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BLUSHING BITTERLY: AN AFFECTIVE AND LITERARY HISTORY OF RACIAL  
UPLIFT AFTER RECONSTRUCTION

By

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And approved by

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Abstract of the Dissertation

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After Reconstruction

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“Blushing Bitterly” asks: how did African American writers manage, deploy, and even circumscribe feeling during the era of racial uplift? African American writers and activists understood the question of feeling as central to national belonging. When the Supreme Court passed the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision on the basis that it protected public feeling, the nation thereby segregated sentiment and belonging along racial lines. At the same time, racial uplift leaders and institutions espoused a politics of respectability that asked African Americans to monitor their affect. Yet novels by Charles Chesnutt, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Pauline E. Hopkins, Sutton Griggs, and W.E.B. Du Bois unleash unmanaged feeling to articulate claims to belonging within and beyond the US. “Blushing Bitterly” therefore complicates our understanding of the racial uplift movement as an affectively conservative project. Against uplifters’ explicit advice to temper feelings of anger or bitterness, many creative works of this era privilege an

uncontainable, unmanageable surfeit of feeling. This surfeit is the location, I argue, of progressive potential.

This project takes up the question of literary form to rethink the racial uplift movement's affective parameters. It argues that the novel is the central medium through which uplift authors theorized affect. Each chapter positions such uplift novels as Chesnutt's *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901), Dunbar's *The Sport of the Gods*, Hopkins' *Of One Blood* (1902-3), and Du Bois' *Dark Princess* alongside racial uplift manuals, essays, speeches, and journals. These chapters then consider the affective aims of racial uplift philosophy in the spheres of the public and the private, the body and mind, and the globe. While Chesnutt and Dunbar remain firmly situated in the US, their novels reveal a deep frustration with the nation. In contrast, the novels of Hopkins, Griggs, and Du Bois imagine transnational forms of belonging that shatter the national frame and refuse citizenship as the horizon of politics. "Blushing Bitterly" shows that racial uplift philosophy, and the *affect management* it demands, often fails in practice. The authors in this study encourage expressing unmanaged feeling. The novel's formal characteristics allow freer forms of feeling than permitted by uplift philosophy. Their novels make room for negative feelings and model how to make way for individual agency in feeling. Theorizing these writers emphasizes the import of affect in African American literature and revises the genealogy of contemporary affect studies. While scholars attribute the "affective turn" in critical theory and literary studies to the early 2000s, "Blushing Bitterly" contends that African American writers of the nineteenth and early twentieth century had already made this turn by engaging in vital affective work.

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## Introduction

### “What Does It Feel Like to be a Problem?”: Racial Uplift’s Affects

*Between the other world and me there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All, nevertheless, flutter around it. They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly: How does it feel to be a problem? they say, I know an excellent colored man in my town; or, I fought at Mechanicsville; or, Do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil? At these I smile, or am interested, or reduce the boiling to a simmer, as the occasion may require. To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem, I seldom answer a word.*

—W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903)

“Blushing Bitterly: An Affective and Literary History of Racial Uplift After Reconstruction” takes W.E.B. Du Bois’ opening question in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) as its critical directive. While Du Bois states that “he seldom answered a word” when asked how it feels to be a problem, the passage nonetheless offers several ways to think through a response. In the first sentence, we see that feeling operates as a racialized affective barrier: this question lies “between the other world and me.” Du Bois also shows that this question can neither be asked nor answered directly, so attempting to discuss racial feelings necessitates formal creativity. This passage also demonstrates that Du Bois must manage his own affects, especially when the question of racial feeling arises. As he states, he modulates his response according to the context in which the question is asked. What might happen, though, if Du Bois did not manage his affects, if the boiling weren’t “reduced”? What shifts in race relations might then occur? In seeking to answer Du Bois’ query, this dissertation turns to the dominant literary form of the racial uplift movement: the novel. It therefore asks further: How do the novels of the



racial uplift movement at once register affect management and the surfeit of racial feeling that cannot be managed?

Racial uplift writers had immense faith in their ability to transform the nation, race, and even the world by successfully transmitting affect through the novel. In prefaces, speeches, essays, reviews, and lively debates between their novels' characters, they theorized the form, content, and politico-cultural aims of racial uplift literature. Anna Julia Cooper, for one, urged black American writers to take up the burden of racial representation to counteract the ways white authors represented African Americans in their fiction. Cooper's 1892 essay collection, *A Voice From the South*, includes her essay, "One Phase of American Literature." In this essay, Cooper theorizes African Americans' the relationship to the nation's literary production. She takes particular umbrage with William Dean Howells' attempts to portray the race in his 1891 novel, *An Imperative Duty*, writing:

Mr. Howells has recently tried his hand also at painting the Negro, attempting merely a side light in half tones, on his life and manners; I think the unanimous verdict of the subject is that, in this single department at least, Mr. Howells does not know what he is talking about . . . One feels that he had no business to attempt a subject of which he knew so little, or for which he cared so little.<sup>1</sup>

Then, speaking to her "fellow countrymen" who, like Howells, "dabble in ink and affect to discuss the Negro," Cooper states: "It is an insult to humanity and a sin against God to publish any such sweeping generalizations of a race on such meager and superficial information. We meet it at every turn—this obtrusive and offensive vulgarity, this gratuitous sizing up of the Negro and conclusively writing down his equation, sometimes

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<sup>1</sup> Anna Julia Cooper, "One Phase of American Literature." In *A Voice From the South*, 175-227 (Xenia, Ohio: The Aldine Printing House, 1892), 201.

even among his ardent friends and bravest defenders.”<sup>2</sup> Cooper concludes her essay by stating that “we can with clear eye . . . ourselves paint what is true with the calm spirit of those who know their cause is right and who believe there is a God who judgeth nations.”<sup>3</sup> In this essay, Cooper offers a clear directive to race writers: portray the race “truthfully.” She provides, as well, a political and ethical imperative: uplift writers work for what is “right.” God will judge the nation, and He will not find African Americans wanting, working as they have for what is good and true. Finally, she also lays an affective foundation on which uplift writers can take refuge—rather than being motivated by anger or sorrow, they can write with a “calm spirit.” Writing serves as a method for managing racial feeling at the same time as it should perform an affective revolution.

At the same time as Cooper assures race writers they can write “with a calm spirit,” her essay reveals her own intense frustration with the nation—indeed, like Douglass before her, she foresees its punishment by God—and with American writing that attends to race. Pauline E. Hopkins, another prominent theorist of black writing, adopts the spirit Cooper here advocates. During the period of racial uplift, Hopkins was a prolific novel writer. As editor to the *Colored American Magazine* from 1900-1904, she helped shaped the form and politics of black writing. In the preface to her first novel *Contending Forces: A Romance Illustrative of Negro Life North and South* (1900), she argued that race writers must “faithfully portray” the race’s “inmost thoughts and feelings” with “fire and romance.” Only then could black writing “cement the bonds of brotherhood” among all people “of all complexions.”<sup>4</sup> In Hopkins’ estimation, race

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 203.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 226-227.

<sup>4</sup> Pauline Hopkins, Preface to *Contending Forces: A Romance Illustrative of Negro Life North and South*, by Pauline E. Hopkins, 13-16 (Boston, Mass: The Colored Co-operative Publishing Co., 1900), 14.

writers had a duty to account for the full range of racial affects—and to find forms capable of this task. Along with Cooper and Hopkins, Charles Chesnutt and W.E.B. Du Bois engaged in literary theory and criticism in essays and prefatory material. As with Cooper, their literary theory helps illuminate the conditions in which race writers produced literature as well as its aims. I contend, however, racial uplifters best theorized black writing—its limits as well as its possibilities—through deploying different modes of the novel. Chesnutt, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Hopkins, and Du Bois use form as a theoretical mode. Through adapting various forms and techniques of the novel, they put literary theory to practice. In other words, their novels show what black literature can do, particularly its capacity to link form and feeling. In these novels, they unveiled the race’s “inmost thoughts and feelings” in service of their own notions of racial progress. These notions, as I argue, often went against the dictates of the racial uplift movement itself. In this case, their novels are not an instantiation of cultural sublimation. The production of novels that challenge and refuse affect management allowed uplifters to contain their affect therein. Through the novel, Chesnutt, Dunbar, Hopkins, and Du Bois refuse the hegemony of (black) cultural life.

This project approaches the topic of racial feeling somewhat indirectly. Rather than looking primarily to the journal entries, letters, speeches, essays, periodicals, or autobiographies in which racial uplifters outwardly stated uplift’s affects and affective aims, I look to novels as the place in which they could more safely and freely register feelings they might not have been able to express or even articulate directly. Their novels offer compelling claims about how the project of racial uplift feels. They demonstrate why and how the racial uplift movement fails to produce good feeling. At the same time,

the novels I examine fight against the sublimation of racial feeling the movement demanded of its participants. A conversation between two characters in Du Bois' first novel, *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* (1911), helps illustrate the ways racial feeling posed a formal problem, even within the spaces of racial uplift—in this case, in the homes of middle and upper class African Americans. This conversation takes place between Blessed Alwyn, the novel's male embodiment of Du Bois' talented tenth, and Carolyn Wynn, a young black teacher. While both are dedicated members of the racial uplift project, the already-cynical Carolyn finds Bles somewhat naïve about racial feeling. When Bles expresses his frustration that the dinner party he attends at her home has so far lacked discussion of “the Problem,” Carolyn admonishes him: ““You haven’t learned our language yet. We don’t just blurt into the Negro Problem; that’s voted bad form. We leave that to our white friends. We saunter to it sideways, touch it delicately because’—her face became a little graver—‘because, you see, it hurts.” Bles, looking “thoughtful and abashed,” stammers, “gravely,” that he thinks he understands.<sup>5</sup> Bles’ affective education (Du Bois titles the chapter in which this conversation appears “The Education of Alwyn”) helps provide this project with its formal methodology. “Blushing Bitterly” examines the affective dimensions of the novel as a tool for expressing and working through racial affects indirectly. Through the novel, racial uplifters theorized the painful experience of feeling like a problem.

At every turn, African Americans were reminded of their status as a “problem.” As Reconstruction came to an end and federal and state governments increased limitations on black citizenship, the nation saw a sharp rise in racial violence and anti-

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<sup>5</sup> W.E.B. *The Quest of the Silver Fleece: A Novel* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1911), 258.

black literature and propaganda. White literary figures like Joel Chandler Harris and Thomas Nelson Page fostered a sentiment of nostalgia for the days of slavery. The figure of the “happy slave” often took center stage in their novels and short stories. This figure appealed to white American readers who preferred to think of slavery as a genteel system operated by benevolent white southerners. Meanwhile, texts such as Thomas Dixon *The Leopard’s Spots: A Romance of the White Man’s Burden—1865-1900* (1902), *The Clansman* (1905), *The Traitor* (1907), and John D. Lynch’s epic poem, *Redpath, or, the Ku Klux Klan Tribunal* (1877), promoted the myth that black men were unfit for government because they were brutish rapists that endangered white womanhood; their work endorsed the spirit and practices of groups like the Ku Klux Klan, which rose in 1865 when white southerners sought to overthrow Southern Republican state governments and their Reconstruction policies. The Klan used violence, against white Republicans who supported African Americans and African Americans alike, to implement its white supremacist agenda. Prominent political figures also fed the fever of race hatred and fear. Leading white supremacist and South Carolina governor Benjamin Tillman declared in 1892 that he would “willingly lead a mob in lynching a negro who had committed an assault upon a white woman.”<sup>6</sup> At the same time, census data and sociological studies claimed that African Americans were biologically prone toward crime, more susceptible to disease, naturally immoral, and had higher death rates. These studies alleged that African Americans had been better off during slavery and were unfit

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<sup>6</sup> Qtd. in Stephan Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 169.

for citizenship.<sup>7</sup> In the post-Reconstruction era of racial uplift, anti-black sentiment *was* public sentiment.

African American writers and activists of the racial uplift era understood the question of feeling as central to national belonging and therefore produced literature that aimed to reorient national affect. When the US Supreme Court passed *Plessy* on the basis that it protected public feeling, it legally solidified the nation's segregation of sentiment and belonging along racial lines. For instance, while white Americans could freely express rage over African American progress, black Americans risked their livelihoods and lives if they revealed the anger they felt in response to lynching and to the increased limitations imposed on their political rights. For example, when Alexander Manly, editor of *The Banner*, Wilmington, North Carolina's black newspaper, published an editorial discrediting the popular white view on lynching, the town's white Democratic leaders burnt down his office and threatened to kill him if he did not leave the city within twenty-four hours. The 1898 Wilmington race riot, which I take up through Charles Chesnutt in chapter one, proved that African Americans could not express racial responses to lynching without being punished by white America. It also demonstrated that African Americans' political and material success angered many white Americans.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, as Ida B. Wells demonstrates in her 1892 lynching exposé, *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases*, white Americans did not lynch black Americans because they raped or insulted white women, but because they defied white structures of feeling by prospering

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<sup>7</sup> Michael J. Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 11. Leading up to the *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling, the nation also reneged on many of the rights and protections promised by the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments and other Reconstruction Acts. In fact, the Civil Rights Act of 1875 was invalidated in 1883 for being unconstitutional.

<sup>8</sup> For more on Wilmington race riot, as well as Manly's role in it, see Leon Prather, *We Have Taken a City: The Wilmington Racial Massacre and Coup of 1898* (Wilmington: Dram Tree Books, 2006).

too much.<sup>9</sup> In a letter he writes to Wells after she publishes *Southern Horrors*, Frederick Douglass applauds Wells' effort, but also warns it may not succeed. He writes: "If American moral sensibility" had not been so "hardened by the persistence of outrage and crime against colored people, a scream of horror, shame, and indignation would rise to Heaven wherever your pamphlet shall be read."<sup>10</sup> Douglass reveals that an affective evolution needs to take place in the nation before Wells' pamphlet can achieve her desired goal: eradicating the myths and affects that make lynching permissible.<sup>11</sup> The facts Wells supplies, he imagines, cannot bridge the divide between black and white feeling.

The racial uplift movement was at once an effort to erase this divide and to claim equality of feeling. In this same era of segregated racial feeling, racial uplift leaders and institutions espoused a politics of respectability that asked African Americans to monitor their affect. Booker T. Washington and other affectively-conservative uplifters, such as Mary Church Terrell, Nannie Helen Burroughs, and Frances E.W. Harper, counselled African Americans to reject negative feelings; such feelings, they argued, impeded personal and racial progress. Their racial uplift philosophies thus disavowed anger, bitterness, despair, and sorrow, among other seemingly unproductive affects. By advising African Americans to reject negative feelings as part of the process of becoming "respectable," these uplifters denied the legitimacy and political efficacy of such affects.

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<sup>9</sup> Ida B. Wells, *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases* (New York: New York Age Print, 1892).

<sup>10</sup> Frederick Douglass, "Hon. Fred Douglass's Letter," in *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases* by Ida B. Wells (New York: The New York Age Print, 1892), 5.

<sup>11</sup> For a reading of lynching's cultural logic, see Jacqueline Goldsby, *A Spectacular Secret: Lynching in American Life and Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006).

The politics of respectability extend beyond external factors like class, dress, public comportment, gender roles and sexuality, and behaviors such as drinking, loafing, or dancing. Along with respectability politics' codes dictating external racial representation and behavior, respectability politics also demanded the management of feeling. To manage affects, an individual or group must conceal, ignore, or sublimate certain affects, while outwardly expressing others that he, she, or the group may not actually feel. Affect management promised a limited form of safety within the US and aided uplifters in promoting a particular version of uplift. But affect management also posed dilemmas for the subject and race. Managing affect necessitated affective masking, both within interracial and intracial racial spaces, and, as demonstrated by Paul Laurence Dunbar and Pauline E. Hopkins, could result in loss of feeling. In either case, a racial uplift philosophy that demanded affect management as part of its respectability politics certainly limited the individual's right to feel freely.

Underlying all of these factors was the *feeling* that motivated the practice of what I call an affective respectability politics. In *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-America*, Saidiya Hartman contends that African Americans attempting to prove their humanity and rights to citizenship experienced an intense feeling of "blameworthiness." The circulation of pamphlets and manuals that claimed to "teach African Americans" how to become qualified for citizenship only heightened the feeling that the race was worthy of blame.<sup>12</sup> The politics of respectability, so central to

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<sup>12</sup> Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-America*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 126. For example, Hartman analyzes the implications of an 1864 pamphlet by Reverend Isaac W. Brinckerhoff, titled *Advice to Freedmen*, which suggests that by following his advice, African Americans could "one day become worthy and respected citizens of this great nation" (133).



the racial uplift movement, comes out this history of feeling “blameworthy.”

Respectability, Tavia Nyong’o helpfully notes, is “a vague term.” It indicates the “volitional aspects of race and class,” the “part the individual or family might voluntarily choose to alter or change.” While the notion of respectability certainly “colluded with bourgeois values,” it also “resisted the automatic equation of poverty or race with degradation. The long history of working-class and African American pursuit of dignity, at work and in society, speaks to this complexity.”<sup>13</sup> Building on Nyong’o’s definition, this project contends that the politics of respectability also depended on standards of feeling, both as a motivator for practicing respectability and as its logical endpoint. Racial uplifters implicitly established a “respectable” set of feelings to prove the affective equality of the races. They hoped to thereby pave the way for full acceptance into the nation. Many uplifters therefore practiced and promoted an affective politics of respectability.

Much of the literature produced during the racial uplift era thus reproduced affective constraints. In Frances Harper’s 1892 novel, *Iola Leroy, or Shadows Uplifted*, for instance, its title character curbs desires and frustrations that might undermine her ability to engage in racial uplift.<sup>14</sup> The novel serves as a model for African Americans who, like Iola Leroy herself, wish to help their race uplift themselves. In contrast, I argue that novels by Chesnutt, Dunbar, Hopkins, Griggs, and Du Bois unleash unmanaged

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<sup>13</sup> Tavia Nyong’o, *The Amalgamation Waltz: Race, Performance, and the Ruses of Memory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 116.

<sup>14</sup> In *Race, Work, and Desire in American Literature, 1860-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), Michelle Birnbaum argues of Iola’s and Dr. Latimer’s marriage: “‘Kindred hopes and tastes had knit their hearts; grand and noble purposes were lighting up their lives; and they esteemed it a blessing privileged to stand on the threshold of a new era and labor for those who had passed for the old oligarchy of slavery into the new commonwealth of freedom’” (206). Yet this marriage only takes place after Iola suppresses her desire for the white Dr. Gresham—a desire less in line with racial uplift’s ideals.

feelings to articulate claims to belonging within and beyond the US. Their novels refuse to follow racial uplift's narrative chronology, a chronology in which practicing uplift philosophy results in the realization of its ideals. Instead, these authors reveal the affective consequences of, and indeed even the impossibility of, following uplift philosophy and its affective demands. As outliers in the racial uplift literary canon, these novels challenge our understanding of the racial uplift movement as a wholly affectively-conservative project dominated by the politics of respectability. Against uplifters' explicit advice to temper feelings of rage, bitterness, and resentment, as well as individually-motivated desires (personal success at the cost of the race's collective image, pleasure in sexual relationships, friendships, and social environments that defy respectability politics, or even aesthetic or cultural production that did not conform to uplift ideology's ideals), many creative works of this era privilege an uncontainable, unmanageable surfeit of feeling. This surfeit, as I argue throughout each chapter of the dissertation, is the location of uplift literature's progressive potential.

With this potential in mind, racial uplifters worked against the affective conditions of US national belonging, which underpinned the racial uplift movement's philosophy as well as its practice. Unlike legal citizenship, national belonging is a state of feeling. As legal historian Mark Weiner explains, national belonging—what he calls “cultural citizenship”—depends on the civic majority's willingness to recognize that “the [new or previously unrecognized] group ‘belongs,’ that it shares certain basic characteristics with the community.”<sup>15</sup> From the creation of the early republic, through

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<sup>15</sup> Mark Weiner, *Black Trials: Citizenship from the Beginning of Slavery to the End of Caste* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 7-8. In contrast, political theorist Danielle Allen argues that citizens simply need to recognize that, like friends, they have “a *shared* life,” not a “common one.” Accordingly, the first recognition should lead to a second: in order to live in a mutually beneficial world, citizens must prove

the Civil War, and in decades following Reconstruction, black Americans attempted to prove their belonging. As the decades after Reconstruction wore on, they had to contend with the knowledge that gaining citizenship rights, however meager, did not automatically expand the nation's affective parameters. On the one hand, the racial uplift movement was an effort to prove the race's belonging by demonstrating that African Americans *felt* American. Rather than reshaping the nation itself, African Americans would fit themselves into its existing structure. This project, however, circumscribed black feeling. On the other hand, and as I emphasize throughout this project, the racial uplift movement was an attempt to be defined differently, to feel differently, and to reshape racial and national affect. Take the 1899 poem by Charles Frederick Wright, "Afro-American," which concludes with the following lines: "For long, in vain, we've sought / Freedom to feel."<sup>16</sup> The poem, which begins by calling America the land of "the Lynching Bee" and ends with the above lines, moves through several stages of feeling: anger, betrayal, sorrow, a little hope, and fear. It appeals to the nation itself, and to God, to end America's "heinous" crimes. These crimes, it notes, are "Perpetrated by a throng / Of heartless fiends."<sup>17</sup> Through all these shifts in feeling, Wright retains a claim to the US. The poem itself is an apostrophe to "My native country." It names the feeling of white America, its "heartless[ness]," as what obstructs the poet's ability to feel free and

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themselves "trustworthy." Danielle Allen, *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship since Brown v. Board of Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), xxi, xxii.

<sup>16</sup> Charles Frederick Wright, "Afro-American." *The Colored American Magazine* (September 1900), 245. A veteran of the Spanish-American war, Wright offers an elucidating account of the black soldier's experience during the early years of Jim Crow. As, James Robert Payne shows, Wright's early poetry is idealistic and patriotic. His post-war poetry, however, demonstrates, as does "Afro-American," his profound sense of disillusionment and national "betrayal" (21). James Robert Payne, "Afro-American Literature of the Spanish-American War." *MELUS* 10.3, Varieties of Ethnic Criticism (Autumn 1993): 19-32.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

to thereby “love” the nation. White America, embodied here in its “heartless” throngs, violently rejects the notion that African Americans share their homeland.

It was during this moment of rising anti-black feeling that African American writers once again began to publish novels. During the civil war, black novel production decreased significantly. Even in the antebellum period, only a few black authors published novels. While scholars continue to discover antebellum black novels, this list is still short in comparison to the racial uplift era’s novel production.<sup>18</sup> Prior to emancipation, the slave narrative took precedence over other forms of black writing. Following Harper’s 1892 *Iola Leroy*, one of the earliest and most influential black novels published after the Civil War, African Americans authors became prolific novel writers.<sup>19</sup> Claudia Tate credits this shift to “the vigorous activity among black women’s clubs,” an activity that both stimulated the production of the black novel, especially the domestic novel, and created an eager group of readers.<sup>20</sup> In *A History of the African American Novel*, Valerie Babb argues that the novel offered African Americans “a means of understanding their racial and cultural selves, and later gave them arenas to contest these understandings.” The genre, she contends, “helped a culture cohere itself.”<sup>21</sup> Drawing on Tate’s and Babbs’ genealogy and theorization of the novel, I argue that uplifters of the

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<sup>18</sup> Antebellum black novels include: William Wells Brown’s *Clotel, or The President’s Daughter* (1853), Frank J. Webb’s *The Garies and Their Friends* (1857), Harriet Wilson’s *Our Nig: Sketches from the Life of a Free Black, in a Two-story White House* (1859) and the unpublished manuscript of *The Bondswoman’s Narrative* by Hannah Crafts (1858), which Henry Louis Gates, Jr. discovered, authenticated, and then published for the first time in 2002.

<sup>19</sup> Gene Andrew Jarrett argues that “[f]iction was the primary means of racial uplift” (84). Building on this claim, I specify the novel’s central place in uplift literature. Gene Andrew Jarrett, *Representing the Race: A New Political History of African American Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 84.

<sup>20</sup> Claudia Tate, *Domestic Allegories of Politic Desire: The Black Heroine’s Text at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 5.

<sup>21</sup> Valerie Babb, *A History of the African American Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 7.

post-Reconstruction era recognized the role the novel could play in shaping American national feeling. In this era of cultural shift back towards antebellum politics, sentiments, and racial formation, the novel served as a tool for moving the race and nation forward. Uplifters therefore implemented racial uplift philosophy through the novel in the hopes of affectively reorienting the nation. As Reconstruction had failed to make this reorientation take place, they adopted the novel to transform national culture and feeling, as well as law.

The novel served as the movement's most promising fictional form for uplifting the race. It provides a form in which to put uplift philosophy in practice by showing its characters' ability to gradually, and against many odds, uplift themselves and the race through individual and collective endeavor. In this case, it is unsurprising that Harper's *Iola Leroy* ends with a call not for poetry, short stories, or plays, but for race novels. As the novel comes to a close, its heroine, Iola Leroy, promises, "out of the fullness of [her] heart" to "write a good, strong book" that will "inspire men and women with a deeper sense of justice and humanity."<sup>22</sup> In her concluding "Note," Harper echoes Iola's sentiments. Her own mission in writing *Iola Leroy*, she explains, "will not be in vain" if it helps the race "add their quota of good citizenship to the best welfare of the nation" and "awakens" in the "hearts of our [white] countrymen a stronger sense of justice."<sup>23</sup> Racial uplift novels, like racial uplift literature more broadly, were born out of the political desire to transform national feeling. In this case, race writers did write for white audiences. They hoped to reorient their affective responses from what Chesnut called a

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<sup>22</sup> Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, *Iola Leroy, or Shadows Uplifted* (Philadelphia: Garrigues Brothers, 1892), 262.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 282.

“subtle almost indefinable feeling of repulsion toward the negro” to “the desired state of feeling”: a feeling that black Americans belonged in and to the nation equally.<sup>24</sup>

However, as Harper’s “Note” demonstrates, black writers also worked to transform the race. Their works urged African Americans to practice individual and collective self-help, and, in so doing, to demonstrate their qualification for full citizenship rights. They wrote furiously and passionately—in non-fiction such as race manuals, pamphlets, newspapers, magazines, and biographies (individual and collective), as well as in novels, poems, plays, short stories, and drama—in order to shape the race itself.

Throughout “Blushing Bitterly,” I examine the ways black writers turn to the form of the novel to work through and against, rather than simply affirm, racial uplift’s affective aims. Literature, as Duncan A. Lucas notes in *Affect Theory, Genre, and the Example of Tragedy*, “may be the single greatest database for the study of patterns in human emotional life.”<sup>25</sup> He argues further that emotions “are the primary motivator of humans’ being.”<sup>26</sup> The novel has a long history as a site for recording feeling. Yet novels do more than record human emotion in a given historical period. Novels are often also future-oriented, as their writers may see the novel as a tool for creating social and political change. In the antebellum period, Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852) is the prime example of this function. *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* ends, of course, by directing readers to “feel right.”<sup>27</sup> Chesnutt in fact articulated his desire to follow the model Stowe set forth. Stowe’s novel, in the case of Chesnutt, provided false hope that

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<sup>24</sup> Charles Chesnutt, *The Journals of Charles W. Chesnutt*, ed. by Richard Brodhead (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 140.

<sup>25</sup> Duncan A. Lucas, *Affect Theory, Genre, and the Example of Tragedy: Dreams We Learn* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018), 4.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>27</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1981), 624.

*fin de siècle* white American readers would welcome anti-racist writing and change their feelings towards the race accordingly. Fueled by Stowe's apparent success and their collective belief in the novel's capacity to effect change through directing, altering, and managing affects, racial uplifters put immense energy into producing novels they deemed capable of this work. They aimed to express racial affects, to elicit the right feelings from readers, and to direct the collective feelings of the race towards uplift's ideals.

What and how does racial uplift philosophy teach African Americans to feel, and to what end? As critics such as Claudia Tate, Hazel V. Carby, Michelle Birnbaum, P. Gabrielle Foreman, Koritha Mitchell, and Andréa N. Williams have demonstrated, uplift authors attempted to reform the black population, transform white public opinion, and gain literary credibility and success. Above all, they used the novel to express political desire.<sup>28</sup> In so doing, black novelists helped African American readers see and feel that they were American citizens, and that they would be granted full citizenship rights and belonging in the US. For instance, Harper's *Iola Leroy* and Kathryn D. Tillman's *Beryl Weston's Ambition: The Story of an Afro-American Girl's Life* (1893) and *Clancy Street* (1898) show that following racial uplift's script correlates to gaining collective civil rights and advancing the race.<sup>29</sup> In this case, black novels needed to make black readers

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<sup>28</sup> Claudia Tate, *Domestic Allegories of Politic Desire: The Black Heroine's Text at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Hazel V. Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Novelist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Michelle Birnbaum, *Race, Work, and Desire in American Literature, 1860-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); P. Gabrielle Foreman, *Activist Sentiments: Reading Black Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009); Koritha Mitchell, *Living with Lynching: African American Lynching Plays, Performance, and Citizenship, 1890-1930* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2012); and Andréa N. Williams, *Dividing Lines: Class Anxiety and Postbellum Black Fiction* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2013).

<sup>29</sup> Tate, *Domestic Allegories*, 23.

feel American, and, at the same time, make white readers feel that African Americans were indeed American—by right and by their shared expression of national feeling.

The novels I examine work to undo and then refashion racial uplift's affective parameters and aims. They each respond, to various degrees, to Booker T. Washington, who, as the most prominent racial leader during the uplift era, set the national tone for racial feeling. In his own person as in his writings, he represented himself and the race as affectively-measured: calm, hopeful, cheerful, acquiescent, free from any negative affects that implied he was dissatisfied with the nation or impatient with the pace at which the race progressed. Washington therefore actively disavowed his own and the race's bitterness.<sup>30</sup> Du Bois, Washington's greatest opponent, claimed bitterness as the natural condition of being black at the turn of the century.<sup>31</sup> I pinpoint their contradictory positions on bitterness here, not only because of bitterness' import throughout the dissertation's chapters, but because it highlights racial uplift's push and pull between affective registers. Yet, as "Blushing Bitterly" argues, acknowledging and expressing negative affects allows the subject to feel more freely.

Throughout "Blushing Bitterly," I use the terms feeling, emotion, sentiment, and affect somewhat interchangeably. I do not discount the important distinctions between these terms that many affect theorists have offered. I argue, however, that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, terms such as sentiment, feeling, and emotion stand in for a textual representation of affect. These terms simultaneously attend to the ways social, cultural, and embodied experiences elicit and shape individual and collective sensation. This is especially the case because of the era's restrictions on black affective

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<sup>30</sup> Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery* [1901] (New York: Double Day, Page & Co., 1907), 48.

<sup>31</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* [1903] (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 154.



expression. I attend, moreover, to the ways affect operates at the level of form, the ways characters perform, suppress, and register affect, and moments in which feeling itself surfaces, through dialogue, as a problem for racial uplift in and beyond the nation. For example, chapter one's reading of *The Marrow of Tradition* shows that expressing bitterness gets in the way of racial reconciliation and undermines the characters' faith (and thus readers' faith) in racial uplift philosophy.

Scholars of the affective turn, which took full force beginning in the early 2000s, credit the production of affect theory to 1) feminist work on the body, and 2) to queer theory's explorations of emotion.<sup>32</sup> Affect theory combines the study of the body and emotion. In fact, affect theorists refuse the dichotomy between body and mind. Studying feeling, in this case, means studying the condition of the body. Affects illuminate "both our power to affect the world around us and our power to be affected by it, along with the relationship between these two powers."<sup>33</sup> Affect theory, as Michael Hardt argues, "forces us constantly to pose the problem of the relationship between the mind and body with the assumption that their powers constantly correspond in some way."<sup>34</sup> Our freedom to feel and express feeling reflects the degree of autonomy we can presumably exert over ourselves and our world. Taking affect theory's correlation between body and mind as a starting point for understanding the relationship between racial uplift's affective and political aims, this study examines the bodily restrictions and guidelines set forth in behavioral manuals, essays, speeches, and other nonfiction works of the racial uplift movement. It looks to what the bodies of its novels experience and feel in the

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<sup>32</sup> Michael Hardt, "What Affects are Good For," Foreward to *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, edited by Patricia Ticinto Clough and Jean Halley, ix-xiii (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), ix.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., x.

multiple spheres in which they modulate their affects in service of, or in opposition to, racial uplift philosophy. The novel itself serves as a site for registering feeling—it too modulates affect to amplify or diminish the subject’s and racial collective’s freedom. In this case, this project makes the claim that racial uplifters’ produced affect theory—which attends to emotion and the body at once—long before the affective turn.

Yet not all racial uplifters emphasized the connection between the body and mind. As this project takes up most explicitly in its third chapter, uplift philosophers that overemphasized the importance of either body or mind limited the subject’s affective freedom. At the height of the racial uplift movement, uplifters such as Du Bois often showed more concern for the condition of the mind, and therefore overlooked the body’s utility as a source for information on the subject’s and race’s relationship to the nation, whether in public, private, or moving beyond national boundaries. Chapter three therefore looks to Hopkins’ novel *Of One Blood, or the Hidden Self* (1902-3) as a philosophical exploration of the relationship between the body and mind. Her novel demonstrates that uplifters must attend simultaneously to the condition of the body and mind. Otherwise, like the subject of mesmeric experimentation, the racial subject risks losing affective capacity and agency entirely.

Completed in the same year that Hopkins began publishing the last of her serial novels, *Of One Blood; or, The Hidden Self*, Thomas Nelson Baker’s 1903 doctoral dissertation, “The Ethical Significance of the Connection Between Mind and Body,” posits that “it is only through the body that we can know anything of the mind.”<sup>35</sup> The

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<sup>35</sup> Thomas Nelson Baker, *The Ethical Significance of the Connection Between Mind and Body: A Thesis presented to the Philosophical Faculty of Yale University, in connection with his application for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy* (1903), 2. Beinecke Library Special Collections, Yale. Microform.

first African American to earn a PhD in philosophy, Baker was born into slavery 1860 and completed his doctoral degree at Yale in 1903. Like Hopkins, he indirectly demonstrates the importance of understanding the body as a site for understanding the workings of the mind. While not attending specifically to emotion as such, his attention to the relationship between the body and mind, and his refusal of Cartesian duality, puts him directly into the field of affect studies that stems from the seventeenth century philosopher, Baruch Spinoza.<sup>36</sup> This genealogy is important because, as this project concludes, the novelists I study ultimately want to free racial subjects from conditions which do not allow them to consciously align the state of the body with the state of the mind. To feel free, one must find places in which they can freely express the state of the mind through their bodily emotional expression. Such a subject would have full agency over his or her affects.<sup>37</sup>

I contend that racial uplift authors worked out their affective concerns through the form of novel, and that the black novel therefore serves as a site for theorizing affect. While not a major figure in any of the dissertation's chapters, Sutton E. Griggs proves particularly informative for this claim. Like Hopkins, he addresses the ways the body teaches the subject about its relationship to the nation and to uplift philosophy. Griggs

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<sup>36</sup> For more affect theory's relationship to Spinoza, see Michael Hardt, "What Affects are Good For," Foreword to *The Affective Turn*.

<sup>37</sup> Baker is one of the few African Americans of his generation to explicitly argue that a philosophy for training body and mind must take into account the connection between these two aspects of personhood. In his dissertation's introduction, he argues that as "all the doings of that which we call the mind are manifested through the body [. . .] the study of the mind by means of the body is the most important of all the studies for giving information concerning the mind."<sup>37</sup> Rejecting the belief that the mind is separate and superior to the body, he argues that the body "is the condition of the mind." "We do not say," he explains, that "the mind cannot exist without the body, but we do say that apart from the body, mind has no existence for experience, i.e., it can be known by us only through the body" (3-4). His introduction thus concludes: "It is in connection with this body that the mind must work out its intellectual and ethical and religious problems" (5).

was an important African American novelist and activist during the era of racial uplift. His 1899 black nationalist novel, *Imperium in Imperio*, has received much-deserved critical attention in the field of African American literary and cultural studies. However, the four novels he published after *Imperium in Imperio*—*Overshadowed* (1901), *Unfettered* (1902), *The Hindered Hand* (1905), and *Pointing the Way* (1908)—remain understudied. While critics dismiss Griggs’ novels as overly didactic and unsophisticated, his novels demonstrate a keen understanding of how African American feeling operated at the turn of the century. Early in Griggs’ *The Hindered Hand*, the protagonist, Ensal Ellwood, sits speaking with Gus Martin. Reminiscing on their time fighting together in the Spanish-American war, Gus bitterly declares: “The flag aint any more to me than any other dirty rag. I fit for it. My blood run out o’ three holes on the groun’ to keep it floatin’, and what will it do fur me? Now jes’ tell me whut?”<sup>38</sup> In response to these questions, Ensal tries to show that “the spirit of the national government was very correct”; only the “lesser governments” obstruct the race’s rights. In time, he tells Gus, “the national government would mould the inner circles of government to its way of thinking.” But Gus won’t hear him. “That kind o’ talk,” he states, “makes me sick.”<sup>39</sup> Ensal’s understanding of the nation does not stand up to Gus’s own embodied experience. He feels this disjunction like bodily sickness. While Ensal has faith that the US government will gradually right the nation and treat African Americans equally, Gus knows that his existence in the nation requires him to give his body, to let his “blood run out o’ three holes on the ground” to keep the flag flying, without giving him anything in

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<sup>38</sup> Sutton E. Griggs, *The Hindered Hand; or, The Reign of the Repressionist* (Nashville, Tenn.: The Orion Publishing Company, 1905), 38.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

return. Understanding his relationship to the nation as one that works to divest him of his body, and so asks him to ignore what his body feels, Gus rejects the affective fealty to the nation expected of US subjects.

Later in *The Hindered Hand*, Griggs writes that southern African Americans, weary of pleading to courts and politicians to stop the rampant and unpunished murder of their brethren by white police and white civilians, have become publicly “voiceless.” Without a safe platform for publicly voicing feeling, they secretly “meet in groups and exchange accounts of outrages and bitterly sneer when they read in the white newspapers of the South’s accounts of the ideal relations between the two races.”<sup>40</sup> But white newspapers were not the only texts spreading the myth of “ideal relations between the races.” Washington’s 1901 autobiography, *Up From Slavery*, certainly contributed to this myth. Given the affective portrait of the race he offered there, it is no surprise that white authors, particularly romantic racialists such as William Dean Howells, presented versions of racial feeling more compatible with the “voicelessness” Griggs suggests in *The Hindered Hand*. Like Griggs, Chesnutt, Dunbar, Hopkins, and Du Bois use the novel to reveal the kinds of affects—bitterness and outrage for Griggs—African Americans may have only felt safe expressing in secret.

Broadly, “Blushing Bitterly” centers its formal concerns on the novel. Yet it recognizes that all forms and techniques of the novel do not perform the same affective work. This project therefore explores different genres, forms, and techniques of the novel through which uplifters registered racial affects, critiqued racial uplift’s affective aims, and offered new structures of feeling that might make African Americans feel more

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 155.

freely, even when this freedom did not extend to the formal expansion of their political rights. I argue that the particularity of formal techniques and genres, like each locational sphere in which racial uplift operates, each have their own affective registers, aims, and limitations. As Ngai helpfully illustrates in *Ugly Feelings*, “specific kinds of emotions thus could be said to determine specific ‘literary kinds’—and, in Hobbes’s example, one that will strategically intensify the very emotion at its origin.”<sup>41</sup> Taking Ngai’s critical history of the relationship between form and feeling as a foundation for this project’s formal/affective inquiry, each chapter looks at different formal techniques and genres through which African American authors reimagined racial uplift’s affective aims. In realist free indirect discourse, what I call “blues naturalism,” the supernatural melodrama, and in a confusion of realism and romance, these authors worked to free feeling from uplift’s and the nation’s affective constraints.

The novels I select for this study represent the strongest versions of unmanaged affect’s political potential. The story of racial uplift’s own affective evolution from the concerns of the public sphere, to the home, the embodied, feeling black subject, and outward beyond national boundaries, begins, I propose, with Chesnutt’s fictional depiction of racial uplift’s failure to account for bitterness. Chapter One reads Charles Chesnutt’s *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901) as an enactment of Chesnutt’s own racial uplift philosophy. He argues that creating “shared standards of thoughts and feelings” across social classes, regardless of race, will eliminate race prejudice. Yet the novel shows that expressing affects like bitterness, which Chesnutt’s free indirect discourse reveals simmering in the characters’ subconscious, is outside the “standards of feeling” to

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<sup>41</sup> Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 9.

which African Americans adhered in order to be considered “socially desirable” citizens. Bitterness not only works outside these “standards of feeling,” but makes social intercourse between the races impossible. However, his characters only achieve the social recognition his uplift philosophy promises by expressing bitterness, and thus failing to manage their affects. Yet the kind of social equality Chesnutt imagines will follow ultimately proves undesirable for his characters because its affective cost is too high: the loss of family, hope, and faith in progress. Thus, the novel actually upholds Chesnutt’s racial uplift philosophy that bitterness works against black interests—but only because these interests remain bound by contemporary racial conditions.

Chapter two analyzes Paul Laurence Dunbar’s 1902 novel *The Sport of the Gods* in order to consider more fully the ways uplifters managed affect in intraracial private sphere. While Chesnutt considers the interracial family as a material and metaphorical analogy for racial reconciliation, Dunbar’s novel looks at how racial uplift narrative of black family produces potentially unbearable affects and affective constraints. Racial uplifters saw the family as the primary site for racial uplift practice. They believed that reforming the African American family would evidence the race’s rightful claim to full citizenship and belonging. They therefore instigated a family reform movement dominated by a politics of respectability that set limits on behavior and feeling. This chapter argues that Dunbar adapts the genre of naturalism to expose the flawed affective logic of this premise. Through what I term “blues naturalism,” Dunbar unmask the affective dissolution and insecure attachments that, for him, characterizes the ontology of the black family at the turn of the century. In *Sport*, Dunbar shows racial uplift, through the failed figure of the family, to be a “maddening” project. The novel enters the home to

record how the facts and myths structuring racial life are experienced affectively and thus shape attachments within the family. In reimagining family affects, Dunbar implies that claiming negative feelings like despair, sorrow, and rage, as well as difficult attachments, allows for a limited form of affective liberation. Expressing these affects keeps one from fully descending into a “madness” that destroys the capacity to feel. Infusing the naturalist novel with a blues structure of feeling, Dunbar offers a corrective to racial uplift literature that limits affective experience in the private sphere.

My third chapter considers how the terms of racial uplift and citizenship circumscribe the interrelationship of the body and mind. Taking up Pauline E. Hopkins’ 1902-1903 magazine novel, *Of One Blood*, this chapter argues that because black Americans could not be full citizens, racialized citizenship impedes affect itself, which depends on psyche and soma simultaneously. Racialized citizenship in the US thus produces a complex embodiment. *Of One Blood* figures this embodiment through incest, rape, racial passing, and mesmeric phenomena, all of which seek to destroy the subject’s knowledge of her embodied history. This complex embodiment, Hopkins shows, drains the subject of affect. Deploying the melodramatic mode, Hopkins highlights the ways excess affects exceed the parameters of racial citizenship. As characters awaken to their psychic and bodily history, they experience overwhelming affects that, for female characters, result in death, or, in the case of male characters, pushes them outside the bounds of the US. This chapter demonstrates that racial uplifters needed to reject the nation and instead adopt transnational modes of belonging to allow for the union of body and mind, thereby enabling black subjects’ full affective capacity.



Chapter four moves outside national boundaries to consider alternative forms of belonging that do not require the affect management demanded by either racial uplift philosophy or the US. W.E.B. Du Bois' *Dark Princess: A Romance* (1928) imagines a "vast emancipation of the world." In search of this emancipatory ideal, the novel's protagonist moves in and between collectives that seem to promise the possibility of belonging based on shared affective transparency. In each of these collectives, he comes up against the "shadow of a color line within a color line," leaving him to seek out new forms of attachment that would allow him to express affect freely.<sup>42</sup> The novel resolves his search through his marriage to the Indian princess Kautilya. Yet it still situates the US South as the center of a world movement. The novel does not escape the fraught affective conditions of US race relations. This world movement therefore does not allow for the transparent, interpersonal affective communion *Dark Princess* seeks. The novel suggests, then, that uplift writers' attachments to the US remained too strong to break.

While the novels of the racial uplift era often rejected the terms of belonging within the US, there remained in these works an implicit attachment to the US and to American blackness. The advent of the Harlem Renaissance, however, showed the end of the racial uplift project in terms of its affect management. When Langston Hughes declared that the younger generation of African American artists only needed to please themselves, he unequivocally marked a transition from affect management to emotional freedom.<sup>43</sup> At the same time, the rise of Marcus Garvey's black internationalism

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<sup>42</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *Dark Princess: A Romance* (Jackson: Banner Books; University Press of Mississippi, 1995), 33.

<sup>43</sup> Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain." *The Nation* 122.318 (June 23 1926). In *The Portable Harlem Renaissance Reader*, edited by David Levering Lewis, 91-95 (New York: Penguin Books, 1994), 95.

indicated that many African Americans were willing to forego national belonging as the horizon of politics. By the 1920s, philosophies for racial progress had fundamentally shifted. Black literary production, too, increasingly expressed rather sublimated black affects.

## CHAPTER ONE

Beyond “Standards of Feeling”: Bitterness in Charles Chesnutt’s  
*The Marrow of Tradition*

*When the race cry has been issued, friendship, religion, humanity, reason, all shrivel  
up like dry leaves in a furnace.*

—Charles Chesnutt, 1901.

On November 10th, 1898, Wilmington, North Carolina’s white Democratic leaders instigated the massacre of its black citizens and successfully overthrew the city’s Republican and Fusionist government. In the “White Declaration of Independence” penned the night before, they declared that a true America was ruled by whites alone, and that it was the duty of all Americans to “act now or leave our descendants to a fate too gloomy to be born.”<sup>1</sup> Celebrated throughout the country as an event that helped turn America right-side up, the riot reaffirmed the nation’s rejection of black civil rights and reinforced the sentiment that African Americans did not belong equally in the nation. By violently enforcing segregation and black submission to whites, Wilmington, like the nation itself, had been “redeemed” for civilization, law and order, decency and respectability. For this, Wilmington’s citizens should “give god the glory.”<sup>2</sup>

In the days that followed, popular African American author Charles Chesnutt began “burning with anger.”<sup>3</sup> He was not only enraged by the anti-black feeling and disregard for black life that the Wilmington Riot itself expressed, but also infuriated that newspapers throughout the nation proclaimed the riot a necessary response to black

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<sup>1</sup> “White Man’s Declaration of Independence,” 9th November 1898, Appleton’s Annual Encyclopedia.

<sup>2</sup> “Stamp of Approval: Clergymen Indorse Recent Riot in Wilmington.” *Denver Evening Post* 14 November 1898. *ProQuest Historical Newspapers*.

<sup>3</sup> Helen Chesnutt. *Charles Waddell Chesnutt: Pioneer of the Color Line*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1952. Print), 170.

violence and “Negro Rule.”<sup>4</sup> Rather than expressing his anger openly, he turned to the novel, a form he believed could transform public feeling. In writing *The Marrow of Tradition*, Chesnutt set out to challenge the predominant narrative that justified and applauded the Wilmington Riot. He hoped that by exposing the sentiments that motivated racial injustice and black exclusion from national belonging, he could teach readers what to feel. In doing so, he aspired to unite the races as social equals and citizens. However, rather than an expression of his “burning anger,” Chesnutt declared *The Marrow of Tradition* “not a study in pessimism,” but a novel meant to “entertain” readers and “satisfy” the emotions.<sup>5</sup> This project then called for Chesnutt to manage his own affects and model the feelings he believed could uplift his race.

By the time Chesnutt published *The Marrow of Tradition* in 1901, he had achieved an almost unprecedented level of success for an African American author, particularly for one who hoped to bring about a “moral revolution” in America.<sup>6</sup> His work had been widely embraced by the white reading public, and he seemed on the verge of achieving his life-long dream of becoming the next Harriet Beecher Stowe, a writer he believed had successfully taught readers to “feel aright.”<sup>7</sup> Chesnutt realized that his own efforts to change public sentiment would have to progress slowly and carefully given the political and cultural climate of the post-Reconstruction era. He first expressed this realization in an 1889 journal entry. There, Chesnutt decides that the aim of his writing

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<sup>4</sup> For a full account of the riot, as well as the local and national responses that followed, see Leon Prather’s *We Have Taken a City: The Wilmington Racial Massacre and Coup of 1898* (Wilmington: Dram Tree Books, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> Charles Chesnutt. “Charles Chesnutt’s Own View of His New Story, *The Marrow of Tradition*.” *The Marrow of Tradition*, edited by Werner Sollors, xxxix-xl (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012), xl.

<sup>6</sup> *The Journals of Charles W. Chesnutt*, ed Richard Brodhead (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 139.

<sup>7</sup> That is, Stowe admonished readers to feel empathy towards the enslaved. Chesnutt, like many others, therefore believed that Stowe’s work contributed to slavery’s end. *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1981), 624.

will be to lead white readers “imperceptibly, unconsciously step by step to the desired state of feeling.”<sup>8</sup> This “desired state of feeling” would replace the “subtle almost indefinable feeling of repulsion toward the negro” with “social recognition and equality for his race.”<sup>9</sup> At the same time, his work would prepare African Americans for social recognition by teaching them how to correctly manage their affective states.

*The Marrow of Tradition* seemed to Chesnutt just the novel to achieve this goal.<sup>10</sup> However, it was not received in the manner he expected. Many readers found the novel too divisive, and argued that it would only fuel racial antagonism.<sup>11</sup> The most famous of these negative reviews came from William Dean Howells, then considered the “Dean of American Letters,” and arguably the most important white advocate of African American authors at the turn of the century. Although he believed that Chesnutt was right to “stand up for his people,” he argued that the novel would be better “if it were not so bitter.”<sup>12</sup> That Howells was surprised by the novel’s expression of bitterness suggests that the African American authors he had encountered and supported thus far, including Chesnutt, had managed to hide any bitterness they might have felt as a result of racial oppression.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *The Journals of Charles W. Chesnutt*, 140.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> In fact, the change in sentiment he believed the novel could produce was so important that he personally sent a copy to President Theodore Roosevelt. In a November 25, 1901 letter to Booker T. Washington, Chesnutt wrote of *The Marrow of Tradition*, “I am very anxious that the president should read this book. He has shown himself friendly, so far, to our people and I should like to help brace him up in this particular.” *To Be An Author: The Letters of Charles W. Chesnutt, 1889-1905*, eds. Joseph McElrath and Robert C. Leitz III (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997. Print.), 170.

<sup>11</sup> As one reviewer noted, as a “political document,” the novel was likely to “do more harm to the cause it advocates than good.” *Philadelphia Record* (n.d., Chesnutt Collection, Fisk University).

<sup>12</sup> William Dean Howells, from “A Psychological Counter-Current in Recent Fiction.” *The Marrow of Tradition*, ed. Werner Sollors (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012), 374.

<sup>13</sup> While Howells did not necessarily prescribe to the racial stereotypes predominant in much of the era’s literature, his own romantic racialism foreclosed the possibility that African Americans, of Chesnutt’s status, at least, could or should hold on to feelings like bitterness or anger. Indeed, because his understanding of black psychology relied so heavily on Booker T. Washington’s ideology, he was unprepared for Chesnutt’s bitterness. Furthermore, as literary critic Eric Sundquist writes, Chesnutt’s career in many ways reflects the precarious status of African American writers of his era. Describing Chesnutt’s work as a “curious literary cakewalk,” Sundquist argues that in trying to develop an “African American

Howells' response to the novel is important because it reflects the kind of affect management required by African Americans who expected to be included in the literary market, provisionally acknowledged as worthy of social equality, and accepted as model citizens, even if they were denied full citizenship rights and national belonging.

Up until *The Marrow of Tradition*, Chesnutt's literary strategy aligned with many of the tenets of the racial uplift movement, a movement based on the premise that the material and moral progress of African Americans would help eradicate racial discrimination in the United States. While the movement was plagued with tensions and contradictory views, its leaders shared middle-class status and values, subscribed to respectability politics, believed in self-help, and saw themselves as an elite group who would bring civilization to the black masses.<sup>14</sup> Also a sought-after speaker and essayist on topics of racial advancement, Chesnutt was among the leading figures who outlined methods for achieving racial equality and full inclusion in the nation.

Chesnutt laid out his own racial uplift ideology at the 1916 Amenia Conference in an address titled "Social Discrimination."<sup>15</sup> Held at Joel and Amy Spingarn's New York

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aesthetic" that could address and critique the era's racial politics, Chesnutt had to pander to audiences who had learned to view black Americans through the lens of minstrel shows and popular literature that expressed nostalgia for the old south. In this case, Howells' reading of *The Marrow of Tradition* is also a response to its tonal shift from his earlier writing, particularly his "conjure tales." See Eric Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1994), 276.

<sup>14</sup> Historian Kevin Gaines argues that "The bitter contradiction between lofty personal ambitions and uplift ideals and the suffocating realities facing black elites made racial uplift ideology a faulty construction that offered little protection during a difficult period." *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), xxi. Indeed, the contradictions within Chesnutt's own work demonstrate the challenge of reconciling ideology and practice, elitism and collectivity, and affirmation and denial of feelings that challenged the middle-class refinement to which he adhered in his social life, essays and speeches, and the majority of his novels and short stories.

<sup>15</sup> The ideology expressed in this speech can be found in most of Chesnutt's other speeches and essays, many of which will be discussed throughout this chapter. I focus on this speech in particular, as it is here that Chesnutt sets out most clearly and succinctly the terms that seem most important to his practice and vision for racial uplift.

estate, sponsored by the NAACP, and attended by prominent figures like W.E.B. Du Bois and Mary Burnett Talbert, the conference was intended to unify the various groups and leaders of African American uplift.<sup>16</sup> Chesnutt's address focused on what he believed was the most significant barrier to social equality: feeling. While Chesnutt acknowledged the need for material progress, he argued that this progress was important primarily as it served to open the way for "social intercourse" between the races. In other words, it was in the realm of social relations that racial discrimination would be eliminated. As a new affective relationship developed between white and black Americans, there would "spring up inspiring friendships" based on "kindred standards of thoughts and feeling."<sup>17</sup> Chesnutt prophesied that the American drive for advancement would lead white Americans to extend the hand of friendship across a fading color line. As the color line disappeared, white Americans would finally "feel" that African Americans were their fellow citizens and choose to relate them as friends and social equals.<sup>18</sup> In order for this to happen, however, African Americans attempting to uplift themselves and their race

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<sup>16</sup> *Encyclopedia of the Harlem Renaissance: Volume I*, eds. Cary D. Wintz and Paul Finkelman (New York: Routledge, 2004), 11-12. The "Notes on the Amenia Conference" sets out the meeting's motivation and goals. As the opening sentence the "Notes" show, it was fueled by a sense of urgency: "The time has come for Americans of Negro descent and all those who believe in democracy wide enough to include such Americans to get into close and sympathetic conference." *Notes on the Amenia Conference, ca. 1916. W.E.B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries*.

<sup>17</sup> Chesnutt, "Social Discrimination," in *Charles W. Chesnutt: Essays and Speeches*, ed. Joseph R. McElrath, et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999: 423-425), 424.

<sup>18</sup> As indicated by his "Social Discrimination" address, Chesnutt's philosophy for racial advancement clearly diverges from Booker T. Washington's own as espoused in his 1895 "Atlanta Exposition Address." Called the "Atlanta Compromise" by his detractors, Washington's address promised his white supporters that African Americans had no desire to share equal social standing with whites. In thinly coded language, he eased the threat of miscegenation and social intercourse by stating that "[i]n all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress." *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, Vol. 3, ed. Louis R. Harlan, 583-87 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974), 585.

would have to decide who set the “standards of feeling,” which feelings were included within that standard, and which would have to be suppressed or denied.

The method for racial uplift Chesnutt proscribed thus explicitly called for affect management and espoused the belief that black and white Americans had an equal right to express the same feelings. Yet as both his personal and literary response to the Wilmington Riot show, even inadvertently expressing affects like anger or bitterness would be seen as threatening and outside the “standards of feeling” to which African Americans like Chesnutt had to adhere in order to be considered “socially desirable” citizens and race representatives. Indeed, Howells’ condemnation of *The Marrow of Tradition* as bitter, as well as Chesnutt’s subsequent denials of bitterness,<sup>19</sup> suggests that racial uplift required African Americans to work within affective boundaries they did not set. Chesnutt’s ideology therefore falters in the face of the political and social conditions that made affect management necessary to racial uplift at the same time as it failed to produce the desired results.

This chapter looks to *The Marrow of Tradition* as a site where Chesnutt puts to the test the affect management theory he develops in his essays and speeches. Identifying bitterness as a central affect shared by black and white Americans, the novel destabilizes the terms Chesnutt sets out in “Social Discrimination.” Bitterness not only works outside the “standards of feeling” Chesnutt hopes will unite the races as friends and citizens, but it is also the affect that makes social intercourse between the races impossible. At the same time, it is by expressing bitterness, and thus failing to manage their affects, that the novel’s characters begin to achieve the social recognition that the racial uplift movement

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<sup>19</sup> In a 1905 letter to a student writing about *The Marrow of Tradition*, Chesnutt claimed: “It had a fair sale, but was criticized as being bitter. I did not intend it to be so. Nor do I think it was” (498). *To Be an Author*.



promises. Yet social equality, and the national belonging Chesnutt imagines will follow, proves undesirable because of its affective costs. Beginning with an exploration of the novel's race leader and figure for racial uplift, this chapter follows Dr. William Miller as he serves as a model for Chesnutt's affect management theory. Miller's affective evolution over the course of the novel highlights the gap between philosophy and practice. It also demonstrates what happens when "standards of feeling," racial and national, exceed their limits.

### I. "Our Time Will Come:" Miller's Affect Management

Affect management involves the conscious and unconscious modulation, suppression, and performance of affective responses in accordance to culturally-determined codes of behavior. These codes fall along social, racial, class, and gendered lines. As such, affect can be directed towards the construction of individual or collective identity. Tavia Nyong'o claims, in fact, that the "deployment of affect" is a "technology of the racial self."<sup>20</sup> While affect may be consciously "deployed" for social or political ends, affect management, like sublimation, may take place unconsciously when it becomes "a necessary condition for full psychic health," even as it fails to serve this function.<sup>21</sup> As psychologist Harry Stack Sullivan emphasizes, at the same time as sublimation helps an individual meet its needs in "a socially acceptable way," it has "unfortunate consequences" for the individual psyche and for interpersonal relationships.<sup>22</sup> If we consider affect management to similarly function as one of the

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<sup>20</sup> When discussing black respectability politics in the decades before and after the Civil War Nyong'o asserts that "affects like shame, embarrassment, and outrage were routinely deployed to accentuate and refract the bourgeois semiotics of sexuality and morality." *The Amalgamation Waltz: Race, Performance, and the Ruses of Memory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 76.

<sup>21</sup> Ken Gemes, "Freud and Nietzsche on Sublimation," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 38 (2009), 38.

<sup>22</sup> F. Barton Evans III, *Harry Stack Sullivan: Interpersonal Theory and Psychotherapy* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 86. Sublimation, Sullivan theorized, arises as a result of "dealing with an irrational

psyche's major "mechanisms of defense,"<sup>23</sup> as well as a tool for the outward construction of individual and collective identity, Sullivan's warning that sublimation has unfortunate consequences seems anticipated by Chesnutt's conflicted position on suppressing emotion through the creation of socially acceptable "standards of feeling."

In the period following Reconstruction, African American institutions, literary publications and societies, newspapers, and social and political leaders, all implicitly and explicitly set the standards for behavior as a side-effect of racial uplift strategies. Additionally, racist laws and practices circumscribed racial behavior and feeling.<sup>24</sup> Such standards shifted according to political leanings, social aspirations, class status, and location. The respectability politics governing the rising black middle class determined codes for dress, behavior, speech, and social comportment.<sup>25</sup> Standards of feeling, whether explicitly stated or not, were attached to these codes.

Chesnutt, along with his literary peers, modeled the kinds of feelings he believed African Americans should express in public and in private. At the same time, he indicated which affects needed to remain publicly unarticulated and even privately unacknowledged. Whether it was too dangerous to express such feelings, or considered

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culture." Behaviorally, it manifests as "an automatic pattern of behavior, outside of awareness, in which the direct and complete satisfaction of a need was given up for a partially satisfying, socially approved pattern." Yet, he argued, for sublimation function as a healthy resource, the "approved pattern" "could not restrict too much need" as it then "disrupt[s] patterns of interpersonal relations" (146).

<sup>23</sup> Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence* [1936] (London: Karnac Books, 1993), 44.

<sup>24</sup> Hochschild's discussion of "feeling rules" is useful here. She argues that we identify "feeling rules" by "inspecting how we assess our feelings, how other people assess our emotional display, and by sanctions issuing from ourselves and from them. Different social groups probably have special ways in which they recognize feeling rules and give rule reminders, and the rules themselves probably vary from group to group." *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 57. In the case of the post-Reconstruction nation, these rules could be legally, culturally, and individually constructed and enforced.

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, Chesnutt's essays "Etiquette" (1881), "Advice to Young Men" (1886), and "Rights and Duties" (1908) in *Charles W. Chesnutt: Essays and Speeches*, ed. Joseph R. McElrath, et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

socially unacceptable to feel them, affects that exceeded standards of feeling remained in the discourse of racial uplift at once as cautionary tales and as cracks in the successful applicability of uplift philosophy as social practice. In this sense, we can think of Chesnutt, as well as other African American writers in this period, as invested in teaching readers how to manage their own feelings for the advancement of the race, even when collective advancement came at a personal, collective—and ultimately national— affective cost.

Arlie Russell Hochschild's sociological study, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* offers a useful model for understanding how individuals practically manage their own affects. In her study, Hochschild discusses “surface acting” and “deep acting” to portray the types of feelings that are required in a given space. In other words, an individual learns to perform emotions, emotions which either remain on the surface or are internalized through “deep acting.” In the case of “deep acting,” the individual actually starts to experience and thus internalize the affect she performs. The problem with this kind of affect management, Hochschild explains, is that it can result in self-alienation; one's affective responses may seem authentic, but the individual loses the ability to have “unmanaged” feelings. Yet, with both “surface acting” and “deep acting,” the emotion the individual appears to feel is generally at odds with their suppressed affective state. Outwardly, the individual smiles, but internally she may be frustrated or distressed, even when not aware that she is feeling these emotions. Because the emotional labor required of her social position demands that she smile, she hides, unconsciously or not, what she really feels by performing the required feeling. While *The Managed Heart* focuses on the emotional labor emerging in workplace after

WWII, Hochschild's findings help account for the personal costs that Chesnutt reveals come with managing affects in the public and private realms of the post-Reconstruction era in daily life and in heightened states of personal and racial conflict.

Miller's "standards of feeling" must be seen not only as a response to the larger racial politics of the Post-Reconstruction United States, but also as a result of his own interpersonal relationships and desire for social recognition. That is, the shifts in his "standards of feeling" occur alongside the tangled genealogical, racial, social, and national attachments that shape his uplift philosophy. It is in these spheres that he confronts the limitations to managing his own affects. As his own affective states fluctuate in response to the contradictions between his beliefs and his experience, the novel shows the compulsion towards affect management to be increasingly implicated in the laws and customs that bar social integration and national belonging.

Free indirect discourse serves as a formal representation of characters' primarily unconscious efforts to manage their own affects. While the novel explicitly comments on the pressures to manage affects through dialogue, it utilizes free indirect discourse when a character either does not recognize how they are managing their affects in a particular situation or cannot allow themselves to consciously bring managed feelings to the surface of their consciousness.<sup>26</sup> Through revealing the disjunction between a character's

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<sup>26</sup> In his extended reading of Zora Neale Hurston's use of free indirect discourse in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Henry Gates, Jr. argues that this technique allows Hurston to express Janie's "divided self" prior to her awareness of this internal division (208). As she gradually comes into a fuller sense of self, the narration increasingly absorbs her voice. For Gates, Hurston's use of free indirect discourse ultimately "resolves that implicit tension between standard English and black dialect" while demonstrating Janie's acquisition of her own voice (191-192). Gates' claim that it was Hurston who introduced free indirect discourse into African American narrative is dependent on his conception of the African American narrative's origin in oral discourse, Chesnutt's use of free indirect discourse offers an earlier model of a character's struggle with thoughts and feelings that cannot be either consciously internalized or externalized due to personal or social pressures. Like Gates Jr., Nancy Bentley argues that free indirect discourse "alert[s] the reader to the existence of meaning that remains out of reach for the subjects

outward expression of feeling and their internal affective state, Chesnutt's free indirect discourse highlights the social pressure to naturalize standards of feeling that are externally imposed and then internalized. As affects arise that contradict these standards, the narrative at once approaches the first-person perspective and distances itself from these characters by adopting the distance of the third-person narrator to demonstrate how characters attempt to protect themselves from affects that contradict their social and racial identities or contradict their personal philosophies. Miller is a prime example of Chesnutt's attempts to narratively resolve this affective process. As Miller becomes increasingly disillusioned with his philosophy for racial uplift, his suppressed feelings come closer to the surface of his consciousness, and are therefore less mediated by a third person narrator.

This chapter's concern with Miller's affective development must be understood in relation to the primary affective conflict in *The Marrow of Tradition*. This conflict centers on the unfolding drama between two interconnected yet alienated families, the black Millers and the white Carterets.<sup>27</sup> This interracial family serves as a site to examine

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themselves but that is still somehow located in the depths of their own subjectivity" (112). However, she also emphasizes the relationship between the free indirect discourse the growing interest in the unconscious in the nineteenth century. She claims that Melville's writing in particular anticipates Freud's writing on the unconscious, and that free indirect discourse allows for this exploration into the psyche. See Henry Gates, Jr, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) and Nancy Bentley, "Creole Kinship: Privacy and the Novel in the New World," in *The Oxford Handbook of Nineteenth-Century American Literature*, ed. Russ Castronovo, 97-114 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>27</sup> Sundquist argues in *To Wake the Nations* that Chesnutt "merged politics and genealogy" in order to expose the sexual dimensions of Post Reconstruction race relations (409). While an understanding of these sexual politics is crucial to any reading of *The Marrow of Tradition*, these politics have been adequately explored elsewhere and, as such, are not a primary focal point for my own argument. However, they are certainly an underlying element, as the relation between the Millers and Carterets comes out of the vexed history of interracial sex from slavery into the turn of the century. So, while I do not address the Alexander Manly article that historically was used as a tool to foment the race riot in Wilmington, and that is represented in the novel, the politics and tensions cohering in and around Manly's article infiltrate any argument about interracial social relations. In this way, Manly's article is implicitly, if indirectly, formative for my argument. For an in-depth reading of Manly's article, the Rebecca Latimer Felton speech to which it responds, and Chesnutt's representation of these articles and events, see Sundquist's extended chapter on

the potential for positive affective relationships across the color line. In the spirit of Chesnutt's "Social Discrimination" speech, the possible union between the Millers and Carterets offers the potential for a literal representation of "kindred standards of thoughts and feelings." Not only would the social recognition of kinship between these families signal that the races share the same "standards," but that these affective standards can serve as a tool to effectively eliminate Jim Crow laws that legalize racial segregation. In potentially breaking down affective boundaries, *The Marrow of Tradition* suggests that rulings like *Plessy v. Ferguson* will not be upheld when they serve a purpose no longer supported by public sentiment. Thus, to the extent that the relationship between the Millers and the Carterets offers the promise of successful racial uplift, *The Marrow of Tradition* is premised on overcoming the obstacles to affective affiliation between the races.

Both families reside in Wellington, North Carolina, Chesnutt's fictionalized Wilmington. Bound by law and by blood, they are separated by the color line. Through a series of highly melodramatic encounters, Chesnutt suggests that cross-racial familial recognition is at once deadly and deeply sought-after. In other words, the relationship between these families simultaneously offers the potential for racial reconciliation and the danger of racial violence.

It is in this fraught state of violence and reconciliation that the Carterets finally acknowledge the Millers as their kin. This recognition serves as the most pivotal moment in *The Marrow of Tradition*, as it depicts the fulfillment of racial uplift ideology's

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Chesnutt in *To Wake the Nations*, Richard Yarborough's "Violence, Manhood, and Black Heroism" in *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Riot of 1898 and Its Legacy* eds. David S. Cecelski and Timothy B. Tyson (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 225-251.

promise: that the social and professional advancement of African Americans will naturally lead whites to accept racial equality. Thus, Chesnutt uses the changing relationship between these two families, as well as the Millers' affective development, to model the conditions that lead to the actualization of the racial uplift movement as imagined by the majority of its proponents.

Ending with "time enough, but none to spare," the novel suggests that if these two families can develop a positive affective bond and subsequently socialize as friends and equals, Chesnutt's own vision for uplift will be imaginatively realized.<sup>28</sup> Many critics therefore claim that the novel ends in a state of positive affective racial union.<sup>29</sup> More than this, they see in the Millers' attainment of the moral and ethical high ground transformative social potential, particularly as the Carterets are made to see the Millers' elevation when Janet agrees to let her husband save the Carterets' son. Andrea Williams thus suggests that *The Marrow of Tradition* ends with "kindred interests" triumphing "over racism."<sup>30</sup> If the Carterets and Millers are indeed now able to share "kindred standards of thoughts and feelings," these newly acknowledged feelings in fact further

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<sup>28</sup> Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition*, Ed. Werner Sollors (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012), 195. All subsequent citations will be in text.

<sup>29</sup> For example, William Andrews claims that Miller's "course of action is vindicated in the end . . . [h]is pragmatic survival orientation guarantees the continuation of a progressive, constructive, and healing tradition in Wellington, when such a tradition will be most needed." *The Literary Career of Charles Chesnutt* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 199-200. Michelle Wolkowicz similarly suggest that the "moral clarity" provided by the ending at once shows "the decline of traditional social values" and the moral elevation of the Millers above the Carterets. "Moral Elevation and Egalitarianism: Shades of Gray in Chesnutt's *The Marrow of Tradition*," (*CLA Journal* 36.3 (1993): 245-259, 252, 255. Eric Sundquist, in contrast, argues that the novel is "locked" in a "posture of incompletely resolved, emotionally frustrated tensions," and thus does not offer the almost neat resolution other critics imagine (453).

<sup>30</sup> Janet, Williams argues, "is able to undermine racism by allowing her gracious thoughts and feelings to prevail" (172-173). Stephen Knadler goes further, claiming that, "onto the vacated pedestal, the black women step up to evoke the affective ties of a reimagined twentieth-century interracial community" "Untragic Mulatto: Charles Chesnutt and the Discourse of Whiteness." *American Literary History* 8.3 (Autumn 1996): 426-448, 437. While Williams and Knadler rightly identify the moral and ethical high ground the Millers attain at the novel's end, they overstate the potential for positive interracial relationships, and the community of racial equality that would follow.

separates the races. Sharing the bitterness that motivated and results from the Wellington riot, and the failures of their imagined futures, the Millers' final affective state implies that family and racial reconciliation is impossible. It is too deeply painful, too costly, and too bitter to bind them. As race leaders whose behavior and feelings model uplift practice, the Millers project a future in which social relations are marked by racial separation. Such division, I argue, is predicated on shared bitterness.

Bitterness is a slippery affect, and therefore difficult to pin down precisely. It is perhaps for this reason that, while bitterness is so much a part of the discourse surrounding Chesnutt's work, bitterness itself remains under analyzed.<sup>31</sup> There is currently only one sustained study of bitterness, *Embitterment: Societal, Psychological, and Clinical Perspectives*, a 2011 collection compiled by a group of social scientists. The editors for this volume define bitterness as "a mixture of anger and hopelessness." At the group level, bitterness arises from a sense of injustice and loss. While "wisdom" and "forgiveness" can serve as antidotes, once a person or group's belief in a "personally just world" has been violated, they become "incapable of intuitively assimilating injustice." Bitterness also creates "a great need for satisfaction," so the bitter person or group may even "seek revenge to cure [their] hatred."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> In "'Beyond Bitter,' Chesnutt's *The Marrow of Tradition*," Sydney Bufkin argues that Howells' critique of the novel's bitterness has overdetermined our view of the novel's reception. (*American Literary Realism* 46.3 (Spring 2014): 230-250. I argue, however, that bitterness deserves more critical attention.

<sup>32</sup> Incidentally, bitterness—which psychologists consider a "complex psychological condition"—remains under analyzed in the field of the social sciences. The editors for this volume published this study partially with the aim of adding what the authors call Posttraumatic Embitterment Disorder into the list of mental disorders. The study, *Embitterment: Societal, Psychological, and Clinical Perspectives* offers a range of readings on embitterment. They argue that bitterness can be experienced by groups who experience social alienation, persecution, and inequality. While *Embitterment* offers various complex definitions for bitterness depending on the field and scope of the author's work, in essence they define bitterness as "a deeply human emotion, one that can be at the core of severe mental illness, and one that can cause problems at societal levels" (2). It arises from "injustice and neglect perceived as threat" and "loss of resources, persons, loss of important goals, or bodily functions" (6). It can be understood as "a mixture of anger and hopelessness," the "missing link between aggression and depression," and is felt by people who



In an effort to move bitterness from the periphery to the center of the critical discussion on *The Marrow of Tradition*, I offer as clear a definition as I can in relation to the novel, and try to identify its meaning in the context of post-Reconstruction racial politics and the racial uplift movement. The first indication that bitterness is a problem comes not in Howells' damning review, but in an 1899 Chesnutt interview. Calling him an "aboriginal author," Pauline Carrington Bouvé describes not only Chesnutt's work, but also comments on his personality. After noting his "grave, severe expression," she writes that, when discussing "certain conditions" in the South, a look of "calm, but concentrated bitterness was most notable."<sup>33</sup> After attributing his bitterness to his admixture of blood, she offers a solution: the "evils of the South" must be remedied by "christianizing" the white man and the black man.<sup>34</sup> However, she does not offer a clear account of why, in particular, Chesnutt's mixed blood should produce bitterness. It is bitterness itself that needs to be overcome, rather than the social or political conditions that produce the feeling. It is an "aboriginal condition" that can only be cured by internalizing Biblical teachings.<sup>35</sup>

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"feel excluded from rewarding social experience" (7). The authors also suggest that "wisdom" and "forgiveness" can function as antidotes to acute states of embitterment. However, when a person's belief in "a personally just world" is violated, they become incapable of "intuitively assimilating injustice" and will be unable to overlook or sublimate the experiences that make bitterness arise. In this case, the bitter individual may also "seek revenge to cure his or her hatred," as bitterness does create a "great need for satisfaction" (38, 10).

<sup>33</sup> Pauline Carrington Bouvé, "An Aboriginal Author: The Work and Personality of Charles W. Chesnutt" (*Boston Evening Transcript*, 23 August 1899 (16). The Charles Chesnutt Digital Archive. [chesnuttarchive.org](http://chesnuttarchive.org)). The use of "aboriginal" in the title, as well as the comparison to Sitting Bull and Gray Eagle suggest that the writer sees Chesnutt as at once native to and separate from the nation.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, Hebrews 12:15, which states that one should "See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no 'root of bitterness' springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled." *The King James Bible*. Trans. Olga S. Opfell. *Hebrews* 12:15 (Jefferson: McFarland, 1982).

It is partially for this reason that Booker T. Washington explicitly rejects bitterness.<sup>36</sup> Rejecting bitterness signals his Christian goodness, his personal drive, and his belief in progress; at the same time, it is a rhetorical and political strategy to attract white philanthropic support for the development of Tuskegee University. In contrast to Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois considers bitterness the natural affective state of being black at the turn of the twentieth century. Rejecting bitterness, in this case, is not an option. In *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois describes bitterness as a state of affective turmoil, one that includes despair, disappointment, and anger. As the primary affective response to the state of “double consciousness” and living within the “veil,” bitterness arises for anyone conscious of their divided self as “Negro” and “American.” Consider, for example, the following statement from Du Bois: “Feeling deeply and keenly the tendencies and opportunities of the age in which they live, their souls are bitter at the fate which drops the Veil between; and the very fact that this bitterness is natural and justifiable only serves to intensify it and make it more maddening.”<sup>37</sup> Chesnutt, in contrast, suggests that bitterness is not only “maddening,” but that it can also be clarifying. Its clarifying power, however, can make bitterness a dangerous feeling when exposed.

Miller suffers from what Chesnutt calls, in a 1908 speech entitled “Rights and

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<sup>36</sup> In his autobiography, *Up From Slavery* (New York: Double Day, Page & Co., 1907), he characterizes himself as progressive precisely because he refuses to feel bitter, even when bitterness might be the natural response to the experience of racial discrimination. For example, during his first imperiled journey to Hampton University he was refused entrance into a hotel, and thus forced to spend the cold night walking about the town to keep warm. While he recalls his rejection by the hotelkeeper as his “first experience in finding out what the colour of my skin meant,” this experience did not leave a negative emotional scar. In fact, negative feelings had no place in his journey toward personal uplift. His “whole soul,” he writes, “was so bent upon reaching Hampton that I did not have time to cherish any bitterness toward the hotel-keeper” (48).

<sup>37</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 154.

Duties,” “the heart burnings that have grown out of the separate car and other segregation laws which disgrace our Southern states.”<sup>38</sup> These moments, though painful, do not derail Miller’s plans for racial uplift. Instead, the feelings Chesnutt describes seem a direct effect of the affect management required by an upwardly mobile racial practice. For, in Chesnutt’s estimation, it is only those of the middle and upper classes who experience social rebuffs so acutely. The gradual rise of the Miller family through several generations has given Dr. Miller the “means and the leisure of enjoying”; consequently, he has acquired “the capacity for [finer] feeling.”<sup>39</sup> In other words, one feels “each recurring repulse,” resulting from the practices and culture of Jim Crow, only to the extent one has time and money. Miller’s feelings therefore are, according to “Rights and Duties,” a product of racial uplift rather than an obstacle to practicing his philosophy. Racial uplift, in this sense, at once instills bitterness—what Chesnutt here describes as feelings of “wrong and outrage”—and calls for its suppression and sublimation.<sup>40</sup> Chesnutt justifies managing these affects with the promise that such social “repulses” will gradually decrease as the African American middle-class not only prove that they are desirable business associates, neighbors, and friends, but that they also share the same “standards of feeling” as their white peers. Until then, however, African Americans would have to adhere to the affective codes that are not only demanded by the practice of racial uplift, but on which their lives often depended.

Bitterness, then, is a personal response to institutional and social injustice. While Miller’s example demonstrates how bitterness is managed at both a conscious and

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<sup>38</sup> Chesnutt, “Rights and Duties.” *Charles W. Chesnutt: Essays and Speeches*, 253.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

unconscious level at various moments in the novel, his bitterness increases and becomes less manageable when his sense of injustice correlates to personal and intimate experiences, rather than ones shaped by law. When faced with institutional injustice, such as the Jim Crow law that separates passengers on the train car, Miller, as we shall see, finds a way to sublimate his bitterness by turning to less difficult emotional territory, or by attempting to bypass his affective states altogether. However, as the social rebuffs, personal insults, and deeply painful losses he experiences accumulate, his bitterness becomes more pronounced and more difficult to manage. His bitterness, in these cases, is not only at the situation itself, but at the fact he can neither express his bitterness nor funnel it in other directions that he presumes are healthy, socially acceptable, and aimed towards individual and collective racial progress. In other words, the “heart-burnings” that Chesnutt argues result from “the separate car and other segregation laws” arise not only from legally-enforced racist practices, but from the intimate, interpersonal experience of racial injustice.

Chesnutt’s decision to fictionalize the 1898 racial massacre through the story of a disconnected interracial family highlights the intimate and personal nature of bitterness. For it is the meaning of family and kinship itself that the novel’s resolution leaves hanging in the balance. Is it the intimacy of kinship that ultimately makes racial reconciliation impossible? The racial insults and personal losses the Millers experience are not simply a result of institutional racism; they result from the Carterets’ refusal to accept them as family and social peers. When the Carteret’s finally extend social and familial recognition, it does not come from realizing that the laws and social practices of the Jim Crow south are unjust and that racial difference is an arbitrary social fact

dependent on illogical premises. Instead, they demand that the Millers accept them as family only because they have a personal need. The fulfillment of that need, moreover, has no direct bearing on large scale institutional change, as much as Chesnutt's essays, and the philosophy of racial uplift more broadly, seems to promise. It is for this reason that bitterness itself is a problem: it is a side-effect of affect management, which is a necessary practice for upwardly mobile African Americans—yet bitterness puts the goal of racial uplift in question because it reveals the flaws inherent in a system that demands affect management as a condition of uplift. Once achieved, the novel implies, racial uplift will be marred and undermined by the bitterness that plagues intimate interracial relationships.

It is therefore not surprising that Howells objected to the novel's bitterness. As someone who had championed Chesnutt's work, helped to establish him as literary figure, and who claimed to discriminate based on the quality of a work rather than its author's race, Howells might have taken the novel's bitterness personally. Even knowing logically that "there is no reason in history" why the novel should not be "bitter, bitter," he criticized *The Marrow of Tradition* for having more "justice than mercy in it."<sup>41</sup> Howells' preference for mercy suggests that he held African Americans, and Chesnutt in particular, to a high "standard of feeling," a standard demanding that they reject negative affects so that they do not repay "wrong" with "hate."<sup>42</sup> In his final statement on the novel, he writes: "No one who reads the book can deny that the case is presented with great power, or fail to recognize in the writer a portent of the sort of negro equality

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<sup>41</sup> Howells, "A Psychological Counter-Current in Recent Fiction," 373.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

against which no series of hangings and burnings will finally avail.”<sup>43</sup> The logic of Howells’ reading is thus strangely complex. Bitterness is the novel’s major flaw, yet bitterness also offers the greatest potential for radical social change. By implication, the public is not ready for racial equality, and so continues to “hang and burn.” His dismissal of Chesnutt and the novel can be seen as his own attempt to silence Chesnutt by managing the public perception of black bitterness.

The Millers’ bitterness comes in part because the Carterets recognize them only out of dire necessity—saving the life of their only child. In fact, the Carterets’ refusal to accept the Millers helps precipitate the riot, and it is the Millers who pay the cost of that refusal when their own son is killed and their hospital burned down. Racial equality and family recognition thus comes to the Millers, as Chesnutt writes, in “a storm of blood and tears; not freely given, from an open heart, but extorted from a reluctant conscience by the agony of a mother’s [and father’s] fears” (195). What kind of shared feelings does the novel imagine will result from this meeting of the Millers and Carterets? What future does it project for racial uplift? Can the methods endorsed and followed by the Millers, and echoed in Chesnutt’s later essays and speeches, still be considered either practical or desirable? In contrast to Andrea Williams, I argue that the conditions enabling this scene of uplift make the outcome itself unbearable because of the lasting bitterness it instills. Here we do not find the “inspiring friendships” Chesnutt hopes will spring up between the races. Instead, the novel leaves the Millers’ racially elevated but affectively and materially devastated.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 374.

The Millers, however, do not easily arrive at a state where they can spurn the promised fruit of racial uplift. Rejecting the social and familial recognition the Carterets offer only becomes possible when the Millers experience feelings that contradict their uplift philosophy. Before the riot that takes the life of their son and destroys Miller's life work, Dr. Miller and Janet both carefully manage their own affects so that they appear to align with the standards of behavior expected of the rising black middle class. As Miller is the primary figure for racial uplift, it is Miller who is continually seen suppressing feelings of anger or hurt lest he disturb the peace by too openly challenging the existing racial hierarchy, whether it be on the Jim Crow car or while being refused entrance into the home of the Carterets.

## II. Asking "Too Much of Human Nature": Miller's Affective Education

Miller is the ideal figure to model racial progress and leadership. He is poised to help uplift the race through building his hospital, training black nurses, the example of his own material and social status, and through his carefully controlled feelings and behavior. He is well-educated, well-spoken, professionally accomplished, and embodies the bourgeois sensibilities of the black middle-class all while maintaining a sense of responsibility to his race.<sup>44</sup> He is motivated the belief that "his people needed him, and he had wished to help them, and sought by means of this institution to contribute to their uplifting" (34).<sup>45</sup> Miller's life offers a positive example to his race, as he has raised

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<sup>44</sup> See, for example: "The Future American" series, "Racial Prejudice: Its Causes and Its Cures," "Rights and Duties," "Race Ideals and Examples," "A Solution for the Race Problem," and "Social Discrimination."

<sup>45</sup> Miller's continued references to "his people" can often be vexing, as it is clear that he at once sees them as separate from himself, claims a shared sense of responsibility, and demonstrates a definitive lack of understanding towards members of his race who do not belong to his social class. For the purposes of this chapter, as it focuses on his role as a race leader, I will continue to use his own language. Andrea Williams' *Dividing Lines* is especially adept at teasing out the complex intraracial anxiety surrounding collective racial identity and class uplift. This anxiety is certainly present in Miller's own sense of identity.

himself up through both his family's and his own hard work and improved Wellington's medical facilities and vocational opportunities. In this regard, he also imagines that his life and work will prove to Wellington's white citizens the equality of his race, and also help to uplift his own people. The symbol of his success will help inaugurate a new era of racial equality in which black and white Americans "discriminate socially," and thus develop "inspiring friendships" based on their shared feelings.

Miller first appears in the novel in a liminal space of racial instability. While traveling home to Wellington, he is seated in the first-class train car as it moves from the North to the South. As it moves through these regions, passengers are not yet separated by the legally-demarcated color line. This instability allows Chesnutt to represent a space in which white and black Americans, of the same class, can sit together on the basis of shared "standards of thoughts and feelings." For example, when Miller's former teacher, Dr. Burns, boards the train, he happily joins his former pupil and they then pass the time conversing about medicine, politics, and racial progress. In this conversation, the novel presents them as social equals. In fact, when Dr. Burns learns they are both traveling to Wellington, he invites Miller to assist him in the delicate operation he is to perform on the Carterets' son, Dodie. Miller eagerly accepts his invitation, stating that he will be "delighted," "if it is agreeable to all concerned" (35). Miller's caveat foreshadows not only Carteret's refusal to allow him to enter his house in a professional capacity, but also hints at the obstacles to interracial "social intercourse" as it serves as a solution to racial inequality. For, as the train passes into Virginia, segregation separates the two companions whose friendship now disrupts the laws and social codes of Jim Crow.



Chesnutt dramatizes Miller's emotional pain at their separation, as well as the arbitrary logic on which segregation is based, by cataloging their similarities before they are separated. As soon as they are seated together, the narrator wryly comments that Miller and Burns represent "very different and yet very similar types of manhood" (33). Then, adopting an ethnographic perspective, the narrator describes how these men would be viewed differently by "a celebrated traveler" and the "American eye." While the "celebrated traveler," who has encountered multiple cultures throughout the world, would focus on the similarities between Miller and Burns, "the American eye" would see their differences: "the first was white and the second was black, or, more correctly speaking, brown" (33). After noting that the two travelers also differ in age, the narrator elaborates on their similarities: both are handsome, well-dressed men, who share not only a profession but also seem "from their faces and their manners to be men of culture and accustomed to the society of cultivated people" (33). By offering these opposing viewpoints, Chesnutt suggests that the segregationist, who sees through the "American eye," has to be trained in discrimination. For while the eye of "a celebrated traveler" is objective and judges rationally, the "American eye" seems motivated by the desire to overcome a state of affective disorientation.<sup>46</sup> That is, seeing such public displays of interracial friendship, it seems, can lead white viewers to experience a disconcerting set of negative affects—anger, contempt, fear, and perhaps even an underlying sensation of

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<sup>46</sup> In "Untragic Mulatto," Stephen Knadler suggests that, in this scene, Chesnutt declines "American realism" as "first 'national' and then class and race specific, governed by the expectations, privileges, and provincialism of white readers" (432). This explanation helps emphasize why the sight of these two men riding the Jim Crow train together would be so jarring to white readers' sensibilities. As Andrea Williams argues, "voluntary relationships are the sign of unhindered access that reflects a thoroughgoing shift in both racial policies and individual's attitudes towards race" (163). My reading of this scene thus in some ways builds on Knadler's and Williams, but it is more interested in how Chesnutt's challenge to America's "realism," and its related shifts in policy and attitude, is experienced and managed affectively.

shame and guilt because this friendship proves that the logic of segregation is based on false claims of fundamental racial differences.

Law and custom are kept in place to obstruct interracial friendships and prevent the affective disorientation, and the subsequent threat to racial hierarchy, they cause. In other words, Chesnutt suggests that American custom, law, and feeling are produced in relation to each other. Consider, for example, how the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling, passed only five years before *Marrow's* publication, was justified by the courts because it answered the demands of “public sentiment.”<sup>47</sup> Chesnutt’s answer to this ruling, and its justification, in some ways depends on its reversal. In the train scene, Chesnutt shows that “public sentiment” has to be enforced by external signs of difference that keep its apparently natural sentiment in place. Miller comes to this realization when moving toward the “Colored” car and seeing the signs that visually mark who belongs in which car. At this moment, he is confronted with the fact that his social status and social relations are secondary to his legally designated racial identity. In a passage that mixes the narrator’s detached observation with Miller’s frustrated contemplation, Chesnutt writes:

The author of this piece of legislation had contrived, with an ingenuity worthy of a better cause, that not merely should the passengers be separated by the color line, but that the reason for this should be kept constantly in mind. Lest a white man forget that he was white,—not a very likely contingency,—these cards would keep him constantly admonished of this fact; should a colored person endeavor, for a moment, to lose sight of his disability, these staring signs would remind him continually that between him and the rest of mankind not of his color, there was by law a great gulf affixed. (38)

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<sup>47</sup> Michael J. Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 20. Leading up to the *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling, the nation also reneged on many of the rights and protections promised by both the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments and other Reconstruction Acts. For example, the Civil Rights Act of 1875 was invalidated in 1883 because it was considered unconstitutional. For a full account of Reconstruction Acts and their subsequent reversal beginning around 1877, see Eric Foner’s *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution 1863-1877* (New York: Perennial Classics, 2011).

*Plessy v. Ferguson* obstructs positive interracial sentiment on the basis of a system whose “beauty,” the train conductor states, “lies in its strict impartiality” (35).<sup>48</sup> Yet the narrator has already undermined the “impartiality” of this system: only one whose eyes have been “trained” in American sensibilities see the differences between Dr. Burns and Dr. Miller. Thus, the symbols that reinforce racist sentiment, like the train car placards, legally and affectively keep this “great gulf affixed” between friends who are marked “Colored” and “White.”

Legal segregation corresponds to affective segregation. In other words, the train placards mark not only which bodies have access to which spaces, but what each race is permitted to feel. That is, the races are held to different “standards of feeling.” Miller and Burns are therefore distinguished by how they react to being forcefully separated. They cannot publicly voice the same feelings or display the same affective response when faced with the reality of racial discrimination. Unlike Miller, Dr. Burns can outwardly express his anger. He rails against the train conductor, declaring their separation “an outrage” that “curtail[s] the rights, not only of colored people, but of white men as well” (37). Burns therefore claims his right to “sit where I please!” (37), and to act according to his feelings—which the novel expresses in direct discourse—and thus attempts to go with Miller to the “Colored” car. Burns, of course, does not join Miller, in part because Miller himself seeks to assuage the situation. In contrast to Burns’ swearing and anger, Miller performs polite acquiescence and attempts to soothe Burns and appease the conductor. In

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<sup>48</sup> For more on how Chesnutt uses this scene to critique *Plessy v. Ferguson*, see Nancy Bentley’s “The Strange Career of Love and Slavery: Chesnutt, Engels, Masoch” (*American Literary History* 17.3, Symposium Issue: Race, Ethnicity, and Civic Identity in the Americas (Autumn 2005): 460-485), and Brook Thomas, “The Legal Argument of Charles W. Chesnutt’s Novels” (*REAL: The Yearbook of Research in English and American Literature* 18 (2002): 331-34).

a calming tone, he assures Burns that “it’s only for a little while. I’ll reach my destination just as surely in the other car, and we can’t help it, anyway” (37). However, the shifting affective states Miller experiences when seated in the “Colored” train car belie his earlier pragmatic response. While Burns expresses his feelings vocally, Miller knows his own must be managed internally. He therefore does not openly express any negative feelings, even to himself. These can only be accessed through free indirect discourse, and even when seen through this lens they compete with Miller’s philosophic meanderings. These meanderings function as a resource for managing his affects, as they create distance between himself and his experience. By adopting the distance from experience philosophy permits, Miller suppresses a conscious emotional response to the fact of his segregation through the process of sublimation, which the novel indicates with the formal shift to free indirect discourse.

Miller’s uplift philosophy, like Chesnutt’s own, helps him to rationalize and suppress the “heart burnings” caused by Jim Crow. By managing his affects, Miller suppresses the feelings that could derail his project for uplift. Yet his philosophic bent also alienates him from his own affective responses. In contrast to Burns’ feelings, his are difficult to categorize. For example, he does not shout out in anger when he sees a porter walking a white man’s dog toward him, ostensibly because dogs are kept in the “Colored” car instead of the “White” car. Instead, he becomes “conscious of a queer sensation” (38). While he is immediately relieved when the porter walks the dog into the next car, his affective state remains unformed and unarticulated, even to himself. However, the narrator tells us that Miller feels like “an unclean thing” and resents being “branded and tagged and set apart from the best of mankind upon the public highways”

(38).<sup>49</sup> In these instances, Miller seems compelled to manage the negative feelings that Burns can express without fear of retribution. He is “branded and tagged” as someone who is not socially-permitted to express his full range of human emotions. Because this paragraph opens with the statement that Miller has “composed himself,” this description could simply be offered from the outside perspective of the narrator. But by shifting into Miller’s point of view as the paragraph continues, the narrative is able to record Miller’s unarticulated feelings in the seemingly-detached voice of an objective observer because Miller cannot allow himself to access these feelings more directly. Yet Chesnutt elsewhere indicates precisely what Miller would be feeling: he would “resent bitterly this attempt to degrade him permanently, by law.”<sup>50</sup> In choosing to manage these feelings, as both the respectability of the black middle-class and Southern custom would dictate, Miller internalizes racially-coded rules of feeling.

These codes, however, do not hold true. In moving from interracial to intraracial “standards of feeling,” the novel presents the first real challenge to Chesnutt’s racial uplift philosophy. While Miller can manage his own affects and still work towards uplifting his race, his internalization of racially-coded rules of feeling blocks his ability to accurately read affective states. He nonetheless attempts to teach his race how to feel by setting the standard for which affects are appropriate. He determines this standard based

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<sup>49</sup> Nancy Bentley argues that “for Chesnutt, the ruling’s “chief harm” came “not from racial separation per se, nor even from civil restrictions, but from the injury of racial stigma” (463). While Bentley’s focus on the stigma imposed by *Plessy v. Ferguson* is clearly reflected in the language of this passage, it is also important that this stigma does not present, to Miller, a challenge to his racial uplift practice, or seem to shift his racial philosophy.

<sup>50</sup> “The White and the Black,” 139-144, 143. As Chesnutt writes in this scene, and in the “The White and the Black,” Miller’s “bitter resentment” arises also because he believes his class status should differentiate him from the masses of his race; it is “persons of education and refinement, who have travelled at the north and in Europe,” who chafe most acutely at the laws of segregation. Chesnutt writes too that their silence “proves nothing,” as their safety in the South depends on their silence, and their self-respect outside of the South depends on downplaying the fact that “at home he is a pariah and an outcaste” (143).

on the volatility of southern race relations as well as on which affects he believes will promote the type of racial progress he envisions. He also expects that following this standard will produce predictable results. However, his self-appointed position as a manager of racial affects limits his perception of what he believes his race is capable of feeling and remembering. He thinks, for example, that the “old wound” inflicted by slavery and the Ku Klux Klan has been “healed” (70). This wound must already be “healed” because, as he believes, “The negroes are not a vindictive people. If, swayed by passion or emotion, they sometimes gave way to gusts of rage, these were of brief duration. Absorbed in the contemplation of their doubtful present and uncertain future, they gave little thought to the past,—it was a dark story, which they would willingly forget” (70). Miller’s conviction that his people are “not vindictive” reveals several flaws in his thinking. First, he assumes that present and future concerns foreclose the possibility that this “wound” is “still bleeding” (70-71). In other words, they do not have the time or inclination to remember and still be hurt by the past. His assumption depends on the belief that, despite the material, political, and social ramifications of slavery and racial violence, these histories do not continue to cause emotional damage. Secondly, he also believes his “people” can choose to forget the past because their emotions are not strong enough to create lasting impressions. For this reason, they do not hold on to painful experiences. Or perhaps he thinks they, like himself, are too pragmatic to admit or even permit such feelings. Lastly, Miller’s thinking here contradicts his own belief that, if segregation must exist, it should fall along lines of class (41).<sup>51</sup> That is, he believes social

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<sup>51</sup> After being moved to the “Colored” car during his return to Wellington, Miller bristles at having to ride the train with black “farm laborers,” who are further described as “noisy, loquacious, happy, dirty, and malodorous” (41). While he feels a certain “racial sympathy” towards these people, he finds that they are as “offensive” to him as they would be to the passengers in the “White” car. He thinks, therefore, that

classifications cannot logically be based on arbitrary distinctions like race. In this, his thinking echoes Chesnutt's own. Yet, when it comes to affect, Miller sees African Americans as a homogenous whole, without differences in feeling based on gender, region, class, or personal experience.

By failing to account for intraracial distinctions in feeling, Miller falls victim to the same logic that he critiques when riding the Jim Crow car. His conception of racial feeling also pinpoints one of the major shortcomings of racial philosophies that depend solely on a black/white dichotomy. In his most famous line from *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), Du Bois declares that "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line."<sup>52</sup> While Du Bois' claim aptly prophesied the major conflict of American democracy in the twentieth century, his emphasis on the interracial color line minimizes intraracial differences, conflicts, and prejudices. Consider, for example, Du Bois' metaphor of the "veil."<sup>53</sup> The "veil," as he describes in *Souls*, shuts African Americans out of the white world. In order to present the "souls" of black folk, Du Bois has to "step inside the veil."<sup>54</sup> Inside this world, Du Bois hears "a shriek in the night for the freedom of men who are not yet sure of their right to demand it."<sup>55</sup> By claiming that this state of consciousness and feeling is an African American "birthright," Du Bois elides the fact

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segregation should be "made on some more logical and considerate basis than a mere arbitrary, tactless, and, by the very nature of things, brutal drawing of the color line" (41). As in other moments in the novel, Miller's thinking reflects Chesnutt's own speeches and essays. Here, for example, the paragraphs tracking segregation logic echo almost point-for-point his 1901 essay "The White and the Black," published in the *Boston Evening Transcript* (20 March, 1901, page 13). From *Essays and Speeches*, 139-144.

<sup>52</sup> Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1.

<sup>53</sup> Building on this metaphor, Du Bois argues that African Americans suffer from "double-consciousness": "An American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (5). In this formulation, "American" and "Negro" are two opposed but dependent identities, sharing the same space but inhabiting their own psychic worlds.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

that many African Americans may not share this sense of living inside a “veil,” or see themselves “only through the eyes of [white] others.”<sup>56</sup> They may not suffer from the affective turmoil that resounds inside the world of the “veil,” or emit desperate but uncertain “shrieks” for freedom. In fact, many characters in *The Marrow of Tradition* are entirely certain of their rights. As political scientist Adolph Reed, Jr. puts it in his critique of Du Bois’ philosophy, “a proposition alleging a generic racial condition [. . .] seems preposterous on its face.”<sup>57</sup> In this case, the “veil” can be seen as an affective as well as psychological barrier. While Du Bois considers the “veil” a barrier between the white and black worlds, *The Marrow of Tradition* suggests that there are “veils” within the “veil.” In other words, “veils” exist at the interracial, intraracial, interpersonal and even individual level. These veils are kept in place by the practice of managing affects. While Miller does not yet see through these “veils,” their existence still shapes his vision.

Chesnutt and Du Bois are acutely aware of intraracial distinctions, yet they both configure racial identity and philosophies for uplift from a position of relative privilege. Their class status and consciousness separates them, to a great extent, from the masses they want to lead. Both figures prescribe solutions to America’s “problem of the color line” that “their people” may be unwilling to follow or unable to conform to. Du Bois’ figure of the “veil” can thus be usefully imported to an intraracial context. Doing so highlights the challenges to intraracial affect management. Black leaders who are not attuned to the differences in feeling that arise from personal experience and social status will push for uplift practices that do not correspond to the variegated feelings of those

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<sup>56</sup> Du Bois, 5.

<sup>57</sup> Adolph Reed, Jr., *W.E.B. Du Bois and American Political Thought: Fabianism and the Color Line* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 125.



they purport to lead. There is a danger, also, that black leaders may adopt a homogenous view of racial feeling that aligns too closely with popular racial ideologies, as we see when Miller encounters black characters who do not belong to his class or conform to his standards.

Josh Green presents a serious challenge to Miller's affect management. After being separated from Burns, Miller observes the passengers on the "Colored" train car. Watching as they dance, sing, and generally make merry after a long day of work, Miller contemplates the "cheerfulness of spirit" with which his race is "blessed." This spirit enables the race to "endure" and "strive" despite the discrimination, hardship, and uncertainty they face in their daily lives. The meek, he concludes, "shall inherit the earth" (41). With this philosophy as the partial basis of his uplift strategy, he can only conclude that affects like anger, frustration, and bitterness fall outside the "standards of feeling" he follows and sees in the behavior of other members of his race. Perhaps Miller also unconsciously projects this state onto the other train passengers because it is a philosophy he must practice. Anything that challenges this philosophy threatens to dismantle his belief system. As yet named and only glimpsed from a distance, Josh Green is also a passenger on that train. The look Miller sees on Green's face contradicts any claim that the race shares a general "cheerfulness of spirit." Miller is accustomed to thinking of Green as an "ordinarily good-natured, somewhat reckless, pleasure loving negro" (39). Now, however, his face "suggest[s] a concentrated hatred almost uncanny in its murderousness" (39).<sup>58</sup> The shifting and "concentrated" feelings Miller observes on

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<sup>58</sup> Chesnutt's use of "uncanny" here suggests that perhaps there is something about Green's expression that Miller unconsciously recognizes. While Freud's concept of the "uncanny" wasn't published until 1919, the idea that there is something "strangely familiar" about Green's feelings implies that Miller might also feel "concentrated hatred," even if it remains below the level of consciousness.

Green's face, during a moment when Green should be relatively free from surveillance, hints at an affective range Miller has yet to acknowledge.<sup>59</sup> This shift also foreshadows the difficulty Miller will have when trying to manage his own affects once he starts to share the experiences that bridge the emotional distance between the two figures.

Miller starts to recognize his misperception of racial feeling when directly confronted with the intensely embittered Josh Green. Green is, as the title to the chapter which features this extended dialogue indicates, "another southern product" (68). His father was murdered by the Ku Klux Klan when he was a child, and he was then raised by a mother who became mad after his father's death. Now a member of the poor black working class, his social status is marked by his black vernacular speech, his dress, and his behavior. Described by the narrator as a "black giant" and identified as the "dust-begrimed Negro who had stolen a ride to Wellington" (68-69), Green's physical appearance and behavior mark him as Miller's opposite. Unlike Miller, he represents the black masses that need to be uplifted. It is in this capacity that Miller takes the opportunity to affectively manage Green while treating the broken arm he has sustained in a fight on the docks.

When Green explains why he was fighting, it becomes clear that the two men resolve racial conflicts differently. In this case, Miller's efforts to manage Green's feelings will be impeded by the fact that they already adhere to different "standards of feeling." We have already seen how Miller attempts to deflate racial tension. Green, in

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<sup>59</sup> In "Race Prejudice: Its Causes and Cures," Chesnutt argues that "The face is the index of the mind, and a brightly illumined soul may shine through a dark face" *Charles W. Chesnutt: Essays and Speeches*, ed. Joseph R. McElrath, et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999): 214-237), 222. His attention to Green's facial expression thus serves as an indication of Chesnutt's interest in how affects reveal themselves and can be visually read (and thus in some ways refuse management). In this, we see the influence of Frederick Douglass and a critique of Thomas Jefferson.

contrast, heightens the tension of such moments by openly retaliating. As he tells Miller, “no man kin call me a damn’ low-down nigger and keep on enjoyin’ good health right along” (69). Green’s logic contradicts everything Miller took for granted on the train. The straight-forward refusal to submit to a racially-motivated insult demonstrates not meekness, but a model of black self-respect and actions motivated by immediate emotional responses. Nonetheless, Miller counsels Green that “these are bad times for Negroes,” so he had “better be peaceable and endure a little injustice, rather than run the risk of a sudden and violent death” (69). While Miller’s advice is certainly pragmatic, his insistence that Green maintain a “peaceable” affective state suggests he thinks Green should, and can, adhere to a standard of feeling he is setting, rather than one Josh has developed on his own. Indeed, Chesnutt has shown Miller’s ability to remain at least outwardly “peaceable” when faced with injustice, so this advice follows the practical application of his own racial uplift philosophy.

Howells’ essay “An Exemplary Citizen” helps reveal the complexity of the affective dichotomy between Miller and Green, as well as the contradictions in Chesnutt’s racial uplift ideology. Miller’s advice to Green, as well as his ability to manage his affects, aligns his own “standard of feelings” with Howells’ romantic racist portrait of African American psychology.<sup>60</sup> Written just months before *The Marrow of Tradition* was published, “An Exemplary Citizen” draws a picture of the ideal black citizen. This is a picture into which Miller seems to fit neatly, at least at this point in the

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<sup>60</sup> Historian George M. Frederickson coined the term “romantic racialism” in *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1987). As Frederickson describes, this ideology conceptualized African Americans as naturally submissive, virtuous, and religious. While Howells’ “An Exemplary Citizen” has a more secular view, this citizen still embodies qualities like submissiveness and virtue, which allow him to patiently tolerate his current state of oppression in the US.

novel. Building on his readings of the works of Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, Paul Laurence Dunbar, and Chesnutt, Howells creates a portrait of the African American temperament.<sup>61</sup> Miller appears to have the conservative spirit, patience, humility, gratitude, forgiveness, humor, and sweetness of temperament that Howells praises in these black authors. He also believes that these four authors in particular share a sense of emotional “calm” that enables them to use “reason and the nimbler weapons of irony” to “save them from bitterness.”<sup>62</sup> Because they were free from bitterness, the kind of bitterness motivates Green, Howells is convinced that “the negro is not going to do anything dynamitic to the structure of society. He is going to take it as he finds it, and make the best of his rather poor chances in it. In his heart there is no bitterness.”<sup>63</sup> Howells’ repeated assertions that African Americans feel “no bitterness” reflects an underlying anxiety over how feelings at once maintain social structures and threaten to disrupt these same structures if not properly managed.

Howells therefore fears that the qualities he prizes most highly in African Americans might be a carefully performed facade; bitterness may be disguised behind the “emotional[ly] calm” demeanor that makes black citizens worthy, in his estimation, of

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<sup>61</sup> This essay is a review of Booker T. Washington’s autobiography, *Up From Slavery*; Chesnutt’s *Frederick Douglass*; and *Frederick Douglass, the Colored Orator*, by Frederick May Holland. William L. Andrews argues in “William Dean Howells and Charles W. Chesnutt: Criticism and Race Fiction in the Age of Booker T. Washington” (*American Literature* 48.3 (November 1976): 327-339) that Booker T. Washington’s prominence, as well as the widespread acceptance and approval of his ideology, overdetermined many perspectives on blackness at the turn of the century, including Howells’ own. Furthermore, he suggests that a collective reading of Howells’ reviews of black literature show that he viewed it as “not only artistic expression,” but as a “psychological profile of the developing black consciousness in America” (333). However, the notion that Howells could think Frederick Douglass could ever fit into this portrait is shocking, to say the least. I can only conclude, like William L. Andrews, that this portrait was primarily drawn from his perception of Booker T. Washington, and from Chesnutt’s literary production up to this time.

<sup>62</sup> Howells, “An Exemplary Citizen,” *The North American Review*, 173 (1901), 285.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

national inclusion. At once consumed by his romantic notions of race and paranoid that he fails to read black affects correctly, he wonders: What if affects can be performed and managed? The anxiety undergirding his repeated denials of black bitterness finally gives way to panic when he reflects:

What if upon some large scale they should be subtler than we have supposed? What if their amiability should veil a sense of our absurdities, and there should be in our polite inferiors the potentiality of something like contempt for us? The notion is awful; but we may be sure they will be too kind, too wise, ever to do more than let us guess at the truth, if it is the truth.<sup>64</sup>

While he can give voice to this “awful” notion, Howells immediately declares its near impossibility. In the same sentence that displays his fear of black contempt—hidden by a “veil” covering true affective states—he assures himself that African Americans are too “kind” and “wise” to spill the “truth.” Here again we see Miller fall in line with Howells’ vision. Patiently enduring injustice, as he has advised Green, shows at least that he is “too wise,” if not “too kind,” to reveal any “contempt” for whites, or his knowledge of their “absurdities.” At the same time, Miller recognizes that, by managing the affects that fall outside the “standards of feeling” Howells holds on to, he keeps the “veil” in place. He forestalls the necessary “dynamic” changes to American society that could produce rather than obstruct an interracial “standard of feelings.” Until such a dynamic change occurs, the class Miller represents “amiably” veils the “subtly” of its feelings. Unless this veil is lifted, however, there cannot be a “standard of feelings” that applies equally to both racial groups.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 284.

More than Green's race pride is at stake when he declares Miller's uplift philosophy impracticable; he cannot follow a racialized "standard of feeling." It is not that he simply refuses to patiently "endure a little injustice," as both Howells' essay and Miller advise as the best method for getting along in America. More importantly, Green cannot put Miller's advice into practice because his affective life has been shaped by personal violent experiences. His experience of racial injustice, unlike Miller's on the train car, has left a permanently "bleeding wound." In other words, Green's feelings surpass his ability or desire to manage them.

In contrast to the social and professional rejection Miller suffers while on the train car and when refused entrance into the Carterets' home to operate on Dodie, Green is the victim of violent racial assault. He premises his response to Miller on this fact. As a witness to his father's murder by the Klan, Green functions in the novel as evidence of racial violence's psychological and emotional toll. As he tells Miller, the image of his father murder is "branded on my mem'ry, suh, like a red-hot iron bran's de skin" (70). Green's language here reveals why he cannot move past a moment in history Miller says most "would rather forget" (70). In the image of a "red-hot iron" permanently burning and marking the skin, Green's simile takes on a visceral and embodied quality. His memory, which has been imprinted by this experience, becomes a site of physical and emotional pain. Green's description can be seen as his own declaration of bitterness. His bitterness is not a result of managing affects according to the rules of upward racial mobility; nonetheless, he has not been able to act on this feeling because he wants to remain alive for the sake of his mother, and he knows that acting on his feelings will mean the end of his own life. Moreover, he feels his father's murder intimately and

personally because the murderer has a face and name: Captain McBane, whose mask slipped during the killing. He directs his feelings at an individual rather than simply at a system. It is one thing to witness his father's murder by the robed and anonymous Klan; it is another feeling to see this man in his daily life, to look in his face and not act out his revenge. Because he is unwilling to die and leave his mother alone, he has had to suppress his resentment, anger, sorrow, and fear, which have coalesced into a persistent state of bitterness, even as that bitterness leaves a festering wound on his psyche which cannot be ignored. He has been affectively "branded," and therefore does not choose what he feels or remembers. That choice was taken away when he witnessed his father being killed. How, then, can he manage the affects associated with this experience? And what value would he see in adopting a "standard of feeling" that would, in due course of time, align him with those who benefit from the system that led to his father's murder?

Green's life mission—killing Captain McBane—serves as a stark sign of his opposition to this kind of racial future. Personal experience challenge "standards of feeling." As in the case of Josh Green, experience produces feelings that fall outside of those prescribed by the racial uplift movement. The novel, in this sense, begins to imply that the racial uplift movement is suspect, as it does not have room for the individual and impinges on the personal freedom to feel beyond any set standards.

Green's and Miller's "standards of feeling" diverge most explicitly when it comes to managing affective responses to racial violence. Miller's philosophy preaches sublimating or eliminating negative feelings. Taking the Bible as his authority, he tells Josh that "we should 'forgive our enemies, bless them that curse us, and do good for them that despitefully use us' (71). His "turn the other cheek" philosophy echoes his earlier

contemplation that the meek “shall inherit the earth.” The standard of feeling he urges Josh to follow requires training oneself to patiently tolerate oppression while imagining that such a response correlates to a better future. It depends on hope, humility, tolerance, and love for one’s enemies. The emotionally or physically injured party, if they are black, must suppress anger, hatred, bitterness, or vengefulness towards those who have caused harm. Someday, Miller’s philosophy suggests, those enemies will see the errors of their ways by the example African Americans have set by continually forgiving their wrongs. Thus forgiveness, while not itself an affective state, works as a resource for affect management. In this context, forgiveness facilitates the creation of distance between feelings and experience and seems to serve as a way protect oneself, and the race, from further violence in the present. It also promises that the forgiver will receive future rewards, if only he lets go of negative feelings now.

Because he does not follow a “standard of feeling” that aligns with Miller’s conception of the racial uplift movement, Josh Green has a better grasp on how whites maintain Southern racial hierarchy. His response to Miller’s forgiveness policy demonstrates that he has a more intuitive and intimate understanding of racial politics and places a higher value on the individual. While Miller sees forgiveness as a necessary component of racial uplift, Green explains that the practice of forgiveness as a way to manage negative affects is itself a byproduct of white oppression. African Americans, he explains, have been “trainin’ ter fergiveniss; an’ fer fear dey might fergit to fergive, de w’ite folks gives ‘em somethin’ ev’y now an’ den, ter practice on” (71). In this statement, Green identifies the similarities between Miller’s method for racial uplift and the emotional “training” enforced by white supremacist practice and the social structure of



the South (and throughout the nation). That is, Josh recognizes that whites enforce forgiveness and submission through violence. Adopting a practice of forgiving, rather than one based on the Mosaic law of justice to which Josh adheres, keeps the system of racial oppression in place. Josh also understands that the material and social progress of African Americans will not produce the results Miller imagines. These signs of black uplift, he knows, are followed by swift action. As he tells Miller, “If a nigger gits a’ office, er de race ’pears term be prosperin’ too much, de w’ite folks up an’ kills a few, so dat de res’ kin keep on fergivin’ an’ bein’ thankful dat dey’er lef’ alive” (71). In the dialect that should mark him as less sophisticated and knowledgeable than Miller, Green eloquently summarizes what Miller refuses to acknowledge, or has not yet learned. In the context of the American south, “forgiving” whites is not a choice. It is a socially enforced practice that keeps African Americans in their place through creating racially-distinct affective codes. African Americans learn these codes by force: through lynching and other symbolic acts of white supremacy.<sup>65</sup>

Through Josh Green, Chesnutt provides an alternative affective standard, one that would call on Miller to unlearn the lessons he teaches and practices. Unlike Miller, Green refuses to adhere to racially-distinct standards of feeling. He knows too well that these rules for feeling remain in place to oppress his race. For example, he understands that “A w’ite man kin do w’at he wants ter a nigger, but de minute de nigger gits back at ’im, up goes de nigger, an’ don’ come down tell somebody cuts ’im down” (71). The price black

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<sup>65</sup> Koritha Mitchell’s *Living with Lynching: African American Lynching Plays, Performance, and Citizenship, 1890-1930* and Jacqueline Goldsby’s *A Spectacular Secret: Lynching in American Life and Literature* both provide compelling analyses of the link between racial violence, lynching in particular, and racial politics. For example, Mitchell argues that lynching functioned for white Americans as a “theater of mastery” where they performed their own “racial supremacy” (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2012) 3.

Americans pay for affective inequality is death: “up goes de nigger.” More accurately, then, Green’s philosophy for uplift proposes that standards of feeling stop falling along racial lines by allowing suppressed and sublimated affects to come to the surface of consciousness and discourse. According to Green’s understanding, one law of justice, and of feeling, should apply equally to black and white Americans. He knows that asking African Americans to adopt a standard of feeling that compels forgiveness ends up reinforcing social divides and feelings of inferiority. In refusing to “forgive,” Green refuses to feel inferior to whites or to discount the affective “branding” inflicted by Captain McBane. His refusal separates him from those who, like Miller, try to maintain peaceful relations with whites; it also makes him even more vulnerable to white violence. He explains, “Ef a nigger wants ter git down on his marrow-bones, ‘an eat dirt, an call ‘em ‘marster,’ *he*’s a good nigger, dere’s room fer *him*. But I ain’t no white folks nigger, I ain’ (71). By implication, Green is calling Miller “a w’ite man’s nigger,” “a good nigger.” Green therefore suggests that Miller’s advice comes not from the teachings of the Bible alone, but from internalizing racist rhetoric that comes in many different forms, forms that may even appear benign.

Managing affects comes at a cost. As a practice, affect management is oriented toward a distant future and comes at the price of present self and racial esteem. In fact, Miller recognizes in Green the portent of a future in which African Americans can demand self-respect, even if he cannot support Green’s attitude in the present. He thinks, “Here was a negro who could remember an injury, who could shape his life to a definite purpose, if not a high and holy one. When his race reached the point where they would resent a wrong, there was hope that they might soon attain the

stage where they would try, and, if need be, die, to defend a right” (71). Although he admires Green’s ability to “resent a wrong”—his bitterness, in other words—and willingness to “die to defend a right,”—to act on his bitterness—Miller is too attached to his own philosophy to encourage this kind of personal and immediate demand for racial equality. What is more surprising, though, is Miller’s belief that his race has not yet reached this “stage,” even as he listens to Green declare his ability to “remember an injury” and “shape his life to a definite purpose,” a purpose that directly aligns with his bitterness. Why, then, does Green not fill Miller with hope? As Miller’s later refusal to lead the black resistance during the riot indicates, it may be because he himself has not yet reached this stage. He has not yet become conscious of his bitterness, for he has not yet experienced it in such a personal and intimate setting. Thus concern for the race (or the race’s national image), rather than for the individual, is still at the fore of his consciousness. In managing affects, he gives up the right to act on and prioritize his own feelings. Yet, because he thinks of himself as a race representative first and foremost, he believes he lives his life according to a higher code than does Green. He gives up, in other words, personal rights in favor of what he believes is the collective good.<sup>66</sup>

In this case, Green’s desire does not fill Miller with hope because he does not consider personal motivation “high and holy.” Because he claims the right to personal revenge for a racial wrong, Miller imagines that Green’s actions and feelings can only reflect negatively on the race. And the “race,” according to Miller, is more important than the person. He thinks, for example, that Green’s call for

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<sup>66</sup> It is worth noting here that Miller has so far benefitted financially and socially from this practice, and so it may be far more self-motivated than it appears.

justice would “do no good, would right no wrong,” for “every such crime, committed by a colored man, would be imputed to the race, which was already staggering under a load of obloquy because, in the eyes of a prejudiced and discriminating public, it must answer as a whole for the offenses of each separate individual” (72). This fact places an undue burden on each member of the race. It elevates individuals’ actions and feelings from the realm of the personal to the collective. Seen through the “prejudiced and discriminating” eyes of the public—the same public who would note the racial differences between Miller and Dr. Burns rather than their similarities—African American individuals act not on their own behalf, but on behalf of the race as a whole. Such is the case in Miller’s estimation.

At the collective level, exacting revenge reinforces the public’s primarily negative and extremely harmful perception of black manhood. Miller thus thinks Green should forfeit the personal “good” and “righting of wrongs” that would come from avenging his father’s murder. Outwardly, he does not even acknowledge the validity of Green’s feelings; and so he manages his own affective response to Green’s trauma. Miller tells Green that he is “feverish,” and therefore does not know what he is talking about. “I shouldn’t let my mind dwell on such things,” he advises (72). In offering this advice, Miller prioritizes the racial collective over the personal. Yet prioritizing the race over the individual is necessitated by racial discrimination. By telling Green not to “let his mind dwell on such things,” Miller gives in to the racially-coded “standard of feeling” white America enforces for its own benefit. He also, in this sense, keeps the “veil” obscuring interracial, intraracial, and even personal feelings in place. He rationalizes his point of view by adopting the same

philosophic stance that saved him from fully the experiencing the racial injustice of being made to ride in the Jim Crow car. Again, taking the Bible rather than personal experience as his authority, he views Green's desire as "pitifully human and weak" (72), and thus holds his race to a standard that, as he soon comes to realize, "asks too much of human nature" (192).

In private letters, and in a select number of his essays and speeches, Chesnutt sides with Green and implicitly condemns Miller's position. Because his writings alternately align him with both Green and Miller, critics continue to argue about which figure Chesnutt further identifies with, as well as which represents his notion of an ideal heroic figure and race leader. Many have concluded that Chesnutt's and the novel's true race hero lies somewhere in the space between Miller and Green.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> In "Keeping an 'Old Wound' Alive: *The Marrow of Tradition* and the Legacy of Wilmington" (*African American Review* 33.2 (1999): 231-243), Jae H. Roe argues that while many scholars, for example Eric Sundquist in *To Wake the Nations*, draw a fairly direct link between Miller and Chesnutt, the question of whether Chesnutt identifies with Josh Green has nonetheless "perplexed critics over the years" (Sundquist 466). Like John Edgar Wideman, who cautions against a directly identifying Chesnutt with Miller ("Charles W. Chesnutt: *The Marrow of Tradition*" (*American Scholar* 42 (1972): 128-134), Roe claims that "The running ideological contestation between Josh and Miller shows that Chesnutt's identification with Miller is not so unambiguous" (237). Critics do not easily identify Chesnutt with Green either. Sundquist's identification of Green as "an illiterate folk hero" (437) puts him at quite an ideological and social distance from Chesnutt. In "Confronting the Shadow: Psycho-Political Repression in Chesnutt's *The Marrow of Tradition*," Marjorie George and Richard S. Pressman do argue that Green, and Janet Miller, represent Chesnutt's "irrepressible shadow" and so indicate Chesnutt's "deep-seated need for recognition, equality, and independence" (*Phylon* 48.4 (4th Qtr., 1987): 287-298). P. Jay Delmar agrees. Writing in "Character and Structure in Charles W. Chesnutt's *The Marrow of Tradition*" that while Green's actions "do seem positive," they represent "the most primitive of anti-racist positions," a claim that privileges Miller's position and actions over Green (*American Literary Realism, 1870-1910* 13.2 (Autumn 1980): 284-289), 287. In contrast, George E. Rutledge argues that Miller becomes Chesnutt's ideal heroic figure once he has been imbued with Green's "epic potential" ("All Green with Epic Potential: Chesnutt Goes to *The Marrow of Tradition* to Reconstruct America's Epic Body." *Charles Chesnutt Reappraised: Essays on the First Major African American Fiction Writer*. Eds. David Garrett Izzo and Maria Orban (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, 2009. 131-158). In an argument reminiscent of Robert Reid-Pharr's *Conjugal Union: The Body, The House, and the Black American* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), Rutledge concludes: "the Miller(s) vs. Green dilemma, conflict, and tension is a nonesuch, for if a new African American body is Chesnutt's goal, then the division between them is a red herring. Since Chesnutt seeks to eliminate the entire 'black' body politic—middle, lower, and underclass—and uplift it into true American status, neither the Millers nor Green is *the* protagonist, for each is just 'one of the novel's protagonists,'" as Robert Nowatski agrees in "'Sublime Patriots': Black Masculinity in Three African American Novels" (*Journal of Men's Studies* 8.1 (1999): 59-72). Rutledge further argues that

Like Miller, Chesnutt is light-skinned, educated, and middle class. He too lives for a self-declared “high, holy purpose”: gradually uplifting his people and leading whites to recognize African American equality through changing their “standard of feeling.”<sup>68</sup> In living to tell the tale of the riot, Miller also potentially serves the function of the author. Though he dies heroically, Green is a relic of an earlier era, and so will not lead the race into a new epoch of racial equality. His is not an example the novel suggests should be followed. While revenge does raise him to a heroic height, it also leads to his death.

Yet Green has a quality that Miller lacks, one Chesnutt very much admires. In a 1908 address to the Niagara Movement, Chesnutt declares that men who “tamely submit to oppression” will never gain a “sense of respect.”<sup>69</sup> He expresses a similar sentiment in “A Multitude of Counselors,” an 1891 essay published in the *Independent*. There, he writes, “When the Southern negro reaches that high conception of liberty that would make him rather die than submit to the lash, when he will meet force with force, there will be an end to southern outrages.”<sup>70</sup> Writing to George Washington

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“Chesnutt’s new African American body” replaces Dr. Miller and Josh Green, and “even though it has a near-white bourgeoisie face and professional training, it now also has a more heroic, epic character to make it worthy to the larger society as an equal who no longer needs to pass or perform” (156). We may draw from these critics the general conclusion that while Chesnutt cannot endorse a figure like Josh Green for race leadership or representation, William Miller needs to absorb some aspect of his spirit and conviction. As Rutledge writes, in the end of the novel, Miller voices the same sentiments that fuel Josh Green, but they are said with “the sensibility, intelligence, ambition, and social acceptability that Green lacks in a democratic, civilized one” (155-156). While I take issue with this conclusion as far as it discounts Green’s sensibility and intelligence, I agree that Miller does come to voice similar sentiments to Green. However, I contend that Miller comes to reject the ambition and “social acceptability” he earlier craved, as it has come to cost too much and no longer offers a rewarding result.

<sup>68</sup> In the same May 29, 1880 journal entry discussed in the opening to this chapter, Chesnutt says that when he does write, it will be for “a purpose, a high, holy purpose, and this will inspire me to greater effort” (139). His purpose, as stated earlier, is to work towards the “moral progress of the American people” (140).

<sup>69</sup> Frances Richardson Keller. *An American Crusade: The Life of Charles Waddell Chesnutt* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1978), 251.

<sup>70</sup> *Charles W. Chesnutt: Essays and Speeches*, ed. Joseph R. McElrath, et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999): 214-237), 78-83.

Cable on June 13, 1890, Chesnutt again seems to side with the yet unwritten Green, telling Cable that the “dog-like fidelity” attributed to southern blacks is “by no means the crown of manhood.”<sup>71</sup> In fact, he tells Cable that he does not even “care to write about such people.”<sup>72</sup> While attributing this “dog-like fidelity” to Miller is certainly an unfair critique, he does refuse to “meet force with force.” Unlike Green, Miller would rather “submit to the lash” than die to defend his rights. Josh Green therefore embodies a state of feeling Chesnutt glorifies (even as he seems to sublimate it through his literary practice) and that Miller hesitates to embrace. According to Chesnutt’s logic in these examples, Green is a figure who, despite being outside of the parameters of the racial uplift movement, can “bring an end to southern outrages,” while Miller is not. However, as Eric Sundquist notes, Green is an outlier in terms of Chesnutt’s predominant sensibilities, and thus presents a problem to scholars who hope to align his sentiments with the author’s overarching philosophy for uplift.<sup>73</sup>

My own attention to the conflicts between Miller’s and Green’s positions has benefitted from this ongoing scholarly debate. But I insist that Miller ultimately, if messily, represents Chesnutt’s method for racial uplift after he begins to feel discomfort over affect management. Over the course of the novel, Miller begins to identify the shortcomings of managing affects, and begins to measure what it costs. While he could discount Green’s feelings when treating his arm—a moment when he himself was not under examination—and assure himself that vengeance and self-defense is the lesser path to take, this racial “standard of feeling” becomes more difficult to follow when his

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<sup>71</sup> *To Be An Author: The Letters of Charles W. Chesnutt*, eds. Joseph McElrath and Robert C. Leitz, III (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 65.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *To Wake the Nations*, 441.

experience of racial oppression goes beyond the institutional to the personal. As the novel reaches its final denouement, Miller becomes affectively closer to Josh Green.

Consequently, his own “standard of feeling” overwhelms any racial or social obligation.

As the riot breaks out, Miller is forced to contend with the viability of his own uplift ideology in practice rather than in theory. A group of men, led by Josh Green, ask him to lead the defense against the white mob. Although “every manly instinct” drives him to take up this position, he echoes the advice he earlier gave to Green and declares that the fight has already been lost, at least for now. They are outnumbered, outweaponed, and “have no standing in the [white] court of conscience” (169). Declaring his advice “unheroic” but “wise,” he tells Green and his band of men that “Our time will come—the time when we can command respect for our rights; but it is not yet in sight” (169). The “distinct feeling of shame and envy” Miller experiences in this moment marks the beginning of his affective transformation. If, when forced to ride the Jim Crow car, Miller was aware of “queer sensations,” those sensations are now named. Having risen to the surface of his consciousness, these feelings make him aware of what his method for affect management takes from him: his pride, self-respect, his chance to directly defend his rights. As the riot continues to challenge his commitment to managing his affective states according to distinct racial codes, he becomes increasingly similar to Josh Green. Accordingly, he comes to demand the right to feelings that exceed the affective boundaries of the racial uplift movement more broadly. Miller’s affective transformation also helps redefine what Chesnutt’s argument for “social discrimination” imagines possible when feelings like bitterness prove more powerful than racial ideology.

### III. “They are bought too dear!”: Unmanaged Affect and Racial Recognition



After refusing to lead the resistance against the white mob, Miller returns home to find his wife and son gone, and so begins his long journey through the riot to find his family. In the process, Miller sees all white pretenses fall away. The “race cry” has been issued, and thus “friendship, religion, humanity, reason, all shrivel up like dry leaves in a furnace” (168). The intensity of anti-black feeling, which so far has been expressed secretly in private meetings, suppressed after the failed lynching of Sandy Campbell, kept hidden with the private burning of documents, or veiled with polite conversation, is now out in the open, and burns fiercely throughout Wellington. As he comes upon the first dead black body, left strategically on the street corner where its example “would be most effective” (172), Miller learns more clearly than before the precarity of black life, and comes to recognize the fury, fear, and the embittered claim to superiority that motivates Wellington’s, and the South’s, white population. In the “seething cauldron of unrestrained passions” (173) that leaves bodies dying and dead in the streets, Miller’s own “standard of feeling” collapses.

In language strikingly akin to that Josh Green used when describing the psychological and affective effects of witnessing his father’s murder, Chesnutt condenses Miller’s response to the riot in a few short sentences. Forced to drive one mile through town looking for Janet and their son, Miller’s memory, like Green’s, is now “branded,” leaving him with an affective wound that does not heal. With this wound, he becomes, like Green, full of a bitterness that will not let him forget. Of Miller’s journey through town, the narrator states:

Though Miller had a good horse in front of him, he was two hours in reaching his destination. Never will the picture of that ride fade from his memory. In his

dreams he repeats it night after night, and sees the sights that wounded his eyes, and feels the thoughts—the haunting spirits of the thoughts—that tore his heart as he rode through hell to find those whom he was seeking. (171)

Miller has no control over his “torn heart,” “wounded eyes,” and “haunting spirits of thoughts.” Just as Green’s mind was “branded” by witnessing his father’s murder, Miller’s experiences this sight in his body and mind. In the image of a “torn heart” and “wounded eyes,” Chesnutt creates a link between physical sensation and emotional pain that results in a “haunting” effect. Miller cannot manage feelings that correspond to a “picture” that will not “fade from his memory.” Instead, this memory, and the affective experience associated with it, repeatedly resurfaces against his volition; he repeats it “night after night” in his dreams. A stark commentary on his earlier assertion that most would “rather forget” dark histories, this description reveals the lasting emotional impact caused by traumatic racial injury and the naivety of Miller’s perspective up until this point.

Miller’s increasingly bitterness comes to the surface as the riot continues to escalate, and through his now conscious embitterment he sees racialized “standards of feeling” for what they are: a tool to repress black rights and bolster white supremacy. Unlike on the Jim Crow train car, Miller cannot “pull[] [himself] together” (41). “Sick at heart,” almost weeping with grief, Miller realizes that the riot will only increase racial hatred, further dividing the races by fortifying the standards that separate them. “The breach between two peoples whom fate had thrown together” would be further widened by “long years of constraint and distrust” (174). Thinking again of Josh Green’s heroic fight against impossible odds, he reflects that even Green’s courage will be used against them. Examining the same set

of feelings as they are performed by each race, Miller realizes that white perception of black feeling is skewed by desire, hatred, fear, and racial-identification:

The qualities which in a white man would win the applause of the world would in a negro be taken as the marks of savagery. So thoroughly diseased was public opinion in matters of race that the negro who died for the common rights of humanity might look for no meed of admiration or glory. At such a time, in the white man's eyes, a negro's courage would be mere desperation; his love of liberty, a mere animal dislike of restraint. Every finer human instinct would be interpreted in terms of savagery. Or, if forced to admire, they would nevertheless repress. They would applaud his courage while they stretched his neck, or carried off the fragments of his mangled body as souvenirs, in much the same way that savages preserve the scalps or eat the hearts of their enemies. (176)

Here, we see how a “diseased public” distorts “standards of feeling.”<sup>74</sup> It is important that he does not come to this realization until after he has become a personal witness to racial violence. Miller dismissed Green's own words as the result of a “feverish” state.<sup>75</sup> He also considered him “pitifully human and weak.” Here, instead, Miller realizes that he too has misinterpreted Green's actions and feelings. Rather than the result of fever and a sign of his lack of refinement, Miller now understands that Green acts and feels according to “every finer human instinct.” For, as the narrator tells the reader, only Josh Green and his party “behaved bravely on this critical day in their history” (187). By turning away from his opportunity to lead the fight against the white mob, even as every “manly instinct” urged him to take this position, Miller

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<sup>74</sup> This passage is very much in line with Frederick Douglass' sentiments in his introductory letter to Ida B. Wells' 1892 study, *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases*. In this letter, Douglass writes that *Southern Horrors* should elicit “a scream of horror, shame, and indignation” if only American sensibility were “not hardened by persistent infliction of outrage and crime against colored people” (New York: New York Age Print, 1892). I point to these similarities because both Douglass and Chesnutt seem attuned to the distortion of public and racial feeling. Douglass' perception is important, moreover, as his long engagement in abolition and black civil rights following the Civil War suggests this distortion has remained a consistent problem through slavery to the text's present day.

<sup>75</sup> In some ways, the novel suggests that “fever” works as a clarifying force. Miller first refuses the legitimacy of Green's feelings by calling them feverish, but we learn that Green has a clearer understanding of Southern race relations. Mr. Ellis, who works for Major Carteret at the *Daily Chronicle*, also describes the riot itself as a fever (173), but it is the “fever” of the riot that the “veneer” of civilization burns away and reveals what lies beneath outward appearance (184).

feels the shame and guilt associated with maintaining “public opinions in matters of race.”<sup>76</sup> However, he only acquires Green’s “love of liberty” and “courage,” in spite of their negative associations in the white mind, when, like Green, he cannot suppress his bitterness.

While Green’s bitterness is attributed to his long-held anger at his father’s killer and his continued frustration with a system that denies his full human rights, Miller’s bitterness results from his disappointment in his own racial uplift philosophy. The riot reveals: interracial friendship is a sham;<sup>77</sup> African American “progress” fuels race hatred rather than lessons it; class status and accommodationist politics cannot prevent racial violence; and attachment to white supremacy trumps reason and human decency. Finally, racial recognition, when finally granted, takes far more from Miller than he can bear to give: hope for the future, faith in progress, an ability to manage his own affects, and, most importantly, his only child.

As a result of these devastating losses, Miller claims his right to feel outside of any standard. He no longer attempts to manage affects either interracially or intrracially. Instead, he simply acknowledges and acts on his emotions. He also

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<sup>76</sup> In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), Sara Ahmed argues that shame only arises when one has an “interest” in the other—the other whose presence or witnessing makes the situation one in which shame is produced. A “prior love or desire for the other,” she writes, has to already exist. In this case, we can call “the other white” American society, or the nation itself. Because that love for or desire to belong to the nation exists, despite the nation’s disinterest or even rejection, shame motivates subjects to “live up to a social ideal.” Furthermore, shame “can work as a deterrent: in order to avoid shame, subjects must enter the ‘contract’ of the social bond, by seeking to approximate a social ideal. Shame can also be experience as *the affective cost of not following the scripts of normative existence*” (105-107). Miller’s shame, in this case, can be considered a product of his attachment to the idea of belonging in America as it is, and also of his refusal to bring about what he knows is a necessary change.

<sup>77</sup> For example, when he finds Olivia Cartaret’s lifelong servant, Mammy Jane, shot in the street, her dying words prove the futility of his faith in interracial affection or safety in submission. As she calls out “Comin’, missus, comin’!” with her last breath, the narrator notes that not her “reverence” for her old mistress, her “deference to whites,” or even their friendship for her can save her when the town is “possessed” by “the raving devil of race hatred” (177).

gives Janet, his wife, the right to express her own feelings, rather than trying to manage them for her, as he did with Josh Green. He no longer cares about maintaining a positive racial image, public opinion, or even the Biblical lessons he had previously used as a resource for suppressing negative feelings. There is no question of forgiveness. Because his feelings are now in excess of his ability to manage them, Miller paradoxically becomes free of the confines of his racial uplift philosophy at the same moment that it strangely comes to fruition.

Racial uplift comes with a knock on Miller's door that interrupts his vigil of mourning by the side of his dead son and weeping wife. Killed by a stray bullet during the riot, the Millers' young son, who is never named, becomes the focal point of *The Marrow of Tradition's* final scenes. Carteret's state of mind when he knocks on Miller's door seems purposefully obtuse. The riot has escalated beyond his intentions, he has lost the ability to control the savage white mob, he has witnessed Miller's hospital being burnt down, and even overheard the shots fired that kill his porter, Mammy Jane's son. Although he turns away in disgust, he remains confident that "the negroes have themselves to blame" (183). As he tells Ellis, "they tested us beyond endurance. I counseled firmness, and firm measures were taken, and our purpose was accomplished. I am not responsible for these subsequent horrors,—I wash my hands of them" (183). Returning home, he finds his wife hysterical, as their son Dodie struggles to breathe. Though attended by a medical student, only a practiced physician can treat his acute case of croup. In an ironic and dramatic plot twist, Miller is the only doctor available. And so Carteret confidently goes to his

door, certain that Miller will gladly take the opportunity to treat a white child: “it is an honor too great for a negro to decline” (188).

Carteret’s conviction that Miller will answer his call depends on his own conception of racialized feeling. As he hurries to the Millers’ home, the narration slips into free indirect discourse and we are given access to thoughts just below the surface of his consciousness. Although the narrator states that he cannot even “imagine” that Miller would refuse his call, the syntax begins to reflect Carteret’s internal dialogue over Miller’s state of feeling. Miller could only have reason to refuse if “some bitterness might have grown out of the proceedings of the afternoon” (188). Note Carteret’s rational and detached relationship to the riot that he knows culminated in the burning of Miller’s hospital. He refers to these events in clinical terms; they are only “proceedings,” and therefore unlikely to have had an emotional effect on Miller. Miller’s refinement, however, gives him pause. Miller “was a man of some education, he knew; and he had been told that he was a man of fine feeling—for a negro,—and might have easily taken to heart the day’s events” (189). The em dashes that mark his qualification of Miller’s feeling signal that his rationalization requires the “fact” of racial difference. Miller may be a man of “fine feeling,” but Carteret is comforted by the fact that African Americans do not feel equally to whites. Up until now, he has had no reason to suppose Miller’s emotions exceed the racial boundaries he imagines are firmly in place. Miller’s ability to manage his affects has, in some ways, confirmed Carteret’s belief that feeling can be demarcated along racial lines.

When Miller declares his right to feel, the effect on Carteret is instantaneous, if potentially brief. Adopting the language of the “veil” so critical to Du Bois’ theory of race relations, Chesnutt here depicts what has to occur for the “veil” to fall away. First, Miller has to make a claim to his own feeling, a claim that prioritizes his feelings over any standard demanded by racial hierarchy, or by the desire for racial uplift. Then, Miller has to demonstrate to Carteret that his claim is based on natural laws of justice, rather than on social codes for racial behavior. Moreover, the claims to justice Miller makes are personally motivated. As they stand before each other with Miller’s wife and his son’s body in the background, Miller refuses Carteret’s call, saying that “My duty calls me here, by the side of my dead child and my suffering wife! I cannot go with you. There is a just God in heaven!—as you have sown, so may you reap!” (190). As he hears Miller’s distraught but vehement speech, Carteret recognizes Miller’s standing as father and husband, and his right to grieve. Realizing that he is responsible for the “subsequent horrors” born of the racial overthrow, Carteret looks at Miller and sees that it is only right and fair that he pays for the death of the Millers’ son with the death of his own. This realization un-trains his “American eye”:

In the agony of the predicament,—in the horror of the situation at Miller’s house,—*for a moment the veil of race prejudice was rent in twain*, and he saw things as they were, in their correct proportions and relations,—he saw clearly and convincingly that he had no standing here, in the presence of death, in the home of this stricken family. Miller’s refusal to go with him was pure elemental justice; he could not blame the doctor for his stand. He was indeed conscious of a certain involuntary admiration for a man who held in his hands the power of life and death, and could use it, with strict justice, to avenge his own wrongs. In Dr. Miller’s place he would have done the same thing. Miller had spoken the truth,—as he had sown, so must he reap! He not could expect, could not ask, this father to leave his own household at such a moment. (191, emphasis mine)

His sense that “he would have done the same thing” erases the arbitrary color line that separates him from Miller. As the “veil” segregating the white and black world is “rent in twain,” any pretense of racial difference or superiority falls away. His vision becomes “clear”: things now appear “in their correct proportions and relations.” He can no longer measure Miller by a “standard of feeling” that is “fine” “for a negro,” but not for him.

Unmanaged affects thus lead to the recognition of emotional equality. They also confirm Howells’ fear that African Americans—who are refined, middle class, and respectable—can do something “dynamitic” to society when they refuse to hide the “bitterness in their hearts.” At least in fiction. It is in the most highly-wrought, most emotionally-driven scene in the novel that bitterness’s potential dynamism alters racial conditions most dramatically. Culminating in a chapter titled “The Sisters,” *The Marrow of Tradition* returns to the theme of kinship as a vehicle for racial uplift and for developing “kindred standards of thoughts and feelings.” The Carterets have already been driven to recognize Miller in a social and professional capacity. After realizing that he has “no standing” there, Carteret returns home to his distraught wife. Olivia, whose identity depends so much on suppressing her relationship with Janet, ignores her husband’s answer to her query and runs to the Millers to beg their help, knowing full well what she may have to give: her property, her name, her kinship, her sisterhood. In other words, Miller’s justification of his refusal to save Dodie on the basis of his own bitterness forces Philip Carteret to see their affective equality and compels Olivia to acknowledge Janet as her kin.



In this light, *The Marrow of Tradition* comes to a close with a scene that erases the color line, establishes social, political, and affective equality, and demonstrates that the races can cooperate in service of a harmonious future the novel seems, tentatively, to foresee. Yet Janet's feelings, more explicitly than Miller's, bring new meaning to bear on the promise of racial uplift. Throughout the novel, Chesnutt shows the lengths southern whites are willing to go in their assertion of racial dominance. Until their attachment to white supremacy comes at a personal cost, they do not surrender the claim to superiority. They destroy and steal property, form mobs, knowingly lynch the innocent, foment racial hatred, and deny family ties. All this is done to protect the myth of racial purity so they can continue to benefit, materially, socially, and politically, from their systematic oppression of African Americans.<sup>78</sup> To see Olivia fall to her knees before Miller is therefore no small thing. In an image that visually turns Wellington's racial hierarchy upside down, Chesnutt underscores what it takes for racial uplift to bring its desired fruit. Because of the conditions of its fulfillment, this fruit is bitter, and must be rejected. Though Janet obtains "her heart's desire" in the novel's conclusion, she finds it "but apples of Sodom, filled with dust and ashes!" (195).

The bitterness of this fruit plays havoc with any "standard of feeling" that could bring the races together. While Carteret's acceptance of Miller's right to feel

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<sup>78</sup> Chesnutt's final description of Miller's hospital highlights the disparity between the methods Wellington's black leaders think will bring racial uplift, and the reality of white response to signs of African American progress. The site of the rioter's culminating passions, the hospital burns. As the flames "complete their work," "this handsome structure, the fruit of old Adam Miller's industry, the monument of his son's philanthropy, a promise of good things for the future of the city," soon lays "smoldering in ruins" (184). Chesnutt juxtaposes the "smoldering ruins" of Miller's hospital, the novel's symbol of progress, with the Carterets' promise of racial equality and family recognition. This juxtaposition widens the scale of loss from the personal—the loss of their son—to the social, political, and economic.

depends on his recognition that Miller's feelings would match his own in the same situation, Olivia's plea that Janet let Miller try to save her son's life comes as a demand for sympathy. In other words, because Janet's feelings do not align with her own needs, Olivia imagines Janet cannot feel enough. Groveling before her, Olivia asks herself: "Was there no way to move this woman?" (194). Her strategy for gaining sympathy therefore questions Janet's humanity, a humanity measured by her ability to feel. She implores Janet, "If you have a human heart, tell your husband to come with me" (194). This demand does not yield the expected response. Janet uses Olivia's claims about "human feeling" against her, explaining that "I have a human heart, and therefore will not let him go. *My child is dead—O God, my child, my child!*" (194). Janet's lapse into personal grief outweighs the desire or need to manage affects according to already established standards. The personal overcomes the racial, and so she turns away from Olivia back to the body of her child.

If the metaphorical "veil" between the races is "rent in twain" by Miller's unmanaged expression of feeling, then Janet's refusal of cross-racial feeling at once dismantles the physical color line and draws the "veil" back into place. It is at this point that Olivia decides to gamble it all away by revealing the secrets she has no carefully kept hidden. Janet knows, however, that the property, name, and kinship Olivia offers as her own to rightfully claim are not "freely given, from an open heart, but extorted from a reluctant conscience by the agony of a mother's fears" (195). Janet, with eyes "flash[ing] with bitter scorn," filled with "bitter tears," gives the novel's final judgment on racial reconciliation. Addressing Olivia for the last time, she states:

I have but one word for you,—one last word,—and then I hope never to see your face again! My mother died of want, and I was brought up by the hand of charity. Now, when I have married a man who can supply my needs, you offer me back the money which you and your friends have robbed me of! You imagined that the shame of being a negro swallowed up every other ignominy,—and in your eyes I am a negro, though I am your sister, and you are white, and people have taken me for you on the streets,—and you, therefore, left me nameless all my life! Now, when an honest man has given me a name of which I can be proud, you offer me the one of which you robbed me, and of which I can make no use. For twenty-five years I, poor despicable fool would have kissed your feet for a word, a nod, a smile. Now, when this tardy recognition comes, for which I have waited so long, it is tainted with fraud and crime and blood, and I must pay for it with my child's life! (195)

But Janet's speech does not end here. Acknowledging that she must pay for her late recognition with the life of her own child, Olivia turns to go. It is in Janet's next statement that critics like Andrea Williams find the promise of an optimistic future. Instead of letting Olivia leave empty-handed, she decides to send Miller back with Olivia to save Dodie. Yet Janet's choice is not motivated by compassion, but by her pride and her desire to prove that "a woman may be foully wronged, and yet may have a heart to feel, even for one who has injured her" (195). This statement distances her from Olivia. She eradicates the intimate connection she has so long desired. Through the distance in her speech, Olivia becomes anonymous, simply "a woman who has a heart to feel," and the situation hypothetical. This is not an instance of a sister seeking to alleviate a sister's pain, but of an "injured woman" who has been "foully wronged," but still feels. The affective and literal distance between them becomes insurmountable when Janet refuses all that Olivia has offered: "I throw back your father's name, your father's wealth, your sisterly recognition. I want none of them,—they are bought too dear!" (195). By rejecting this offer, Janet reestablishes affective as well as racial boundaries between the two

families. Though the novel ends with Miller entering the Carteret house with “time enough” to save Dodie’s life, but “none to spare” (195), Janet’s final words ensure that the races will remain separated by a gulf of shared bitterness.

#### IV. “We are men and citizens and Americans”: Chesnutt’s Feeling Nation

On June 25, 1905, Chesnutt delivered a lengthy address to the Boston Literary and Historical Association. Titled “Race Prejudice: Its Causes and Cures,” his address provides an overview of US racial history, refutes theories of natural or permanent racial difference, and catalogs the “causes” and “cures” for race prejudice. He considers this prejudice the chief obstacle in American life. His goal, as he states in the address, is to help eliminate this obstacle so that each citizen, regardless of color, can share equally in the rights and feelings of citizenship. Chesnutt’s theory of citizenship is therefore affective as well as legal. Race prejudice, like legal citizenship, is conditioned by affective relations. Accordingly, Chesnutt theorizes race prejudice in affective terms. It is a “hostile feeling,” “a very real and vital evil.”<sup>79</sup> Until race prejudice is cured, there is no hope that African Americans will “enter in the full enjoyment of those rights to which by virtue of our humanity and our citizenship we are justly granted.”<sup>80</sup> Chesnutt’s address, however, does end with hope. Before presenting the utopic vision of American brotherhood which brings his speech to a close, he lays out the step by step process by which this vision can be realized.

According to Chesnutt, there are four key remaining differences between the races that must be eliminated before race prejudice can be eradicated. These are:

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<sup>79</sup> Chesnutt, “Race Prejudice, Its Causes and Its Cures,” 230, 216.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

education, property, recognition of citizenship rights, and the notion of “race integrity.” First, he argues that any educational system based on the belief in racial hierarchy is “repugnant” to America’s “political system,” “justice,” and “human liberty.”<sup>81</sup> African Americans must be allowed to develop “social efficiency,” or “usefulness,” through equal access to educational opportunities, facilities, institutional support, and government financing. Second, the property gap between the races should be removed by a more equal distribution of wealth. Chesnutt places more emphasis on the third and fourth differences, for they are primarily affective and therefore more difficult to eradicate. As Chesnutt writes, before law, African Americans have “ceased to be aliens, and have become citizens.”<sup>82</sup> In public consciousness, however, they remain aliens. He thus argues that the nation must be made to apply Constitutional laws, and that the American people must be made to respect these laws. Only then will African Americans be viewed in public consciousness as citizens having an equal claim to national belonging and legal protection. The last and “most difficult” difference separating citizens, Chesnutt writes, is the idea of “race” itself. In strong terms, Chesnutt critiques the “new doctrine” of “Race Integrity.”<sup>83</sup> Condemning those who “zealously guard [our color] as a priceless heritage,” he argues that race integrity is a white invention used to protect the color line. “It is they who preach it,” he writes, “and it is *their* racial integrity which they wish to preserve.”<sup>84</sup> Echoing the argument of his series of essays on “The Future American,” Chesnutt proposes racial amalgamation—social, cultural,

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 228.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 229-230.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 231.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 231-232.

physical, and affective—as the final solution to this problem.<sup>85</sup> In a direct plea to his listeners, he asks that they “dismiss from [their] mind any theory, however originated, or however cherished, that there can be built up in any free country, two separate sorts of civilization, two standards of human development.”<sup>86</sup> “It is enough,” he tells his audience, “that we are men and citizens and Americans; I think it might be well if we never called ourselves, or encouraged others to call us, anything else.”<sup>87</sup> Rejecting racial identity in favor of national identity, in Chesnutt’s view, is the most vital step towards producing a new era in American life, one defined not by race prejudice, but by its absence. In the absence of race prejudice, America would be affectively shaped by the intimacy created between citizens who feel they are as bonded to each other as national kin.

Chesnutt’s new America coheres around shared feeling. After leading his listeners through a long, detailed, and at times tedious view of America’s past and current wrongs, he rebuilds their hope, and his own, by painting an affectively-constructed nation. This nation is defined by shared pride in citizenship, honor and mutual recognition of the rights of all its citizens, an abiding love for liberty and justice, and cultural attachment to national belonging. Chesnutt elsewhere describes America as a deeply divided nation. This divide is epitomized by the legal and affective color line. Prophesying a “new epoch in our nation’s history,” he describes a time

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<sup>85</sup> In 1900, Chesnutt published three essays under this title in the *Boston Evening Transcript*. They are: “The Future American: What the Race is Likely to Become in the Process of Time,” “The Future American: A Stream of Dark Blood in the Veins of Southern Whites,” and “The Future American: A Complete Race Amalgamation Likely to Occur.”

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

in the not distant future, when there shall in the United States be but one people, moulded by the same culture, swayed by the same patriotic ideals, holding their citizenship in such high esteem that for another to share it is to entitle him to fraternal regard; when men will be esteemed and honored for their character and talents. When hand in hand and heart with heart all the people of this nation will join to preserve to all and to each of them for all future time that ideal of human liberty which the Fathers of the Republic set out in the Declaration of Independence, which declared that all men are created equal, the ideal for which Garrison and Phillips and Sumner lived and worked; the ideal of which Lincoln died, the ideal embodied in the words of the Book which the slave mother learned by stealth to read, with slow-moving finger and faltering speech, and which I fear that some of us with our freedom and culture have forgotten to read at all:—the book which declares that ‘God is no respecter of persons, and that of one blood hath He made all the nations of the earth.’<sup>88</sup>

This America has one people, one culture, one set of patriotic ideals. It does not discriminate based on race, but judges men “for their character and talents.”<sup>89</sup> Chesnutt’s vision thus proposes social and affective equality based on national belonging and cemented by devotion to American ideals. A people who are “hand in hand and heart with heart” are separated by neither physical divisions nor affective differences.

Chesnutt published his last novel, *The Colonel’s Dream* (1905), the same year he gave this address. Like *The Marrow of Tradition*, the novel ends in an ambiguous and tenuous state of future promise. Also like *Marrow*, it represents increasing racial divisions and thus challenges Chesnutt’s utopic vision of a nation consisting of “but one people.” *The Colonel’s Dream*, for example, ends with not “one people” but two: “White men go their way, and black men theirs, and these ways grow wider apart, and no one knows the outcome.”<sup>90</sup> While the narrator professes the outcome unknown,

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 236.

<sup>89</sup> Unlike racial discrimination, social discrimination did not divide citizens in their relation to the nation. Consider, for example, the list of persons Chesnutt includes in the above passage. The “slave mother learned by stealth to read” has the same standing as white abolitionists and civil rights activists Garrison and Sumner, and even holds a place equal to Lincoln. What binds these individuals of distinct races and classes is their fealty to God and nation. They are share the same culture, patriotic ideals, hold their citizenship in equal esteem, and should even be able to “honor” men for “their character and talents,” rather for their race or class.

<sup>90</sup> *The Colonel’s Dream* (New York: Doubleday, Page, & Company, 1905), 294.

Chesnutt continues to argue that the nation he envisions can come into being by establishing an interracial “standard of thoughts and feelings.” He gave his 1916 “Social Discrimination” address, with which this chapter began, a full fifteen years after publishing *The Marrow of Tradition*. The divisive contemporary response to *Marrow* in many ways mirrored Chesnutt’s own conflicted state of feeling. The contradiction between his public statements, his speeches and essays, his private letters, and his fictional works suggests that Chesnutt’s attempts to create a “shared standard of (national) feeling” was complicated by his efforts to manage his own affects. If *The Marrow of Tradition* ends by implying that affects cannot be managed, and that “unmanaged” affects dismantle the racial divide, as I argue that it does, then Chesnutt’s response to the Wilmington Riot, as well as the general thrust of his philosophy for racial uplift throughout the following years, demonstrate that he cannot adopt the lessons the Millers have learned. Indeed, he published a novel rather than directly express his rage and sorrow. For Chesnutt, writing seems to offer the chance to sublimate the feelings on which he cannot act directly. He is still attached to the idea of national belonging and shared interracial feeling that coheres rather than divides the nation.

Expanding the scope of *The Marrow of Tradition*’s affect management from the Millers and Carterets to Wellington, and to the nation as a whole, what we see is a country divided by “standards of feelings” that are at odds, particularly about who belongs in the nation. Major Carteret, for example, speaks as the vehicle for white public opinion when he contemplates that, in his mind, there is “no permanent place for the negroes in the United States, if indeed anywhere in the world, except under



the ground” (147). Carteret, McBane, and Captain Belmont, the three masterminds behind the political revolution and race riot, believe that they are nonetheless “animated by high and holy principles”: loyalty to one’s race (150). McBane puts it more bluntly, and defines these sentiments more accurately, when he declares that “This is a white man’s country, and a white man’s city, and no nigger has any business here with a white man wants him gone!” (151). These sentiments are the very “marrow of tradition” Chesnutt hoped to expose. Having seen the public hail the Wilmington Riot as a political and social victory for the (white) nation, Chesnutt was acutely aware of the difference in feeling that divided the races.

The “White Declaration of Independence” written the night before the riot demonstrates how far from reality Chesnutt’s vision of the nation remained at the turn of the century. The white attachment to the idea of a white nation trumped African American efforts to prove their citizenship and display their uplifted (and middle class) status. Following the riot, African Americans were thus largely denied national protection. Many were forced into silence, as their feelings would be too dangerous to express openly.<sup>91</sup> And so, with the exception of Chesnutt’s novel, which provides only a fictional account of the riot, the African American response to this sign of their exclusion from national belonging remains mostly lost to history.<sup>92</sup>

One of the key remaining documents, however, provides a devastating account of the days following the riot while recording the helplessness, despair, and

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<sup>91</sup> For a detailed description of the African American response to the riot, see Leon Prather’s *We Have Taken a City*.

<sup>92</sup> Though less critically acclaimed and less well-known, one other contemporary novel was written about the Wilmington Riot. David Bryant Fulton, under the pseudonym Jack Thorne, published *Hanover; Or, The Persecution of the Lowly. Story of the Wilmington Massacre* in 1901.

bitterness many African Americans felt as a result of their status in the nation. The “Letter by a Negro Woman to President William McKinley,” included in the 2000 Wilmington Race Riot Commission report,<sup>93</sup> relies at once on the writer’s anonymity—“I cannot sign my name and live”—and on citizenship status as a rightful claim to aid. “[F]rom the depths of [her] heart,” the writer appeals to President McKinley’s sympathy and implores his help.<sup>94</sup> Shifting the blame from the race to the powers that be, she asks: “Why do you forsake the negro?” Foregoing the right to national belonging, if doing so will grant her any protection, the writer states that “If you would send us all to Africa on we will be willing or a number of us will gladly go.” Condemning the nation itself, she asks: “Is this the land of the free and the home of the brave? How can the Negro Sing My Country tis of Thee?” After demanding that, for “Humanity’s sake,” for “Christ’s sake,” the president help Wilmington’s African Americans, the writer concludes: “To day we are mourners in a strange land with no protection near.”<sup>95</sup> This letter makes the link between feeling and national belonging—legal and affective—explicit. Without protection, and without sympathy, or “heart with heart” feeling, she is “in a strange land” that she cannot claim as her own. In this land, she must manage her affects to survive, knowing she is not included in its “people,” and is therefore held to different “standards of feeling.”

While Chesnutt never gives up his claim to national belonging, his affective response to the Wilmington Riot reinforces a relation to the nation that is predicated

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<sup>93</sup> “Letter From a Negro Woman to President William McKinley.” Charles Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition* ed. Werner Sollors (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012), 303-304.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 303.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 304.

on something like bitterness. Along with the “burning anger” his daughter notes he felt, the riot also made him “feel personally humiliated, and ashamed for the country and state,”<sup>96</sup> as he wrote to Walter Hines Page just a month after it occurred. Signed “Sorrowfully,” the letter records the complex state of feeling the riot elicited in Chesnutt. While the novel was a response to these feelings, he still meant for it to “entertain” and be “satisfying to the emotions” of his readers; he also included “a love story with a happy ending,” as if to counteract or manage the bitterness so present in the novel’s final pages.<sup>97</sup> As much as he advocated developing shared interracial feeling as the remedy for curing race prejudice, and he quite explicitly intends *The Marrow of Tradition* to fulfill this function, the anger, shame, humiliation, and sorrow he felt after the riot remained behind a veil of his own. Chesnutt felt the racial divide acutely, and it remained one he could not bridge. Responding to a “private and confidential” letter from Booker T. Washington, Chesnutt wrote: “My love I keep for my friends, and my friends are those who treat me fairly. I admire your Christ-like spirit in loving the Southern whites, but I confess I am not up to it.”<sup>98</sup> The racial uplift movement, as epitomized in Washington’s philosophy and as often reflected in his own ideology, continued to “ask too much of human nature.” Indeed, Chesnutt’s letter suggests that it would take a “Christ-like” strength to manage the affects caused by Southern injustices, and that bitterness, though it is beyond the “standards of feeling” demanded by the racial uplift movement, is a product

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<sup>96</sup> Chesnutt, *To Be An Author*, 116.

<sup>97</sup> “Charles Chesnutt’s Own View of His New Story, *The Marrow of Tradition*.”

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 187. In the letter, written on August 11, 1903, Chesnutt critiques Washington’s position on the franchise in harsh terms. He called Washington’s justification for limiting voting rights according to qualification “a complete acquiescence in the withdrawal of the ballot from the Negro,” an acceptance of African Americans’ lack of representation, and a willingness to throw himself “at the mercy of the whites” rather than make a rightful claim to “your share of government” (185). “You need not approve it,” he chides Washington, as by doing so he is “tying the hands of the friends of the race who would be willing and able to cry out against the injustice” (185-186).

of human nature—and therefore a right that cannot be denied, even as it is circumscribed. If, as Chesnutt claims, “there is no more powerful factor than sentiment in the conduct of human affairs,” then there was no place more crucial to intervene than the affective gulfs caused by the nation’s racial divide.<sup>99</sup> These gulfs, as seen in Paul Laurence Dunbar’s *The Sport of the Gods*, can infiltrate and destroy the family unit even outside of the segregated and racially-violent South.

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<sup>99</sup> Charles Chesnutt, “Obliterating the Color Line,” *Essays and Speeches*, 171.

## CHAPTER TWO

Tasting Bitterness: Family Affects and Blues Naturalism in  
Paul Laurence Dunbar's *The Sport of the Gods*

*Could they restore to him his wife or his son or his daughter, his quiet happiness  
or his simple faith?*

—Paul Laurence Dunbar, 1902

“Whom the Gods wish to destroy they first make mad.”<sup>1</sup> So states the narrator of Paul Laurence Dunbar’s fourth and final novel, *The Sport of the Gods* (1902). Drawn from Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, Dunbar’s title positions this tale as a family tragedy set in motion by feeling’s failure to measure up. Just as Lear’s demand that each of his daughters declare their love to his satisfaction leads to his family’s destruction, Dunbar’s own Hamilton family struggles to feel according to the dictates of family attachment demanded by the racial uplift movement and prescribed by uplift literary production. As Dunbar’s title suggests, the “Gods”—understood in the novel as the divine forces of American racism and history—make the project of racial uplift through the black family a near impossible project. This paradox is the primary site of Dunbar’s critique. At the same time, he shows that the Hamiltons’ attachment to untenable family ideals, in whatever form, precipitates their downfall. In critiquing racial uplift’s ideal notions of family, Dunbar breaks with the genre conventions of his peers, becoming the first African American author to adopt naturalism. Turning to the naturalist novel, Dunbar unmasks negative feelings and thus destabilizes the central ideals and beliefs at the center of racial uplift ideology and literature. To do so, *The Sport of the Gods* presents a portrait of the

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Laurence Dunbar, *The Sport of the Gods* (New York: Signet Classics, 2011), 49. All subsequent references to this text will be cited parenthetically.

affective dissolution and insecure attachments that, for him, characterize the ontology of the black family during the nadir of American race relations.

*Sport* tells the story of the black Hamilton family's affective devastation. Berry, Fannie, and their two children, Joe and Kitty, live in a postbellum South that appears safe and peaceful. However, the irony of their apparent security cannot be missed. Its veneer cracks when their white employers, the Oakleys, falsely accuse Berry of theft. Following this incident, which reveals the tenuous and insidious state of interracial attachment, Berry is sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. Fannie, Joe, and Kitty then move North after being evicted by their employers and rejected by the southern black community. After arriving in New York, their family attachment quickly dissolves until each member of the family reaches what the novel deems a tragic end.<sup>2</sup> Ultimately, the novel's greatest tragedy is not the destruction of family, but the destruction of feeling.

Driven "mad" by the "Gods," the Hamiltons undergo a series of personal and collective affective metamorphoses that lead to apathy. Each of these metamorphoses corresponds to environmental pressures over which they have little control. Yet the narrator also blames these changes on the personal failures, flaws, and desires that seemingly contribute to the family's downfall and dissolution. As the novel hints, idealizing family, in whatever form, is damaging in its own right, as it curtails the individual's freedom to feel outside the dictates of racial uplift.

Leading racial uplift proponents like Anna Julia Cooper, Mary Church Terrell, Nannie Helen Burroughs, W.E.B Du Bois, and Frances Watkins Harper situated the

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<sup>2</sup> This chapter draws on Melanie Klein's early attachment theory. See Hanna Segal, *The Introduction to Melanie Klein* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1973). This chapter is also in dialogue with Jillmarie Murphy's *Monstrous Kinships: Realism and Attachment Theory in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Novels* (2011).

family at the center of racial uplift. They saw the home itself as the place where uplift ideology must be adhered to most strictly, for it was within this arena that families and individuals were made fit to enter the public sphere and to represent the race as a whole. As Michele Mitchell argues in *Righteous Propagation*, race activists “were imbued with a politicized mission to change the habits, environments, morals, and lives of African Americans.” From 1890-1920, she writes, “black discourse about domestic spaces maintained that the weal or woe of African Americans was bound up in the purification of home environments.”<sup>3</sup> For example, Burroughs encouraged African Americans to “view the home as the primary agent in racial progress.” Terrell, leader of the *National Association of Colored Women*, vowed to make “more homes, better homes, purer homes”; only then could the race could become “truly great.”<sup>4</sup> Cooper similarly argued that “[a] race is but a total of families. The nation is the aggregate of its homes.”<sup>5</sup> The outpouring of instruction manuals for properly maintaining the home; behavioral guides for wives, mothers, and husbands; the creation and growth of institutions like The National Association of Colored Women, the circulation of journals such as *Women’s Era*, *Our Women and Children*, *The A.M.E. Church Review*, and *The Colored American Magazine*; lecture tours on home and family management; and the rapid increase of published poetry, short stories, dramas, and novels by black authors modeling proper family life as the way towards racial progress, all attest to the pressure put on black families and individuals to uplift the race through regulating feelings, as well as material

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<sup>3</sup> Michele Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation: African Americans and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction* (2004), 12, 148.

<sup>4</sup> Mary Church Terrell, “The Progress of Colored Women; An address delivered before the National American Women’s Suffrage Association . . . February 18, 1898, on the occasion of its Fiftieth Anniversary” (Washington: Smith Brothers, 1898), 10-11. Ida B. Wells Papers, Special Collections, University of Chicago, box 5, folder 13.

<sup>5</sup> Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice From the South* (Xenia, Ohio: The Aldine Printing House, 1892), 29.

conditions, in the private sphere. Roles within the family needed to be clarified, and attachment to the ideal construct of the family which these texts, institutions, and racial leaders preached so vehemently, thus needed to be enforced.

Creating the ideal home atmosphere was of paramount importance to racial progress. *Hall's Moral and Mental Capsule: for the Economic and Domestic Life of the Negro, as a Solution of the Race Problem* (1905) illustrates the widespread emphasis on creating the ideal atmosphere in the private sphere. In this fairly typical text, Josie Briggs Hall states that the home atmosphere should be "so pure that the good influences passing out from one family could penetrate the center of all the others."<sup>6</sup> The capacious 1902 *Afro-American Home Manual* similarly promises to teach readers "what to do and how to do it" in order to achieve "success in life."<sup>7</sup> From chapters on "The True Lady," "The True Gentleman," to sections on "Courtship, Marriage, and Domestic Life," and essays on "The Model Husband," "The Model Wife," and "Home Pastimes and Amusements," the manual provides readers with detailed instructions for implementing the proper rules for family and social life.

*Hall's Moral and Mental Capsule* and the *Afro-American Home Manual*,<sup>8</sup> like racial uplift literature, prescribe unrealistic practice. The characters in *Sport* cannot fulfill

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<sup>6</sup> Josie Briggs Hall, *Hall's Moral and Mental Capsule: for the Economic and Domestic Life of the Negro, as a Solution of the Race Problem* (Dallas, Tex: Rev. R.S. Jenkins, 1905), 41.

<sup>7</sup> Garland Irvine Penn, *Afro-American Home Manual and Practical Self-Educator Showing What To Do and How To Do It Being a Complete Guide to Success in Life . . . With Articles by Professor I Garland Penn and many other distinguished men of the African Race* (Atlanta: Phillips-Boyd, 1902).

<sup>8</sup> Similar manuals include Sutton E. Griggs' *Guide to Racial Greatness; or, the Science of Collective Efficiency* (1923), Eugene Harris's *An Appeal for Social Purity in Negro Homes: A Tract* (1898), and William Noel Johnson's *Common Sense in the Home* (1902). In addition, texts like Helen H. Richard's *Euthenics: The Science of Controllable Environment; A Plea for Better Living Conditions As a First Step Toward Higher Human Efficiency* (1910) and sociological reports like the 1914 *Morals and Manners Among Negro Americans. Report of a Social Study Made by Atlanta University* (edited by W.E.B. Du Bois and Augustus Granville Dill) participate in the larger discourse on the methods and obstacles to improving home environments.



the role of “Model Husband” or “Model Wife” when they have little control over their circumstances. Moreover, as the novel progresses, the pressure asserted by idealized notions of the black family become affectively corrosive. *The Sport of the Gods* thus suggests the impossibility of maintaining the “uplifted” African American family when there is no place for it in Jim Crow America.

While the novel starts by presenting a loving and content family, it ends with Berry and Fannie returning to a home where they have nothing left but time “to taste all of the bitterness.”<sup>9</sup> In the novel’s final lines, we learn that “It was not a happy life, but it was all that was left to them, and they took it up without complaint.” For, “after what they had endured no wound had power to give them pain” (144). In a state without “pain” or “happiness,” they are left in an affective stasis marked by a bitterness that they taste but do not feel. Hurt beyond feeling, Berry and Fannie exemplify the bitter consequences of believing in impossible family ideals. The Hamiltons’ attachment to idealized versions of the family limits their ability to conceive of less affectively-restricting forms of belonging that would leave open freer structures of feeling.

Dunbar’s novel suggests that both the insecurity of family due to racial volatility and the restrictive notion of family prescribed by racial uplift philosophy can lead to apathy. Arriving at a state of apathy, Berry and Fannie accept the racist structures of America. They cannot feel, and so cannot work towards a better future. Defined by *The Oxford English Dictionary* in 1894 as “inmotivity” and “lack of emotional sensibility,” and then in 1921 as “affectlessness, detachment; alienation; incapacity to feel emotion,” apathy for the Hamiltons becomes a state of unfeeling acceptance of failed ideals and

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<sup>9</sup> Paul Laurence Dunbar, *The Sport of the Gods* (New York: Signet Classics, 2011), 136, 144. Subsequent references cited parenthetically.

family tragedy.<sup>10</sup> Affect theorists understand affect itself as “bodily capacities to affect and be affected,” or the feeling of liveness.<sup>11</sup> As such, Berry and Fannie’s final apathy renders them metaphorically outside of the circuit of the living, and outside of racial uplift altogether.

Characterized by shame, anger, guilt, grief, bitterness, insecurity, sadness, and finally apathy, the affective structure of the family Dunbar’s novel outlines gives little hope that the home offers respite from the violence and oppression of the political and social sphere at the beginning of the twentieth century. Turning inward to this most private of spaces and perhaps the most idealized racial construct at the turn of the century, *The Sport of the Gods* reveals the painful consequences of holding onto racial uplift philosophy in the home. Situating this novel within the discourse of racial uplift ideology and literature, and within Dunbar’s own oeuvre, this chapter asks: What does racial uplift feel like in the private sphere? How does this feeling take shape in the literary production of the period? What does Dunbar’s naturalist intervention tell us about the affective history of family during the racial uplift movement?

*The Sport of the Gods*, like *The Marrow of Tradition*, points to an ideological and political crossroads between racial uplift philosophy and literary representations of racial uplift in practice. Racial uplift leaders, texts, and writers imagine progress is on the other side of practice, that modeling behavior on uplift ideology leads to specific results.

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<sup>10</sup> Oxford University Press. *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). For a more contemporary understanding of apathy, we can look to Lauren Berlant. Here, apathy is an effect of “political depression,” a “mode of what might be called detachment” that constitutes an ongoing attachment to “life-building modalities that can no longer be said to be doing their work, and which indeed make obstacles to the desires that animate them.” “Cruel Optimism,” in *The Affect Theory Reader*, 97. Dunbar presents an early imagining of this state in the Hamiltons’ return.

<sup>11</sup> Patricia Ticineto Clough, Introduction. *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, edited by Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Halley, 1-33 (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 2.

Through uplifting one's family in the private sphere, the entire race will be uplifted. That is, African Americans will be recognized as equals and granted full citizenship rights. In *Sport*, Dunbar shows racial uplift, through the failed figure of the family, at its bleakest and most ambivalent to be a "maddening" project. Rather than directly protesting against lynch law and mob violence, legal segregation, political disenfranchisement, or explicitly writing against popular literature that promotes nostalgia for slavery and incites racial violence, *Sport* enters the space of the home to record how these facts and myths structuring social and political life are experienced affectively and thus shape attachment within the family.

Moreover, through Joe and Kitty Hamiltons' attempts to form new types of attachment, Dunbar reveals the ways racial uplift ideology curtails individual affects and aspirations. Yet he also suggests that adhering to individual inclinations offers no more protection against the affectively destructive force of American racism than the collective practice of racial uplift within the private sphere. In reimagining family affects, *Sport* implies that a kind of affective liberation can come from claiming negative feelings and difficult attachments. Infusing his naturalist novel with a blues structure of feeling, Dunbar imagines new forms of attachment.

Beginning with a discussion of Dunbar's place in the racial uplift literary canon, this chapter argues that in writing *Sport* Dunbar creates a new genre, which I term blues naturalism. Dunbar's blues naturalism sets him apart from his peers, as its blues structure of feeling situates his novel outside of racial uplift's affective parameters. The novel therefore serves as a corrective to racial uplift literary and cultural production that prescribes limitations on affective experience. Using Dunbar's early theory on family as a

counterpoint to *Sport*, I look at the forms of attachment that dictate the Hamiltons' affective experience as they move through different models of the family, in both the North and South. In revealing the insecurity of attachment in these notions of family, Dunbar's blues sensibility embraces unmasking feeling through perpetual mourning for lost family. At the same time, it makes room for individual affects and aspirations that do not conform to racial uplift's terms of family attachment.

#### I. "Bated Breath and Aching Heart": Dunbar on Racial Uplift's Genres and Feelings

Racial uplift philosophy ultimately depends on the aspiration towards an ideal. The notion of "uplift" itself points to a status the race will attain when they are recognized, through their own hard work and the transformation of the white public's vision, as the ideal to which their practice and philosophy aspires. Kevin Gaines' seminal study, *Uplifting the Race*, offers a useful summary of this construct. "Racial uplift ideals," Gaines argues, "were offered as a form of cultural politics, in the hope that unsympathetic whites would relent and recognize the humanity of middle-class African Americans, and their potential for the citizenship rights black men had possessed during Reconstruction."<sup>12</sup> As "a form of cultural politics," racial uplift ideals drive the pressure to conformity. In other words, racial uplift ideology promises its practitioners that if they conform to its standards they will reach uplift's ultimate ideal. This ideal is worth attaining not simply because of the citizenship rights that would follow. Equally important are the *feelings* having such rights would make available. Published in the September 1900 issue of *The Colored American Magazine*, the poem "Afro-American"

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<sup>12</sup> Kevin Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 4.

illustrates the constraints on feeling race relations impose on black Americans. In its final lines, the poet writes: “For long, in vain, we’ve sought / Freedom to feel.”<sup>13</sup> In order to become attached to an ideal and work towards it, one needs the promise of rewarding affects.<sup>14</sup> In this case, the reward is the feeling of freedom, or the freedom to feel. The racial uplift movement promises good feeling is on the other side of its practice, but only if one steadily works towards a prescribed set of ideals.

The Hamiltons’ final acceptance that they are “powerless[ness] against some Will infinitely stronger than their own” (144) highlights why Dunbar’s place within the uplift canon is tenuous at best. Scholars have thoroughly debated the politics of his writing for over a century, and most often argue over whether his dialect poetry, for which he is most famous, formally reproduced the racist beliefs of his era. Many have recently recuperated Dunbar as far more politically astute and subversive than has previously been acknowledged.<sup>15</sup> The 2010 collection *We Wear the Mask* sets out to correct the view that Dunbar simply portrayed “negative stereotypes to satisfy a white reading public.”<sup>16</sup> While much of the criticism on *The Sport of the Gods* has centered on Dunbar’s recreation and

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<sup>13</sup> Charles Fred Wright, “Afro-American.” *The Colored American Magazine* (September 1900), 245.

<sup>14</sup> See Sara Ahmed’s *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010) for more on how the reward of happiness, or good feeling, has been used to order society. That is, she argues that happiness has been promised to those who are willing to live their lives properly, and that the happy ideal has been used to direct individuals and groups towards particular life choices rather than others.

<sup>15</sup> Margaret Ronda, for example, turns away from debates on dialect and argues that much of his poetry critiques the southern labor system and Booker T. Washington’s uplift ideology more particularly. Margaret Ronda, “‘Work and Wait Unwearying’: Dunbar’s Georgics,” *PMLA* 127.4 (October 2012): 863-878, 864.

<sup>16</sup> Willie J. Harrell argues that Dunbar used dialect “not only represent his race in a positive light but also to show that beneath the surface lay a disguised protest against their treatment as second-class citizens.” Introduction to *We Wear the Mask: Paul Laurence Dunbar and the Politics of Representative Reality*, edited by Willie J. Harrell, Jr., ix-xvii (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 2010), xiii. Casey Inge claims, as well, that *Sport* does not render Dunbar the “‘mouthpiece of plantation literature,’” but that it instead highlights his understanding of the “pathology inherent in the discourse of the (racial) family.” “Family Functions: Disciplinary Discourses and (De)Constructions of the ‘Family’ in ‘The Sport of the Gods,’” *Calloloo* 20.1 (Winter 1997): 226-242, 240.

valorization of plantation myths and politics, critics increasingly find that the novel does important work to dismantle such popular rhetoric.<sup>17</sup> In a recent article on *Sport*, Thomas Alan Dichter claims that rather than capitulating to racist stereotypes, Dunbar “maps the network of beliefs that engendered such stereotypes in the first place.”<sup>18</sup> But this is not to say that Dunbar’s writing supports the racial uplift doctrine that took center stage in many of his peer’s novels. Instead, in showing the impossibility of escaping “the shadow of slavery,”<sup>19</sup> Dunbar challenges the premise of racial uplift itself.

Without the promise that ideals can be realized, that “slavery’s shadow” can be escaped, African Americans would have little impetus to put racial uplift philosophy into practice. Yet Dunbar was not entirely accommodationist, although this is partially the case. *Sport* does more than “merely gaze at the wreckage of Reconstruction-era black freedom dreams.”<sup>20</sup> Rather than surrendering to the structures that prove such dreams impossible, Dunbar suggests alternate forms of liberation. *Sport* finds a limited, circumscribed, and painful affective freedom by sidestepping racial uplift ideology’s ideals.

For Dunbar, becoming attached to ideals results in a state of affective ambivalence and even apathy when reality inevitably fails to measure up. The short story “One Man’s Fortune” implies ideals should be abandoned altogether. The story tells the tale of two African American school fellows, Bertram Halliday and Davis Webb. Unlike the accommodationist and savvy Davis, Bertram internalizes the lofty ideals espoused by

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<sup>17</sup> Thomas L. Morgan, “The City as Refuge: Constructing Urban Blackness in Paul Laurence Dunbar’s *The Sport of the Gods* and James Weldon Johnson’s *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*,” *African American Review* 38.2 (Summer 2004): 213-37.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Alan Dichter, “Dunbar and the Discourse of Black Criminality,” *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists* 4.1 (Spring 2016): 65-98, 67.

<sup>19</sup> Harrell, Jr., xvi.

<sup>20</sup> Dichter, 94.

their university. Following their graduation, Bertram strives again and again to find employment that measures up to his ideals. By the time he accepts his limited choices and turns South to “find a school,” the only respectable option available to educated black men, Bertram recognizes that his aspirations have only resulted in greater disappointment and prolonged his search for what he cannot have. After this realization, he writes to Davis, “You were better equipped than I was with a deal of materialism and a dearth of ideals.” Davis, meanwhile, has amassed a decent income by capitulating to racist stereotypes that pay. As a barber, he plays up to his white clientele’s racist expectations and is rewarded handsomely. Reading Bertram’s letter, Davis “Thanks heaven” that he “has no ideals to be knocked into a cockney hat.” In the story’s final line, he concludes: “A colored man has no business with ideals—not in *this* nineteenth century!”<sup>21</sup>

According to Dunbar, then, it is better not to waste time and effort striving towards unattainable ideals. If Addison Gayle, Jr. is right that this story reveals Dunbar’s “true sentiments about the racial problem,”<sup>22</sup> then “One Man’s Fortune” suggests that “a colored man has no business” with racial uplift, “not in *this* nineteenth century!” Racial uplift is thus conditioned in Dunbar’s work by negative affective states that make endeavors towards its ideals unrewarding, and, in some cases, devastating. Moreover, Dunbar implies that the negative affects arising from failed ideals leads to the acceptance of existing social structures, as it feels that there is no way out of a system that punishes rather than rewards attempts to exceed its boundaries.

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<sup>21</sup> Paul Laurence Dunbar, “One Man’s Fortune.” In *The Complete Stories of Paul Laurence Dunbar*, edited by Gene Andrew Jarrett and Thomas Lewis Morgan, 127-139 (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 139. This story first appeared in *The Strength of Gideon and Other Stories* (1900).

<sup>22</sup> Addison Gayle, Jr., *Oak and Ivy: A Biography of Paul Laurence Dunbar* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971), 125, 130.

Accepting one's place in an oppressive social structure requires entering a particular affective state. Survival depends on apathy or numbness of feeling, an affective block that allows, in the case of *The Sport of the Gods*, a return South to the conditions that the Hamiltons sought to escape. The Hamiltons' plight thus speaks to a broader futility, suggesting that the effort to uplift the race not only fails in material terms, but corrupts the private and social spheres by instilling belief in impossible ideals. When these ideals prove unattainable, they produce feelings like shame, anger, guilt, sorrow, and bitterness that can both dissolve families and cement negative attachments that deaden feeling. *Sport* suggests, in other words, that ideals must be reformed or abandoned altogether in order to liberate feeling.

Disillusioning readers of racial uplift literature, *Sport* records rather than resolves the challenges to black family life. In doing so, the novel critiques the dominant strains of racial uplift philosophy that pertain to the family. The novel therefore falls outside the scope of the turn-of-the-century novels that often functioned as uplift manuals and manifestations of its fulfillment.<sup>23</sup> Casey Inge argues, for instance, that we should see *The Sport of the Gods* as "a challenge to the idealization of family by many post-Reconstruction African-American novelists, who viewed family as 'the basis of self-

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<sup>23</sup> For a reading of how post-Reconstruction novels enact racial uplift, particularly through their representation of the home and family, see Claudia Tate, *Domestic Allegories of Political Desire: The Black Heroine at the Turn of the Century* (1992), Michelle Birnbaum, *Race, Work, and Desire in American Literature, 1860-1930* (2003), P. Gabrielle Foreman, *Activist Sentiments: Reading Black Women in the Nineteenth Century* (2009), Daphne Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850-1910* (2006), Koritha Mitchell, *Living with Lynching: African American Lynching Plays, Performance, and Citizenship* (2011), and Andrea Williams, *Dividing Lines: Class Anxiety and Postbellum Fiction* (2013), to name a just few. While much of the critical discourse on the black family at the turn of the century has focused on women writers and women's movements, bringing Dunbar into this conversation opens new ways of thinking about how male writers affectively conceptualized the family and their role in it.



definition and social mobility.”<sup>24</sup> While *Sport* refuses to adhere to this standard, some contemporary critics nonetheless praised the novel as protest fiction and thus as participating in the racial uplift project.

Reviewers claiming the novel a success based their judgement on two factors: whether *Sport* demonstrated the plight of black Americans and whether it elicited the sympathy of white readers. A reviewer for the *Booksellers News Station* found that “No fair-minded person will lay the book down without registering a vow to be more thoughtful to the colored race in future.”<sup>25</sup> The *Philadelphia Item* wrote, similarly, that it is a book to be read with “bated breath and aching heart,” one that teaches readers “how cruel and unwonted is class-hatred, and how anachronistic in these enlightened days is the persecution of a race on a mere plea for a difference of color.”<sup>26</sup> Detroit’s *Free Press*, in contrast, argued that while Dunbar had “a good opportunity to [...] picture the power of his race to rise above misfortune and live down unmerited disgrace,” he instead portrayed “the inherent weaknesses and vices of negro character.” “Mr. Dunbar,” the reviewer concludes, “appears to be a fatalist, for he depicts the Hamiltons as powerless against a Will infinitely stronger than their own. It is not thus that any people is encouraged and enabled to rise above adverse fortune.”<sup>27</sup> By condemning the novel based on its obvious fatalism, this reviewer reflects a general understanding of the expectations, affective and otherwise, placed on race literature. This reviewer fails to see, however, that the Hamiltons’ downfall cannot be blamed on the so-called “inherent weaknesses and

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<sup>24</sup> Inge, 228.

<sup>25</sup> *Booksellers News Station* (New York City, May 15, 1902). *Paul Laurence Dunbar Papers, Ohio Historical Society*, Reel 4.

<sup>26</sup> *Philadelphia Item*. May 17, 1902. Philadelphia. *Paul Laurence Dunbar Papers, Ohio Historical Society*, Reel 4.

<sup>27</sup> *Free Press*, Detroit, May 17, 1902. *Paul Laurence Dunbar Papers, Ohio Historical Society*, Reel 4.

vices of negro character”; rather, an “infinitely stronger Will” compels the condemnation of “negro character” for its own benefit. Yet, even when *Sport* successfully draws on the sympathy of readers by producing a novel that must be read with “bated breath and aching heart,” Dunbar’s lesson may be missed.<sup>28</sup> Unlike the majority of racial uplift texts, literary or otherwise, this novel does not “encourage and enable” a “people” to “rise above adverse fortune,” but instead reveals the inevitable private affective destruction wrought by this “Will,” and even caused by racial uplift philosophies that impose unattainable ideals as a strategy to overcome the “sport” of the American race gods.

Despite the disparity in these reviews, they all implicitly make a claim about what the race novel is supposed to make readers feel, and these feelings, in turn, are based on what the characters themselves feel, as well as on the novel’s own attitude towards its characters. Dunbar offsets the characters’ affective metamorphoses, individually and as a family, with *Sport*’s wry, sardonic narrator, who offers both pity and disdain for the Hamiltons. As these divergent reviews show, *Sport* at once elicits a sympathetic readership and defies the genre of uplift narratives by refusing to allow its characters to “rise above misfortune” and become a model black family. Dunbar makes clear that the Hamiltons, to an extent, are to blame for their own circumstances. Their complicity in their “misfortune,” however, arises from their allegiance to ideals that work against them. That is, Joe Hamilton is not the only member of the family who has been victim to “false ideals” (56). Yet how can they be complicit when their fate is controlled by the “gods”?

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<sup>28</sup> Christine A. Wooley argues that the contemporary market for sympathetic literature, for “stories like Berry’s,” “alters the effects of telling stories like Berry’s.” She claims, further, that in the novel “the feelings that emerge from an affective response to the story of injustice do not alter the sociopolitical conditions that created such injustice” (365-6). See “‘We are not in the old days now’: Paul Laurence Dunbar and the Problem of Sympathy,” *African American Review* 43.2/3 (Summer/Fall 2009): 359-370.

The contradiction between the Hamiltons' complicity and the novel's fatalism creates the novel's complex affective structure. In complicating the characters', narrator's, and even the readers' ability to take a clear emotional stance on the Hamiltons' affective dissolution, Dunbar elevates feeling itself as central to the construction of racial uplift literature, philosophy, and practice.

Thinking about *Sport* in relation to contemporaneous naturalist novels helps to better understand Dunbar's relationship to uplift literature and philosophy. Throughout the 1890s, American naturalist novels attempted to capture the brutalization of the American work force in a modern industrial society. Yet, as Donald Pizer argues, in these works the "writer's stress is not on demonstrating the origins of an inescapable prison but on encouraging the reader to accept the idea that conditions within the prison are so intolerable that its walls must be torn down and its prisoners fed." As such, these writers "concentrate their energies on the unacceptable nature of the condition itself, which suggests that it is this aspect of the problem which has engaged them."<sup>29</sup> In the sense that racial uplift literature encourages readers to remake an unacceptable reality, its texts function similarly to such naturalist novels. The difference lies in uplift's belief that a better future is possible through self-help and altering public opinion. Racial uplift literature is not primarily interested in demonstrating what is wrong, but in providing a guide to how it might be righted, and a vision of what its promised change looks like. *The Sport of the Gods* falls somewhere between white American naturalist novels and racial uplift's texts. In Dunbar's case, the "stress" is on demonstrating that the "prison" is inescapable, as in Frank Norris's *McTeague* (1899), for example. In *Sport*, there is no

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<sup>29</sup> Donald Pizer, "Late Nineteenth-Century American Literary Naturalism: A Re-Introduction," *American Literary Realism* 38.3 (Spring 2006): 189-202, 197.

way to “tear down walls and feed its prisoners.” Yet, while the conditions that make life “intolerable” for black Americans, and for the family itself, certainly interests Dunbar, his naturalist intervention focuses not on potential solutions but on how on living with such conditions feels in the private sphere, and on how to feel beyond the affective constraints put in place by racial uplift.

How can the naturalist novel open up space to feel more freely? By freedom to feel I do not imply that the novel produces “good” feelings. Rather, it offers an unmasking of feeling and in that suggests a limited liberation from the pressure to deny and sublimate “bad” feelings, which, as seen from Chesnutt’s writing, racial uplift ideology and survival in the South both demand. *The Sport of the Gods* is, according to critical consensus, the first African American naturalist novel, and anticipates by several decades the rise of naturalism as a major genre in African American literature.<sup>30</sup> Dunbar’s decision to set the Hamilton family against racist social structures that take on the stature of the Gods suggests that this novel, and the African American naturalist novel more broadly, does not see easy solutions to the problems it presents, and may produce what Sianne Ngai calls “ugly feelings.” As a genre in which the plot proceeds by moving its characters in an inevitable downward spiral, literary naturalism has an inherently negative affective structure.<sup>31</sup> Thus, in a genre that does not strive for positive feeling or cathartic

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<sup>30</sup> In his comprehensive essay on African American naturalism, John Dudley concludes that the “utopian impulse” African American naturalist works reflect “a positive faith in humanity and the conviction that aesthetic representation can engender real change” (271). *The Sport of the Gods* seems to be an exception to this rule, if indeed Dudley’s claim holds true. If, as Dudley claims of Dunbar’s contemporaries, Dunbar’s naturalism has “explicitly political agenda” and creates “a sense of urgency about conditions in Jim Crow America,” neither that agenda nor what that sense of urgency aim toward is clear (263). “African American Writers and Naturalism.” In *The Oxford Handbook of American Literary Naturalism*, edited by Keith Newlin, 257-273 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>31</sup> Sianne Ngai and Lauren Berlant both offer compelling readings on the relationship between genre and affect in American literature and culture. See Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge: Harvard University

resolutions, it becomes possible to consider more fully the negative affects arising from a condition of powerlessness that most texts in the uplift canon sublimate. In this sublimation, such texts prescribe affective masking to prevent the rejection of racial uplift as a practice.

*Sport's* blues sensibility, in part made possible by naturalism's affective structure, offers an alternative to the apathy the Hamiltons suffer as a result of their failed ideals. Critics like Houston Baker have already noted Dunbar's contribution to the blues as genre. Baker in fact calls *Sport* "a blues book most excellent." Drawing on Baker's claim, John Dudley writes that "the naturalist milieu of the novel matches both the audience and the subject matter of the blues music that emerges from this period."<sup>32</sup> While Baker and Dudley consider the novel's blues aesthetic as it reveals the "unpleasant truths" of black life in New York City, the affective structure of the blues also reflects the characters' reluctant acceptance of broken family attachments.

*The Sport of the Gods'* blues affective structure can thus be defined as the conscious acceptance and expression of difficult attachments through which survival of feeling becomes possible when uplift no longer dictates the ideals to which individuals collectively aspire. A blues affective structure allows the individual to survive the feeling of severed attachments. Adopting this structure is not possible, in *Sport*, if a person relies on any form of family unity. By looking to its underlying blues affective structure, we can see that this first African American naturalist novel is not simply a story of familial devastation. Rather, it serves as a model for accepting the certainty of broken ties and

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Press, 2007) and Lauren Berlant, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

<sup>32</sup> Houston A. Baker, Jr., *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 115; Dudley 266.

recognizing that adherence to collective ideals limits freedom of feeling and so can lead not only to devastation, but to total apathy.

Yet Dunbar's blues naturalism counters a wholly apathetic ending and capitulation to naturalism's conventions. *Sport*'s naturalism certainly "highlight[s] the narrative impasse his novel reveals," as Thomas L. Morgan argues. It is true, as well, that "his deterministic prose style reflects the lack of choice available to his black characters in American social space. Again and again," he writes, "Dunbar's text pummels the reader with naturalistic effect to document the over-determination of black characters by white America."<sup>33</sup> But his novel further suggests that black characters are overdetermined by the black family idealism key to the racial uplift movement. This ideal too asserts pressure on individuals that limits not only their choices, but the ways they are allowed to feel within the private sphere. When Du Bois called *Sport* "a source of sociological knowledge," he was referring to its depiction of the hazards of black life in the urban North, but perhaps he also recognized its critique of the affective costs of racial uplift's family ideals as one of the truths the novel could teach.<sup>34</sup> Its blues sensibility, then, works in concert with naturalism to challenge uplift philosophy and literature.

Naturalism seems to offer the least likely literary form for the liberation of feeling. Indeed, the most well-known naturalist novels of the nineteenth century, like Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900), portray characters who accept "that they can sink no lower," that, moreover, they must "unconsciously accept that flight or surrender into oblivion is their only recourse."<sup>35</sup> Such a reading may be true of *Sport*'s primary

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<sup>33</sup> Morgan, 221.

<sup>34</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Black North: A Social Study, New York City," *New York Times* 17 Nov. 1901: 10 and "The Black North: Some Conclusions," *New York Times* 15 Dec. 1901: 20.

<sup>35</sup> Pizer, 201.

characters, who, like the family of King Lear, all suffer for misunderstanding or disobeying the rules for proper attachment. But Dunbar does not leave readers without other avenues for feeling. If we understand genre as Lauren Berlant does in *The Female Complaint*, another reading becomes available. For Berlant, genre is

an aesthetic structure of affective expectation, an institution or formation that absorbs all kinds of small variations or modifications while promising that the persons transacting with it will experience the pleasure of encountering what they expected, with details varying the theme. It mediates what is singular, in the details, and general about the subject. *It is a form of aesthetic expectation with porous boundaries allowing complex audience identifications: it locates real life in the affective capacity to bracket many kinds of structural and historical antagonism on behalf of finding a way to connect with the feeling of belonging in a larger world, however aesthetically mediated.*<sup>36</sup>

By adding the adjective “blues” to the genre of naturalism, we arrive at a new structure of “affective expectation,” one that relocates away from “flight or surrender into oblivion” by making acceptable the “affective capacity” to belong to oneself rather than to a “larger world” that dictates which feelings are permissible even within the comparatively freer space of the home. The blues naturalist novel, as a genre, offers a route towards modes of attachment in the private sphere that do not prescribe limitations on feeling, or call for the masking of negative affect as the price of belonging.

## II. “Kingdoms in Themselves”: Southern Family Affects

Dunbar’s blues sensibility lies dormant in much of his writing. His poem “Unexpressed,” for instance, suggests a burgeoning blues desire to let loose repressed feeling:

Deep in my heart that aches with the repression,  
And strives with plenitude of bitter pain,  
There lives a thought clamors for expression,

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<sup>36</sup> Berlant, 4, emphasis mine.

And spends its undelivered force in vain.<sup>37</sup>

The poem ends as the speaker beats his brow, for the thought he wishes to speak remains unspoken. In sublimating negative thought and feeling, the poem reflects racial uplift's drive towards repressing the full range of affective experience. That is, the speaker's "bitter pain" must remain unarticulated. While many of Dunbar's poems and much of his short prose has a carefree, joyful tone, poems like this one suggest the desire to let bitter, painful thoughts and feelings come to the surface so their "undelivered force" can be spent, if not for the good of the race, then for the individual's relief. This speaker might project happiness outwardly, but his "heart" inwardly "aches" from repressing his affective experience. Just five years before publishing *The Sport of the Gods*, Dunbar solves the problem of repressed feeling not through advocating freer expression, but through suggesting the race redirect its energy toward seemingly realistic ideals that can be upheld in the private sphere.

Despite the fact that he fits uneasily within the category of uplift proponents and writers who upheld family life as the starting point and goal of racial uplift, Dunbar did in fact outline a clear position on the black family that aligns in important ways with that of his peers. While Elizabeth Duquette argues that Dunbar was wary of the potential pitfalls in utilizing the family as a model for the nation, prior to *Sport* he fell in line with this kind of thinking. Yet, at the same time, he seemed aware that in doing so he was "accepting the discriminatory affective structures associated with it."<sup>38</sup> In this case, his understanding of the relationship between the black family and the nation hinged on

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<sup>37</sup> Dunbar, "Unexpressed." In *The Collected Poetry of Paul Laurence Dunbar*, edited by Joanne M. Braxter (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1993) 25.

<sup>38</sup> Elizabeth Duquette, *Loyal Subjects: Bonds of Nation, Race, and Allegiance in Nineteenth-Century America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 157.



altering affective expectations. In Dunbar's deviations from his peers, then, we find not the precise accommodationism of Booker T. Washington per se, which deemphasizes political equality in favor of industrial and agricultural labor, nor the political motivations that spur Anna Julia Cooper's tracts on family reform, but rather a call to give up struggling for uplift itself and instead focus on happiness in family life. In this way, Dunbar provides the perfect complement to Washington's program and antithesis to Cooper's link between family uplift and political equality. That is, Dunbar urges readers to work towards private fulfilment, and in doing so to accept a life of menial labor and racial inequality.

I turn here to an 1897 essay Dunbar penned shortly after completing his first tour in England. In "England as Seen by the Black Man," Dunbar argues that "the Negro needs greatly to learn" the "beauty and perfection of family life."<sup>39</sup> "I must confess," he writes, "that no phase of English social observance struck me more forcibly than this." Drawing on his observations of the "typical middle-class English household," he sets out a formula for black families to follow that relieves affective strain and strengthens collective bonds of attachment, and, at the same time, improves the condition of the race and nation more broadly.

In focusing on perfecting family life, Dunbar offers an alternative "to a state of constant striving after ideals that cannot for many years be attained for the black race."<sup>40</sup> In other words, he imagines that the family image he paints is an ideal attainable in the present. Here is no "constant striving" without reward. Thus, he "would have black men,

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<sup>39</sup> Paul Laurence Dunbar, "England as Seen by a Black Man," *The Independent* (September 16, 1897). In *In His Own Voice: The Dramatic and Other Uncollected Works of Paul Laurence Dunbar*, edited by Herbert Woodward Martin and Ronald Primeau, 176-180 (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2002), 177.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

who are vainly beating their heads against the impregnable wall of adverse circumstances, stop and recognize their limitations—to learn a lesson of these stolid people and cease to fret away their little lives in unavailing effort.” He wants this

for the blacks because I want them to be happy. I do not want them to continue to imbibe the dangerous draught which has intoxicated their white brothers of this Western world and sent them raving madmen, struggling for life at the expense of their fellows in the stock markets and the wheat-pits of our great cities. I would not have black man unambitious; but I would not have them disturb the even course of their lives with feverish dreams—dreams from which but one awakening is possible. Few there are who do not know how little it has taken to make these people happy, from how small a flower they have drawn the honey of joy; but because the blossom has developed, I would not have them ravish the plant.<sup>41</sup>

Dunbar warns against striving towards economic advancement. The capitalist fever that has “intoxicated their white brothers,” he implies, must be eliminated from racial uplift philosophies and practices that aim towards financial upward mobility. Instead, quietly accepting their status as the lower working-class provides African Americans with affective uplift. That is, he offers “happiness” rather than the devastating affective “awakening” that comes when dreams prove impossible to fulfill. He shifts the goal from racial uplift to protecting emotional well-being and attachments in the private sphere. In other words, the race should be satisfied by the ability to keep its families together. Dunbar offers a philosophy that, when practiced, can make the lives of African Americans simple and enjoyable once the larger striving for cultural, social, and political uplift no longer “disturb[s] the even course of their lives.” And embracing and cultivating family is the route towards this happiness.

Yet, in portraying the “typical middle-class English family,” Dunbar already sets his readers up for disillusionment and failure. As becomes apparent in *Sport*, the same

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 180.

standards idealized in this essay cannot apply to black families in the US. By way of addressing the specific ways African American families should learn from his essay, he provides a window into an idyllic scene of middle-class English family life. One can only feel “simple delight,” he claims, when witnessing the lives of “great, strong, big [English] families.” Here Dunbar invites his readers to envision the potential black family home that, being observed, also elicits “simple delight” in the scene of the “father with his group of sturdy sons grouped around him, the mother in the midst of her healthful, hearty daughters.” Such families, he claims, are “kingdom[s] in themselves.”<sup>42</sup> The English family Dunbar idealizes is self-sustaining. Their needs, materially and affectively, are met by each other. Each family member fulfills a specific role that keeps the family as it is: the father gathers his “sturdy” sons about him, the mother draws her “healthful, hearty” daughters to her. In this implied distinction of gendered spaces and roles, the essay prescribes the behavioral patterns to which men and women should adhere in order to reproduce this structure by teaching their sons and daughters their place in the family. Here Dunbar’s essay falls in line with African American behavioral manuals that set such criteria. In this scene, Dunbar suggests a division of affective and domestic labor: the men provide strength and steadiness, materially providing for the family and creating the feeling of safety, while the women who are “healthful” feed the family and fill it with “cheer” through their “heartiness.” As “kingdoms in themselves,” such families provide each other with security and happiness, but this happiness and security requires a particular practice and structure of feeling, and, importantly, a social structure set up to support it.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 177.

The “beauty and perfection of family life” looks different when Dunbar turns from the middle-class English family to the rural black southern working-class family at the turn of the century. The lessons they need “greatly to learn” pertain to the family, but more importantly, to a racial structure of feeling that requires shifting through a change of perspective. That structure then needs to be kept in place in the private and social spheres. Looking to the English family, which Dunbar urges African Americans to do through traveling abroad but which his essay enables readers to do from their homes in the US, facilitates an affective transformation that makes staying in America, and in the South more particularly, endurable and potentially happy. Time abroad would allow African Americans the chance to “cool in their blood the fever-heat of strife” before returning to the rightful home that they “love” and “revere.” Having learned from the English a valuable lesson on obedience to authority, collective spirit, and “strength from a strong people,” Dunbar would have African Americans come home and “use that power, if it be vouchsafed for him to use it in no other way, in just living and loving and being quiet.”<sup>43</sup>

“Living and loving and being quiet” is a better option than that with which *The Sport of the Gods* ends, but it is still an idealized vision that advocates accepting the racist structures of American politics and social practice. Thus, while he agrees with racial uplift leaders on the gendered roles each family member should adopt, and similarly ascribes to bourgeois middle-class values, the idealized family for Dunbar functions not as an uplift narrative or practice. Rather, it serves as a method for survival by strengthening family attachment, accepting racial hierarchy, and purging negative

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 180.

feeling. Accepting conditions as they are, in turn, should allow for “quiet happiness” rather than the bitterness, rage, and grief that comes from endeavoring for uplift without the promise of reward. Dunbar’s essay thus suggests a kind of affective accommodationism disguised as private practice rather than public racial politics. While turning inward to private happiness does not necessarily entail accommodationist practice, for Dunbar it means stasis in industry, society, and politics. Through cultivating happiness exclusively in family life, African Americans eliminate the “Negro Problem,” as they cease working towards public change. In “being quiet,” African American families may be able to “live and love,” but they give up racial uplift’s broader aspirations that are in fact meant to protect their lives and happiness.

When Dunbar published *Sport* in 1901, he took a family that could not look like that portrayed in “England as Seen by the Black Man.” While the Hamiltons attempt to form a “kingdom in themselves” by adopting the lessons Dunbar believed African Americans needed to learn, they live in a post-slavery dependence on the white Oakleys that makes family autonomy and “simple happiness” impossible. The novel’s opening pages ironically suggest that the Hamilton’s home provides the same idyllic refuge as does the English family’s. However, the fact that it is situated on a former plantation situates the Hamilton family in relation to the history of slavery, which still asserts pressure in the present. Dunbar’s ideal family cannot be embodied in this race or place. In his failed transposition, Dunbar suggests that the will to become such a family matters little when there are greater institutional and cultural forces at work. Attempting to uphold racial uplift’s family ideals is another kind of “constant striving” with “unavailing effort.”

The Hamiltons are, for all intents and purposes, “living and loving and being quiet,” but doing so promises no sure protection against the forces of American racism. The black Hamiltons and white Oakleys share a seemingly benign attachment, but the atmosphere they have created is insecure, and the Oakley’s affection a source of imminent terror. The Oakleys wield a nearly divine power over the Hamiltons, as they can decide their fates at their will. In essence, *Sport* flouts Dunbar’s own vision of family in “England as Seen by the Black Man.” It therefore undoes the affective accommodationism that there serves as a strategy for surviving racial oppression in America while living in the South. The novel suggests there is no strategy that can win in a battle with the Gods.

*The Sport of the Gods* thus serves as an antidote to contemporaneous African American novels that reproduce normative racial uplift ideals about the family that, by 1901, Dunbar seems to find affectively damaging in their representation, to the extent they serve as structures to be emulated. Take, for example, J. McHenry Jones’ *Hearts of Gold: A Novel* (1896), Amelia E. Johnson’s *Clarence and Corinne; or God’s Way* (1890), Frances Harper’s *Iola Leroy* (1892), *Minnie’s Sacrifice* (1869), *Sowing and Reaping* (1876-77), and *Trial and Triumph* (1888-89), all of which end with the happy union of a married couple who then raise a new generation that will continue to work towards racial uplift. *Hearts of Gold* closes by noting that its own happy couples are not unlike “the thousand and one happy families that pass unnoticed day by day.” The family’s contentment “is ample pay for all the struggles and sorrows of the past.” “After sorrow,” which arises during the struggle for the ideal, comes “joy.”<sup>44</sup> These novels

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<sup>44</sup> J. McHenry Jones, *Hearts of Gold: A Novel* (College Park, Maryland: McGrath Publishing Company, 1969), 297-298.

suggest a fairly straight-forward affective trajectory. In the effort towards uplift there will be sorrow, but individuals will achieve uplift, and joyful contentment will naturally follow. And this uplift materializes in the ability to produce happy families, to create contentment and stability in the private sphere. By instilling belief in this trajectory from sorrow to joy, from struggle to success, from ideal to its actualization, the writers of racial uplift literature mislead the readers they hope to inspire into practicing the lessons they teach. By turning a novel like *Hearts of Gold* on its head in *Sport*, Dunbar implies the need for more realistic representations of black family life that do not teach readers to repress their own affects in service of unattainable ideals.

*The Sport of the Gods* reverses the affective trajectory of uplift novels like *Hearts of Gold*. Dunbar takes an already happy family and ends as they accept a state of despairing, bitter apathy. With a characteristic clarity of vision the Hamiltons, in their naiveté, have not yet achieved, from the beginning the narrator hints at the insecurity of their assumed simple happiness. While the children's lives are "pleasant and carefully guarded," they live in the shadow of the Oakley's home. Living in this shadow, the Hamiltons model themselves after white families, teach their children white values, and alienate themselves from the African American community that could have offered them strength, refuge, and some sense of autonomy from the upper-class white society on which they are ideological and economically dependent. The general loving cheerfulness that defines the affective structure of the Hamilton family at the novel's start is thus a polished veneer that hides the dangerous foundation on which their happiness rests.

The interracial domestic unit, or "kingdom" the Hamiltons form with the Oakleys, endangers them from the beginning. As Inge argues, Oakley's inability to have children

of his own forces him “to exercise his ‘sympathetic imagination’ in order to complete his nuclear family.”<sup>45</sup> Oakley’s unfulfilled desire for his own nuclear family precludes the Hamiltons from having a merely economic relationship with the Oakleys. The attachment the families form is thus far more insidious than that of employer and employee, if such an interracial relation is even possible in the postbellum South. Because their private lives are intertwined, and thus take on familial affective dimensions, the Hamiltons’ happiness in the private sphere is dependent on the Oakleys’ good will and affection.

At the same time, however, the Hamiltons’ precarious position cannot be blamed on the Oakleys alone, as the narrator insists that the Hamiltons’ beliefs and ideals are flawed. Having reciprocated the affection the Oakleys demand of their employees, the Hamiltons accept their place in a system that reproduces the plantation tradition and the politics it prescribes. In the formation of this odd family unit, the Hamiltons recreate a myth of white paternalism that appears benevolent, and that experience as benevolent for a time. While the novel’s very first sentence points back to slavery, it simultaneously sets up the Hamilton home as a “relief” for the reader who is accustomed to hearing “so much said in regret for the old days” (1). But this pronouncement is more obfuscation than promise. Within a few chapters, it becomes clear that in moments of crisis, the “family” they form with the Oakleys takes on the affective valence of the relationship which existed between slave and master. That is, the Oakleys consider the Hamiltons family only when convenient. Race loyalty subsumes whatever form of kinship has been established across racial lines in the home sphere.

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<sup>45</sup> Inge, 234.



The cheerful atmosphere existing between the Oakleys and Hamiltons quickly evaporates when Berry is accused of stealing Francis Oakley's nine hundred and eighty-six dollars. In fact, Frank pocketed this money himself to secretly pay his gambling debts. Yet the nine hundred and eighty-six dollars is nearly the exact amount Berry accumulated in savings while working for the Oakleys, and which he has just put in the bank. Maurice Oakley condemns him based on this fact alone. Acting as judge and jury, he sentences the Hamiltons because they have, most simply put, hurt his feelings by refusing to be "faithful" and "content"—by valuing more than their "immediate necessities"—though this is in fact what they have been. By saving money, Berry broke the affective contract Oakley imagined a reality rather than simply an ideal he enforces to maintain the illusion of his "invented family."<sup>46</sup> In producing a "happy life," the Hamiltons did not account the price they must pay for interlacing their family so intimately with the Oakleys' own.

The scene of Berry's arrest is the first of many to stage the grief of family separation as an ideological rupture that produces an affective transformation, either individually or collectively. As seen by the severity of Oakley's feelings, race politics extend beyond the public sphere and are imposed intimately, privately. These politics shape relationships, condition attachment, and facilitate power imbalances, and thus infect this faux family unit from the start. An insidious force, southern race consciousness can take on the guise of benevolent friendship, but it also allows Oakley to assume Berry's guilt. While, as Inge points out, Oakley's paternalism remains benign as long as there is "domestic harmony," attention to Oakley's affective transformation is even more telling.<sup>47</sup> Oakley turns to the language of race to mask his sense of betrayal. Although he

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<sup>46</sup> Inge, 235.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

feels angry and hurt, he cannot let it appear that he has been personally injured, as a friend or family member might be, by Berry. Indeed, when Frank does finally confess the truth by letter, Oakley is surprised that his wife shows concern for Berry, and asks: ““What is Berry to Frank? What is that nigger to my brother? What are his sufferings to the honor of my family name?”” (110).

Linking *Sport* to the slave narrative rather than to the plantation tradition, Dunbar clarifies the literary tradition in which the novel participates and illuminates the extent to which black family stability depends on the mercy of whites in power. Now, as then, appeals to sympathy fall on uncaring ears. Both Oakley and his wife coldly reject Fannie’s desperate appeals that they recognize her husband’s innocence and remember the long years they have known and cared for them. Mrs. Oakley replies only that it “all seems perfectly plain, and Mr. Oakley knows better than any of us, you know” (26). In the full surrender to Oakley’s will and feeling, there can be no empathy shared between white and black, men or women. While Dunbar’s narrator relies more on irony than Chesnutt’s in *The Marrow of Tradition*, *Marrow’s* revelation that once the “race cry” has been issued, “friendship, religion, humanity, reason, all shrivel up like dry leaves in a furnace” again proves true.<sup>48</sup> In this novel, the “race cry” is far more private and personal, but it has the same effects. The “full horror” of the Hamiltons’ situation is not only that Berry has gone from trusted, loyal friend and servant to “damned hound” in Oakley’s eyes. Rather, it is that in this transition the very foundation of their beliefs, their idealization of the Oakley’s paternalism, their faith in family and friendship, sympathy and trust, have all been shaken.

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<sup>48</sup> Charles Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition*, edited by Werner Sollors (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012), 168.

This moment of family crisis illuminates the volatility of interracial attachment by reversing the family crisis that takes up *The Marrow of Tradition*'s ending. In that case the white Cartarets offered the feeling and fact of their biological kinship in order to keep their own family together. Here Dunbar presents the opposite. It is the black family in crisis, and the white family who withholds recognition as pseudo kin, offering not even sympathy in its stead. The Hamiltons are employees, yet it is as if they have been asked to accept something like family affection as their pay. The money exchanging hands, in other words, has been made invisible through affection. Indeed, Oakley's certainty that Berry could not have saved over nine hundred dollars suggests he pays little attention to the monetary aspect of their exchange. In her study of interracial work relationships in the late-nineteenth to early twentieth century, Michele Birnbaum argues that "the workplace is the postbellum site of affective engagement across the color-line." White employers, she writes, routinely exploited "the overlapping rhetorics of family and work that were imported from domestic slavery to domestic service at mid-century."<sup>49</sup> The "affective engagement" that makes it possible to imagine that the fiction of family obligation can take the place of monetary compensation also makes interracial attachment volatile. If *The Marrow of Tradition* proves that being offered white family recognition tastes like "apples of Sodom, filled with dust and ashes!",<sup>50</sup> *Sport* looks to what happens when this recognition and its attendant affects cannot be rejected and are deployed against the African American family.

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<sup>49</sup> Michele Birnbaum, *Race, Work, and Desire in American Literature, 1860-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 15, 9.

<sup>50</sup> Chesnutt, 195.

*The Sport of the Gods* suggests that this complex interracial attachment conditions the concept of family at the turn of the century. Anna Julia Cooper highlighted the importance of focusing on southern conditions when she argued that only when the “average homes, homes of the rank and file of horny handed toiling men and women of the South” were raised up will “the plateau be lifted into the sunlight.”<sup>51</sup> As the place where Cooper believed African American families most needed to be uplifted, the South was also where the affective dynamic between blacks and whites was most obviously fraught, and needed the greatest transformation in order for the race to be “lifted into the sunlight.” While the rhetoric of family reform that took precedence in racial uplift philosophy was broadly premised on achieving national belonging, it was also premised on earning the affection or acceptance of southern white neighbors in order to make black prosperity less dangerous. According to Anna Walker Blackwell, leader of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union and home mission activist, “‘making home life measure of up to the highest ideal’ would ensure that ‘this race of ours . . . take[s] its rightful place among the other races of the world.’”<sup>52</sup> In her declaration, we can also hear the desire to be treated as equals locally as well as globally. By adopting mainstream discourses on the family, racial uplift proponents like Blackwell placed African Americans in a position where they had to engage in uneven affective labor, building themselves up to match “the highest ideal,” an ideal that had been historically and was presently being used to oppress the race.

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<sup>51</sup> Cooper, 31.

<sup>52</sup> Anna Blackwell Walker, *The Responsibility and Opportunity of the Twentieth Century Woman* (n.p., ca 1910), 12.

*Sport* focuses on how uneven standards of feeling play out in an interracial sphere that is neither wholly public nor private. As the novel shows, the appearance of good feeling that comes from the Hamiltons modeling themselves after the Oakleys covers the ever-present threat of imbalanced affective labor. Hence Chesnutt's call for shared "standards of thoughts and feeling." Dunbar reveals that intimacy and attachment between white employers and black employees, or between the races in strictly public spheres, is dangerous. Moreover, reforming the black family to gain acceptance, nationally or locally, backfires when it relies on white feeling. The Hamiltons mistakenly assumed that private equality of feeling is not as offensive to whites, nor as potentially dangerous, as public success.<sup>53</sup> Dunbar critiques the Hamiltons for not understanding that the affection shown by the Oakleys can be withdrawn any time they, knowingly or not, break the codes of racial behavior that govern interracial attachments.

These codes, in the South if not in the nation as a whole, were articulated most explicitly by Booker T. Washington, notably in his 1895 "Atlanta Exposition Address." White Americans widely accepted Washington's version of these "codes," perhaps because they reified the (false) ideal forms of interracial attachment that existed prior to emancipation and that they still desired. While Washington's address pertains to the public sphere, its implications for feeling in the private sphere are immense. For example, he complicates his promise that "in all things purely social we can be as separate as the fingers" by the fact that it is difficult to discern what is the "purely social" when so many

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<sup>53</sup> As Ida B. Wells asserts in *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases* (1892), black prosperity incites violent assertions of white superiority. Koritha Mitchell argues, further, that black family happiness also that drives whites to assert their dominance through lynching. In Mitchell's words, "blacks were valuing each other and loving each other, and whites reacted." Koritha Mitchell, *Living with Lynching: African American Lynching Plays, Performance, and Citizenship* (Champaign, University of Illinois Press, 2011), 8.

forms of relation are entangled in any one sphere. In fact, he calls on his listeners to “mak[e] friends in every manly way of the people of all races by whom you are surrounded.”<sup>54</sup> This equation, in which Washington promises social separation and calls for the making of “friends” between all races, creates insecure attachment that proliferates from public formations of interracial relationships that are then lived and worked out in the private sphere.

Moreover, Washington premises the development of interracial “friendships,” friendships that will not violate the code of “social separation,” on unequal emotional ground. He places his white listeners in the position of benevolent superiors whose “help” and “encouragement” African Americans need. Whites, in return

can be sure in the future, as in the past, that you and your families will be surrounded by the most patient, faithful, law-abiding, and unresentful people that the world has seen. As we have proved our loyalty to you in the past, in nursing your children, watching by the sick-bed of your mothers and fathers, and often following them with tear-dimmed eyes to their graves, so in the future, in our humble way, we shall stand by you with a devotion that no foreigner can approach, ready to lay down our lives, if need be, in defense of yours, interlacing our industrial, commercial, civil, and religious life with yours in a way that shall make the interests of both races one.<sup>55</sup>

In Washington’s promise, the language of feeling takes precedence. Patience, faith, lack of resentment, loyalty, tears of sorrow, humility, devotion, even the “lay[ing] down of our lives”—all these are required of African Americans in order to receive the “help” and “encouragement” of whites, who will reward them with a “friendship” that denies social engagement across the color line. While he argues for “making the interests of both races one,” this “oneness” excludes the private sphere. But, as the affective language

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<sup>54</sup> Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery* [1901] (New York: Double Day, Page & Co., 1907), 219.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

throughout this passage and his speech as a whole show, these feelings are most acutely demanded and expressed in the private sphere.

In the US South, this broadly defined interracial relationship coheres most intensely in the white homes where many African Americans worked as domestic laborers. In this sphere, the intimacy between employers and employees implies the kind of secure attachment that safeguards individuals in families from the fear of rejection. This dangerous, contingent intimacy becomes the model for attachment in the family itself, as it is on this interracial state that African American survival in the South often depends. Yet Farah Jasmine Griffin argues that for Dunbar the South is “not a site of racial terror” because by making Frank’s “duplicity the root cause of injustice experienced by the Hamiltons, Dunbar displaces the unfairness of the South onto one individual character who does not belong there.”<sup>56</sup> However, Frank does stand in for the “unfairness of the South.” It is because an individual like Frank has the power to perpetuate racial injustice with impunity, and because this impunity is also based on family feeling, that the home itself serves as a site of Southern racial terror. But this is often difficult to see on the surface. Indeed, Morgan contends that “the concern with keeping everything ‘smooth and quiet’” in the novel, “no matter what the social cost, presents white Southern life as determined to efface the rights of all African Americans.”<sup>57</sup> The cost of “smooth and quiet,” in this case, is Berry’s life as he knew it, and the life of his family. He is not allowed the “right” to make secure attachments. Nonetheless, he has been required to live up to the Washingtonian ideal of the loving,

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<sup>56</sup> Farah Jasmin Griffin “*Who Set You Flowin’?*”: *The African-American Migration Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 25.

<sup>57</sup> See Morgan, 219-220.

faithful, affectionate helpmate and supplicant, and until his arrest, he maintained the illusion that the Oakleys would reward his practices with “help” and “encouragement.”

The Oakleys’ disregard for the Hamiltons’ wellbeing calls to mind Dunbar’s allusion to *King Lear* in the novel’s title. In the fateful moment of Berry’s accusation, Dunbar echoes one of *King Lear*’s central conceits, spoken by Gloucester in Act IV: “As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods, / who kill us for their sport.”<sup>58</sup> The racist tenets that underwrite the Oakleys actions and sentiments confer them with divine status. The Oakleys are “gods” who kill “for their sport.” Through convicting Berry, they orchestrate a kind of death: they destroy any possibility of restoring his family to wholeness, and in this act of destruction they put into motion the affective metamorphoses in Berry and Fannie that leads them to return South and reform a type of a family with the Oakleys. Lawrence Rodgers argues, however, that in *Sport* Dunbar “offers a compelling portrait of the South as an uninhabitable symbolic geography for the black population.”<sup>59</sup> But the Hamiltons do inhabit this geography, which is the impasse that for Dunbar exists at the heart of African American private life. The Hamiltons feel they have no choice but to inhabit such a “uninhabitable” space, and their apathy equips them to do so. They tried to keep their family whole in both the North and the South, but in neither space was this in their control. Numb to feeling, they choose not their own happiness, but the only choice they can now make: a surrender to the gods only possible after being driven to apathy.

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<sup>58</sup> William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, edited by R.A. Foakes (Surrey: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1997), 307.

<sup>59</sup> Lawrence R. Rodgers, “Paul Laurence Dunbar’s *The Sport of the Gods*: The Doubly Conscious World of Plantation Fiction, Migration, and Ascent,” *American Literary Realism, 1870-1910* 24.3 (Spring 1992), 44.



Dunbar renders Berry's heartbreak after his release from prison as a confluence of contradictory affects that turn to apathy. When Skaggs, the Yellow Newspaper reporter who reveals the Oakley's crime, brings Berry North, he cannot tell him the truth about his family "in this first hour of freedom." He thinks, "Let him have time to drink the sweetness of that all in. There would be time afterwards to taste all of the bitterness" (137). Skaggs does not realize that Berry has already been "tast[ing] bitterness." When he learned he was being released and declared innocent, he felt only "surprise and a half-bitter joy" (137). With freedom comes another kind of sentence: whatever slight hope and happiness he retained in prison by imagining that his family was well and remained waiting for him is crushed, and his ability to feel either happiness or even pain will be lost. With this loss of feeling comes the acceptance that destroys his ability to work towards any other future. In such a state, he neither exceeds the parameters of racial uplift to find alternate forms of attachment and feeling, nor achieves the simple happiness through affective accommodationism Dunbar earlier envisioned.

When Berry finally learns what has come of his family since they moved to New York, his affective response is more than he can bear. When Fannie tells him that she is remarried and that Kit and Joe are lost to them, Berry's voice rises to "a fierce roar, like that of a hurt beast." Soon, the "real force of the situation came full upon him, and he bowed his head in his hands and wept like a child. The great sobs came up and stuck in his throat" (140). Asked to leave, Berry turns toward the door "murmuring, 'My wife gone, Kit a nobody, an' Joe, little Joe, a murderer, an' then I—I—ust to pray to Gawd an' call him 'Ouah Fathah.' He laughed hoarsely. It sounded like nothing Fannie had ever heard before" (141). In this moment Berry's faith "give[s] way." His laughter is not

motivated by joy, but is a bubbling over of bitter feeling, a visceral response to his loss of faith.

Berry's laughter, hoarse with despair and anger, painfully ripped from his throat, signals his break from the idealistic family affects he managed to still believe in while imprisoned. Here all ideals fall away in the force of his awakening. "[B]linded by his emotions," he "laugh[s] to himself" and questions:

This was what they had let him out of prison for? To find out all this. Why had they not left him there to die in ignorance? What had he to do with all these people who would give him sympathy? What did he want of their sympathy? Could they give him back one tithe of what he had lost? Could they give him back his wife or his son or his daughter, his quiet happiness or his simple faith? (142)

That night he is fueled by thoughts of "revenge," and filled with "a savage joy." When he learns that Fannie's new husband, his would-be victim, has been killed, he feels "a wild, strange feeling surging in his heart." There comes over him then "a glorious resurrection" of his "dead faith." Yet this resurrection of faith does not bring glory. Instead, Berry and the now free Fannie head southward without seeing either their son or daughter. When they arrive, Leslie Oakley "beg[s]" them to return to their old cottage where they can "spend the rest of their days in peace and comfort" (144).

The scale, progression, range, and confusion of Berry's emotions highlight the complete metamorphosis from his previous affective state. Gone is his "quiet happiness and simple faith." When he learns of his family's fate, his affects are so intensely experienced, so divergent and simultaneous at once, that they become "blinding," almost cancelling each other out. His primary attachment is to a family that no longer exists. The "resurrection of faith" is only temporary relief that he has not committed murder, for he does not seek out his son or daughter. Though alive, he cannot restore them to their

former status in his life, and so leaves them behind without a backward glance. Feeling that “no wound had power to give them pain,” Fannie and Berry form their old attachment to the Oakleys anew, they without feeling, Oakley without sanity, and Leslie trying but without the power to “make amends.” Together they form a new type of family, one that simply lives because they have to. Endeavoring towards any kind of ideal that would restore some kind of happiness, the Hamiltons have learned, creates more “bitterness” to “taste.” The rage, despair, hope, and sorrow Berry felt in the pages leading up to this abrupt ending have disappeared. He has been wounded beyond feeling. While the novel brings his affects to the surface, he does not affectively survive this experience, as a blues sensibility might allow. Berry shuts down his affects, becoming apathetic, rather than finding solace through articulating his loss. The subsequent re-attachment he forms with Fannie and the Oakleys takes the shape of “a kingdom in itself,” but this “kingdom” is a bleak shadow of what Dunbar imagines in 1897.

### III. “Foolish Men and Immoral Women”: Gender in the Anti-Uplift Urban Family

The affective transformations the Hamiltons undergo while in the North confirms Dunbar’s own argument that urban migration leads to the migrant’s moral, material, and affective degradation. Andrea Williams claims, therefore, that Dunbar’s writings “value African Americans who remain fixed to their southern roots and family obligations.”<sup>60</sup> Dunbar does consistently condemn African Americans who leave the South, in part because he believes that in moving to the North, particularly to urban centers like New York, African Americans lose family values and thus degrade the race. However, his 1898 “Negroes of the Tenderloin” takes this a step further. In this essay, he clarifies that

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<sup>60</sup> Andrea N. Williams, *Dividing Lines: Class Anxiety and Postbellum Black Fiction* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2013), 96.

his anti-urban stance is based on environmental notions of racial difference. To Dunbar, African Americans are naturally suited to country life. Ultimately, he believes that southern migrants lose their natural, God-given affective capacity for simple happiness by living in northern cities. It is no surprise, then, that in moving the Hamilton family to New York, the novel chronicles an affective shift from their former happiness, reliant on old southern belief systems, to complex negative feelings driven by their attachment to new urban ideals.

In “Negroes of the Tenderloin,” Dunbar describes southern migrants as a dangerous contagion. They are a moral disease on the city and the race that must be cured to prevent imminent doom. Looking to the city streets, Dunbar sees “crowds of idle, shiftless Negroes,” and asks: “what is to be done with them, what is to be done for them, if they are to be prevented from inoculating our civilization with the poison of their lives?” The problem, however, lies not in the people, but in the environment whose allure they are ill-equipped to resist. Everything in the city, he argues, “tends to the blotting out of the moral sense, everything to the engendering of crime.” While he is afraid for “our civilization,” his strongest emotion is “pity for the poor people and their children.” Considering the ruin to which they have come on leaving the South, he “grieves on account of [his] race.”<sup>61</sup> Dunbar’s pity and grief imply that he does not blame African Americans for the moral decay and crime into which they have fallen. He recognizes, that is, that African Americans coming North make a conscious choice to better their lives. In making this decision, however, they are exchanging an environment for which they are naturally suited, difficult as it may be, for one which is far more dangerous. He writes:

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<sup>61</sup> Dunbar, “Negroes of the Tenderloin.” In *The Paul Laurence Dunbar Reader*, edited by Jay Martin and Gossie H. Hudson, 40-43 (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1975), 40.

“They say they have not rights at the South; but better the restrictions there than a seeming liberty which blossoms into noxious license.”<sup>62</sup> Neither choice is ideal; remaining in the South, however, is the lesser of two evils, as doing so at least allows African Americans to retain what Dunbar considers their natural capacities and childlike nature.

As “great, naughty, irresponsible children,” African Americans arriving in New York cannot resist the “glare and glitter of the city streets.”<sup>63</sup> Arriving, they “los[e] so much and gain so little.” Among their losses, Dunbar counts: “the simple, joyous natures which God had endowed them,” their “capacity for simple enjoyment,” “their gentleness, their hospitality, their fidelity,” their love of tilling the soil, their “soft mellow voices which even slavery could not ruin,” and “their old banjo music.” In sum, they have lost all of “the good traits that distinguish them in their natural habitat.” In the process, they learn to “indulge in vice,” to play ragtime, and have grown “cynical,” “hard and mean and brutal,” have “forgotten to laugh and learned to sneer,” and are now “ashamed of all the old simple delights.” While he does not name the ideals that motivated African Americans in the South, he blames their artistic, cultural, moral, and affective transformation on a motivational shift. “Their highest ideal,” he argues, “is [now] a search for pleasure,”<sup>64</sup> and coming to the city has taught them to find pleasure in criminal and morally degrading behavior and feeling.

Dunbar’s moralism and racial condescension aside, his correlation between environment and feeling corresponds with uplift tracts on home improvement, as well as

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

the rising field of sociological sciences. Euthenicists like Ellen H. Richards developed scientific studies and educational tools for improving living conditions. Richards argued that by creating the right conditions, people could control their environments, prevent the spread of disease, and, simultaneously, improve human behavior.<sup>65</sup> Counted amongst the leading sociologists of his day, Du Bois also believed that individuals were molded by their environments.<sup>66</sup> In his 1899 *The Philadelphia Negro*, a massive sociological study of the social problems facing African Americans, Du Bois cataloged the external factors, as well the moral condition of home atmospheres, effecting adults and children in middle-class, working-class, and impoverished living environments. As in Dunbar's account of the effects of New York city life on migrating African Americans, *The Philadelphia Negro* acknowledges that urban living conditions can contribute to criminal behavior and lax moral standards.

Unlike Dunbar, Du Bois does not blame African Americans for their environment or its consequences. Du Bois does not see blackness as pathological, and does not argue that African Americans are naturally suited for either rural or urban life. Rather, racial discrimination and lack of opportunity shape social conditions in the North as in the South, city and country. In "The Meaning of All This," where Du Bois reflects on his study's findings, he argues that the "Negro Problem" (concentrated in urban centers) is a problem of American feeling:

Other centuries looking back upon the culture of the nineteenth century would have a right to suppose that if, in a land of freemen, eight millions of human beings were found to be dying of disease, the nation would cry in one voice, "Heal them!" If they were staggering on in ignorance, it would cry, "Train them!" If they were harming

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<sup>65</sup> Ellen H. Richards, *Euthenics: The Science of Controllable Environment; a Plea for Better Living Conditions as a First Step Toward Higher Human Efficiency* (Boston: Whitcomb & Barrows, 1910).

<sup>66</sup> For an extended reading of Du Bois's environmentalist views, see Michelle Mitchell's section on Du Bois in *Righteous Propagation*.

themselves and others by crime, it would cry, "Guide them!" And such cries are heard and have been heard in the land; but it was not one voice and its volume has been broken by counter-cries and echoes, "Let them die!" "Train them like slaves!" "Let them stagger downward!"<sup>67</sup>

Dunbar's voice in "The Negroes of the Tenderloin," laced with pity, disdain, and grief, does not cry out that migrants should be healed, trained, or offered guidance. Nor does he cry out that they should be left to die, trained like slaves, or allowed to "stagger downward." However, he does think African Americans in New York should be sent back to the South, be content with lives as simple laborers, and satisfied by simple joys. Until they "show greater capacities for contact with hard and intricate civilization," Dunbar would have them "stay upon the farm and learn to live in God's great kindergarten for his simple children!" There, they can happily and freely fell forests, till fields, and sing "in their cabin doors at night."<sup>68</sup> Echoing the sentiments of "England as Seen by the Black Man," Dunbar reinforces blackness as an attribute of the southern rural landscape. Here, he goes further, setting African Americans in a peaceful, pastoral scene that recalls a mythologized version of slavery rather than re-envisioning freedom and the opportunities it should afford. Arguing, finally, that while there is no definite way to stop black migration to the North, Dunbar imagines that the "whole matter" would solve itself if "the metropolitan could vomit them back again."<sup>69</sup> In this visceral image, Dunbar

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<sup>67</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro* (Pennsylvania: The University of Pennsylvania, 1899), 387.

<sup>68</sup> Dunbar, "Negroes of the Tenderloin," 43. In suggesting African Americans should live in cabins, Dunbar contradicts the bulk of African American home reform and literature, which emphasized the need to transition from living in cabins to living in houses. See, for example, Katherine Davis Chapman Tillman's play, *Fifty Years of Freedom, or From Cabin to Congress: A Drama in Five Acts* (1910), in *The Works of Katherine Davis Chapman Tillman*, edited by Claudia Tate, 341-388 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). Text's like Tillman's, Michelle Mitchell argues, modeled the desires of many African Americans (147).

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 42. Elizabeth McHenry writes that for Dunbar, "uplift's self-help, leadership ideals paled before the magnitude of social conditions in cities." Elizabeth McHenry, *Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African American Literary Societies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 184.

reinforces the idea that African Americans are not suited for city life. As the metropole cannot absorb them into its body, they become poisonous and so rot the city, and by extension the race, from the inside out.

Uplift literature, in the meantime, re-inscribed the notion that migration's consequences were ultimately negative. Contemporaneous migration narratives showed that urbanization resulted in "fragmentation, dislocation, and material and spiritual impoverishment."<sup>70</sup> Griffin thus argues that many black artists portrayed the North as a place that leads to the "death and demise of the migrant." For some it might lead to "cosmopolitan status," but most either return South to acquire "racial, historical, and cultural redemption" or die without realizing they can only be redeemed by returning home.<sup>71</sup> Yet, as *The Sport of the Gods* demonstrates, returning South does not offer Berry and Fannie Hamilton any sense of redemption. They may have escaped the perilous city, but they have gained none of the happiness Dunbar promises to those who take up their old lives in the South.

Unlike their parents, Joe and Kit do not return South. In contrast to their mother, they welcome the new forms of attachment, feeling, and possibilities that become available in the northern city. Once in New York, they gradually reject the attachment that guided their behavior while their family was fully intact. Yet the family's affective

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<sup>70</sup> Griffin, 8.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 10. Dunbar focuses almost exclusively on the poor and working class, who he argues derail middle-class uplift endeavors as the public lumps all African Americans into one group. In "Negro Life in Washington" Dunbar is more ambivalent about the race's fitness for city life. While this essay is generally positive, of the African American elite he writes: "He has not—and I am not wholly sorry he has not—learned the repression of his emotions, which is the mark of a high and dry civilization. He is impulsive, intense, fervid, and—himself." Again, Dunbar posits that the race has an essential nature, and that city life corrupts this nature by altering emotional states and practices. Dunbar, "Negro Life in Washington," *Saturday Evening Post* (December 1901). *Library of Congress* Reel 4. For a reading of postbellum class anxiety, see Andrea Williams, *Dividing Lines*.



dissolution begins before they move North. It is not just that Berry's imprisonment alters the form of their family, but that both the Oakleys and the black community refuses to give them shelter. As such, the Hamiltons' former cheery home atmosphere quickly shifts into one that fluctuates between states of fear, grief, anxiety, shame, anger, and despair. Cast out of their home, without the sympathy of their community, they have neither a place to live nor an income. Their dependence on and attachment to the Oakley's proves their downfall, because, as a result of this relationship, they never formed secure attachments with the African American community to whom they now turn. As soon as they heard of Berry's arrest, the A.M.E church, where Berry was a member, and his lodge, "The Tribe of Benjamin," where he was treasurer, "disavowed sympathy with him" (28). Even those sympathetic to the Hamiltons are afraid to show or act on it, as "the safety of their positions and firesides, demanded that they stand aloof from the criminal." They cannot align themselves with anyone branded with "the white people's displeasure" (28). Moreover, the Hamiltons never learned the terms of attachment in their local African American community, and so they pay the price of that choice. The community is thus unwilling to endanger themselves for a family who see themselves as their superiors. Fannie, Joe, and Kit each view their rejection from the community differently. As a result, they struggle to find feeling in common. Thus, their previous affectively transparent atmosphere proves difficult to maintain when they hope to shield each other from negative feelings and personal desires that may be at odds with the family's unity.

On the one hand, the fact that the Hamiltons are rejected at every turn precipitates their further downfall by forcing them to move to the North, a migration readers of

“Negroes in the Tenderloin” already know will prove disastrous. On the other hand, by moving to New York they are seeking opportunity rather than just an escape.<sup>72</sup> Despite their apparent satisfaction with their home life, Joe and Kit quietly longed to be free from the Oakleys’ shadow and for the autonomy further separation would offer. As the narrator notes, Joe and Kit had already drawn “unpleasant comparisons between their mode of life and the old plantation quarters system” (37). Thus, when Joe first suggests New York as their destination, they are overcome by the possibilities it offers. Until this moment, New York had seemed but “a place vague and far away, a city that, like Heaven, to them existed by faith alone.” New York seems to them “the center of all the glory, all the wealth, and all the freedom of the world” (43). While they quickly learn this New York is more myth than reality, it does offer them greater freedom. Yet this is a freedom Fannie tries to limit, as it lures her children from the home she tries to ideologically fashion after their old abode.

One of the primary obstacles to this goal is the fact that they live in a boarding house, which already disrupts a sense of family insularity. In addition, boarding houses were considered dangerous environments, as they could lead to a “sexual degeneracy” that compromised both children and the race at large.<sup>73</sup> With the close proximity to their devious landlady and the sly William Thomas (who promises them on their arrival that New York will give them a “shakin’ up [they] won’t soon forget” (45)) that comes with

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<sup>72</sup> As Dunbar acknowledged in “Negroes of the Tenderloin,” African Americans were moving North to escape conditions in the South. The Hamiltons’s move is then not an anomaly. Rather, in the early twentieth century many black families “were lured by the promise of true emancipation and social justice,” and so willingly undertook difficult journeys to urban centers in search of better futures for themselves and their children (210). See Michael P. Moreno, “Mobile Blacks and Ubiquitous Blues: Urbanizing African American Discourses in Paul Laurence Dunbar’s *The Sport of the Gods*.” In *We Wear the Mask*, 210-229.

<sup>73</sup> Burroughs, 148. For more on how racial uplift leaders saw boarding houses as problems for the race, see Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation*.

living in their boarding house, Joe and Kit are easily drawn away from their mother's influence. Fannie, as already implied by her alienation from her southern community, does not know how to navigate this new social environment, and does not adapt, as do her children, to the new modes of attachment they must understand to survive here. Thus, though the family does experience moments of happiness while living in New York, the shared cheerfulness that previously seemed to define their home is no longer possible in this new atmosphere. They are transformed from a loving cohesive unit to a group of strangers whose feelings work against the continuation of their previous attachment.

In the spatial logic of Joe's and Kit's affective transformations, Dunbar shows that where you are in the novel, North or South, within the family or moving outside of it, dictates forms of attachment. In the northern section, Dunbar's attention shifts "away from race," which, as Rodgers notes, allows him to explore "the moral frailty of his characters when they are confronted by the magnetic charms of New York city."<sup>74</sup> However, in addition to exploring the characters' moral frailty (which I argue is less frailty than failure to learn the new rules governing urban life), moving the characters to a primarily African American northern community allows Dunbar to look at intraracial forms of attachment free from the direct influence of whites. As they seek new forms of attachment outside of the nuclear and interracial families after these traditional and southern models have failed them, Joe and Kit learn that the alternative families they enter are also untenable, as they are also conditioned by ideals they must adhere to in order to remain within a given "kingdom," whether that be the Banner Club or the theater. In contrast to the nuclear family, these are organized in a more utilitarian fashion.

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<sup>74</sup> Rodgers, 53.

That is, belonging is contingent on your usefulness and your fulfilment of the gendered norms that characterize these “homes.” In order to belong to the Banner Club, Joe must exhibit the heightened masculinity the club epitomizes, while Kit’s belonging in the theater will expire once she no longer has the youthful beauty it demands. The threat of being expelled thus underlies these alternative family models. The subsequent affective metamorphoses Joe and Kit undergo as they struggle to maintain the gendered ideals in their new “families” marks Dunbar’s insistent critique of any form of collective idealism in the private sphere.

By positing alternative models of the family that Joe and Kit imagine might be more tenable than the patriarchal middle-class ideal, Dunbar is already going against the grain of racial uplift ideology. Yet, as these too prove affectively destructive, *Sport* continues to imply that the private sphere cannot produce secure or positive collective attachments despite the shift of context that brings the Hamiltons outside of the South where the “race gods” most obviously threaten black family life. The problem is not simply that the Hamiltons bring white southern ideals with them to the North, as Laurence Rodgers claims.<sup>75</sup> Nor is the problem, as Griffin and Morgan argue, simply that the North proves equally destructive.<sup>76</sup> These readings are not surprising, as Dunbar’s description of the city’s powerfully negative pull rivals his depictions of southern racism’s godlike force. Indeed, the narrator’s descriptions of the city’s effect on migrants

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<sup>75</sup> Rodgers, 54.

<sup>76</sup> Morgan thus argues that Dunbar presents “the space of the urban North as a mirror image of the pastoral South—no more, no less” (221-22). Critics’ focus on the debilitating effects of city life in *Sport*, and in Dunbar’s oeuvre itself has been illuminating, particularly as it demonstrates the impasse that characterizes Dunbar’s position on racial uplift itself. See Morgan, as well as Griffin’s “*Who Set You Flowin’?*”.

parallels the affective devolution of the family over the course of the novel. On the Hamiltons arrival to New York the narrator states:

the first sign of demoralization of the provincial who comes to New York is his pride at his insensibility to certain impressions which used to influence him at home. First, he begins to scoff, and there is no truth in his views nor depth in his laugh. But by and by, from mere pretending, it becomes real. He grows callous. After that he goes to the devil very cheerfully. (49)

In this microcosm of individual devolution, Dunbar captures the trajectory of the naturalist novel in miniature. Like the migrant, the family “goes to the devil.” But I contend that this “going” becomes possible only when they begin to mask their affective experience, and when the terms of belonging here also necessitate some form of masking. In other words, as in the case of southern race relations, the city, or the forms of attachment it fosters, dictate rules for feeling that threaten the security of attachment.

As the first great migration narrative in the African American literary tradition, *Sport's* apparent censure of urban life is significant.<sup>77</sup> But I am less interested in the role of place itself than in what the shift in context allows Dunbar to say about alternative models for attachment in the private sphere. The “insidious wine of New York” that “intoxicates” and destroys the Hamiltons serves not just to indict the city itself (46). More importantly it demonstrates anew the fragility of attachment through heightening the negative affective metamorphoses that result from the effort to adapt to alternate family structures. The novel’s final lines focus attention on what it means to return South and accept racial conditions as they are, but Joe’s and Kit’s choice to seek out other forms of

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<sup>77</sup> Johnathan Daigle makes a compelling case for the novel’s inherent defense of “emergent urban culture” by claiming that Dunbar distinguishes “between the diseased blackness diagnosed through moralistic and sociological analysis and the more complex blackness borne of shared experience.” He argues, in fact, that Dunbar is unwilling to “write off the transformative possibilities of the environment he critiques” (644). Its transformative affective possibilities become most apparent in Dunbar’s depiction of the character Sadness. Jonathan Daigle, “Paul Laurence Dunbar and the Marshall Circle: Racial Representation from Blackface to Black Naturalism,” *African American Review* 43.4 (Winter 2009): 653-654.

attachment show their unwillingness to conform to the idealism that shaped their parents' construction of their family and that allows them to go back to the Oakleys.

The nuclear family model is already compromised before the move North. The absence of the patriarch shifted the burden of maintaining family collectivity entirely to Fannie. Doing so facilitates Dunbar's gender critique by heightening the importance of the mother's role while limiting her ability to match up to the ideal she tries to embody. As Mitchell argues in *Righteous Propagation*, the gendered sexual politics dictated by racial uplift leaders were a response to the notion that slavery had "purportedly engendered wanton sexual behaviors and warped how black men and women interacted with each other." Racial uplift philosophy therefore promoted the notion that women had to "radiate inviolable modesty, that men embody controlled manliness, that couples marry and establish patriarchal households."<sup>78</sup> Fannie's inability to hold the family together manifests in Joe's and Kit's rejection of these gender norms. As was the case for James Weldon Johnson, New York shows them "a new world—an alluring world, a tempting world, a world of greatly lessened restraints, a world of fascinating perils; but, above all, a world of tremendous artistic potentialities."<sup>79</sup> With the new gender norms they encounter in the boarding house, the Banner Club, and the theater world, the novel opens up space for Joe and Kit to give in to the alluring new forms of attachment, perilous as they may be, that are more elastic and thus more open to their individual desires. The "tremendous artistic potentialities" Johnson senses thus also translates to the affective possibilities urban life makes available to these migrants.

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<sup>78</sup> Mitchell, 11.

<sup>79</sup> James Weldon Johnson, *Along this Way: The Autobiography of James Weldon Johnson* (New York: The Viking Press, 1933), 152.

The pressure Fannie asserts to keep them together brings out Joe's and Kit's aversion to traditional family norms, which then pushes them to look elsewhere for a sense of belonging. Fannie's inability to keep the family together not only reflects on Anna Julia Cooper's theory of motherhood and racial uplift, but also how it offers a model for shaping other forms of family. Cooper believed that uplift started with the mother, who must be the origin of change. As "a stream cannot rise higher than its source," each family member's individual affective state correlates to that created and transmitted by the mother within the home—and the "atmosphere of homes is no rarer and purer than are the mothers in those homes."<sup>80</sup> Cooper's theory models a system of "disciplinary intimacy" in which parents (but particularly mothers) utilize "the bonds of affection," rather than corporeal punishment, to "cultivate in their children" the "'norms and imperatives' of the larger community." Through her "loving affection," the mother shapes "the growth and moral education" of her children.<sup>81</sup> The manner in which a child is "morally educated" to be part of a family depends, in Cooper's terms, on the quality of the "atmosphere" in which she is raised. Yet Dunbar critiques not Fannie Hamilton herself, but the "norms and imperatives" of the community, and the family itself, that reinforce unfulfilling and insecure forms of attachment.

Defined by the feelings it creates in those within a given space, an atmosphere is an unstable affective structure, subject to the changes in mood, behavior, and feeling of those who shape it.<sup>82</sup> The dominant affective structure created by Fannie Hamilton shifts dramatically as Fannie and her children attempt to come to terms with Berry's absence

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<sup>80</sup> Cooper, 29.

<sup>81</sup> Inge, 231.

<sup>82</sup> For a theory on atmospheres and their affective parameters, see Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004, 2014).

from their daily life, and in their struggle to find a new place to make their home. When asked by her children where they will now live, Fannie, “with a burst of tears,” answers “Gawd knows, child, Gawd knows” (41). Having absorbed a woman’s role in the home, Kitty soothes her mother and attempts to lift her brother’s dejected spirits through her “cheery hopefulness.” She inherently knows, it seems, that “the woman [should] always forget her own sorrow when someone she loves is grieving” (41). Despite Kitty’s efforts to shift the atmosphere back to its previous affective state, Joe’s “anger and shame” and Fannie’s confession that the cruelty she met when trying to find a house “nigh killed me” overwhelm her attempt at cheerfulness. Even as she takes on the role of mother by providing “tenderness,” making tea, and entreating Fannie to rest, Kitty cannot uplift the family’s spirit; the tea gets “stuck in [Fannie’s] throat, and the tears [continue] to roll down her face into the shaking cup” (41). Joe then negatively alters the home atmosphere, telling Fannie that Kitty should know the truth, that “nobody wants us” (41-42). Kit’s “wide and saddening eyes” and “clenched hands” show that her apparently natural cheerfulness cannot withstand the force of her mother’s despair and her brother’s rage (41-42). What Fannie and Joe feel manifests in their bodies and transmits to Kitty. As this affect transmission demonstrates, atmospheres are experienced viscerally and emotionally.<sup>83</sup> The fact that their affects transmit regardless of their desire to manage them complicates their ability to keep the family affectively coherent.

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<sup>83</sup> See Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004). Brennan argues that the transmission of affect means that “we are not self-contained in terms of our energies.” For this reason, there is no secure distinction between the individual and the environment (6). Thus, because affects are “contagious,” individuals in proximity to each other affect each other’s biological and emotional states (75).



Thus the move North is not only a shift in location, but a shift in their home atmosphere. Rather than one predominant affective state transmitted by the mother, there are now three competing affective states that make for an atmosphere of contention and evasion rather than cohesion. Fannie, Joe, and Kitty each feel differently from the other when they arrive in New York, and each undergoes an evolution of their desires, their social ambitions, and their relation to each other. All of Fannie's attempts at unifying the family's affects, and so re-creating the atmosphere of their southern home, are met with defeat. Evasive, secretive, and disobedient, Joe and Kitty slip further and further from Fannie's affective influence. As the Hamilton home increasingly becomes a place where three individuals live in their own worlds rather than one family living and working together in a collective spirit, Joe and Kitty adopt new ideals. Fannie soon "seriously question[s]" whether taking the family to New York was the right decision. Her son stays away "more and more, growing always farther away from her and his sister," and Kitty, the "child of her heart," becomes "sly" and "sullen," hiding her real feelings from her mother (72-73). Fannie soon feels there is "nothing left to work or fight for," and spends her nights weeping (73). By the time the novel jumps forward five years, she is ready to reject Kitty and has given up on her son. The once "rare and pure" atmosphere created by the mother (tainted though it was by their relation to the Oakleys) thus disappears entirely, as all three live separate lives. Their affective distance causes their physical separation, and so the family's dissolution is as complete as their individual metamorphoses.

Through entering into the life of the theater, Kit cultivates forms of attachment that move her outside of the traditional family. Soon Hattie Sterling, a veteran of the

theater with whom Joe falls madly in love, persuades a very willing Kit that she should audition for the chorus line. In this moment, Kit feels a “flutter of delight.” Her delight comes not with the prospect of “working,” but with “the glamour of the work,” a “glamour” that would make her like her new idol, Hattie (91). In adopting Hattie’s ideals, Kit transfers her attachment from her mother to Hattie herself. Hattie then takes on the role of mothering Kit, calling her “‘child’ in a pretty, patronizing way” (90). Although Hattie promises Kit that they will be “great chums,” and decides to call her “Kitty” as it sounds “nice and homelike,” what Hattie herself feels is more complex than she displays outwardly. Though she tells Kit that, with her “looks and voice,” she’ll quickly work her way up from chorus girl, she hints at the fragility of attachment in the world of the theater. Kitty, she states, may soon be able to “put one of the ‘up and ups’ out o’ the business. Only I hope it won’t be me. I’ve had people I’ve helped try to do it often enough.” In her glib remarks, Hattie illuminates the anxiety that characterizes her life as an actress. Her position as an “up and up” is not stable. The narrator has already noted that the thickness of her makeup covers the signs of her age. In the laughter that is meant to disguise the anxiety underlying her joking statement, the narrator notes “just a touch of bitterness.” She already “recognize[s] that although she had only been on the stage a short time, she was no longer the all-conquering Hattie Sterling, in the first freshness of her youth” (91-92). Yet she only has a “touch” of bitterness, for she has accepted the conditional terms of attachment that determines her life. She may currently embody the “ideal” to which Kit aspires, but she knows that permanently maintaining her status as an idealized figure is not possible given the lifespan of attachment in the theater “family.”

This is a lesson she imparts to Kit. Because of the atmosphere that shapes life in the theater, a woman's time there is limited. She lasts until a younger, more alluring star inevitably comes along to take her place. While Kit insists that she "wouldn't want to push anybody out," Hattie assures her that it "has to happen. Somebody's got to go down. We don't last long in this life: it soon wears us out, and when we're worn out and sung out, danced out and played out, the manager has no further use for us; so he reduces us to the ranks or kicks us out entirely" (92). Hattie understands the terms of attachment in this sphere. There is no question that she will "go down," it is only a question of when. In choosing this form of attachment, Kit works towards a new ideal that she knows can only be realized, if at all, for a limited time. She accepts this condition of insecure attachment because it does not yet circumscribe her desires.

The forms of attachment that condition the nuclear family are no more secure. For, by deciding to audition for the role of chorus girl, Kit loses the respect, protection, and love of her mother. Fannie tells her that she would rather "see you daid any day." She implores her not to join the theater, lest she "go down lak your brothah Joe. Joe's gone" (93). Yet, to Kit, Fannie does not understand the forms of attachment in their newly-adopted atmosphere. To Kit, Joe is not "gone"; he has just become "somebody." Because of Fannie's unwillingness to adapt to their shifting ideals, she loses both children. When she threatens Kit that she will re-marry if she enters the stage, Kit tells her that she should "to live for herself now," and so severs the attachment that bound Fannie, Berry, Joe and herself together. Like Kit, each now must live for themselves—each has entered or been forced into a new "kingdom." In this transition, they seek out substitute families whose untenable ideals determine their affective metamorphoses.

Kit's affective separation from her family is complete by the time Joe is imprisoned for Hattie's murder and her father is released from prison. While she feels "some of the grief" of Joe's crime, she also "fe[els] the shame of it keenly." By this point she and Joe are already "almost entirely estranged," so she decides to forget his situation and "live her own life" in which the "chief aim was the possession of good clothes and the ability to attract the attention which she had learned to crave." Her feelings and ideals, which were once clearly aligned with her mother's, now parallel Hattie's own. And, as Hattie warned, the attention they value has already proved fleeting. After only five years, "her voice was not as good as it used to be, and her beauty had to be aided by cosmetics" (121-22). In order to escape the shame of being connected to her family and protect what little time she has left on the stage, she leaves New York. Attached to an ideal she already cannot embody, Kit must suffer the bitterness that plagued Hattie and faces the certainty of failure, at least within the terms of the novel's naturalist plot and the gendered norms of the racial uplift movement. While she is ostensibly now free from the "gods" that forced her out of the South and the once-secure love of her family, she is subject to a new type of fate, and becomes complicit, as Dunbar himself has been accused, in reproducing minstrelsy's racist stereotypes that themselves are a figure for the American gods which make her family its "sport."<sup>84</sup>

Like the theater for Kit and like the city itself, the Banner Club exudes an intoxicating atmosphere that almost immediately begins to transform Joe's ideals, and so alters his feelings and behavior. His attachment shifts from his mother and sister to his

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<sup>84</sup> In the South Kit was much admired for her singing at church. But, as Rodgers argues, in "switching from 'the simple songs she knew to practice the detestable coon ditties the stage demanded' (p. 130), Kitty is transformed from a stock southern plantation figure into the novel's minstrel re-enactment of the same emblem. She leaves one racist code of behavior to become engulfed in another" (53).

male peers, who welcome him into the Banner Club's exclusive "fraternity." With this entrance, he also gains the confidence to pursue Hattie. While initially his invitation to this "fraternity" is contingent on how easily he can be taken advantage of, soon he enters the inner circle and learns that his father's criminal past works as a kind of currency in the new family he has entered. Members of the Banner Club prosper on the politics of disrespect—they drink, commit crime, gamble, and have relationships outside of marriage, all with the careless bravado that evidences their inclusion and confirms their attachment. "The place," the narrator states, "was a social cesspool, generating a poisonous miasma and reeking with the stench of decayed and rotting moralities. There is no defense to be made for it. But what do you expect when false idealism and fevered ambition come face to face with catering cupidity?" Cupid does seem to "cater" to Joe, as all he desires—recognition of his manhood, brotherhood, independence, Hattie's love—come easily as soon as he is "introduced" into "this atmosphere" (66). The new "false idealism and fevered ambition" that governs his attachment only allows him to feel at home away from his nuclear family. Indeed, when Fannie tells him that "It's been a long time sence you been my son" (78), his relief at being released from this former attachment overwhelms his feelings of guilt and shame.

Despite the fact that his mother and sister live in the city with him, the Banner Club serves Joe the same way it does lone strangers: it becomes "the whole social life." But the narrator finds that it is but "a substitute—poor, it must be confessed—to many youths for the home life which is so lacking among certain classes in New York" (65). For Joe, though, it is "no poor substitute," but rather a superior replacement for the home that restrained his desires. Taking Cooper's theory of home life at its word, the family formed

in the Banner Club can be “no rarer or purer” than the “atmosphere” created therein.

There is no mother to moderate this “atmosphere.” Instead, its atmosphere is made collectively by a “peculiar class” that lives

like the leech, upon the blood of others,—that draws its life from the veins of foolish men and immoral women, that prides itself upon its well-dressed idleness and has no shame in its voluntary pauperism. Each member of the class knows every other, his methods and limitations, and their loyalty to one another makes them a great hulking, fashionably uniformed fraternity of indolence. (84)

Joe feels “honored” to be part of this family, and soon learns that “all his former feelings [of respectability] had been silly and quite out of place; that all he had learned in his earlier years had been false” (85). Through the re-education of his forms of attachment, Joe becomes a model for masculine disrespectability, precisely what the racial uplift movement asks mothers to train their sons to avoid. The narrator sees the affects that dictate his turn away from the traditional home and family as all wrong. But, in that they allow him a freedom from the conventional attachment that he has learned does not guarantee uplift or even safety, the feelings that Joe’s adoption of the Banner Club as family bring to the surface might have been liberating, had he not over-embodied its ideals.

Joe’s affective metamorphosis comes to a head in a chapter titled “Frankenstein.” While the narrator finds that Hattie Sterling has given him both “his greatest impulse for evil and for good,” Joe blames her entirely for what he has become (111).<sup>85</sup> Yet, as his downfall was preordained by “the gods” from the beginning, Joe’s transformation into a

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<sup>85</sup> While not focusing on Dunbar’s misogyny, my argument aligns in part with Dichter’s reading that the novel’s misogyny crystalizes in Joe’s accusation that Hattie brought him to ruin. He argues, further, that *Sport* ultimately locates the responsibility for the stigma of black criminality “with its black women.” Rather than blaming Hattie’s murder on its male perpetrator, the novel blames its female victim, Hattie, because she first leads him into “depravity” (87). I agree that this is Joe’s position, but think the novel critiques the system of attachment that makes such a belief possible.

kind of monster, logically, has been outside of either Hattie's or his own control. In either case, whether determined by the gods or by the poisonous influence of the Banner Club and Hattie, Joe "was so ready to go down that it needed but a gentle push to start him, and once started, there was nothing within him to hold him back from the depths. For his will was a flabby as his conscience, and his pride, which stands to some men as conscience, had no definite aim or direction" (111). This pronouncement from the narrator is misleading. Joe's pride does have an "aim and direction," and that is to have what he understands as the Banner Club's definition of manhood respected to the degree he believes he has embodied it. He has already learned the "contempt for women" characteristic of his male peers (73). Thus, one night when Hattie looks at him with "disgust" and kicks him out when he returns "battered, unkempt, and thick of speech," Joe feels rage rather than shame or remorse. After promising himself that he will kill her, he returns to make good on his threat. Looking at her, his feelings overwhelm his body. His face becomes "ashen, and his eyes like fire and blood" (116). His hands begin "moving convulsively." He "breaks into a murderous laugh," and his "fingers twitched over each other like coiling serpents." As he accuses her of making him "what I am," he begins to fully realize "what he was," his "foulness and degradation." In this moment, he becomes unrecognizable. Hattie stares, "fascinated," for this "is not Joe, but a terrible, terrible man or a monster." Drawing steadily towards her, his gaze fixes on her throat until his hands, which seem to have known already the use to which they would be put, "checked her scream" before it began:

His fingers closed over her throat just where the gown had left is temptingly bare. They gave it the caress of death. She struggled. They held her. Her eyes prayed to his. But his were the fire of hell. She fell back upon her pillow in silence. He had not uttered a word. He held her. Finally he flung her from him like a rag, and sank into a

chair. And there the officers found him. (117)

Notice the heightening speed of Dunbar's sentences. After the extended descriptions of both characters' bodily and mental states, her killing takes place quickly. Here, action eclipses feeling and speech. The only feeling communicated appears in her "pray[ing]" eyes and in his that show "the fire of hell." The images too rob both of their humanity. She is "flung" like "a rag," a thing to be discarded. Through all this Joe does not speak, nor does he speak again in the novel. This act robs him of feeling, and therefore also takes his ability speak. That is, as he seemed to act without consciously feeling, his affects cannot find their match in words. There are no long, complex sentences here because Joe has been broken down into this single act. Its consequences, not just for the murdered Hattie but for his sense of self, are more than he can bear to feel. Whereas all of Joe's actions up to this point have been examined as a response to shame, rage, guilt, pride, and sometimes joy, these disappear in the moment his last and mostly deeply imbibed form of idealism is crushed.

Joe's internalization of the masculine ideal he has learned in the Banner Club makes him ill-equipped to deal with the extreme shame and rage that Hattie's insults evoke. Beginning with the almost automatic bodily response that leads him to strangle Hattie, he is characterized by his total "apathy"; when questioned about the murder he "showed absolutely no interest in the matter." After being imprisoned, Joe had

no feeling or spirit left in him. He moved mechanically, as if without sense or volition. The first impression he gave was that of a man over-acting insanity. But this was soon removed by the indifference with which he met everything concerned with his crime. From the very first he made no effort to exonerate or vindicate himself. He talked little and only in a dry, stupefied way. He was as one whose soul is dead, and perhaps it was; for all the little soul of him had been wrapped up in the body of this one woman, and that stroke that took her life had killed him too. (119)



What can be worse than the “soul death” that Joe has brought upon himself? Yet the language of this passage oddly divorces Joe of responsibility. His indifference and mechanical movements suggest an automaton, a being who, without “sense or volition,” cannot feel enough to act consciously. In focusing less on the loss of Hattie’s life and more on the vehicle the “body of this one woman” had become for Joe, the narrator suggests that he has committed a suicidal act. Yet, at the same time, Joe acted out of a perverse self-defense. The bonds of attachment between himself and Hattie, initiated and nourished in the atmosphere of the Banner Club, instilled his whole self in Hattie’s confirmation of his particular masculinity. Idealism, here, is killing. It is not the lynch rope or the white mob that brings him to an end, that makes him “not a man,” but a “monster.” Rather, the drive to conformity results in the novel’s ultimate act of harm: the destruction of feeling.

#### IV. Blues Naturalism; or, “The Philosophy of Sadness”

Joe’s metamorphosis into Dunbar’s own Frankenstein’s monster, a man without either soul or feeling, is not simply due to what the narrator identifies as his latent “moral and mental astigmatism that made him see everything wrong” (56). Nor is it simply driven by Hattie, as Dichter argues.<sup>86</sup> Rather, his metamorphosis takes place because he has not recognized alternative affective possibilities. The terms of attachment to which he has adhered have made such a broadened vision impossible. He has not learned that there are alternative ways of managing the affective devastation that comes from the failure of idealist notions of family. He does not know, in other words, how to feel otherwise. Like his parents, and like Kit, who the narrator suggests will someday face a similarly

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<sup>86</sup> Dichter, 87.

devastating state, he has not intuited the implicit lesson in Sadness' philosophy, a lesson in living the blues.

Despite the narrator's insistence that Sadness' philosophy contributes to Joe's end, Sadness' philosophy might have saved him. From Sadness, Joe might have learned the blues affective education that would have made living with negative feeling—rather than sublimating it, masking it, or being destroyed by it—possible. Sadness is first introduced as “a young man who, on account of his usual expression of innocent gloom, was called ‘Sadness.’” With “a deep expression of gloom,” Sadness explains to Joe that he has taken the name because “[a] distant relative of mine once had a great grief. I never recovered from it” (63). The other members of the Banner Club meet Sadness' explanation with laughter. Sadness' participation in this laughter signals his characteristic expression of contradictory feelings. He manages his grief through expressing it simultaneously with its opposite. Here, he shows no desire to mask or “recover” from the “great grief” that organizes his state of feeling. His laughter is not a cure, but a way surviving while feeling of grief. When another patron complains that Sadness should “be respectable” and stop telling Joe, with “tears in his eyes,” that “he looked like a cousin of his who died,” Sadness, turning his always “mournful eyes” to the speaker, replies that “Being respectable is very nice as a diversion, but it's tedious if done steadily” (64). Rather than a necessary and socially enforced practice, respectability, here implicitly defined as the concealment of negative feeling, is simply a “diversion” from the experience of life. It is a “tedious job” that only covers over what is actually taking place and being felt. In the most traditional sense, Joe did not ascribe to respectability politics,

but he did try to follow the rules of the Banner Club without learning the lessons Sadness embodies.

Before killing Hattie, Joe nonetheless saw something in Sadness that allowed him cast off his own protective mask and reveal the whole sad truth of his family—the false accusation that led to his father’s imprisonment, their shameful rejection by their southern African American community, and their subsequent fall from social respectability. While listening, Sadness shows no surprise or horror. When Joe finishes his story, Sadness tells Joe that it “isn’t half as bad as that of nine-tenths of the fellows that hang around here.” As an example, he shares his “great grief,” the fact his own his own father “was hung.” In the transition from “hang” to “hung” Sadness moves between the present and past tense, suggesting a continuum of tragic family violence into the present, as if the “fellows that hang around” the Banner Club live with the anxiety of a future “hanging,” or with the feeling that comes from a family member “being hung.” With this incursion of southern racial violence into the northern bar, past, present, North and South, all become infused with the feeling of family loss. Sadness responds to Joe’s “horror” with his own bleak humor. The hanging, he states, “was done with a very good rope and by the best citizens of Texas, so it seems I really ought to be very grateful to them for the distinction they conferred upon my family.” In another turn in Joe’s affective education, Sadness explains that he is not “grateful,” but “ungratefully sad.” “A man must be very high or very low,” he tells Joe, “to take the sensible view of life that keeps him from being sad. I must confess that I have aspired to the depths without ever being fully able to reach them” (82-83). Through Sadness’ philosophy, the novel rejects the “sensible view of life” that is a poor shadow of a life that allows a person to simply

feel sad. He does not advocate surrendering to the rage, shame, grief, and bitterness that overcomes Joe and his parents, nor the shame and self-interest that motivates Kit to reject her family. Sadness is an altogether different state of feeling. While Sadness has “aspired to reach the depths,” that is not a place he has been able to “reach,” perhaps because the humor that persists alongside his sorrow does not permit the descent to those depths. Sadness lives on the edge of despair. He survives this state of constant mourning by articulating and claiming the feelings that racial uplift philosophy would compel him to mask, measure, and manage in order to promote belief in family attachment and reform as the route to progress. Sadness finds a substitute family in the Banner Club. But, because of his blues sensibility, he does not curb his own feelings to gain belonging, for his allegiance is ultimately to the “great grief” from which he cannot recover, which allows him to feel freely and openly in the private spheres through which he moves.

Sadness’ philosophy provides a new way to understand the implications of Dunbar’s most well-known statement on the affective strategies that African Americans adopt in the interracial public sphere. In “We Wear the Mask,” Dunbar writes:

We wear the mask that grins and lies,  
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—  
This debt we pay to human guile;  
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,  
And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Why should the world be over-wise,  
In counting all our tears and sighs?  
Nay, let them only see us, while  
We wear the mask.

We smile, but O great Christ, our cries  
To thee from tortured souls arise.  
We sing, but oh the clay is vile  
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;  
But let the world dream otherwise,

We wear the mask!<sup>87</sup>

Rather than a strategic mask activated for safety in the public sphere, as portrayed so vividly by Chesnutt in *The Marrow of Tradition*, *The Sport of the Gods* reveals that masking also conditions feeling in the private sphere. Consider, for instance, how *King Lear*'s Cordelia sets in motion the destruction of her family by refusing to express love to her father on his terms. She tells him, "Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave / My heart into my mouth. I love your majesty / According to my bond, no more nor less."<sup>88</sup> By denying her father the display of feeling he demands, she breaches the contract of family attachment. Thus, though she loves him best, he casts her out. Through calling on *King Lear*, Dunbar not only suggests the impossibility of secure family attachment and racial uplift, but also, through Sadness, invokes the lesson Edgar offers at the end of the play: "The weight of this sad time we must obey, / speak what we feel, not what we ought to say."<sup>89</sup>

Sadness' refusal to succumb to a determinist environment that destroys feeling, like Cordelia's refusal to feel on her father's terms, points to Dunbar's underlying rejection of naturalism's affective structure in *Sport*. Gene Andrew Jarrett argues that *The Sport of the Gods* is not Dunbar's first foray into naturalism. Rather, according to Jarrett, Dunbar's first novel, *The Uncalled* (1896), "engages naturalism and tailors it to accommodate ideas of human uplift and redemption."<sup>90</sup> Despite the obvious determinism of *The Uncalled*, the novel's protagonist, Fred, "demonstrates the will to overcome his fate, despite the curse of his family." While the naturalist novels of Dunbar's white

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<sup>87</sup> Dunbar, "We Wear the Mask," *The Collected Poetry of Paul Laurence Dunbar*, 71.

<sup>88</sup> Shakespeare, 165.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 392.

<sup>90</sup> Jarrett, 290.

contemporaries show the modern individual “‘bereft of agency or vitality’ [...] and thus as ultimately tragic,” *The Uncalled* instead “illustrates the importance of individual will.” Jarret thus argues that it is “not a novel of tragedy, which would be traditionally naturalist, but a novel of triumph, which captures Dunbar’s revision of this genre.”<sup>91</sup> If *The Uncalled* is Dunbar’s first revision of the genre, *The Sport of the Gods* is his second and more radical revision. The white protagonist of *The Uncalled* can adopt an American bootstrap ideology to overcome his fate and the “curse of his family,” but the African American characters central his final novel are subject to the racist paradigms that exclude the black family from this most mythical of American ideals. The novel does not provide a way out through the power of individual will, but a way to keep feeling alive despite being overdetermined by the godly forces of American racism.

In Dunbar’s blues naturalism, we can detect the nascent strain of what Ralph Ellison calls “the blues impulse,” which he defined nearly fifty years later in “Richard Wright’s Blues” (1945). This impulse, Ellison writes, comes from the desire to “keep the painful details and episodes of a brutal existence alive in one’s aching consciousness, to finger its jagged grain,” but, by doing so, to “transcend it, not by the consolation of philosophy but by squeezing from it a near-tragic, near-comic lyricism. As a form, the blues is an autobiographical chronicle of personal catastrophe expressed lyrically.”<sup>92</sup> When combined with the affective structure of the naturalist novel, Dunbar’s blues

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 293.

<sup>92</sup> Ralph Ellison, “Richard Wright’s Blues.” In *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison: Revised and Updated*. Edited by John F. Callahan, 128-145 (New York: The Modern Library, 2003), 129. We might think, too, of Sterling Brown’s “Ma Rainey,” in which the speaker implores Ma “to git way inside us, / Keep us strong” through singing “bout de lonesome road / We mus’ go.” As described by Brown, the blues is a mode of artistic expression that speaks for and affirms a collective experience. “Ma Rainey,” in *The Collected Poems of Sterling A. Brown*, edited by Michael S. Harper (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 62-63.

promotes “keep[ing] the painful details and episodes of a brutal existence alive” in the consciousness of his characters, but he does not offer a model for transcending that experience. Generically, the characters in a naturalist novel cannot transcend the conditions to which they are subject. *Sport* instead takes a minor character, Sadness, who has already arrived at his lowest point and situates him at the cusp of that “transcendence” by unmasking the affective conditions of his “personal [and racial] catastrophe.” Recall Ellison’s emphasis on the personal and autobiographical drive in the blues. The blues allows for a form of attachment to the self, rather than to a collective, whether a nuclear family or alternative kinship network. The blues assumes that attachments are insecure, that the insecurity of attachment is what makes up the “painful details” and “brutal[ity]” of existence that is then articulated through the free expression of negative feeling—itself a kind of ironic relief from those very feelings.

Thus, rather than blaming Joe’s and Kit’s turn away from their family on circumstances put into motion by the Oakleys and on the influence of the city, their choices can be seen as attempts at self-determination and freedom of feeling that go awry. Joe and Kit fail because they replace one set of overdetermined ideals with those that come with the new family attachments they form in the Banner Club and in the theater. Despite the Hamiltons’ devastating end, Morgan, like Jonathan Daigle, offers a redemptive reading of *Sport*. Morgan claims that Dunbar, along with James Weldon Johnson in *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, “paved the way for the Harlem Renaissance’s subsequent explorations of urban blackness.”<sup>93</sup> But we need not look so far forward to account for *Sport*’s implicit intervention, nor limit it by geographic location.

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<sup>93</sup> Morgan, 230.

In *The Sport of the Gods*, then, Dunbar does not offer any grand strategy for racial uplift, nor any celebration of the triumph of individual and collective human will, nor even the possibility of the “quiet happiness” through family he advocates in “England as Seen by the Black Man.” If we imagine that his audience for the novel is someone other than the white reader optimistic reviewers suggest will learn to sympathize and be better “to the colored man in future,” we can think about what Dunbar offers to the black reader who might look to “the first blues figure” in African American literature, Sadness.<sup>94</sup> We might think, too, about Kit’s choice to enter the theater not as evidence of her moral demise, as the narrator insists. Instead, the theater might offer her the opportunity her claim her body as a modern, self-defined subject. We might consider her a representation of the “racially marked women” that Daphne Brooks argues use “their bodies in dissent of the social, political, and juridical categories assigned to them.”<sup>95</sup> These categories include those prescribed to women by racial uplift leaders, by parents and husbands and children who set expectations for how women like Kit should feel in the private sphere. Kit’s choice, though condemned by the novel, can be seen as a legitimate alternative in a world in which there were few opportunities available to black women. My effort, however, is not to redeem Dunbar’s racial politics or *The Sport of the Gods* as a novel of racial resistance. Rather, this chapter demonstrates that, unlike his peers, Dunbar used the novel to move into the interior spaces of black family life to show how the forms of attachment, and the idealism that shapes these terms, limited the capacity to feel the

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<sup>94</sup> Bernard W. Bell, *The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 71.

<sup>95</sup> Daphne Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850-1910* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2006), 162. For more on black female performers in the early twentieth-century, see Jayna Brown, *Babylon Girls: Black Women Performers and the Shaping of the Modern* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2008).



negative affects that were a fact of black family life at the turn of the century. *Sport* thus models affective un-masking in the African American private sphere as a politics of self-liberation.

## CHAPTER THREE

Suspending Animation: Racial Uplift's Mind/Body Problem in Pauline E. Hopkins'  
*Of One Blood: or, The Hidden Self*

*"Look, gentlemen, she breathes! She is alive; Briggs is right! Wonderful! Wonderful!"*  
 —Pauline E. Hopkins, 1903-1904

The passing of the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision legally displaced the African American body. In *A Voice from the South* (1892), Anna Julia Cooper describes an encounter with her own racial (dis)embodiment that occurred prior to de jure segregation. While on a train traveling South, she sought a restroom at a station and saw only two options: one labeled "FOR LADIES," and one labeled "FOR COLORED PEOPLE." Cooper's bodily encounter suggests that while *Plessy* exacerbated this displacement, it already existed in feeling. Facing these signs, Cooper "wonder[ed] under which head I come."<sup>1</sup> Identified as neither only "Colored" nor "Woman," Cooper confronted the legal and social disavowal of her raced and gendered bodily person at the same moment her bladder evidenced her corporeality. Without space to be embodied subjects, *fin de siècle* African Americans struggled to reconcile competing philosophies of the racialized body.

Embodiment is a vexed subject during the racial uplift movement. On the one hand, the raced body needs to disappear from view; it needs to be seen as other than black through regulating and disciplining its behavior and appearance. Only then, in the estimation of some race leaders, will survival in the present, what to speak of social and political equality, become possible. Booker T. Washington's "gospel of the toothbrush" is

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<sup>1</sup> Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice From the South*, "Indian Vs. Woman," 96. Cooper explains further that, should she be forced to stay overnight at the station and seek food or shelter, she would be informed that "We doan uccommodate no niggers hyur" (97). As Charles Lemert argues, Cooper "anticipated by nearly a century today's debates over the insufficiency of such categories as race or gender, even class, to capture, by themselves, the complexities of a woman's social experiences" (15-16). Introduction to *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper*, edited by Charles Lemert and Esme Bhan (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1998).

a case in point. In *Up From Slavery*, Washington writes: “In all my teaching I have watched carefully the influence of the tooth-brush, and I am convinced that there are few single agencies of civilization that are more far-reaching.”<sup>2</sup> Washington’s “civilizing” gospel paradoxically disembodies the subject through disciplining the body—the myth of the uncleanness and animality of the racialized body calls for the public disavowal of that historically-constructed body through the brushing of the teeth. While Washington espouses a three-pronged uplift practice that improves the “head, hand, and heart” of the black masses, I argue that his emphasis is actually on the hand, rather than the head, head, and heart together.<sup>3</sup> Thus he centers his “Atlanta Exposition Address” on what the black laboring body offers the white South (and nation). It promises, as well, that the black masses still retain the same docile, affectionate, and loyal “head and heart” that were characteristic of the race, he argues, under slavery. In separating these three facets that form the subject, Washington enforces a notion that the body and mind can be clearly delineated. The black body is not a social or political problem as long as its “head and heart” can be sublimated, or “civilized,” through corporeal discipline.

On the other hand, the legal and linguistic gymnastics predominant at the turn-of-the-century materialize the African American body, particularly the female body, as itself a highly visible problem by limiting its access and claim to public spaces, as exemplified by Anna Julia Cooper. Cooper, unlike Washington, wants to bring the racialization of the body into view, to remake a place for it by reckoning with the history that unmakes it. At the same time, she too disciplines the body through uplift politics that depend on Victorian ideals of manhood and womanhood. As the previous chapter demonstrates, the

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<sup>2</sup> Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1995), 36, 85.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

pressure to conform to bourgeois notions of family, gender, and sexuality similarly asserts itself as a desire to remake how the black body is seen.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time as racial uplifters struggled to reconcile competing methods for disciplining the body, white social scientists proclaimed that African Americans were quickly degenerating after slavery. They brought the body into view as a diseased, immoral, and criminal threat to national well-being.<sup>5</sup> W.E.B Du Bois' *The Philadelphia Negro* is one of many efforts by African American intellectuals to disprove such false findings. Alongside attempts to refute these theories, black leaders and sociologists instituted reform methods aimed at correcting the racial problems cited in mainstream medical discourse: "poor health, disregard of hygienic child culture, and venereal disease among African Americans primed the race for extinction."<sup>6</sup> "Social Darwinist theories," like those cited here, "implied people of African descent simply lacked the intelligence, discipline, and virility to make it in a competitive industrialized world."<sup>7</sup> Although Du Bois refuses claims of natural degeneracy, texts like *The Philadelphia Negro*, like racial uplift novels, saw themselves as a pedagogical tool for remaking the black body.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The historical oversexualizing of African Americans in popular culture, stemming from slavery, also drove respectability politics, a politics that helped the body disappear. Michelle Mitchell explains that "a welter of racist theories pertaining to sexuality and reproduction also produced reform impetus among African Americans. Between 1880 and 1920, fluctuating black birth rate statistics, black morbidity levels, and comparatively high occurrences of infant death fed speculation that black people were particularly 'degenerate.' . . . Popular eugenics suggested black women and men, due to sexual practices which were allegedly impure and haphazard, were scarcely capable of reproducing themselves" (10). Michelle Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation: African Americans and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 10.

<sup>5</sup> For more on how white social scientists fomented white anxiety over the black body, see Bryan Wagner, *Disturbing the Peace: Black Culture and the Police Power After Slavery* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), Michelle Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation: African Americans and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), and Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> Mitchell, 10.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> For more on Du Bois and eugenics, see Michelle Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation*, as well as Kyla Schuller's chapter on Du Bois in *The Biopolitics of Feeling: Race, Sex, and Science in the Nineteenth*

Racial uplift philosophy therefore operates under the logic that “work on the body [...] allows the body to disappear from view.”<sup>9</sup> The body as black disappeared from view by bringing the right bodies to the fore; one need only thumb through *The Colored American Magazine*—for instance, its first issue includes sixteen pages of portraits—or any turn-of-the-century African American newspaper to see images of respectable, dignified, and successful African Americans whose bodiliness was made absent through this kind of curated representation.

Part of this project manifests as a heightened interest in the mind, particularly in the psychology of the black subject. Du Bois remains the key figure for understanding racial psychology at the turn of the century. However, as discussed in chapter one, his notion of double-consciousness privileged the psyche of the talented tenth as the measuring stick for what it “feels like to be a problem.” Double-consciousness relies, as well, on interracial politics and assumes that such barriers do not exist “within the veil,” or even at the level of the individual who sublimates his or her own affects. Like Washington’s “gospel of the toothbrush,” Du Bois’ double-consciousness intervenes between mind from body. Du Bois, for example, depicts African Americans’ psychological condition in the US as the experience of having “two warring ideals in one dark body.”<sup>10</sup> This claim does not account for what takes place in that body, particularly when that body has no knowledge of its history, or its “twoness.” For Du Bois, the body

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*Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018). There, Schuller claims that Du Bois struggled to come to genetic determinism and actively fought against “the solidification of genetic racism, a move that brought along with it the notion that race is a cultural, rather than a physiological, phenomenon” (31).

<sup>9</sup> Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 34. Consider, as well, Mitchell’s chapter, “What a Pure, Healthy, Unified Race Can Accomplish: Collective Reproduction and the Sexual Politics of Black Nationalism,” in which she addresses the ways African Americans focused on the biological reproduction of the race as part of their political program.

<sup>10</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1996), 5.

does not necessarily function as a source for understanding the workings of the mind. The body, here, is a stable concept—and it is the mind that, above all, needs to be studied, cultivated, and disciplined. After all, as Du Bois writes in the Forethought, *The Souls of Black Folk* aims to sketch not the physical world but the “spiritual world”—which seems to be a catchall phrase for the condition of the mind and soul—of those that live within the veil.<sup>11</sup>

Prioritizing the mind and soul over the body that lives and feels allows Du Bois to express a bitter gratitude for his own son’s early death. In “Of the Death of the First Born,” Du Bois describes that, on the day of his son’s burial, he feels “an awful gladness” in his “heart” that his child is “not dead, but escaped: not bond, but free.” Calling himself a “fool” to wish that “this little soul should grow choked and deformed within the Veil,” Du Bois consoles himself that his son is “well sped” before “the world had dubbed [his] ambition insolence, had held [his] ideals unattainable, and taught [him] to cringe and bow.”<sup>12</sup> In other words, for Du Bois, the mind and spirit live in the living body, but are not of the body. The body is simply an impermanent container, and therefore of lesser importance to the project of racial uplift.

Both classical philosophy and critical theory have been consumed by the relationship of the body to the mind. Whether looking to the mind/body dualism of secular critical theory or the body/soul dualism of classical philosophy, it is clear that neither makes room for the third term missing from their binaries, affect. Affect theorists reject body/mind dualism. Affect theory in fact proceeds from the Spinozian notion that while the body and mind may be autonomous, they “nonetheless proceed or develop in

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 174.

parallel.”<sup>13</sup> In his Foreward to *The Affective Turn*, Michael Hardt takes this further, arguing that affect straddles the relationship between body and mind “insofar as it indicates at once the current state of the mind and the body.”<sup>14</sup> The previous chapter’s reading of *The Sport of the Gods* emphasized the importance of the individual’s will to feel fully, outside of the constraints of racial uplift philosophy or practice. A racial uplift philosophy that focuses primarily on either the body or mind, rather than on the interrelationship of both, fails to account for affect.

This chapter turns to Pauline E. Hopkins, the most prolific female author of the racial uplift movement, to consider the affective aims of racial uplift philosophy in relation to the body/mind.<sup>15</sup> It argues that Hopkins’ fiction serves as a philosophical inquiry into the relationship between the body and mind, and, in doing so, that it offers a theory for how affective experience shapes racialized subjectivity in the US. Along with contemporaries like Du Bois, Hopkins was well-versed in the burgeoning field of psychology. Indeed, Hopkins’ psychological theories have been compared to Du Bois’ notion of double-consciousness.<sup>16</sup> In contrast to Du Bois, Hopkins’ investment in psychology extended to the body itself. Martin Japtok and Andrea N. Williams argue, however, that Hopkins was overly invested in the body. In Williams’ estimation, Hopkins

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<sup>13</sup> Michael Hardt, “What Affects are Good For,” Foreward to *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, edited by Patricia Ticinto Clough and Jean Halley, ix-xiii (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), ix.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, x.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Yarborough argues that she is the “single most productive black woman writer at the turn of the century.” Introduction. *Contending Forces: A Romance Illustrative of Negro Life North and South*, by Pauline E. Hopkins, xxvii-xxviii (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), xxvii.

<sup>16</sup> See Joshua Lam, “Uncanny Compulsions: Automatism, and Memory in *Of One Blood*,” *Callaloo* 39.2 9 (Spring 2016): 473-492, and Cynthia Schrager, “Both Sides of the Veil: Race, Science, and Mysticism in W.E. B. Du Bois,” *American Quarterly* 48.4 (Dec., 1996): 551-586, and Lois Brown, *Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins: Black Daughter of the Revolution* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

“inadvertently conced[ed] to essentialist notions of white genetic superiority.”<sup>17</sup> I contend, instead, that her fiction meditates on the relationship of the body to the mind, and so does not affirm scientific racism because she refuses any stable notion of the body. Rather, in this meditation, she identifies the dangers of separating body from mind, a separation she understands as the aim of US racialization and the *a priori* condition of African American belonging in the nation.

Hopkins writes her characters outside of the US. By doing so, she resists the pressure to affirm black national belonging. Unlike Hopkins, many African American authors in the decades following Reconstruction imaginatively realized black subjects as full US citizens, with all the rights, social and legal, that citizenship in the US promises its subjects. Novels like Frances Harper’s 1892 *Iola Leroy*, for instance, provided black readers with a vision of an idealized political future, and, at the same time, demonstrated to white readers why they should accept black Americans as fellow citizens. Hopkins proves an exception to this rule. All four of Hopkins’s novels, as well as her only published play, *Peculiar Sam; or The Underground Railroad*, end with characters who move outside the United States, as if freedom and futurity are only possible elsewhere. Thus, for Hopkins’ characters, the cost of belonging otherwise in the US is either national expulsion or death.

While serving as the editor for the first African American literary journal, *The Colored American Magazine*, Hopkins had a unique opportunity to shape the form,

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<sup>17</sup> Andréa N. Williams, *Dividing Lines: Class Anxiety and Postbellum Black Fiction* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 107. Williams and others argue that Hopkins proliferated eugenicist, classist, and biological notions of race; Hopkins, they claim, affirmed scientific racism rather than disputing it. As Williams concludes, Hopkins had a difficult task: “refuting scientific racism without becoming complicit in it” (109). Martin Japtok, “Pauline Hopkins’s *Of One Blood*, Africa, and the ‘Darwinist Trap.’” *African American Review* 36.3 (Autumn 2002): 403-415.



content, and politics of racial uplift literature. Like Chesnutt and Dunbar, Hopkins understood the importance of transforming the white perception of blackness, as well as the intraracial politics of embodiment. Her literary and philosophical experimentation with racial embodiment extends further than Chesnutt's and Dunbar's, however, as she directly questions the body's capacity and its relationship to the mind. In this, Hopkins is not alone. Like Hopkins herself, many writers for the *Colored American Magazine* were fascinated by the body's and the mind's mystical potential. The question of what the body and mind were capable of was open-ended and became the subject of short stories as well as serialized novels. These texts were more than fanciful explorations. Rather, they point to a contemporary belief in the body's and mind's mutability. The practice of racial passing already demonstrated that bodily identity was not as fixed as the law decreed. The body's capacity thus remained unknown and required further exploration. Of what, then, was the body capable? What, too, was its relation to the mind?

Both the melodramatic mode and a contemporary interest in the supernatural offer Hopkins a set of formal conventions to wrestle with these questions. The melodramatic mode formally refutes the binary logic of the body/mind divide and, in its drive towards expressing excess affect, requires that characters be driven to expressive extremes that in themselves highlight the complex relationship between body and mind. The genre itself thus allows Hopkins to formally expose the flaws and failures of the body/mind binary. The supernatural, in turn, refuses to stabilize either the body or mind. Combining the supernatural and melodramatic modes, Hopkins drives her characters to extremes that push affect out of the body, suspending its animation and limiting its ability to live fully, as fits the demands of racialized citizenship, or pushes the characters themselves outside

national bounds. Such a condition mirrors what for Hopkins is the supernatural existence of black subjects in the nation. Subjects fully awakened to their affective capacity are, in this case, forced to leave the nation, as they cannot live in the nation while feeling in their bodies the cost of US belonging.

*Of One Blood; or, The Hidden Self* calls for an alternative form of belonging that allows subjects to be aware of their embodied histories while living with the affects that may result from such understanding. Serialized in *The Colored American Magazine* from 1902-1903, *Of One Blood* is Hopkins' last published novel.<sup>18</sup> While much of Hopkins' fiction intervenes at the intersection of body and mind, this novel most forcefully raises the question of what it means to live as a thinking, feeling, and embodied racialized subject in the US. For example, when, in the opening chapters, Harvard's eminent doctors exclaim over Dianthe Lusk's reanimated body, "she breathes! She is *alive*," Hopkins reminds us that being "alive" requires the movement of breath in the flesh.<sup>19</sup> While Dianthe's breathing evidences the potential for bodily reanimation, the chapters following this miraculous event consider more fully the relationship between the living body and the mind. Thus, when Molly Vance remarks that Dianthe, who awakens without memory, is "lost" yet "still living," she underscores the novel's key concern: how to draw together the body and mind when these have been rendered apart by the history of race in the United States.

The onslaught of psychic and bodily violence found in *Of One Blood* forces a confrontation with the on-goingness of America's racial history in the present. This

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<sup>18</sup> Hopkins also began work on a fifth novel, *Topsy Templeton*, which she began publishing in serial form in *New Era Magazine* in 1916.

<sup>19</sup> Pauline Hopkins, *Of One Blood; or, The Hidden Self* (New York: Washington Square Press, 2004), 54. Subsequent citations from this novel will be cited parenthetically in text.

history asserts itself between the body and mind. Hopkins represents this violent mental and bodily assault through incest, racial passing, rape, psychic control, mesmerism, hysteria, and death. In such representation, Hopkins illustrates that the history of race in the US not only shapes how the black subject moves and lives in the nation, but predetermines her relationship to her body and mind. *Of One Blood* thus asks us to consider the affective experience of racialized subjectivity in the body itself.

Hopkins ties this affective experience to supernatural notions of the self. *Of One Blood* therefore opens by positing psychological and spiritual theories on the “transmigration of the soul,” the transference of “personality” from body to body until a “true” “hidden self” can manifest. The cost of realizing this hidden self in the US is death. Belonging in the US forces the “hidden self” into hiding through historically disembodiment of the racialized subject. It is for this reason that Hopkins adopts and deploys emerging “psychological and psychical discourses” to develop a framework for addressing both “the psychology of racism and the psychic effects it produces.”<sup>20</sup> By doing so, as Cynthia Schrager writes, Hopkins illuminates “the experience of being psychically split.”<sup>21</sup> This split, however, is not only psychic, as Du Bois defines it in *The Souls of Black Folk*. Rather, it is affective. Psychic splitting has physiological effects that are felt in and on the body. As the “hidden self”—here defined as the mind with full access to its history—comes to the surface, the body is pushed to its affective limits and cannot be held together as long as it remains tied to the nation. The price of belonging is

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<sup>20</sup> Dana Luciano, “Passing Shadows: Melancholic Nationality and Black Critical Publicity in Pauline E. Hopkins’s *Of One Blood*.” In *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, eds. David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, 148-187 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 149.

<sup>21</sup> Cynthia D. Schrager, “Pauline Hopkins and William James: The New Psychology and the Politics of Race.” In *The Unruly Voice: Rediscovering Pauline Hopkins*, edited by John Cullen Gruesser, 182-209 (Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 189-90.

a splitting off of the mind from the body, an erasure of embodied history that only allows the racialized subject to exist as a ghostly citizen.

The three main characters in *Of One Blood* all struggle to reconcile their body with their mind. They each experience a disjunction between how they move in the world, their racial history, and their knowledge of self. Their affective responses, heightened at moments of crisis, threaten to expose this disjunction and offer the promise of reanimating the body/mind relation. While summarizing a novel like *Of One Blood* proves difficult, even a brief summary illustrates Hopkins' investment in the bodily and psychic experience of race. In short, the novel tells the story of three separated descendants of an American slaveholder, Dr. Aubrey Livingston, Sr., and an enslaved woman, Mira. When their descendants (Aubrey Livingston, Reuel Briggs, and Dianthe Lusk) eventually cross paths, they do not recognize each other as siblings and become entangled in marital and sexual relationships that threaten their mental and bodily integrity. In doing so, the novel suggests that reckoning with the affective conditions of African American belonging require reimagining what racial uplift might look like when its philosophy rejects citizenship, in any nation, as the ideal around which equality and futurity coheres.

In this chapter, I first turn to a reading of Hopkins' literary aims and her struggle to realize those aims in an era largely influenced by Booker T. Washington. This analysis helps to reconceive our understanding of the kind of cultural and affective work Hopkins believed race literature capable—creating a transracial sense of belonging that brought together the body and mind in order to allow subjects full access to their own affective life. To do so, Hopkins deployed the melodramatic mode and entered the realm of the

supernatural, both of which are popular genre forms that appealed to readers of serial fiction. These forms are at odds. Melodrama privileges the body because of its expressive capacity, while the supernatural relies on the mind, and therefore privileges disembodiment as its politics and form. While *Of One Blood* may seem to favor the mind and spirit's mystical capacities, I argue that Hopkins was ultimately unwilling to reject the body. Rejecting the body means the loss of affect, which animates both body and mind. In *Of One Blood*, then, she attempts to reunite the racialized body and mind through a philosophical meditation on what becomes possible for the subject who adopts forms of belonging outside the nation.

#### I. "Like a Page from an Exciting Novel": Racial Uplift's Excess Affects and the Supernatural Melodrama

Even to *Of One Blood's* characters, the novel's plot defies belief. Indeed, when Aubrey Livingston's fiancé, Molly Vance, declares that Dianthe's miraculous reanimation and consequent amnesia is "like a page from an exciting novel," she alerts readers of the *Colored American Magazine* that *Of One Blood* is neither a "simple, homely tale," nor one that is "unassumingly told," as Hopkins herself argues race literature must be.<sup>22</sup> Instead, the novel conforms to popular generic conventions rather than to the standard realist mode Hopkins argues for in the preface to her first novel, *Contending Forces* (1900). This does not mean, however, that *Of One Blood* does not accomplish important political and cultural work on behalf of the race. The novel fuses form with feeling, using the novel as a site for negotiating excess racial affect. The form of this novel demonstrates that the "simple, homely tale" proved an inadequate medium

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<sup>22</sup> Pauline Hopkins, Preface to *Contending Forces*, by Pauline E. Hopkins, 13-16 (Boston, Mass: The Colored Co-operative Publishing Co., 1900), 13.

for such a project. The “exciting novel” thus becomes the ideal form through which to press the body/mind into expressing the unmanaged affects of racial uplift.

Hazel V. Carby, Claudia Tate, and many other scholars of nineteenth century black women’s writing have already noted that Hopkins outlines her literary aims, as well as the aims of race literature itself, in her now canonical preface to *Contending Forces*. Critics have long evaluated Hopkins’ contributions as an essayist, fiction writer, dramatist, and literary editor for *The Colored American Magazine* by the standard of race writing she articulates there.<sup>23</sup> As Hopkins outlines in the preface, race literature should engender a didactic force, one that serves politics above all else. Her preface suggests race writers can best the “cement the bonds of brotherhood” by writing plainly; ornamentation inhibits a story’s ability to transform readers’ hearts and minds. Yet the three magazine novels that followed *Contending Forces* demonstrate her unwillingness to follow her own formula for race writing. By the time she completed *Of One Blood* in 1903, Hopkins had moved far from the “simple, homely tale.” Incorporating adventure, romance, fantasy, ghost stories, an African archaeological expedition, and forays into mystic phenomena and psychic experimentation, the novel appeals to popular taste while defying easy generic classification. Nonetheless, it relies most heavily on melodrama and the supernatural to accomplish its affective work.

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<sup>23</sup> Hazel Carby argues, for instance, that Hopkins’ preface to *Contending Forces* crystalizes Hopkins’ formal and political motivations. As Carby writes, her “pedagogical and political intent was that her fiction enter ‘these days of mob violence’ and ‘lynch law’ and directly intervene in and help transform the state of relations between the races” (129). More recently, Andréa Williams has argued that Hopkins’ preface call for a “new fiction to intervene in the public perception of black Americans” was not a call for literature that simply catered to the tastes of a black middle class, but rather one that contributed “to the literary formation of a class” that “needed to look to African American literature for a sense of its boundaries, responsibility, and authenticity relative to the ‘lower class’ and ‘parvenus’” (106). Hazel V. Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Novelist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). Claudia Tate, *Domestic Allegories of Politic Desire: The Black Heroine’s Text at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

At the same time that Hopkins advocates for the “simple, homely tale,” she also argues that African American writing should “*faithfully portray the inmost thoughts and feelings of the Negro.*” Not only should black writers express such inner, private, and until now unexpressed feeling, but they should do so with “*all the fire and romance which lie dormant in our history.*”<sup>24</sup> In her preface, then, Hopkins embeds a dichotomy between literary form and its ability to express feeling. How can the “unassuming” story reveal the race’s “inmost thoughts and feelings” with the “fire and romance” she believes lays “dormant” in African American history? The adjective “faithfully” also implies that failing to portray the race’s “inmost thoughts and feelings” is a kind of betrayal, or, at the least, a shortcoming of the race writer. More simply, she claims that it is the duty of the race writer to express racial affect. Race writers must therefore use forms that allow for such expression. In this case, the realist mode Hopkins seems to be championing actually becomes an obstacle to this project. For, as Nancy Glazener puts it in *Reading for Realism*, “high realist connoisseurship” requires an “aesthetic and emotional muting.”<sup>25</sup> Aesthetic “muting” sublimates affect. Realism, then, formally reproduces the affective constraints of racial uplift. In this case, Hopkins’ formula for race writing internally contradicts itself. It implies, almost by accident, that the “exciting” novel, constructed with “fire and romance,” may more successfully “cement the bonds of brotherhood.”

The *Colored American Magazine* takes the sentiments espoused by Hopkins as its mission. However, it also resolves the internal tension between form and feeling evidenced in her preface by making space for popular genre fiction—which relies on

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<sup>24</sup> Preface, 14.

<sup>25</sup> Nancy Glazener, *Reading for Realism: The History of a U.S. Literary Institution, 1850-1910* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 119.

eliciting heightened emotional responses from readers—as well as literary experimentation. As the primary African American literary journal of the early twentieth century, the journal's mission, values, and content provide important insight into the literary aims of racial uplift ideology and practice.<sup>26</sup> Hopkins herself took advantage of this publication platform, serializing three of her novels and publishing numerous short stories and nonfiction articles in the journal. Indeed, prior to 1900, Hopkins did not write fiction, likely because, as Claudia Tate states, “there were few African American outlets for this genre until the advent of the *Colored American Magazine*.”<sup>27</sup> From the time she was named literary editor for the *Colored American Magazine* in May 1900, when it published its first issue, to being forced to leave the journal in 1904 through the machinations of Booker T. Washington, Hopkins helped shape the form, content, and politics of African American literary production. Thus, when the journal declares in its first issue that “[w]hat we desire, what we require, what we demand to aid in the onward march of progress and advancement is justice; merely this and nothing more,”<sup>28</sup> it reveals the stakes of the political and cultural work asked of race literature by Hopkins and answered by its contributors.

Yet its tenure as a literary journal was short-lived, as was Hopkins's role as its editor. The *Colored American Magazine*, like many early publications, struggled financially despite its relative success and loyal readership. Its commitment to literature

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<sup>26</sup> The *Colored American Magazine* catered to African American readers as well as sympathetic whites. Its commitment to literature was, according to Nancy Glazener, “commensurate with the *Atlantic's*” (8). As Hanna Wallinger notes, the journal's founders believed that the *Colored American Magazine* had a “pedagogic function,” and that, along with its nonfiction essays debating uplift philosophies and practices, its poetry and fiction also contributed towards “the advancement of the race.” Hanna Wallinger, *Pauline E. Hopkins: A Literary Biography* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 56.

<sup>27</sup> Qtd. in Wallinger, 33.

<sup>28</sup> “Editorial and Publishers' Announcements.” *The Colored American Magazine* 1.1 (May 1900): 60-64, 61.



also shifted after 1904 when Hopkins was forced to leave her post. Hopkins provides a detailed account of the magazine's transformation and her own ousting from the publication in a 1905 letter to William Monroe Trotter, a Boston newspaper editor and staunch opponent to Booker T. Washington.<sup>29</sup> As Hopkins tells Trotter, Washington's involvement with the *Colored American Magazine* began in November 1903 when she sent out a call to "writers of prominence" soliciting articles on a key question of the era: "INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION; WILL IT SOLVE THE NEGRO PROBLEM"?<sup>30</sup> John C. Freund, the white editor of the New York's journal *Music Trade*, contributed his recent articles on Jamaica for this issue. Shortly thereafter, Freund began contributing financially to help cover the magazine's manufacturing costs. Hopkins soon realized that Freund's motives were not philanthropic. By early 1904, it had become clear that Freund was in the service of Washington and was working to destroy the magazine in its current form, as its politics opposed Washington's own.

Washington's objections to the magazine, however, did not just extend to the nonfiction essays that openly contradicted his mission. It was not just that its literary production exposed the racial affects he either ignored or denounced. But, as becomes clear in Freund's subsequent threats to Hopkins and William Dupree, by creating a platform for expressing the race's "inmost thoughts and feelings," the magazine could

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<sup>29</sup> Trotter, who served as the editor of the *Boston Globe*, was a well-known opponent to Washington. He was once even arrested for disrupting a meeting of the National Negro Business League during which thousands had gathered to hear Washington speak. "That Boston Riot." X.11 *The Colored American: A National Negro Newspaper* (August 22) 1903: 6. Incidentally, the issue in which the article detailing Trotter's disruption appears features a full-page photo of Washington, with the caption quoting Andrew Carnegie: "To me he seems the greatest of living men, because his work is unique; the modern Moses, who leads his race and lifts it through education to even better and higher things than a land overflowing with milk and honey. History is to tell of two Washingtons—one white, the other black—both fathers of their people."

<sup>30</sup> "Pauline Hopkins to William Monroe Trotter, 16 April 1905." In *Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins: Black Daughter of the Revolution*, 546-554, 546.

infect readers with a similarly expressive desire. The following excerpt from an April 1904 letter from to Dupree illustrates this problem. Freund threatens Hopkins and the magazine as follows:

Either Miss Hopkins will follow our suggestion in this matter and put live matter into the magazine, eliminating anything which may cause offense; stop talking about wrongs and a proscribed race, or you must count me out absolutely from this day forth. I will neither personally endorse nor help a business proposition which my common sense tells me is foredoomed to failure. Every person that I have spoken to on the subject is with me. IT IS MR. BOOKER T. WASHINGTON'S IDEA.<sup>31</sup>

Hopkins tells Trotter that Freund's reference to a "proscribed race" was a "hit" at *Contending Forces* and her serial novel *Hagar's Daughter*, both of which, she writes, "had roused the ire of the white South, male and female, against me."<sup>32</sup> Ultimately Hopkins ties Washington's infiltration of the magazine via Freund back to the series on "Industrial Education." The series, she explains, "created consternation in the ranks of the Southern supporters [of Washington's policy] because they were written by writers of so high a standing in the literary world as to prove that the policy of industrial education solely for the Negro was not popular, and was doomed to failure in the end."<sup>33</sup> Yet there seems to be more at work in Freund's letter. The *Colored American Magazine* was not just aimed at white readers. Indeed, it raised Washington's "ire" as well as that of the white South. Literature that speaks of "wrongs" clearly offends black readers like Washington as well as his white supporters. Hopkins had certainly angered Freund himself by refusing to follow his demands. With each preceding sentence of his letter, his anger mounts. Indeed, the capitalization and underlining of "IT IS MR. BOOKER T. WASHINGTON'S IDEA" reveals Freund's increased frustration and escalating fury.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 550.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 551.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 553.

These lines shout rather than speak politely. It is as if Hopkins' writing and the magazine itself can and does contaminate readers into revealing *too much feeling*, thus inhibiting their ability to manage their affects appropriately. Washington's industrial education is also an affective education. In forcing Freund to this extreme expression of outrage on behalf of Washington, Hopkins challenges the affective basis of Washington's uplift program. Freund's letter exposes, as well, just how carefully feeling must be managed to maintain Washington's racial and national agenda.

Hopkins was forced to resign in September 1904 shortly after the magazine's offices had been moved to New York city where a Mr. Roscoe Conkling Simmons, in fact a nephew of Washington's wife, was given her position. While the magazine continued to run until 1907, it no longer included literary works of any kind. I offer this brief history because it illustrates the kind of opposition writers such as Hopkins faced. Washington's program not only dominated the public's perception of uplift's aims and practices. More importantly, he had the power to shutdown literary efforts that reimagined African Americans' place within the nation as other than its peaceful and loyal laborers. In repositioning the African American body and mind within the body politic by expressing the "wrongs of a proscribed race," Hopkins and the writers of the *Colored American Magazine* undermined the basic premise of Washington's uplift program. In line with Washington's "gospel of the toothbrush," the magazine had to be scrubbed clean of Hopkins as if she were dangerous affective debris.

In other words, according to Washington and his associates, the *Colored American Magazine* was doing the wrong kind of cultural and political work through its literary production. His own autobiography, the 1901 *Up From Slavery*, then presumably

positioned African Americans properly within the nation by making a case for a particular affective orientation the black subject has to freedom and nation. As has already been noted in chapter one, in *Up From Slavery*, Washington denounces bitterness, calling it an obstacle on the road towards his notion of progress. In fact, his autobiography's measured affect suggests a kind of mental and bodily abstraction that results from rejecting any feeling that might bring to the surface historical truths and present conditions that would complicate or disrupt his mission. The literary work of the *Colored American Magazine*, much of which came from Hopkins herself,<sup>34</sup> elevated present and historical conditions that could bring the affects Washington denied to the fore. On the surface, series like "Industrial Education" went against the spirit of Tuskegee. At a deeper level, however, the magazine's dramatic genre fiction disrupted it at the level of the body and mind. The *Colored American Magazine* reanimated underlying affective experiences that could make Washington's uplift philosophy and practice unsustainable and impossible to embody.

The fiction Hopkins publishes in the magazine exposes racial uplift's affective excess, that remainder unaccounted for or ignored by philosophies that aim to manage the body's and mind's relationship to the civic and domestic spheres. Affects like outrage, bitterness, or despair cannot be expressed or even acknowledged within these spaces, or so racial uplift philosophy implies. These affects are in excess of what African American men and women are permitted to feel in the South, and, once Washington takes over the *Colored American Magazine*, what they are allowed to express in any publication that he

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<sup>34</sup> In addition to publishing under her own name, Hopkins published with the pseudonyms J. Shirley Shadrack and Sarah Allen (her mother's name). For more on her use of pseudonyms, see *Pauline E. Hopkins: A Literary Biography* by Hanna Wallinger (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2005), 60-69.

controls, either overtly or covertly. As Hopkins writes in her letter to Trotter, the magazine's new policy does not allow either "a word of complaint" or "talks of wrongs" within its pages.<sup>35</sup> In reproducing this rift between feeling and expression, racial uplift literature in the vein of Washington alienates the body from the mind by excising affects like outrage and bitterness. Such literature does not permit the body/mind to be put in situations that heighten its expressive capacity. The living body may feel such affects, but these affects must remain unvoiced and unseen in print or public. And, as Dunbar demonstrates in *The Sport of the Gods*, the affective demands of the domestic sphere similarly requires that African Americans repress affects in order to work towards ideal notions of family life. *Of One Blood* takes this repressed and thus excess affect as its topic and literary mode to upend the affective aims of racial uplift in the mental and bodily sphere.

*Of One Blood* formally works through the problem of aligning the condition of mind to the condition of the body in a state of harmonious affective freedom. In doing so, Hopkins depicts scenes of racial "violence, suffering, and oppression," which Glazener argues had been relegated to the "domain of cheap—commodified, manipulative, addictive—fiction."<sup>36</sup> *Fin de siècle* African American fiction finds political purchase in what realists like Howells considered "manipulative and addictive" forms. Such fiction allows Hopkins and others to put characters into states and places that push the affective limits of the body and mind. In staging feeling, such forms rely on plot devices that move characters to perform dramatically, exaggeratedly—like readers of such works, the characters themselves are made to weep and rage. Not only does the structure of popular

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<sup>35</sup> Hopkins, "Pauline Hopkins to William Monroe Trotter," 554.

<sup>36</sup> Glazener, 119.

fictional forms—like melodrama, adventure, and romance—create opportunities for affective excess, but, by incorporating the supernatural into these forms, Hopkins reveals how the subject can be drained of affect by separating body from mind.

The supernatural allows Hopkins to depict the relation of body to mind in circumstances that challenge given social meaning and to envision alternate ways of belonging in the nation and the world. Hopkins belongs in a tradition of African American writers who use the fantastic as a mode of political race work, a tradition that perhaps begins with William J. Wilson's 1859 series *Afric-American Picture Gallery* and is then taken up by Hopkins, Sutton E. Griggs, and Du Bois in the late nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, then in the Harlem Renaissance by George Schuyler, most notably in his 1931 satire, *Black No More*, before becoming a major form of twentieth and twenty-first century African American literature, from Toni Morrison, to Octavia Butler, to contemporary Afro-Futurists. The relatively unknown Edward A. Johnson also belongs in this category.<sup>37</sup> *Light Ahead for the Negro* (1904), Johnson's only novel, is a time travel tale in which the protagonist goes up in an airplane in 1906 and wakes in 2006 to a utopian world of partial racial equality.<sup>38</sup> Like Hopkins, he makes

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<sup>37</sup> Johnson was a successful attorney and, in 1917, became the first African-American member of the New York State legislature. Prior to this, he wrote a children's history textbook in an attempt to correct the popular misrepresentations of Reconstruction. See *A School History of the Negro Race in American from 1619 to 1890*. This was a children's textbook written at the request of the Raleigh School Superintendent. In 1899, Johnson also wrote a second textbook, *History of Negro Soldiers in the Spanish American War and Other Items of Interest*. His last book *Adam vs. Ape-Man in Ethiopia*, was published in 1928.

<sup>38</sup> Neither the novel itself nor Johnson have received much critical attention. While *Light Ahead for the Negro* is more racial treatise and a step-by-step revision of Reconstruction than a literary narrative, it deserves a greater hearing, especially as Johnson was a well-known and respected figure during his day. See, for example, the brief profile of Johnson in April 1933 issue of *The Crisis*, titled "The Life Work of Edward A. Johnson," which interestingly enough, does not mention the novel at all. "The Life Work of Edward A. Johnson," no author. *The Crisis* 40.4 (April 1933): 81.

the body and mind perform out of turn, moving it improperly through time and (social) space.

In fusing the supernatural and melodramatic modes, Hopkins provides ways to rethink and re-feel—through the body—African Americans’ present and future place in the nation. She also makes the melodramatic mode perform out of turn. Traditionally, literary critics have considered melodrama and the melodramatic mode to have a stabilizing force. In the hands of conservative white writers, it reinforces racial binaries. Moreover, melodrama’s Manichean logic demands a moral clarity that often temporarily solves the social problems it depicts. It resets the world back to a moment of imagined former stability: a moment when right and wrong were clearly defined, when evil was punished, virtue rewarded, and peace prevailed, and, importantly, when racial lines were clearly demarcated. Melodrama has therefore been critiqued as “an inherently conservative and backward-looking form even as it progressively tackles basic problems of social inequity,” as Linda Williams puts it.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, she argues, the genre can be transgressive when it points towards new futures.<sup>40</sup> Hopkins pairs the supernatural with melodrama to provide this potential. She “points towards new futures” while making the body’s feeling visible in the present. The supernatural melodrama leaves characters

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<sup>39</sup> Linda Williams, *Playing the Race Card: Melodramas of Black and White from Uncle Tom to O.J. Simpson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 36. She argues further: “Looking back at Uncle Tom from the vantage point of [the 1990s], I began to see that the emotionally charged ‘moral legibility’ that we see to be so crucial to the mode of melodrama is intrinsically linked to a ‘racial legibility’ that habitually sees a Manichean good or evil in the visual ‘fact’ of race itself—whether it is the dark male victim of white abuse or the dark villain with designs upon the innocent white woman” (xiv). For more on melodrama’s formal and political conservatism, particularly on the nineteenth century stage, see Douglas A. Jones, Jr., *The Captive Stage: Performance and the Proslavery Imagination of the Antebellum North* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2014).

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

and readers with other ways of being in the world once affect has been freed through melodramatic excess.

The melodramatic mode unmanages affect by pushing characters to emotional and bodily extremes. Hence the characters in *Of One Blood* are often flushed with emotion, choked with sobs, pale with terror, and paralyzed with dread. Their exteriorized affective experiences expose internalized and hidden—purposefully or not—knowledge or truths, which, by rising to the surface, force characters to confront their own personhood, their social position, and their sense of belonging. This characteristic of the melodramatic mode comes from melodrama’s origin in theater. Melodrama proper derived from the tradition of *pantomime dialogue* in which “the actor’s body was called upon to dramatize inexpressible emotions and states of being.”<sup>41</sup> As in stage melodramas, the body in the melodramatic mode serves as the primary vehicle for what is otherwise unexpressed or inexpressible. Characters find their feelings show and cannot be managed, despite an endeavor to keep these interiorized. For example, Peter Brooks argues in his seminal study of the form, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, that the body of melodrama behaves hysterically, “if by hysteria we understand the condition of bodily writing, a condition in which the repressed affect is represented on the body . . . hysteria gives us the maximal conversion of psychic affect into somatic meaning—meaning enacted on the body itself.”<sup>42</sup> Because early melodrama “made its messages legible through a register of nonverbal as well as verbal signs, it offered a repertory of gestures, facial expressions,

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<sup>41</sup> Carla Marcantonio, *Global Melodrama: Nation, Body, and History in Contemporary Film*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), 8.

<sup>42</sup> Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995 [Second Edition with New Preface]), xi.



bodily postures and movements . . . which could not help but be expressionistic.”<sup>43</sup> In an era when the body’s racial designation was considered fixed, visible, and imbued with stable social meaning, Hopkins counterintuitively re-emphasized the body as text that should be read through its expressive functions—functions that are always in flux. Readers are not looking at the body’s racial status. Rather, as Brooks states of melodrama, *Of One Blood* converts “psychic affect into somatic meaning.” In seeing the body as the site of feeling, as participating in intellectual production, Hopkins understands affect as the starting point of social relations and personhood, and therefore as the site from which to produce a literature that can do the necessary affective work of “cementing bonds of brotherhood.”

What Brooks calls an “expressionistic aesthetics of the body” key to melodrama manifests in *Of One Blood* through the complex map of racialized, gendered, and sexual embodiment, as well as through the affective excess brought on by these states.<sup>44</sup> Marla Harris contends that Hopkins is interested in “what happens when people are out of place.”<sup>45</sup> More than this, however, she also works through what happens to the mind and body through the various forms of physical and psychic displacement that take place within a single subject. While Brooks argues that “the desire to express all” is a “fundamental characteristic of the melodramatic mode,” a character’s ability to “express all” becomes more difficult when, as in the case of Dianthe Lusk, her mind and body are often at odds, outside her control, manipulated, obscured, and assaulted. In *Of One Blood*, the goal seems to be “victory over repression,” or creating a “climactic moment in which

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., x.

<sup>44</sup> Brooks, 1995 Preface to *The Melodramatic Imagination*, x.

<sup>45</sup> Marla Harris, “Not Black and/or White: Reading Racial Difference in Heliodorus’s *Ethiopica* and Pauline Hopkins’s *Of One Blood*.” *African American Review* 35.3 (2001): 375-390. 377.

characters are able to confront each other with full expressivity, to fix in large gestures the meaning of their relations and existence.”<sup>46</sup> The full expression of the melodramatic mode becomes a way of making sense of what is insensible about the body/mind problem within the American racial schema—but this is only possible by stepping outside the constraints of racial uplift ideology.

Like the genre itself, *Of One Blood* has been accused of conservatism because of its apparent desire to return to a utopian past. Because the novel ends in the space of a mythical African kingdom, critics argue that Hopkins fails to fictionally overturn the American social order that she critiques.<sup>47</sup> Her utopian drive and melodramatic resolution, in which good triumphs over evil and the suffering of the innocent virtuous female pulls on the reader’s heartstrings, similarly deprive the novel of its political force. Eric Sundquist, for instance, categorizes the novel as “patently escapist fiction meant to flee the brutality and racism of American history.”<sup>48</sup> Critics remain divided on the political success of Hopkins’s use of the melodramatic mode in *Of One Blood*.

Regardless, the novel proves an effective literary tool because it elevates the mind/body divide to illuminate and problematize the affective dimensions of racial uplift and black national belonging. In the uplift era, the African American melodrama, particularly the supernatural melodrama, becomes a form that challenges the black disembodiment and

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<sup>46</sup> Brooks, 4.

<sup>47</sup> Jennie A. Kassonoff sees Reuel’s return as a fantasy of black nationalist fulfilment, while Marla Harris sees it as “a continuation in a benign form of the paternalism of white slave-owners and missionaries” rather than an “alternative to Western patriarchy” (388). See Kassonoff, “‘Fate Has Linked Us Together’: Blood, Gender, and the Politics of Representation in Pauline Hopkins’ *Of One Blood*.” In *The Unruly Voice: Rediscovering Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins*, edited by John Cullen Gruesser, 158-81 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996) and Marla Harris, “Not Black and/or White: Reading Racial Difference in Heliodorus’s *Ethiopica* and Pauline Hopkins’ *Of One Blood*,” *African American Review* 35.3 (Fall 2001): 375-90.

<sup>48</sup> Eric Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993), 569.

enervation created by the conditions of black life in the US. Moreover, by creating “escapist fiction,” Hopkins provides a site for releasing racial feeling, and, in doing so, she creates opportunities for freer affective expression. Providing this kind of “escapist fiction” then, Hopkins offers a form of racial politics that defies uplift’s affective aims for the body and mind.

## II. “As If in Some Hideous Trance”: Losing Racial Feeling

What limits or circumscribes the subject’s affective capacity? Hopkins suggests that the condition of being black in the *fin de siècle* US robs the subject of fully experiencing affect, what to speak of fully expressing affect. The US accomplishes this feat through pushing black subjects qua citizens to sublimate the knowledge and feeling of their racial history. More precisely, black subjects in the US who *feel* the effects of their history—racial and sexual—make bad, unruly, and potentially dangerous citizens. As Washington’s anger over the *Colored American Magazine* under Hopkins’ editorial control demonstrates, bad feeling makes for bad subjects.

But this is not the only way to lose the *feeling* of racial history. If, as Thomas Nelson Baker contends in “The Ethical Significance of the Connection Between Mind and Body,” intellectual, ethical, and religious problems “must be work[ed] out” with an understanding of the connection between the body and the mind, then racial uplift philosophy should take into account the inseparability of mind and body.<sup>49</sup> When either the body or mind takes precedence, uplift philosophy blurs the connection between body and mind and then impedes an understanding of the affective experience of black

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<sup>49</sup> Thomas Nelson Baker, *The Ethical Significance of the Connection Between Mind and Body: A Thesis presented to the Philosophical Faculty of Yale University, in connection with his application for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy* (1903), 5. Beinecke Library Special Collections, Yale. Microform.

subjectivity. For instance, Washington's program of industrial education, along with his "gospel of the toothbrush," attempts to remake African American history by re-inscribing a false notion of blackness. Washington's program affirms rather than diminishes notions of racial difference and black inferiority. By doing so, Washington remakes the body by forcing it to suppress feelings that contradict his philosophy. Robert Reid-Pharr thus argues that "the often backbreaking toil [performed at Tuskegee] was designed specifically to train a black elite (or perhaps the bodies of a black elite) in a manner that would suit them as agents of a compliant work ethic, in which blacks would accept—and indeed support—their relegation to the bottom rungs of the class and caste ladders." The "cultural work" being done, Reid-Pharr claims, was "the reestablishment of the black's presence within his body, even and especially as the fact of that body's peculiarity was brought most into question."<sup>50</sup> As Baker might agree, toil of this sort could train the mind to comply with a particular view of the body's social station.<sup>51</sup> The subject, in turn, comes to know his place in the world through the body's history—which effects his social station, access to political and economic success, and gendered and racial identity—, for it is the body that experiences first.

The subject, however, can view itself differently from the labor to which its body is put. While the program at Tuskegee may have, as Reid-Pharr suggests, tried to reestablish "the black's presence within the body," that reestablishment does not account for affective experience, or rather counts on the body's only having affects that accord

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<sup>50</sup> Robert Reid-Pharr, *Conjugal Union: The Body, The House, and the Black American* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 131.

<sup>51</sup> We might think here of Foucault's argument that the modern body is "directly involved in the political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it; mark it; train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs" (22). See Michel Foucault *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2012).

with its station. But the body/mind connection allows the subject to exceed the physical conditions that dictate the body's place in a given social structure. Affects bring together the condition of body and mind and can create the mental and physiological states necessary for change, or, at the least, for inwardly denying the body's external status. Through denying history, the subject separates body from mind, and so disrupts the affective circuit such that the body and mind no longer work in concert. In such cases, the body then becomes vulnerable to the will, or mental power, of another person or institution. The mind, similarly, loses its relationship to a body through which to act.

Like Washington's uplift philosophy, racial passing also depends on the subject's ability to suppress the feelings of racial history. In *Of One Blood*, Hopkins therefore explores the affective costs of racial passing. In Reuel Briggs' case, he loses the ability to act according to his own will, because doing so would expose his race and racial feeling. When passing for white, it becomes especially important to avoid "words of complaint" and "talks of wrong." However, racial passing comes with social, political, and economic advantages. In claiming these advantages, Reuel sublimates feelings that pertain to his race or American racial history. This sublimation aids in the racial ambiguity his fellow classmates ascribe to him. Indeed, it is unlikely he would have become a famed Harvard medical student if he were not so racially ambiguous. While his fellow students suspect he may be of either Italian or Japanese origins, they do not take the "tint of suggesting olive" in his otherwise "white" skin as a racial barrier (4, 3). His racial ambiguity does not impede his success, for it is only a subject of rumor. However, the novel demonstrates that Reuel's effort to keep his racial identity a secret manifests as affective suppression. To succeed in a white world, he must hide racial affects. Unlike Reuel, Dianthe passes for

white unintentionally. Yet the effects are similar. As a result of losing her racial history, Dianthe loses affective capacity. She is increasingly enervated by this loss. Consequently, Dianthe becomes more and more susceptible to the will of others and has less control over her body, actions, or feelings. Losing racial history, as Hopkins demonstrates through Dianthe and Reuel's passing, disrupts the link between body and mind, and therefore interrupts affective circuits. The loss of racial history, in other words, results in a loss of racial feeling.

Racial passing propels the novel's melodramatic and supernatural plot. Throughout *Of One Blood*, both Reuel and Dianthe experience their racialized bodies as an obstacle to fulfilling their desires. However, as long as it is in their interests to keep their racial identities a secret, their race can be and is used against them.<sup>52</sup> Reuel's desire to keep racial identity—and racial history—hidden becomes an affective problem that surfaces physiologically on his body. In being made to think about his racial history, he is made to feel his history. Such feelings threaten to expose his identity. Therefore, Reuel succumbs to Aubrey's will and machinations in order to sublimate his own feelings about his blackness. Aubrey, of course, needs to get rid of Reuel in order to take Dianthe for himself. Most significantly, then, Aubrey manages to push Reuel out of the nation and away from Dianthe by secretly informing all of Reuel's potential employers of Reuel's racial identity, thus ensuring he will not be hired within the US. Simultaneously, he

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<sup>52</sup> Otten argues that, in "the practice of passing, Hopkins suggests, racial difference becomes something that lies *inside* an individual. Race is here construed as an interior element, as a secret buried within the personality, as a 'submerged' side of the self: in James's terms, an aspect of the self that is 'fully conscious' yet sealed off from normal consciousness, that preserves and represses memories of guilt and trauma. Hopkins's use of this protoanalytic structure is important, for if race can be seen as a pathologically hidden side of the self, then it can also be therapeutically brought to the surface and refigured; through the sort of analytical plot that we now think of as Freudian (but that is also present in the works of James and others at the century's end), racial difference can be acknowledged and its threatening qualities diffused" (229).

reveals that he knows Reuel is actually black, and so convinces Reuel that his only opportunities lay beyond the nation where the news of his passing will not have traveled. As in this instance, throughout the novel Reuel makes many decisions based on whether or not they enable him to suppress the affects that arise in moments when his race is in question.

Dianthe and Reuel's racial passing complicates their affective life by limiting their expressive capacity.<sup>53</sup> From the beginning, Reuel exhibits a quiet discomfort with his racial identity and his willingness to keep it secret. This discomfort becomes clear when, early in the novel, Aubrey asks Reuel what he thinks "of the Negro problem," and Reuel responds that he has "a horror of discussing the woes of unfortunates" because he is an "unfortunate" himself" (9). As the novel has not yet revealed Reuel's race, a reader might assume that Reuel here categorizes himself among the poor. But his refusal to speak, and the silence in which they then sit, discloses that the question of racial identity inhibits expression. Nonetheless, Reuel uses emotion as a sleight of hand—by stating that discussing "the woes of unfortunates" causes "horror," he gets out of expressing feeling. In calling the "Negro problem" "horrifying," Reuel manages to avoid exposing his personal relationship to that problem and how, precisely, he feels that horror.

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<sup>53</sup> JoAnn Pavletich argues that, by the time Hopkins writes *Of One Blood*, she has rejected the trope of the tragic mulatta, as well as the "strictures of true womanhood," to expose "the untenable contradictions at the root of that powerful social construction" (649). JoAnn Pavletich, "Pauline Hopkins and the Death of the Tragic Mulatta," *Calloloo* 38.3 (Summer 2015): 647-663. Hazel Carby argues that Hopkins' "use of mulatto figures engaged with the discourse of social Darwinism, undermining the tenets of 'pure blood' and 'pure race' as mythological, and implicitly exposed the absurdity of theories of the total separation between the races'" (140). Schrager, in turn, argues that Hopkins uses mulatto/a in *Of One Blood* to "dramatically represent the split consciousness of the AA subject; in the figure of Aubrey, she goes further, exposing the hidden self at the foundation of Anglo American subjectivity and the suppression of the truth of miscegenation on which the color line depends" (196).

When Reuel wishes to marry Dianthe, he begins to speak openly of race for the first time. He does so, however, in order to suppress her racialized embodiment. The conversation begins when Aubrey asks Reuel to explain the “link” that exists between himself and Dianthe. Reuel then tells Aubrey of his history with Dianthe. Before being called to tend her in the hospital, he twice saw her as a haunting “hallucination.” These instances proved to Reuel what the “French and German schools of philosophy have taught . . . the soul’s transmigration” (42). Having seen her in the spirit, a “mad desire seized [him] to find that face a living reality that [he] might love it and worship it.” Having found her “*in the flesh!*” he wants to love her and “cure her” (43). When Aubrey questions Reuel’s decision, reminding him that tying himself to an African American woman will ruin his medical career, Reuel declares that he will “marry her in spite of hell itself! Marry her before she awakens to consciousness of her identity” (43). In other words, Reuel “cures” her of more than her illness—he cures her of being black. He rationalizes this decision easily; it cannot be a “sin” to take her out of “the sphere where she was born.” Now that he has a chance for “happiness,” he will “seize it,” for “Fate has linked” them together and “no man and no man’s laws will part” them (43-44). But Reuel’s defiance reinforces the spirit of America’s racial categorization laws rather than breaking them. Only by “curing” Dianthe of her blackness, can he “love” and “worship” her “*in the flesh*” while rejecting her “consciousness” of her racial self. He seeks to make her like himself—a racially disembodied subject. Linked by “Fate,” they must too pass for white in order to exist together, even if Dianthe does not consent to this choice. By taking Dianthe out of the African American “sphere” and into the white world of Boston’s elite, Reuel prioritizes the “flesh” over the whole subject.



However, when Reuel explains his justification for denying Dianthe her racial identity, he does not realize that Aubrey already knows that Reuel himself is passing. Up till now, Reuel has only expressed excitement, joy, and determination to make Dianthe his wife. Once the question of Reuel's own racial identity arises, his affects shift. Significantly, he can no longer vocalize his feelings. Indeed, the sentence in which Aubrey tells Reuel that he knows he has black blood comes in a whisper. The sentence comes from the narrator, rather than through the characters' dialogue. The secret of Reuel's identity cannot be spoken. The novel sublimates it even at the level of the text. Reuel's response, then, is similarly silenced. It can, however, be seen. Aubrey's whispered confession makes Reuel's face "flush" a "dark, dull red" (44). The temperate flush, which moves "slowly" over his features, draws together the mental world, through which the soul "transmigrates," and the body that houses it. His "flush" calls the mental realm back into the realm of the body; the dull red spreading over his face gives his soul's feeling away. The chapter ends abruptly with Aubrey's promise that Reuel's "secret is safe with me"—though of course it is not. Once again, discussions of race, and racial revelations, draw the chapter to a certain, silent close. The chapter has to end because Reuel has expressed his relation to questions of race as fully as he is willing. He can only speak of his own race in the halting question of where and how long Aubrey has known the truth. He cannot and will not say or express more—only the "dark, dull red" flush evidences his suppressed affective response to his exposed identity.

While Reuel very carefully curates his racial identity, and so consciously suppresses racial feeling, Dianthe loses her racial feeling against her will. Once a star performer of the Fisk Jubilee Singers, Dianthe willingly served as a vehicle for

expressing the feelings of racial history through song. In fact, she excelled at eliciting racial feeling in white audiences. The first time Reuel sees her “in the flesh,” she is singing “Go Down, Moses,” to an audience “spell-bound” by the outpour[ing] anguish of a suffering soul.” Hearing her anguished song, they feel the “horror, the degradation from which the race had been delivered.” Her performance is so affectively expressive that it “strain[s]” the audience’s “senses almost beyond endurance” (15). Given the expressive capacity Dianthe shows here, it is surprising that, once revived after her train accident, she struggles to feel. Though physically “reanimated,” she loses mental and bodily strength, losses that correspond to her simultaneous loss of history through her forced passing. While Reuel returns life to Dianthe’s body after she has been declared dead, he returns that life only in limited form. Suffering from amnesia as much as from Reuel and Aubrey’s decision to deprive her of her (biological and racial) history, Dianthe lacks full access to both her body and mind.

Dianthe is acutely aware of this loss and how it drains her of agency and affective capacity. Her powerlessness comes from her lack of history. With no knowledge of her past, she feels that all is a “confusion and mystery,” which makes her “head ache so” (68). The past, here, asserts pressure on her body and mind. Her mental confusion causes physical pain. Indeed, when she suddenly finds herself singing “Go Down Moses” while entertaining guests at Aubrey’s Boston home, she promptly faints. Her body cannot withstand the affects associated with this song, even if she cannot name her relationship to it. Because of her mental and bodily pain, she begs Aubrey to tell her what happened the last time she sang this song, for she knows she must have sung it before. Hearing her tale from Aubrey, who cunningly adjusts it to his benefit so that she thinks he is the only

one who knows the truth of her identity, Dianthe becomes “white-faced.” This knowledge, which should revitalize her, drains her of bodily energy because she feels she has no choice but to keep passing for white. She is not allowed, by force of circumstance, to claim her racial history or racial feeling. Full of “despair more eloquent because of its quietness,” she cries out, “bitterly, ‘Who has ever suffered such torture as mine?’” Suffering from forced bodily dysphoria, she feels certain that, for her, “there is no rest out of the grave!” (68). Bound in her body that does not feel like her own, Dianthe struggles to assert her will. Sinking “upon her knees” at Aubrey’s feet, as if energy draining from her body pulls her downward, she attempts to “throw off the numbing influence of the man’s presence.” She “tried to defy him, but she knew that she had lost her will-power and was a puppet in the hands of this false friend” (69). Aubrey’s desire for Dianthe is parasitic; it drains her life energies, physically and mentally. In a world in which her racial history can be used to control her body and mind, Dianthe loses the integrity of her subjectivity.

Like a puppet, Dianthe moves and feels at the will of others. The fault, however, does not just lay with Aubrey. Reuel also refused to tell her of her past, though she begged him, too. Unlike Aubrey, he does not reveal her racial history, for it does not serve his purposes to do so. She needs to think she is white so that they can live in a white world together. But, like Aubrey, he attempts to manage her affects. He suppresses her agitation by “kiss[ing] away her anxieties,” warning her that she “*must* guard against” becoming “excited” (64). Thus told to dampen her mental and bodily energy and feeling, Dianthe increasing comes closer to becoming a living corpse.

As more phantom than physical presence, Dianthe is bodily moved by others rather than by herself: Reuel awakens her from “seeming death” after the train accident, Aubrey and Reuel hide her identity so she passes for white, Reuel takes her as his wife, and Aubrey threatens to expose her real racial identity in order to take her as his mistress. In all these instances, Dianthe exhibits diminished affect, and therefore limited agency. Through all this, Aubrey and Reuel force her to privilege her body over her mind. Made to embody blackness or whiteness as the occasion requires, she cannot claim the feeling or history of either identity construct. Despite learning of her racial embodiment from Aubrey, Dianthe does not regain her full affective capacity. Rather, weakened in body and mind, and convinced by Aubrey that she will ruin Reuel’s career and break his heart if she reveals her racial identity, she remains subject to his whims. Dianthe’s affects shift dramatically, however, after she meets her maternal grandmother, Aunt Hannah. Dianthe and Aunt Hannah meet after Aubrey kills his fiancé, Molly Vance, fakes Dianthe’s own death, and secludes her as his mistress on the grounds of his ancestral plantation home. There, she learns from Aunt Hannah that her racial identity, as revealed by Aubrey, does not contain her whole history, nor does it account for the sexual, gendered history of African American women during slavery and into the present. When Aunt Hannah finally grants full access to this history by revealing that Dianthe, Aubrey, and Reuel are siblings, neither Dianthe’s body nor mind can withstand its affective force.

African American sexuality is a fraught topic when Hopkins writes *Of One Blood*. In depicting incest and intraracial rape, for Aubrey too has “black” blood, Hopkins strays from standard representations of African American sexuality and the race’s reproductive future. Respectability politics, Michelle Mitchell explains, relied on “specific concepts of

acceptable sexuality in that black reformers frequently promoted ‘respectable reproductive sexuality within the confines of marriage’ as a viable means of uplifting the masses and working towards black progress.”<sup>54</sup> In *Of One Blood*, Dianthe lacks the knowledge and agency to engage in acceptable forms of sexuality. Her marriage with Reuel cannot be allowed to “reproduce” or uplift the race. And her sexual relationship with Aubrey, which violates the norms of sexuality outside marriage as well as incest, further implicates her in anti-uplift uses of her body. In representing Dianthe’s lack of agency, her incapacity to follow the dictates of racial uplift’s bodily aims, Hopkins critiques reform practices that gloss over historical realities and present conditions. The politics of respectability are not useful to Dianthe because she has been robbed of the affective integrity to not only make socially acceptable choices by adhering to an uplift practice, but to act on her own desires.

*Of One Blood* is the first literary text by an African American author to depict incest. Incest remained a taboo topic in African American culture and literature well into the twentieth century.<sup>55</sup> The unwitting incestuous relationships in *Of One Blood* result from the rape of enslaved black women by white men—a legacy that manifests in the present when Aubrey forces Dianthe into a sexual relationship. When Dianthe expresses her shock that both Reuel and Aubrey are her brothers, that her mother and her grandmother were both raped by their owner, Dr. Livingston, Aunt Hannah tells her that “dese things jes’ got to happen in slavery” (176). What is important to note here is this:

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<sup>54</sup> 85.

<sup>55</sup> Shawn Salvant, “Pauline Hopkins and the End of Incest,” *African American Review* 42.304 (Fall/Winter 2008): 659-77. Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* is one of the first novels to treat incest directly. Morrison faced intense backlash from much of the black elite. For a further reading of incest in African American literature, see Trudier Harris, “Tiptoeing through Taboo: Incest in ‘the Child who Favored Daughter.’” *Modern Fiction Studies* 28.3 (Autumn 1982): 495-505.

Dianthe, Reuel, and Aubrey unknowingly engage in incest because their kinship has been kept a secret. They do not have access to their own racial or familial history. As a result, they use their bodies in violation of social norms and engage in a kind corporeal alienation. Without knowledge of their kinship relations, some aspect of their body remains hidden, outside their mental grasp and physical control. Even if Hopkins does resolve the “problem of incest” by revising the “scientific and metaphorical meanings of ‘one blood’” to allow for “a sympathetic embrace of sibling affinity and the consummation of incestuous desire with a difference,”<sup>56</sup> Hopkins still represents Dianthe’s realization that she has engaged in incest with not one brother, but two, as an affective assault. Whether or not Hopkins finds a way to redeem incest, as Shawn Salvant would have it, novel’s incest results from a non-agential surrender to both Reuel and Aubrey, on the part of Dianthe, and on forbidden romantic love and sexual violence on the parts of Reuel and Aubrey. The legacy of slavery in the US means that brothers and sisters, and fathers and daughters, as is the case with Mira, who is actually the mother of all three siblings, and Dr. Livingston, act on sexual desires and feelings of romantic love that result in bodily violations with devastating emotional effects.

Hopkins reveals what the mind/body split feels like by depicting Dianthe’s affective response to learning of her family history. To do so, Hopkins utilizes one of melodrama’s key tropes, melodramatic recognition. According to Carla Marcantonio, melodramatic recognition unveils “what may be in front of our eyes but unrecognized,

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<sup>56</sup> Salvant, 659. For contemporaneous studies on incest, see Emile Durkheim, *Incest: the Nature and the Origin of the Taboo* (1898) and Edward Westermarck, *The History of Human Marriage* (1891). For a reading of the incest plot as a literary device, see W. Daniel Wilson, “Science, Natural Law, and Unwitting Sibling Incest in Eighteenth Century Literature.” *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 13 (1984): 249-70. See Ann Cvetcovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), for recent affect theory on incest.

unacknowledged.”<sup>57</sup> In the moment of melodramatic recognition, readers and characters discover the truth of “masked relationships and disguised identities, abductions, slow-acting poisons, secret societies, [and] mysterious parentage.”<sup>58</sup> For Dianthe, this moment of historical awakening so overwhelms her body with seething affects that her blood nearly ceases its circulation. When Aunt Hannah confirms that Dianthe, Reuel, and Aubrey are indeed “all of one blood,” Dianthe “staggered as though buffeted in the face. Blindly, as if in some hideous trance, reeling and stumbling, she fell. Cold and white as marble, she lay in the old woman’s arms, who thought her dead [. . .] But she was not dead.” When she at last awakens from this trancelike state, her face is “lined and old with suffering. All hope was gone; despair was heavy on her young shoulders whose life was blasted in its bloom by the passions of others” (177-8). While Dianthe does not die in this moment, her body never returns to a fully living state. She is “like a stone woman” rather than living flesh (176). She remains pale, cold, like marble, full of despair and weary with suffering until life actually leaves her body. Self-knowledge, through access to her history, does not grant Dianthe the liberty to live as a fully embodied subject in the US.

For readers of melodrama, the moment of melodramatic recognition should provide a “momentarily soothing fantasy that the world and the mysterious forces that propel it can be rendered perfectly legible and visible.”<sup>59</sup> In *Of One Blood* this moment of revelation awakens Dianthe, as well as the novel’s readers, to the trauma of interracial sexual history. Rather than providing a “soothing fantasy,” it clarifies a world that, when made “perfectly legible,” devastates. In order to survive such recognition, the world

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<sup>57</sup> Marcantonio, 12.

<sup>58</sup> Brooks, 5.

<sup>59</sup> Marcantonio, 12.

would have to be remade. For Dianthe, unlike readers, her world cannot be remade. To continue living in her body, she would have to sublimate or erase her newly acquired knowledge. What her body experiences shapes her mental life. Having been prey to the “passions of others,” Dianthe finds that sexual experience—and psychic experimentation—ultimately kills her by bringing too much affect to the surface—a surge of feeling that nearly kills her.

Aunt Hannah’s revelation exemplifies the consequences of attempting to live in the US as what Russ Castronovo calls “an embodied, complex, materially specific” subject.<sup>60</sup> The knowledge of her embodied and material history causes an affective response that nearly drains Dianthe’s life force. While Dianthe does not die in this moment, her body never returns to a fully living state. She remains stone-like, full of an enervating despair and weary with suffering until the moment when life actually leaves her body, and her soul—which retains her personality—is carried away by a host of spirits from all lands. Self-knowledge, through access to her racial and genealogical history, does not grant Dianthe the liberty to live as a fully embodied subject in the US. Rather, melodramatic recognition here reveals a larger truth: racialized subjectivity in the US requires the sublimation or erasure of the relationship between the body and mind. When she exclaims, in horror, “My brothers! both those men!,” her “utter horror” “fr[eezes] her blood” (177). Realizing that she has not only committed bigamy but also incest, Dianthe feels like her body can no longer serve as the vehicle for her mind.

At last granted full awareness of herself as an historically-contextualized racial subject, Dianthe understands she has been under the spell of mesmeric forces, both

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<sup>60</sup> Russ Castronovo, *Necro Citizenship: Death, Eroticism, and the Public Sphere in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 249.



historical and supernatural. Dianthe does not subjugate to these forces, however, due to what some critics call her weakness of character.<sup>61</sup> Rather, Hopkins uses Dianthe to demonstrate that the nation cannot allow black subjects, particularly black female subjects, to exist on US soil as historically embodied subjects. In other words, with historical knowledge of self the black subject takes possession of his or her affects and thus throws off the mesmeric forces of a racial uplift philosophy that bifurcates body and mind. As a result, and for the sake of white hegemony that undergirds the terms of belonging in the nation, the historicized black subject must be displaced.

### III. Living “After the Body Perishes”: Mind, Spirit, and Eternal Life

Given the *fin de siècle* conditions of black life in the US, depicted most painfully in the history of sexual violation that drains bodily vitality, it is not surprising that African American authors and uplifters, such as Du Bois and Hopkins, were drawn to theories of the mind. Du Bois traces an African American investment in the mind and spirit to the early history of transatlantic slavery: “The Negro, losing the joy of this world, eagerly seized upon the offered conceptions of the next; the avenging Spirit of the Lord enjoining patience in this world, under sorrow and tribulation until the Great Day when He should lead His dark children home,—this became his comforting dream.”<sup>62</sup> Christianity helped enslaved peoples focus on life after death. It offered comfort during

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<sup>61</sup> Arguing against critical consensus to the contrary, Mollie Godfrey claims that Dianthe’s “weakness in relation to Reuel and Aubrey points directly to the ‘badge of servitude’ that Hopkins argued had been maintained by America’s segregation laws.” Dianthe, she writes, “may indeed be ‘far from being a woman who supports herself and survives in the face of past tragedy and victimization like Sappho Clark’ (Rich 100) [...] but this difference coincides with Hopkins’s increasingly vocal critique of Booker T. Washington’s self-help narratives” (66). See Mollie Godfrey, “*Of One Blood*, Humanism, Race, and Gender in Post-Reconstruction Law and Literature.” *CLA* 59.1 (September 2015): 47-74, and Charlotte J. Rich, *Transcending the New Woman: Multiethnic Narratives of the Progressive Era* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2009).

<sup>62</sup> *Souls*, 162.

otherwise unbearable bodily and mental experience. In *Of One Blood*, Hopkins translates this early African American preference for the needs of the spirit over those of the body into the supernatural realm. Contemporary psychology, grounded as it was in mysticism and the unknown, offered Hopkins one avenue for this project. Melodrama prioritizes the body too much to fully account for the novel's central tension between mind and body. By also adopting the supernatural, Hopkins formally represents racial uplift's pull between the mental and bodily spheres.

Like melodrama, the supernatural can be seen as a mode that "evades engagement with the politics of race." Yet, because it "make[s] available alternative strategies for thinking about bodies and minds," the supernatural destabilizes the "defining boundaries" of self until they are "difficult to locate."<sup>63</sup> If the black female body in particular, as in Dianthe's case, cannot affectively withstand knowing her bodily history, then defining the mind as something that exists independently of the physical world allows the self to survive the onslaught of racial feeling that melodrama brings to the body's surface. Therefore, at the same time as the novel highlights the body's expressive capacity as one alternative to exceeding racial uplift's affective limits, it also depicts the mind's independence from the boundaries of the physical self as a potentially more viable alternative.

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<sup>63</sup> Otten, 236. Otten queries the publication of the supernatural sketches by Hopkins and others published in the *Colored American Magazine*. On the surface, he writes, "one could plausibly argue that their authors studiously ignore the ways in which African-American identity has been displaced, constricted, and warped—they [seem to] write escapist stories which merely entertain instead of ones which challenge racist politics and reclaim racial heritage." Arguing "just the opposite," he claims that African American writers "render identity itself problematic as a way of countering both racist structurings and black-authored displacements of black identity" (234). In directly engage race in her supernatural depiction of black American life in *Of One Blood*, Hopkins further challenges the boundaries of identity, racial and otherwise.

The novel's romance between Dianthe and Reuel hinges on a spiritual and mental connection forged through the power of the supernatural world. Dianthe would not have returned to life after the train accident were it not for Reuel's mystical abilities. Dianthe's and Reuel's affinity for each other begins before they meet in physical form. Their connection, other words, surpasses external limitations. In fact, Reuel muses early on that his future wife must be "to me a necessity; because I love her; because so loving her, 'all the current of my being flows to her,' and I feel she is my supreme need" (23). The "current" of Reuel's being is spiritual rather than physical, and, in "current" form, their psychic energy seeks the other out. At the moment of this musing, Reuel wanders the woods surrounding the Vance's Boston home. It is Halloween, and each party member, on a dare, searches the grounds for a rumored ghost. Reuel feels, at this moment, a sense of "restless, unsatisfied longing," and wonders whether "the spirit is sometimes mysteriously conscious of the nearness of its kindred spirit" (23). Feeling the "sweet unrest" of the "master-passion that rules the world," he anticipates the presence of Dianthe's spirit, who appears in spectral form and pleads his help. Unbeknownst to Reuel at this moment, Dianthe has just been in the train accident, and she is the anonymous patient on whom he will be called to treat, as she indicates, the next day. Returning to the party, he tells no one of his ghostly, passionate encounter. They would laugh, he thinks, to know that he has become the "slave of a passion as sudden and romantic as that of Romeo for Juliet; with no more foundation than the 'presentiments' in books which treat of the occult" (25).

Of course, this is not the first time Dianthe appears to Reuel in spirit form. In the novel's first pages, she comes to him as a vision. As a disembodied, ephemeral image,

Dianthe's appearance affirms the reality of the spirit at a moment when Reuel considers taking his own life. She saves his physical life by confirming that the supernatural world exists. At the same time, Reuel here represents the desire to reject and move beyond the body, as if it is the body itself that poses a problem to his life. In the moments before Dianthe appears, Reuel has been reading "The Unclassified Residuum," a text "eagerly sought by students of mysticism," who, like Reuel, are interested in "divinations, inspirations, demonical possessions, apparitions, trances, ecstasies, miraculous healing and productions of disease, and occult powers possessed by individuals over persons and things in their neighborhoods" (2).<sup>64</sup> Reading these words, Reuel recognizes that he has "the power" to astonish the world with his mystic abilities, were it not for the social barriers that limit his opportunities. "O Poverty, Ostracism! have I not drained the bitter cup to the dregs!," he exclaims to the empty room (3). His suicidal contemplation, then, stems from drinking the "bitter cup" of his social position, a position tied to his racial identity. In this moment Dianthe's face appears to his "earnest, penetrating gaze" (5). As their gazes meet, they establish a mystic connection. Her own "terribly earnest" eyes "entreat" an emotional response from Reuel, though he knows not what feeling she asks for from him. While the vision soon disappears and Reuel is again alone in "silence and darkness," this is only the first of many times that Dianthe's spiritual mind reaches out to Reuel (5). Shared desire constantly draws them together, but, as Dianthe learns from Aunt Hannah, this desire has always been illicit. Their mental and spiritual connection, in this case, supersedes physical obstacles to their romantic connection. The occult world

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<sup>64</sup> While Hopkins attributes this text to Alfred Binet, the term "Unclassified Residuum" comes from William James's "The Hidden Self." As Otten and Schrager argue, this seems intentional on Hopkins' part.

absolves them of incest and offers them a way to leave behind the racial history marking their bodies.

Throughout *Of One Blood*, Reuel contemplates the power of the mental world and the spirit's existence beyond the body. As the novel's subtitle, "the hidden self," implies, there is more to the subject than is visible on the surface. From the beginning of the novel when Reuel first sees Dianthe's corpse before reanimating her, he looks at her and thinks: "Death! There is no death. Life is everlasting, and from its reality can have no end. Life is real and never changes, but preserves its identity eternally as the angels, and the immortal spirit of man, which are the only realities and continuities of the universe" (28). Reuel elevates the spirit that animates the body above the body itself. Death therefore becomes a false construct. If a person's "life" does not rely on the body, then racial discrimination, racial trauma, and race itself have no bearing on the self, as the self cannot be contained to its corporeal existence. The spirit, in other words, is supreme; the body is simply a container that in itself carries no real meaning or value.

Reuel's conversation with Ai, the mystical and wise head priest in Telessar, helps clarify what Reuel means by "life." Life is not an impersonal essence that animates the body, a body that then takes on individual characteristics. Rather, what Reuel calls "life" might better be defined as what Ai calls "Personality." "Personality" links the "immortal spirit" to a particular mind. The indefinite article individuates "the immortal spirit of man" into distinct personalities that carry histories, memories, and characteristics. In other words, Ai's notion of "Personality" looks like an "eternal" mind that develops over time as it moves from body to body. When asking Reuel if he believes in "Personality," Ai clarifies that

Personality begins to exert its power over our lives as soon as we begin its cultivation. Death is not necessary to its manifestation in our lives. There are always angels near! To us who are so blessed and singled out by the Trinity there is a sense of the supernatural always near us—others whom we cannot see, but whose influence is strong upon us in all the affairs of life. Man only proves his ignorance if he denies this fact. (142)

Ai's description of "Personality" suggests it exists alongside the living person, whether or not the person is aware of themselves as part of this eternal consciousness. Those with especially strong supernatural capacities use their "Personality" to communicate beyond the body's constraints—and can see those who exist without or beyond bodies. Both Reuel and Dianthe, as indicated from the novel's start, possess this ability, and certainly "sense the supernatural." In this case, their connections to their physical bodies are already somewhat tenuous. Their spirits travel beyond the body's physical boundaries. Indeed, while Reuel is in Africa, he repeatedly hears Dianthe's voice across the distance of continents and seas. However, Ai also implies that this eternal personality is part and parcel of the mind that lives in the body, and thus influences how a person acts and feels in the world. "Personality" is not "impersonal." Rather, a person's experiences in the world shape the subject eternally.

Ai further educates Reuel in the relationship between body and mind through explaining Telessar's religious belief system. They believe in "One Supreme Being" who "distributed a portion of himself" to man. This "ever-living faculty" is the "soul Ego," or individual personality with spiritual force. The "Ego" can "express itself to other bodies" whose Egos have similarly developed their spiritual capacity. But, as Ai warns, "unless the Ego can wean the body from gross desires and raise it to the highest condition of human existence," it fails to reunite with the Supreme Being (131). As Ai further explains, the Ego can never be destroyed, and, if it does not attain its highest potential in

one life—reuniting with the Creator—it can continue its endeavor in the next.

Reincarnation, which occurs “by natural laws,” assures that the Ego can be “re-associated with another body to complete the necessary fitness for heaven” (131). Within Telessar’s religious belief system, the Ego’s presence in the body means the Ego has not yet attained its ultimate goal. Ideally, the Ego eventually perfects itself after passing from body to body through which it practices its supernatural and spiritual endeavors. The fact of the body evidences that the soul it carries has not yet completed its work and been liberated from its tie to the physical world.

Nonetheless, the kingdom of Telessar reveres the human form, particularly the female body. They revere it not as it serves as the mind’s access to the world, but as an aesthetic object. For instance, they preserve the bodies of their “most beautiful women” by “subject[ing]” them “to the fumes of the crystal material covering like film” (131). Afterwards, they display these bodies in their great temple. Life, Ai affirms, may be “wonderful,” but “eternity is more wonderful” (143). This fact, he states, is “one of the great secrets of Nature” (143). Ai, and the novel itself, then propose that the body is a vehicle that can be abandoned. Such a philosophy can be attractive in a nation that at once limits the body based on its perceived “blackness,” what to speak of a nation that permits the killing of black bodies and the rape of African American women. Being robbed of their bodies through American law and social practice, a philosophy that negates the body’s importance proves to be a racially equalizing force. Life and Death, racial identity and social status, belong to the realm of the body and are merely effects of the passage of time. Because the mind exists eternally via “Personality” and “Ego,” the

body, as a problem, begins to disappear. If anything, it is only a beautiful object to be admired as one works towards complete supernatural existence.

But with the elevation of the spirit over the body, the subject loses the capacity for feeling emotion in, on, and through the body. Further, the subject risks losing bodily autonomy in the present. Ai's philosophy endangers the subject, as it implies the body's vulnerability to the supernatural will of others. Recalling, too, that, as Thomas Nelson Baker argues, it is only through the body that we can know the mind, for it is "the body which experiences first," the loss of the body entails a similar loss of the mind. Cutting off the relation of body to mind poses an ethical dilemma. It poses a formal dilemma, as well. What happens to melodrama when the body disappears? Hopkins' decision to write *Of One Blood* in the melodramatic mode, then, formally resists the philosophic privileging of mind over body that Ai preaches to Reuel in Telessar. If Hopkins wishes to reveal how racial uplift philosophies can limit affective (and literary) freedom, then losing the fundamental connection between the body and mind, a connection on which affect depends, suggests that the novel offers a deeply pessimistic representation of bifurcated bodies and minds.

Hopkins highlights how the separation of the body and mind makes the subject vulnerable to physical and psychic violence. The flipside of Ai's philosophy shows that the living body can be made a puppet controlled by another Ego. Consider the experiments in mesmeric phenomena that Dr. Livingston performed on the enslaved Mira. According to Aubrey, his father used his position as a slave owner to "ma[ke] some valuable discoveries along the line of mesmeric phenomena" (50). In order to make these discoveries, the senior Livingston would "throw" his slave girl, Mira, into "trance states."



Often, he called her in to perform these “tricks” for the “amusement of his visitors.” They would then see Mira change from “a serious, rather sad Negress” to a “gay, noisy, restless woman, full of irony and sharp jesting.” Nothing, Aubrey explains, “could be more curious than to see her and hear her” (50-51). This pastime continues for years, until, while under mesmeric trance, Mira predicts the Civil War and defeat of the South. Consequently, Livingston sells Mira down river and she dies shortly after. While Mira retains subversive power during her trance states through predicting civil war, Livingston still has power over her body and so can send her to death. By emptying Mira’s body of her mind through mesmeric experimentation, her master replaces it with one that works at his will alone. In other words, by throwing her into trance, Dr. Livingston robs Mira of the knowledge of her own body and its movement—thus separating her body from her mind. If, as Thomas Nelson Baker’s dissertation argues, the mind has “no existence for experience” without the body, then while entranced Mira can neither feel nor think. She therefore loses agency, supernatural as well as physical.

Hopkins inserts the story of Mira’s objectification to Dr. Livingston as an amusing anecdote Aubrey tells during a festive Christmas Eve at the home of Charlie and Molly Vance.<sup>65</sup> The story awes and delights its listeners. Representing Mira’s fate as a casual conversation piece reveals that white America feels little discomfort on learning of slavery’s degradation of the black female body and mind. They do not seem to recognize that such degradation has taken place; instead, they are simply amused by Aubrey’s first-person account of mesmeric phenomena. Their response demonstrates that white America

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<sup>65</sup> Friends of Reuel and Aubrey, Charlie and Molly play an important role, acting in some ways as outside readers who re-evaluate their understanding of race and nation through observing Reuel, Aubrey, and Dianthe’s complex relationship. Charlie returns from his and Reuel’s expedition to Africa transformed. Like a model reader of race literature, he now understands the brotherhood of all mankind.

casually accepts black abjection, and highlights, too, the pleasure it brings white viewers and participants. Hopkins therefore shows that psychic experimentation and supernatural phenomena are another avenue for abusing African American personhood for the benefit of white slaveholders during slavery, to uphold white supremacy in the novel's present, and for the advancement of scientific and psychological study.<sup>66</sup> Rather than offering the promise of spiritual liberation from bodily suffering, it becomes a dehumanizing form of entertainment with killing effects.

Aubrey's description of his father's experiments on Mira comes nearly word-for-word from William James's 1890 essay "The Hidden Self."<sup>67</sup> In "The Hidden Self," James reviews recent psychological treatises on hysteria and mesmeric phenomena by Pierre Janet, Alfred Binet, and their fellow French psychologists. James takes particular interest in Janet's 1899 *De l'Automatisme Psychologique* (Of Psychological Automatism). From Janet, James quotes an account of a patient, Léonie, who Janet treats through hypnotism. Léonie's personality transforms entirely during trance states, as does

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<sup>66</sup> See Otten and Schrager for more on psychic experimentation and race.

<sup>67</sup> William James, "The Hidden Self," *Scribner's Magazine* 7.3 (March 1890): 361-373. James's "The Hidden Self" expands the notion of the mind's capacity. Having accepted the mind's capacity, one too must accept the capacity of the body to experience the mind. Phenomena otherwise labeled false and fraudulent become not only probable, but moreover must be recognized as a topic requiring serious and immediate study. He writes that "*A comparative study of trances and sub-conscious states*" is "of the most urgent importance for the comprehension of our nature" (373). For Hopkins, unlike James, this work must account for race, not only as a biological concept, but as a social fact that shapes consciousness, the body, and feeling. Thomas J. Otten is the most thorough critic of Hopkins's use of William James in *Of One Blood*. At the turn-of-the-century, Otten explains, race and mind are two of the largest "segments in American culture in which representations of personal identity are structured, crystallized, contested, and recast." Race and mind can thus be seen "as each other's doubles," as together they shape "the terms through which definitions of what a person is—and of who counts as a person—achieve coherence and legibility." Yet, as he notes, the novel reveals that these doubles "are rather imprecisely matched." In pairing "academic psychology and Jim Crow codifications of race, the novel demonstrates how distant from each other these two ways of defining a person are: the wide open question of the mind's powers simply gives way to powerful, historically specific strategies for reading a body so as to render it powerless" (229).

Mira's.<sup>68</sup> Like Aubrey, Janet explains that "nothing is more curious" than seeing this transformation.<sup>69</sup> While Hopkins borrows generously from other texts in all of her writing, this particular borrowing reveals, first, that Hopkins read widely in the leading psychological theories of her day, and second, that she found a correlation between the hypnotic states to which the men and women in Janet's study were subjected and the mesmeric experience of US slavery and belonging.

Hopkins is less interested than James in the possibility of the "simultaneous personages" that seem to emerge during induced trance states. Rather, she latches on to what happens to the subject while under trance. "One of the most constant symptoms in persons suffering from hysteric disease," James writes, is the alteration "of the natural sensibility of various parts and organs of the body." In some cases, "the entire skin, hands, feet, face, everything, and the mucous membranes, muscles, joints, so far as can be explored, become *completely* insensible."<sup>70</sup> During moments of bodily insensibility, the subject often exhibits an entirely different personality. Once re-awakened and returned to full bodily capacity, the subject has no memory of their other personality or personalities. By "*tapping* the submerged consciousness and making it respond in certain peculiar ways," Janet accesses the "simultaneous personages" split within one human being.<sup>71</sup> None of the characters in *Of One Blood* seem, however, to discover a new "personage" when they finally access their "submerged consciousness," if indeed this is what takes place when they are confronted with their biological, racial histories. Instead,

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<sup>68</sup> Normally, Léonie is "a serious and rather sad person, calm and slow, very mild with everyone, and extremely timid." But, once "put to sleep hypnotically," a "metamorphosis occurs." She becomes, like Hopkins's Mira, "gay, noisy, restless," and acquires "a singular tendency to irony and sharp jesting."

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 367.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 363-4.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 368.

what seems important for Hopkins is the notion that the body's feeling capacity shifts with changes in mental and physical states. In other words, the mind's relationship to the body matters—the body is put to different use, or disuse, when the mind undergoes transformations that limit bodily sensibility.

While Reuel's journey into Telassar, where he is crowned its rightful king, enables him to embrace his racial identity and therefore his racial history, this journey does not ultimately allow Reuel to claim this identity—and his racial feeling—within the US.<sup>72</sup> The turn to Africa, despite being arranged by Aubrey and facilitating Dianthe's rape, solves the problem of racial passing but only within Africa. Indeed, Cynthia Schrager refers to the "hidden self" as a "trope for an African American who is 'passing.'"<sup>73</sup> In claiming his ancestral home in Ethiopia, Reuel accepts his blackness. Mollie Godfrey claims, however, that Reuel has hidden more than his race in passing for white. The passing subject "adopt[s] the perspective of anti-black 'contempt and pity' upon which *Plessy* covertly insisted."<sup>74</sup> Godfrey blends the dominant critical interpretations of Hopkins' "the hidden self." The "hidden self" must be more than a suppressed racial identity. Given Hopkins' interest in contemporary psychology as well as her borrowing of William James' term for her subtitle, the hidden self refers to the unconscious as well. The anti-black perspective for which Godfrey faults Reuel suggests that, in rejecting blackness, he suffered from false consciousness. His "hidden self" can only emerge, then, once he rejects this consciousness while in Telessar. He experiences

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<sup>72</sup> Melissa Asher Daniels argues, for instance, that Reuel's "descent into unconsciousness and the hidden city of Telassar coincides with the discovery of his hidden self, or his true African identity" (169). "The Limits of Literary Realism: Of One Blood's Post-Racial Fantasy by Pauline Hopkins." *Callaloo* 36.1 (Winter 2013): 158-177. However, it's important to note the limitations of this discovery, in the sense that it does not resolve the novel's affective concerns.

<sup>73</sup> Schrager, 188.

<sup>74</sup> Godfrey, 57.

significant shame, in fact, when Ai comments that Reuel “isolate]ed” himself “from our race” because he did not like being counted as “less than other mortals” while in the US. Reuel, bowing his head, feels “keenly that he had played the coward’s part in hiding his origin” (129). However, the novel also suggests that Reuel’s embodiment does not determine his identity, as the consciousness of his racial identity shifts according to context, as indeed his Ego similarly travels between bodies. By having Reuel acknowledge his African heritage only once he is in the supernatural, spiritual realm of Telessar, Hopkins suggests race cannot be categorized by biology or physiology alone—for she certainly does not do away with this notion—but instead depends on the racialized subject consciously claiming a suppressed history.

Attending to the relationship between the body and mind asks for a further redefinition of the “hidden self.” Rather than being either 1) African heritage, 2) racial unconscious, or 3) some combination of these, the “hidden self” emerges as a new form of subjectivity when the subject no longer sublimates racially-motivated affects and therefore removes impediments that come between the body and mind. The “hidden self” is the subject with full affective agency. Such subjectivity becomes possible when racial (un)consciousness, racial history, and racial feeling can be accessed and openly acknowledged. Within the context of the US, however, the feeling of racial history/identity overwhelms the subject, as in the case of Dianthe, or, in the case of Reuel, pushes him outside US national boundaries.

In the space of the US, the novel abounds with spiritual visions, ghostly sightings, mesmeric phenomena, and other supernatural events that propel the novel’s melodramatic plot while giving more power to the spirit than body. The subject’s supernatural eternity,

in one sense, clashes with melodramatic temporality. The body, of course, is subject to time. However, Hopkins deploys the supernatural in service of melodramatic timing. Mira, for instance, appears throughout the novel to both Reuel and Dianthe to offer warnings and illuminate hidden truths. Dianthe's death, similarly, reveals her timeless existence beyond death at the same time as it cannot occur until Reuel appears "in the nick of time"—another key trope of melodrama.<sup>75</sup> Time is an important element in melodrama, Linda Williams notes, because of its capacity to heighten pathos: "Time is the ultimate object of loss; we cry at the irreversibility of time."<sup>76</sup> The supernatural world, however, does not follow a linear model. Dianthe's death, unlike melodramatic time, is "reversible" in the sense that her spirit continues living. Even before her death, she seems to find a new body to inhabit, that of Queen Candace, whom Reuel marries in Telessar after he learns the false news of Dianthe's death. Defying linear temporality, Dianthe inhabits this other body before her death. Reuel only marries Queen Candace because of her uncanny resemblance to his true love. Hopkins' investment in the spirit should be satisfied by transferring Dianthe's spirit to Queen Candace, and, in the process, offering Dianthe and Reuel the chance to fulfill their romantic desire in physical rather than just spiritual form. Queen Candace's body is also better equipped to regulate feelings. Unlike Dianthe, her feelings cannot overwhelm her. Indeed, she is remarkably calm, measured, and powerful, suggesting that the African American female subject simply needs a body better able to withstand its history.<sup>77</sup> Importantly, however, Queen Candace has such

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<sup>75</sup> Marcantonio, 14; Williams, 30.

<sup>76</sup> 31.

<sup>77</sup> In *The Biopolitics of Feeling*, Kyla Schuller offers a compelling case for why the female body was considered especially susceptible to affect. It's heightened "impressibility," she argues, made women's body's particularly vulnerable to the effects of their social environment. *The Biopolitics of Feeling: Race, Sex, and Science in the Nineteenth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).

affective equilibrium because she has not physically experienced the sexual and psychic trauma Dianthe has undergone. Queen Candace's body, then, is not actually a fit substitute for Dianthe's spirit. Thus neither Dianthe nor Reuel seem satisfied by this supernatural trick. Hopkins suggests, then, that particular bodies still carry important meaning. The supernatural spirit cannot, finally, take the place of the body.

In the end, the novel holds on to the importance of affective communion in the subjects' own specific bodies. Indeed, Reuel returns to see Dianthe just in the nick of time. He is not soon enough to save her from the poison Aubrey has forced her to drink after she tries to poison him, but he does arrive in time to hold her body to his own one final time. In melodramatic fashion, Reuel's footsteps ascending up the stairs to the room where Dianthe lays dying coincide her own final breaths. As Reuel enters the room where Dianthe lays rigid, she arises "with a wild scream of joy" and runs into his arms (187).

For just a few "brief moments," she

lived an age in heaven. The presence of that one beloved—this drop of joy sweetened all the bitter draught and made for her an eternity of compensation. With fond wild tenderness she gazed upon him, gazed in his anxious eyes until her own looked into his very soul, and stamped there all the story of her guilt and remorse. Then winding her cold arms around his neck, she laid her weary head upon his shoulder and silently as the night passed through the portals of the land of souls. (188)

While Dianthe may be "compensated" by this brief reunion, in which she at last feels relief from the agony of her affective experience, the reader attuned to melodramatic convention may be less pleased. Dianthe's death does prevent the continuation of an incestuous relationship and reaffirm her virtuousness and innocence. Yet it does not set the world right by reasserting a Manichean order of good and evil. This scene reaffirms, instead, the necessity of belonging with others through body as well as the mind, of having a historically-specific body in with to feel. At the same time, it suggests that black

subjects will not be allowed to survive in the US as fully living and feeling persons. This kind of living, itself a kind of “heaven,” would, for Hopkins, have to found elsewhere.

Dianthe represents a kind of subject the US kills through denying history—by treating certain bodies as if they are already dead. Yet, in the novel’s close, Dianthe’s spirit does not die as her body dies. In leaving the body through death, Dianthe’s “spiritual person” survives. She achieves a deadly liberation from the affective conditions of US belonging. As her body perishes, she hears “the chant of thousands of voices swelling in rich, majestic choral tones.” This sound is “the welcome of ancient Ethiopia to her dying daughter of the royal line.” However, these are not the only voices welcoming her spirit. She hears, as well, “the great masters of the world of song,” and thus calls out, “Beethoven, Mozart, thou sons of song! Art thou come to take me home? Me, thy poor worshipper on earth? O, let me be thy child in paradise!” (187). Dianthe ultimately has affective and hereditary ties to many nations, yet belongs fully to none. Once the confines of subjectivity shift from the body to the mind, Dianthe finds herself belonging differently to and of the world. In this case, her spirit is not limited to Queen Candace’s body. Dianthe’s sense of belonging coheres around song rather than nation. There is the song of ancient Ethiopia, the songs of her slave ancestors that she sang as a Fisk Jubilee singer, and the classical music of Europe. Therefore, while the novel may partially position her spirit or mind in a body firmly bound to Ethiopia as a nation, Hopkins leaves open the possibility of a broader sense of belonging that is not positioned within any single nation. To make this sense of belonging possible, the novel has to forego its attachment to the body. But, as Dianthe’s and Reuel’s final reunion shows, the subject can only be “compensated” for “guilt, remorse,” and “bitterness” through mental



and bodily connection. Only then can Dianthe feel “sweet” “drops of joy” when she at last “wraps her arms” around Reuel’s “neck” and lays her “weary head upon his shoulder.”

#### IV. “What Will the End Be?”: Racial Uplift’s Unknown Future

In the very first issue of the *Colored American Magazine*, Hopkins publishes “The Mystery Within Us,” a short story generally considered the genesis for *Of One Blood*. “The Mystery Within Us” suggests that the mind and body are interdependent and cannot be considered separately. In it, Hopkins tells the story of Tom Underwood, a once-struggling physician and now successful author of “scientific texts on subjects pertaining to the science of the preservation of life.”<sup>78</sup> When his friend Jack visits, Tom relates his transition from poor doctor to wealthy author. Just a few years earlier, Tom attempted suicide. He could not bear his “misfortune” and the world’s “scorn.” Halfway through drinking a vial of poison, he loses control over his body, and, when a voice begins to speak, Tom realizes he is having a “psychological experience.”<sup>79</sup> A shadowy man then appears before him. Chastising Tom for giving up on life, this phantom tells Tom that once he too “lived in the flesh,” but now, having taken his own life, his mind lives as a spirit. Receiving a multitude of “impressions” via “waves of electrical shocks,” Tom realizes that this spirit is that of the famous Dr. Thorn, who died at the height of his fame.<sup>80</sup> As Dr. Thorn tells him, he would have “remained in the body a few years longer” if he could have. For, though the body is only a “clay house” or “casket” for the soul, it has its purpose.”<sup>81</sup> After the spirit lectures him on the importance of the body and on his

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<sup>78</sup> Hopkins, “The Mystery Within.” *The Colored American Magazine* 1.1 (May 1900): 14-18, 14.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

earthly duties, Tom loses consciousness. When he wakes, he finds the bottle of poison gone and a full manuscript, which Dr. Thorn transmitted to him during his psychological experience. As Tom and Jack conclude, there are, as Shakespeare writes, “more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy.”<sup>82</sup> This story is an early philosophical meditation on the questions animating *Of One Blood*. If, as Hopkins raises in the voice of Dr. Thorn, the mind simply “lives in the flesh,” what is its relationship to the body, the soul’s “clay house”? If, as happens to Tom, the body can become the instrument of another, how does a subject use its mental powers to protect the body? What happens to the mind when it has been thus severed from the body?

Hopkins recognizes the danger inherent in uplift philosophies that over-prioritize the needs of either the mind or body at the cost of the other faculty. Racial uplift’s affective aims in this sphere threaten affect itself—in doing so, racial uplift practices work to obstruct the uplift subject’s capacity to express affect in and through the body. In the process, uplift also refuses the body as itself a site for understanding the conditions of racial life in the US. What the body feels—physiologically and emotionally—offers vital insight for racial uplift philosophers who attempt to create freer ways of being in the world.

*Of One Blood*’s philosophical exploration into the mind/body problem ultimately refuses the notion that the body and mind can be separated without harming the subject. More particularly, Hopkins suggests racial uplift should aim to heal the rift between mind and body in order to allow racialized US subjects to express and survive their affective experience. This work begins with a sustained attention to how the subject feels and

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 18.

thinks through the body in the here and now. Hopkins is very much in line with Thomas Nelson Baker, who claims that the body “is the most important factor with which we must reckon in all psychological study.”<sup>83</sup> Therefore, even those more invested in the mind and spirit need to begin with what the body knows. Baker argues further:

There are those who spurn all talk about Physiological psychology as useless in giving us information concerning the nature of the mind. They make the same mistake that Socrates made,—nay, rather, a more fatal mistake,—where he boasted of his ignorance of nature and found his highest inspiration in the Delphic oracle - “γνῶθι σεαυτόν [sic] [handwritten in Greek] (Know thyself).<sup>84</sup>

The simultaneous study of physiology and psychology, as Baker indicates, best allows the subject to “know thyself.” Where and how, within the US and within the parameters of racial uplift philosophy, can the African American subject freely “know itself”? Such knowledge is impossible without a body from which to learn. Indeed, Baker declares that “experience knows nothing of disembodied spirits.” Even in the spiritual world, he writes, “the mind will have a body.”<sup>85</sup>

In all of her fiction, Hopkins suggests the impossibility of freely living as a feeling, knowing racial subject in the US.<sup>86</sup> She seeks a mode of belonging that does not sever the mind from the body, and that allows the subject to regulate their own affects independently of the dictates others try to impose. This alternative affective project does not require affective sublimation, but a healthy modulation of affect. It neither results in deathly passivity, nor a dangerous suffusion of affect that overwhelms the body and mind. Hopkins begins this work by taking *Of One Blood*’s surviving characters to live in

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<sup>83</sup> Baker, 1.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 1-2.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>86</sup> Her novel *Winona* ends, for instance, with her protagonists seeking a place where “American cast prejudice could not touch them” (435). *Winona: A Tale of Negro Life in the South and Southwest*. In *The Magazine Novels of Pauline Hopkins*, 285-437 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

Ethiopia. Reuel, for example, takes up his position as King of Telassar, with Queen Candace by his side. But Reuel's return to Ethiopia does not safeguard him from the reach of US imperialism and the affective conditions it carries. Contemplating the future, Reuel asks: "Where will it stop?" "What will the end be?" (193). To these questions, Hopkins does not provide clear answers. Reuel's experiences in the US continue to haunt him. Outwardly, "his days glide peacefully by in good works; but the shadows of great sins darken his life, and the memory of past joy is ever with him" (193). While disembodied Dianthe helps Hopkins imagine the possibility of something like a global belonging safe-guarded from Western imperialism, this belonging can only be realized at the level of spirit, and thus requires that the (female) body be left behind. A spirit without bodily constraints may be free. But without a body with which to act or feel, the spirit is but a phantom, the aftermath of a life that could not be fully lived. Similarly, although Reuel Briggs, the embodiment of the black male subject, may survive beyond the US with body intact, he still cannot feel freely and openly, and certainly misses the joy once experienced when Dianthe's mind was still linked to her body, weakened though it was by her painful racial past.

Where, if not in Africa, could an idealized future become possible? This is not a question Hopkins answers in *Of One Blood*. As the last of her published novels, it serves as a dramatic, pessimistic culmination of a long endeavor to change her world through writing a type of novel that might "cement the bond of brotherhood among all classes and all complexions." While she may have lost faith in literature's ability to transform the nation, the novel reveals her continued investment in expressing the race's "inmost thoughts and feelings" with "fire and romance." Tate sees Hopkins' key message as

follows: “black men and women must be responsible for the course of their own advancement and that duty, virtue, *carefully controlled emotions*, the institution of marriage, and the vote are key components to directing social progress and achieving results.”<sup>87</sup> *Of One Blood*, however, does away with this notion. Her goal, as I’ve argued throughout, is to create a social world in which the subject does not have to “carefully control emotions.” Further, Hopkins shows that being “responsible for the course of [your] own advancement” begins with an agency only possible with the freedom to feel. The body of Hopkins’ work demonstrates her commitment to the body, the mind, and to freer affective experience and expression. The melodramatic and supernatural modes together, though neither “simple nor homely,” serve this end. Just as you cannot have melodrama without a body, the supernatural world needs a physical one in which the spirit can act. Even if neither the writer nor the novel’s characters achieve their desired political or affective end, *Of One Blood* performs the important political work of bringing suppressed racial feelings to the surface.

The *Colored American Magazine* served as Hopkins’ primary vehicle for disseminating the kind of literature, by other like-minded African American writers as well as by herself, that helped establish a racial uplift philosophy that could return full bodily rights, and thus full rights to the mind and to feeling, to African American subjects. Hopkins’ pessimistic endings, reflected in Reuel’s final questions, may have stemmed from a presentiment that she would soon lose the *Colored American Magazine*, and thus her ability to continue her uplift project. Under the control of Booker T. Washington, the journal soon espoused a philosophy that fundamentally contradicted

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<sup>87</sup> Tate, *Domestic Allegories*, 59. Italics mine.

Hopkins' own. No longer did it give a platform for expressing feelings of "wrong and outrage." In a nation that privileged the leadership of Washington more than any other African American of her generation, Hopkins lost faith in meaningful progress under his controlling hand. As she writes to William Monroe Trotter:

With the knowledge of which we possess, can we be expected to worship Mr. Washington as a pure and noble soul?

Can we be expected to join in paeans of praise to his spotless character and high principles?

One cannot help a feeling of honest indignation and contempt for a man who would be a party to defraud a helpless race of an organ of free speech, a band of men of their legal property and a woman of her means of earning a living.<sup>88</sup>

Hopkins would neither succumb to Washington's philosophy nor acquiesce to the demands for the kind of literature he supported, when he supported literary endeavors at all. Hopkins opposed Washington as vehemently and bitterly as did Du Bois, and like Du Bois, began to look outside of national boundaries for a kind of belonging that did not destroy the historically-awakened, feeling black subject.

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<sup>88</sup> Hopkins, "Pauline Hopkins to William Monroe Trotter," 248.

## CHAPTER FOUR

“Some Vast Emancipation of the World”: Affective Transparency and (Inter)National Attachment in *Dark Princess: A Romance*

*I once loved America. I cannot imagine it now.*  
—W.E.B. Du Bois, 1928

This final chapter argues that the dream of shared affect—between individuals, across the races, and throughout the nation and beyond—remains a central principle of racial uplift philosophy and aesthetics well into the first decades of the twentieth century—at least for W.E.B. Du Bois. Notwithstanding the fact that his most famous metaphor, “the veil,” suggests that race relations are always obstructed by an affective barrier through which neither racial subject can transparently express feeling, in 1928 Du Bois dreamed of a racial collective and nation that affectively “coalesce[s],” that collectively and transparently shares “great joys and great sorrows.”<sup>1</sup> Du Bois’ fiction of the 1910s-1920s epitomizes the racial uplift movement’s passionate drive towards shared transparent affect. So strongly does he desire such a state of being in the world that he even contemplates rejecting national boundaries and foregoing national politics. Doing so, he imagines, might enable this kind of affective transparency foreclosed within the US. But, because Du Bois’ fiction remains physically stuck in the space of the nation, his dream remains more wish than reality. It cannot be fulfilled in a space that requires affect management along racial lines. By 1928, however, Du Bois’ call for shared feeling suggested he was out of touch with the mission of his Harlem Renaissance peers. Alain Locke, for instance, claimed that the “New Negro” “welcomes the new scientific rather

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<sup>1</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Man in a Wounded World*, Chapter 8, “The Challenge” (page number unclear - says 6 typed on top of page - says 15 in pencil on the upper left-hand corner). *Fisk University, John Hope and Aurelia E. Franklin Library, Special Collections. The W.E.B. Du Bois Papers*. Box 27, Folder 5.

than the old sentimental interest.”<sup>2</sup> He thus contradicted Du Bois’ insistence of the importance of affect to racial progress and aesthetics.

Despite being a prominent figure in the Harlem Renaissance, particularly as editor to one of its most important journals, *The Crisis*, Du Bois’ fiction of 1910s-1920s does not neatly align with either the literature of the racial uplift movement or with that of the Renaissance. By the advent of the Harlem Renaissance, Du Bois’ early and arguably most important philosophies were out of vogue. With a subtle nod to Du Bois, Alain Locke heralds the energy the “new Negro” brings to black America in 1925. In his introductory essay to the 1925 anthology, *The New Negro*, Locke celebrates the new generation of African Americans, who are “vibrant with a new psychology,” and who promise “new leadership.”<sup>3</sup> In 1903, Du Bois put forth one of the racial uplift movement’s most seminal texts, *The Souls of Black Folk*. In *Souls*, Du Bois combines essay, fiction, and biography to reveal what he considers the psychological and affective condition of being black at the turn of the century. His notion of “double-consciousness,” as I address in chapters one and three, laments the bifurcation of the African American subject. Living within the “veil,” he writes, “One ever feels his two-ness—An American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.”<sup>4</sup> In this formulation, “American” and “Negro” are two opposed but dependent identities, sharing the same body but inhabiting their own psychic worlds. Because of this foundational experience of living within the “veil,” and thus being unable to “coalesce” one’s affects

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<sup>2</sup> Alain Locke, “The New Negro.” In *The New Negro*, edited by Alain Locke, 3-16. [1925] (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 5.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 3,5.

<sup>4</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 5.



and identities even with the subject, Du Bois' fiction, I contend, increasingly searches for a world in which the subject experiences a boundless, reconcilable sense of self. This sense of self is only possible by eliminating "veils," wherever they impede such idealized selfhood. His post-uplift era fiction recognizes that his vision can only be realized once his characters reject the affective boundaries of the racial uplift movement, which remained tied to the nation. The scale and philosophy of his fiction, then, fits neither the racial uplift movement nor the modern era of the Harlem Renaissance.

However, while participating in the 1916 Amenia Conference, a summit of racial uplift leaders held in upstate New York, Du Bois tangibly felt the possibility of realizing this dream within the US. Du Bois' later reflections on the conference demonstrate his own commitment to affect as a technology for racial uplift. In Du Bois' estimation, the conference, at least temporarily, healed affective rifts between racial uplift leaders, a healing that could expand outward to the nation itself. A letter from Joel and Amy Spingarn, who hosted the event at their idyllic upstate home, clarifies the affective dimensions of the Amenia Conference. Members of New York City's elite Jewish community, the Spingarns were staunch supporters of racial uplift and actively participated in its fight for racial justice.<sup>5</sup> In October 1916, just a few months after the event, they wrote Du Bois a thank you note for sending them "a book of autographs of all

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<sup>5</sup> Joel Spingarn was an educator, critic, and activist. He was motivated by his "profound sense of social responsibility" and his "abhorrence of racial violence." He helped form the National Association for Colored People in 1909, and, in 1911, resigned from his position as chairman of Comparative Literature at Columbia University to fully "devote his energy and talents to the NAACP." He served as its president from 1930-1930. He also established the Spingarn medal in 1913, which was then awarded annually to "for the highest achievement by an African American." Caption for "NAACP Leader Joel Spingarn," NAACP Collection, Prints and Photographs Collection, Library of Congress (030.00.00) Courtesy of the NAACP Digital ID. Joel's younger brother, Arthur Spingarn, served as the next president of the NAACP. Chesnutt was in fact awarded the Spingarn medal in 1929, which his family considered a wonderful recognition of his literature and broader contribution to the race.

those who attended the first Amenia Conference as our guests.” “We shall treasure it always,” they write, “as a memento of those whom we are very proud and happy to call our friends.” In their thanks, they at once give Du Bois a task and express a deeply-felt desire:

Will you tell them how deeply grateful we are for their kind, more than kind words, and how the pleasure which we ourselves had drawn from the Conference was renewed as we read what each friend had written, as we tried to feel what each of them had felt during those days and had mirrored in his soul? We wish you could tell all America, too, how much it loses by cutting itself off from hearts so generous and warm-hearted and from friends so loyal and so good to possess.”<sup>6</sup>

There are several important elements at work in these few sentences. First, the Spingarns demonstrate a desire to “feel” what others have felt. They want to eliminate affective barriers—between the races and within the race—and in so doing experience shared affect, for their own “souls” to “mirror” the souls of all those gathered. It is not enough to join together to plan the race’s uplift. Instead, their own sense of the conference’s success comes from the affective (intraracial and interracial) communion it made possible.

Secondly, this kind of affect transmission, which seems to depend on affective transparency, takes some endeavor. It requires an active form of affect labor. The desire for affect transmission must be there for affect transmission to occur. And finally, the letter argues that should white America recognize the kind of friendship the attendees established by coming together in “sympathetic conference,”<sup>7</sup> they would know what they lose by excluding black America from the nation’s affective bounds. White America would then seek out such “generous and warm-hearted friends,” as did the Spingarns, for

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<sup>6</sup> “Letter from J.E. and Amy Spingarn to W.E.B. Du Bois, October 30, 1916.” W.E.B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312) Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

<sup>7</sup> “Notes on the Amenia Conference, ca. 1916,” 1. W.E.B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

it would know how good such friends are “to possess.” As the racial collective within the United States establishes its own transparent affect transmission, it would, too, transform the nation.

Creating this shared sense of racial feeling at the Amenia Conference was no simple feat. In his 1925 pamphlet on the origins and impact of the conference, Du Bois explains that “[o]ne can hardly realize today how difficult and intricate a matter it was to arrange such a conference, to say who should come and who should not, to gloss over hurts and enmities [...] There had been bitterness and real cause for bitterness [...] Men were angry and hurt [...] the lowest motives that one can conceive had been attributed to antagonists on either side—jealousy, envy, greed, cowardice, intolerance, and the like.”<sup>8</sup> Given this tension, the friendly affect transmission of which the Spingarns speak was not immediate. Du Bois in fact recalls that, in the early days of the conference, “there was just a little sense of stiffness and care in conversation when people met who for ten years had been saying hard things about each other.”<sup>9</sup> Du Bois’ language, in this last sentence, is quite tempered. Given the “bitterness, “hurts, and enmities,” it certainly makes sense that some affective barriers would arise. Their “care” and “stiffness” comes from their desire not to create further “real cause” for bitterness. As the conference progresses, the cares and stiffness gradually melt away, as the attendees develop more transparent feelings. They no longer have cause for jealousy, envy, and other feelings that get in the

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<sup>8</sup> Du Bois, “The Amenia Conference, 1925,” 9, 15. W.E.B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312) Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries. This pamphlet is incomplete. The archival document consists of loose pages (several of these are only partial pages), and contains pencil markings throughout.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 11.

way of affect transmission. The conference, in other words, functioned as a microcosm for larger affective revolutions—at the scale of the race and the nation.

For Du Bois, the conference heralds the end of an era epitomized by the ironfisted rule of Booker T. Washington, who had passed away the year before. With the death of Booker T. Washington, his greatest adversary, Du Bois felt free to alter the terms of black belonging in the nation. In the pamphlet, he thanks Washington for helping the race accumulate property, establishing Tuskegee, championing industrial education, and “compelling the white South to think at least of the Negro as a possible man.” At the same time, he states that “in stern justice, we must lay on the soul of this man a heavy responsibility for the consummation of Negro disfranchisement, the decline of Negro college and public school, and the firmer establishment of color cast in this land.”<sup>10</sup> This is no small accusation. It comes from his own bitterness towards Washington, a bitterness shared by many who opposed Washington and who were only then free from the control of the “Tuskegee machine.”<sup>11</sup> The 1916 Amenia Conference therefore served as a new beginning in which shared good feeling, rather than bitter antagonism, was not only the ideal, but also the basis for further uplifting the race. As his pamphlet outlines, shared transparent affect—affect that is easily perceived, recognized, and transmitted—begins at the interpersonal level. It erases affective divisions and makes collective endeavor possible. Du Bois therefore argued that “on account of our meeting the Negro race was more united and more ready to meet the problems of the world than it could possibly have been without these beautiful days of understanding.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>11</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Towards an Autobiography of a Race Concept*, edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 36.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 17-18.

In this chapter, I contend that the 1916 Amenia Conference served as a model for transparent affect's transformative potential. The chapter argues that Du Bois' 1928 novel, *Dark Princess: A Romance*, dramatizes the affective shifts in the racial collective that Du Bois outlines in the above pamphlet. In contrast to the conference, however, the novel also reflects Du Bois' effort to turn away from the nation. Several important factors influence Du Bois' move outward. First, Du Bois travelled extensively between 1918-1928. Indeed, he states that "[his] travel" was in fact his most important "work of the decade."<sup>13</sup> Secondly, after WWI, Du Bois became increasingly disillusioned with US democracy. "Through the crimson illumination of the war," and by traveling around the globe, he realized that the "general welfare" of the people was not, in fact, the governing principle of the US' democratic government.<sup>14</sup> Third, during this period, he engaged in increasingly international movements for racial and world progress. His shift away from the US, then, results the nation's continual failure to live up to his vision of its affective and political potential. In this case, *Dark Princess* rejects the racial uplift movement's affect management and its national boundaries. The novel makes way for a passion-fueled world emancipation project that begins with interpersonal and even individual affective transparency. Du Bois premises this movement on personal pleasure: sensual, aesthetic, and spiritual. This is a pleasure that depends on the individual having full access to his or her feelings. As with the Amenia Conference, this kind of feeling radiates outward and facilitates a collective endeavor for racial and world progress.

*Dark Princess* tells the story of a young African American man, Mathew Towns. Mathew is a talented medical student who exiles himself from the US after being forced

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<sup>13</sup> Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 133.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 142

out of a white medical university. While traveling through Europe, he meets and falls in love with an Indian Princess, Kautilya of Bwodpur—the novel’s titular dark Princess. Kautilya is a vital member of a world coalition formed to emancipate the “darker peoples of the world.” After Mathew rescues her from an uncouth white American, she invites him to a meeting of the coalition. With members from China, India, Egypt, and Japan, to name just a few, the coalition already reflects its own third world mission. However, the members of the coalition welcome Mathew coldly. They suspect that African America is not yet ready to join its ranks. They think African Americans are still too servile and complacent. In forming his fictional coalition, Du Bois likely drew on his experience in the First Universal Races Congress in 1911, on the First Pan-Africanist Congress in 1919, and the League of Nations, which formed in 1920. The Pan-Africanist meetings, according to Eric Sundquist, “acted as a lightning rod for Du Bois’ intellect and imagination.”<sup>15</sup> As Cheryl Wall further illuminates, Du Bois’ mission in forming the Pan-Africanist Congresses “was to realize ‘the world-old dream of human brotherhood.’”<sup>16</sup> In these meetings, Du Bois created a widening network of sympathetic intellectuals from Europe and Africa. At the same time, however, these meetings and institutions did not affectively cohere in the way of the 1916 Amenia Conference. Indeed, in a report on the First Universal Races Conference, Professor Ulysses Weatherly of Indiana University notes that the paper Du Bois presented there, “The Negro Race in the United States of America,” might have made a greater impact if Du Bois had focused less of the “tragic side” of black American history. In his report, Weatherly also notes that the conference’s

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<sup>15</sup> Eric Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1994), 546.

<sup>16</sup> Cheryl Wall, *The Harlem Renaissance: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 75.

“greatest weakness undoubtedly lay in the divergence of purpose between the emotional and scientific points of view” and derides the “emotional[] faddists,” “the radicals of every shade,” and the “one-idea visionar[ies]” such events attract.<sup>17</sup> Weatherly’s report suggests that Du Bois, too, would have been at once inspired by the prospect of international collectivity and disappointed by its affective divisions.

Shortly after the coalition, Mathew returns to the US to provide the Princess with reports on black Americans’ current beliefs, attitudes, and on their readiness to join a world movement. With this evidence, the Princess can then urge the other members of the coalition to let African Americans join its movement. While working as a Pullman Porter, Mathew meets the militant Perigua, a violent revolutionary. Urged on by Perigua, Mathew plans to derail a train carrying a delegation of the Ku Klux Klan. His suicidal act of revolt, he believes, will convince Kautilya of African Americans’ revolutionary spirit. At the last moment, Mathew learns Kautilya is onboard, and thus alerts the train’s authorities of his plans. Mathew is then jailed and sentenced to ten years imprisonment. Certain that he has lost Kautilya forever, he falls into despair. In the meantime, black Chicago politician Sara Andrews arranges his early release and soon embroils him in Chicago’s political sphere. After several years, Mathew and Sara marry. Mathew finds his marriage a disappointment. He and Sara share neither feelings nor political aspirations. Once Kautilya arrives back on the scene, Mathew leaves Sara, engages in a sexual relationship with Kautilya, and once again commits himself to the fight for world emancipation. Kautilya then moves to the American South to give birth to their son, who

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<sup>17</sup> Ulysses B. Weatherly, “The First Universal Races Congress.” *The American Journal of Sociology* 17 (July 1911-May, 1912): 315-328, 325, 327.

will lead the novel's world movement. The novel comes to a dramatic close after Mathew joins Kautilya and they marry in a mythic ceremony, performed by Indian priests and a southern African American preacher. Throughout the novel, Mathew seeks a form of attachment unburdened by conflicting and concealed emotions, whether that be to the nation, to this world coalition, or to Kautilya herself. However, he continually finds affective barriers which seem impossible to overcome within the space of the US.

Yet *Dark Princess* ultimately situates the center of its world movement within the US South. At the end of the novel, Mathew and Kautilya choose to live in rural Virginia, which is both Mathew's childhood home and the space Kautilya considers the center of black American spirituality. For Kautilya, the black American South is the spiritual and geographic locus of the world's "darker peoples." In doing so, the novel suggests that Du Bois still retains some of the racial uplift movement's attachment to US national belonging. This attachment impedes the novel's drive towards transparent affective union. For it is in the US that Du Bois learns to "feel like a problem," as he writes in the first chapter of *The Souls of Black Folk* in 1903.<sup>18</sup> The US South also poses a precise affective problem for Mathew: it is the nation's most concentrated center of racial animosity, the painful site of slavery, and the place in which white men killed his father and violated his mother. In Mathew's ultimate return to the South and in his marriage to Kautilya, Du Bois reflects the novel's conflicting attachment to and refusal of the affective aims of racial uplift and of US national belonging.

Only two years prior to publishing *Dark Princess*, Du Bois penned "Criteria of Negro Art," in which he declares that "all art is propaganda and ever must be."<sup>19</sup> Just a

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<sup>18</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1996) 3-4.

<sup>19</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, "Criteria of Negro Art." *The Crisis* 32 (October 1926): 290-297.



few sentences later, Du Bois goes on to clarify what he believes artistic propaganda can achieve. “I stand in utter shamelessness,” he declares, “and say that whatever art I have for writing has been used always for propaganda for gaining the right of black folk to love and enjoy.”<sup>20</sup> Black literary propaganda can shape readers’ attachment to a particular way of being in the world—one defined by love and enjoyment, rather than simply by gaining political rights for their own sake. Du Bois makes the connection between political rights and “black love and enjoy[ment]” quite clear by linking these states to the nation. In answer to his own rhetorical questions, “What do we want? What is the thing we are after?”, he writes:

We want to be Americans, full-fledged Americans, with all the rights of other American citizens. But is this all? Do we want simply to be Americans? Once in a while through all of us there flashes some clairvoyance, some clear idea, of what America really is. We who are dark can see America in a way white Americans cannot. And seeing our country thus, are we satisfied with its present goals and ideals?”<sup>21</sup>

In stirring up readers’ dissatisfaction in with the nation, Du Bois imagines that African American writing will reform the US—its goals as well as ideals—through reorienting national affect. A form of propaganda that aims to expand the freedom to love, would, according to Freudian psychoanalysis, tighten the “affective bond” that Freud considered “crucial to the formation of human subjectivity, sociality, and even civilization.”<sup>22</sup> Love functions, therefore, not just to increase one’s potential for “enjoyment,” but also to affectively cohere the race and nation. Might this affectively-cohered nation, then, look like the America Du Bois presciently foresees in his “flashes of clairvoyance”? Seeing a

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (second edition; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 125.

future nation and people bound together by love's affective force, Du Bois certainly cannot be satisfied by America's "present goals and ideals" or its affective divisions.

Du Bois did not always have faith in literature's potential to create social change. Up until 1899, he had worked diligently to dismantle racism by providing "careful, reasoned" statements of fact. The lynching of Sam Hose changed this. After hearing that Sam Hose, a black man, had killed his white employer (in self-defense) and then been accused of raping his wife, Du Bois quickly wrote one such "careful, reasoned statement" in Hose's defense. Walking down to the office of the *Atlanta Constitution* to submit his letter, "a red ray" "cut across his path:" he heard that a white mob had lynched Sam Hose in nearby Newnan, Georgia, and that his knuckles were now "on exhibition at a grocery store" further down the street on which he was then walking.<sup>23</sup> Du Bois realized then that "one could not be a calm, cool, and detached scientist while Negroes were lynched, murdered and starved; and secondly, there was no such definite demand for scientific work of the sort of I was doing."<sup>24</sup> Here Du Bois implies the efficacy of emotionally-driven antiracist work over the disimpassioned scientific treatise. Nonetheless, he suggests that black writing had so far failed to reorient that nation. Despite the fact that African Americans had created a "distinct and creditable Negro literature," the same "barriers of race prejudice" continued to exist in 1930 as in 1910.<sup>25</sup> But Du Bois does not give up on literature as a necessary form of propaganda. Instead, literature itself needed to be revised. More precisely, African American writers need to work towards a literature

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<sup>23</sup> Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 34.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 141.

that infiltrates what Du Bois terms “the vast area of the subconscious.”<sup>26</sup> Only this kind of literature might be able to undermine the “founding stones of racial antagonism.”<sup>27</sup>

Du Bois later reflects that of all his books, *Dark Princess* is his favorite.<sup>28</sup> In making this claim, Du Bois must have felt that *Dark Princess* best reflected the stated goals of “Criteria of Negro Art” and was perhaps most capable of reshaping the nation through its attention to the subconscious and irrational foundations of racial and national identity. He depicts the Ku Klux Klan’s lynching of Jimmie, Mathew’s fellow Pullman Porter, as unconscious habit rather than conscious decision. They are psychically compelled to lynch Jimmie, who was forced into a compromising position by the wife of a Klan leader, because their sense of selfhood depends on performing such acts of racial identification. Despite the fact that *The Souls of Black Folk* continued to be his most significant contribution to African American letters, Du Bois may have believed that the novel was most capable of “attacking the founding stones of race antagonisms.” More than any of his books, it points to a belief that “get[ting] justice and right to prevail in the world”<sup>29</sup> begins in black love, enjoyment, and transparent feeling. As Claudia Tate and others have noted, “Criteria of Negro Art” demonstrates that Du Bois “aligned his political agenda to the pleasure principle.”<sup>30</sup> Building on this critical work, I argue that for Du Bois, the most fulfilling pleasure comes from affective communion. Tate argues that while Du Bois may have been unaware of his “tendency to eroticize racial justice,” he was certainly familiar with Sigmund Freud’s theories of desire and pleasure as the

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>30</sup> Claudia Tate, Introduction to *Dark Princess: A Romance*, by W.E.B. Du Bois, ix-xxviii (Jackson: Banner Books; University Press of Mississippi, 1995), xix.

driving principles of human psychology.<sup>31</sup> For Du Bois, the greatest pleasure seemed to come from the meeting of affects. Like the Amenia Conference, the novel's world movement only begins once its characters feel as one.

Through exploring Du Bois' complex attachment to the US, this chapter considers the affective dimensions of John Bowlby's and Melanie Klein's attachment theory. It examines the ways *Dark Princess*' characters form attachments to each other, to the nation, and to the globe, and argues that the novel's form mirrors the difficulty of these attachments. Notably, Du Bois subtitles the novel "a romance." Because of its affective register and global scale, romance offers Du Bois an ideal genre through which to reorient black affect beyond the nation while also prioritizing interpersonal relationships. Yet, despite calling the novel a "romance," Du Bois depicts much of the novel's action in a social realist style. In these social realist passages, the novel remains in an affective stasis characteristic of the realist genre and nation. As I argue in an extended reading of *Dark Princess*, the novel attempts to reject the literary, affective, and political parameters of the racial uplift movement. At the same time, its inability to permanently exceed US national boundaries, evident in Mathew and Kautilya's decision to remain in the United States, affirms racial uplifters' continued attachment to a notion of black American collectivity formulated during the early years of Jim Crow and reflected in the majority of the era's literature. The novel attempts to exceed national boundaries, but cannot. Thus, the novel constitutes an aporia at the level of form and thus ideology. Much of racial uplift's literature, as I have argued throughout "Blushing Bitterly," aimed to discipline

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<sup>31</sup> Claudia Tate, "Race and Desire: *Dark Princess: A Romance*." In *Next to the Color Line: Gender, Sexuality, and W.E.B. Du Bois*, edited by Susan Gillman and Alys Eve Weinbaum, 150-208 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 156.

black readers into becoming racial uplift's ideal subjects. Like *The Marrow of Tradition*, *The Sport of the Gods*, and *Of One Blood*, *Dark Princess* also undoes this work. In *Dark Princess*, Du Bois takes this a step further. He works to reshape the terms of black readers' attachment to each other and to the nation. After beginning with a reading of Du Bois' affective and formal aims, this chapter moves to consider how transparent affective communion might remake the world, even as it cannot remake the nation.

#### I. "A Mass of Quivering Nerves": Romance and Realism

Many of Du Bois' contemporaries, as well as critics up to the present day, have considered *Dark Princess* an embarrassment, at best a failed attempt at artistic propaganda and at worst a "dirty old man's fantasy."<sup>32</sup> The novel's first readers found it "bewildering," a strange mixture of "fact and fantasy" made up of "the queerest sort of mixture: clear sharp observation, thoughtfully considered and carefully written, helter-skelter with Graustarkian romance."<sup>33</sup> But, as recent critical interest in the novel demonstrates, Du Bois' novel nonetheless succeeds in directing "his audience's desires beyond the US and even [to] Africa [and] East India as the material for world-making." He uses romance not only as a genre but as a form of sensual, biological, affective, and aesthetic bonding "to invite readers to imagine and create an oppositional transnational community."<sup>34</sup> Michele Elam and Paul C. Taylor thus claim that "what appears to be a dirty old man's fantasy is really a development in ethical expression. That is, the wedding of passion and politics [...] inflects and gives content to the novel's argument about

<sup>32</sup> Tate, Introduction to *Dark Princess*, xxiv.

<sup>33</sup> For a full account of the novel's reviews, see footnote fifteen in Claudia Tate's "Race and Desire: *Dark Princess: A Romance*," 159.

<sup>34</sup> Elizabeth Sheehan, "This Great Work of the Creation of Beauty: Imagining Internationalism in W.E.B. Du Bois's *Dark Princess* and Black Beauty Culture." *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 62.3 (Fall 2016): 412-443, 420.

antiracist activism.”<sup>35</sup> Claudia Tate further celebrates Du Bois’ turn to romance as a political stance. She argues: “When racist oppression proved stronger than his idealistic beliefs in providence, democracy, socialism, and communism, Du Bois resorted to the conviction that had defined his entire life: Others would strive just as he had. They would seek the greatest and fullest possibilities of life with passion like that inscribed in *Dark Princess*.”<sup>36</sup>

Fusing racial politics to bodily and spiritual pleasure at the level of form, Du Bois exceeds the bounds of racial uplift literature’s respectability politics. In Du Bois’ oeuvre, this is not distinct to *Dark Princess*. Tate, Elam, and Taylor concur that “Du Bois becomes a figure whose erotic fantasies and desires are inextricable from his political and literary work.”<sup>37</sup> Tate goes so far as to claim that Du Bois “seems to have experienced the emotional effect of laboring for racial uplift like the pleasure of libidinal satisfaction.”<sup>38</sup> One can hardly imagine Chesnutt, Booker T. Washington, Anna Julia Cooper, or even Pauline Hopkins, though she comes closest, to hinging politics on the erotic, or of romanticizing out-of-wedlock sexual pleasure or a bohemian lifestyle. But, by doing so in *Dark Princess*, Du Bois formally refuses racial uplift’s constraints on the body, suggesting that bodily constraints also limit the subject’s capacity to feel sensual pleasure and experience the shared joy in which the romance genre culminates.

The romantic genre facilitates bodily and affective communion at the interpersonal and global scale. From its early development in the US up to the first

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<sup>35</sup> Michele Elam, and Paul C. Taylor, “Du Bois’s Erotics.” In *Next to the Color Line: Gender, Sexuality, and W.E.B. Du Bois*, edited by Susan Gillman and Alys Eve Weinbaum, 209-233 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 224.

<sup>36</sup> Tate, Introduction to *Dark Princess*, xxvi.

<sup>37</sup> Elam and Taylor, 210.

<sup>38</sup> Tate, “Race and Desire,” 155.

decades of the twentieth century, the romance functioned as a medium for revealing “veiled anxieties about the future of the United States,” as Gretchen J. Woertendyke argues. In the early republic, the genre’s imaginative versatility, she shows, both “entertained readers” and offered writers “ways of making their contemporary time and place legible.” Woertendyke writes: in “a period of shifting allegiances and overall instability, the romance thrived upon the danger and possibility of spaces beyond and outside borders, whether psychological, metaphysical, historical, or geographic.” The genre’s “futurity,” moreover, “underscores the urgency of the present, one rich with possibility.”<sup>39</sup> Or, in the case of *Dark Princess*, we might more accurately say that the future is “pregnant” with possibility. The novel ends in a messianic vision of futurity in which Mathew Towns finally marries Princess Kautilya in a mythical, dreamlike southern setting that affectively, spatially, and biologically unites the third world. Holding their newborn son aloft towards the heavens, Kautilya calls on Brahma, Visnu, and Siva, to the “Lords of Sky and Light and Love.” Echoing and answering her call, voices from the surrounding forest herald the young babe, child of India and the black American South, as the “Messenger and Messiah to all the Darker Worlds.”<sup>40</sup>

By telling his publisher that *Dark Princess* is a “romance with a message,” Du Bois signals that pleasure might in fact come before politics.<sup>41</sup> His contemporaries did not share the notion that black pleasure sets the foundation for black politics. Tate argues, in fact, that “U.S. reviewers, scholars, and readers have routinely understood black novels

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<sup>39</sup> Gretchen J. Woertendyke, *Hemispheric Regionalism: Romance and the Geography of Genre* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 3, 4.

<sup>40</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *Dark Princess: A Romance* (Jackson: Banner Books; University Press of Mississippi, 1995) 311. Subsequent references to the novel will be cited parenthetically.

<sup>41</sup> Herbert Aptheker, Introduction to *Dark Princess: A Romance*, 5-29 (Millwood, N.Y.: Kraus-Thomson Organization, 1974), 19.

as expressions of racial politics even when such a formulation earns reproach. Yet this audience has celebrated the highly individualistic portraits of desire in white literature [. . .] while expecting desire in black textual production to be defined by and subsumed within the political ambitions of the black masses.”<sup>42</sup> In *Dark Princess*, desire is not secondary to politics. Instead, desire is both necessary to politics and comes from political engagement, at least from the international and pleasurable politics that Du Bois celebrates in the novel and in “Criteria of Negro Art.” Revising the formula Tate outlines above, Du Bois undermines the unconscious, irrational, and habitual foundations of race prejudice, a project he outlines as race literature’s aim in his 1940 autobiography, *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept*. He creates new habits that situate black individuality, collectivity, and being-in-the-world in the realm of sensory enjoyment. Pleasure, born in affective transparency, is the message and the method. When Mathew and Kautilya join together in a spiritual connubial bliss, they float in a “peace and happiness” that allows them to “sense the flood of the meaning of the happiness that spread above [them]” (217). Contemplating their bliss, earned after a hard-won fight for “freedom,” Mathew feels such a strong “surge of joy” that he has to “bite back” his “sob[s]” and “wild laughter” (218). Together, they go “down the King’s highway to Beauty and Freedom and Love,” where they create and save up the energy to begin, in earnest, their world work (218). While the earlier romances, like the *fin-de-siècle* magazine novels of Pauline Hopkins, end with their lovers’ romantic union, this union generally does not serve a political end, nor do they depict the erotic pleasure and affective transparency of *Dark Princess*.

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<sup>42</sup> Tate, “Race and Desire,” 160.



Consider how Du Bois recalls the collective pleasure the 1916 Amenia Conference attendees shared. Their pleasure arises not only from coming together to fight for racial progress, but from enjoying themselves in this particular place together—feeling in their bodies and spirits a happiness that comes from a kind of collective joyful abandon. He writes in his 1925 pamphlet:

We ate hilariously in the open air with such views of the good green earth and the waving waters and the pale blue sky as all men ought to see, yet few men do. And then filled and complacent we talked awhile of the thing which all of us call ‘The Problem,’ and after that and just as regularly we broke up and played good and hard. We swam and rowed and hiked and lingered in the forests and sat upon hillsides and picked flowers and sang.<sup>43</sup>

Du Bois paints an idyllic portrait indeed. This description mirrors the lifestyle Mathew and Kautilya intermittently achieve in the novel, and which they finally seem to secure by novel’s end. In this passage, politics do not come either first or last. First comes good feeling, full bellies, a congenial atmosphere, and beautiful scenery. Even at the level of the sentence, Du Bois seems to luxuriate in sensory detail and accumulation. With each “and,” he adds another level of enjoyment. Only in the midst of this feeling do they speak together of “The Problem.” By the end, Du Bois describes the conference attendees as joyful revelers. And discussing “The Problem” is not separate from their joy. Sitting upon hillsides, picking flowers, and singing, they are like the fairy crew out of which *Dark Princess*’ romance “was surely born,” as Du Bois writes in the novel’s dedication to “Her High Loveliness, Titania XXVII.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> 13.

<sup>44</sup> N.p. For a reading of Du Bois’ allusion to Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in his dedication and the novel’s frame narrative, see Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2003), 233-238. There, Edwards argues that Du Bois “would appear to turn to Shakespeare’s play in attempting to posit a concordance between his romance of the ‘darker peoples of the world’ and a radical internationalist politics” (236).

The joy Mathew and Kautilya feel in similar moments of sensory revelry—for they take pleasure not just in each other, but in good food and in beautiful objects and natural scenery—depends on their sense that they are securely attached. Such security means neither need fear that they must uphold the affective barriers that have impeded other relationships, to other individuals as well as their respective nations. Without any confusion of feeling, Mathew and Kautilya freely express their affective states—states which they increasingly share. This kind of attachment is not something Du Bois takes for granted. In fact, in *Souls*, he feels the need to proclaim his affective and biological affiliation to the “souls” on whose behalf he speaks. “Need I add,” he writes in “The Forethought,” “that I who speak here am bone of the bone and flesh of the flesh of them that live within the Veil”?<sup>45</sup> The “utter shamelessness” Du Bois declares in “Criteria of Negro Art” further establishes his refusal to let affective barriers stand. The subject who feels shame, Sara Ahmed argues through Silvan Tomkins, attempts “a hiding that requires the subject to turn away from the other and towards itself.”<sup>46</sup> In other words, shame cuts the subject off from others and in so doing obstructs shared experience. Shame condenses in the self who feels insecure in her knowledge that others have judged her thoughts, feelings, or actions, and so she tries to disappear from view. In claiming

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<sup>45</sup> 2.

<sup>46</sup> Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 103. For more on shame, see *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader*, edited by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995). See, as well, *Touching Feeling*, in which Sedgwick argues that shame also demonstrates the subject’s simultaneous desire for re-identification with the self and other. Shame, she writes, makes a “double movement”: “toward individuation, toward uncontrollable relationality” (37). *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003). Tavia Nyong’o makes a compelling claim that the “transformation of shame” is “part and parcel of the politics of respectability” (88). *The Amalgamation Waltz: Race, Performance, and the Ruses of Memory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009). Du Bois, however, refuses to feel a shame that aligns with respectability politics.

“shamelessness,” Du Bois does the opposite, and suggests that the “love and enjoyment” his artistic propaganda promotes too refuses affects that block interpersonal feeling.

Throughout the novel, Mathew struggles to come to terms with his relationship to the US and to define the conditions under which he can safely surrender to another person, nation, or collective. Mathew’s highly emotional nature facilitates the novel’s affective drive towards a secure form of attachment. Highly attuned to his own and other’s affective responses, Mathew is an ideal figure through which to measure the possibilities for affective communion. The narrator tells us, throughout, that its protagonist is “oversensitive,” has “a delicate sensibility,” and often feels like “a mass of quivering nerves” (47, 104). Mathew’s persistent state of affective intensity results from his shifting responses to being black in America.

From the outset, Mathew’s feelings alternate between rage, bitterness, despair, hate, and loneliness, punctuated with brief moments of euphoria. The novel begins with Mathew fleeing the US in “a cold white fury” (3). A talented medical student, Mathew has just been rejected by the prestigious University of Manhattan when its deans decide they cannot have black students operating on white female patients. In order to graduate, the university’s medical students must complete an obstetrics course which has only just been barred to African Americans. Although born of ex-slaves and raised in rural Virginia, Mathew’s rise in the world up till now facilitated a relatively untroubled relationship to the nation. After being kicked out of his medical program, however, Mathew becomes “sick at heart.” He soon leaves America because America has become “impossible,” “unthinkable” (14). Despite America’s “impossibility,” once abroad Mathew feels “lonesome and homesick with a dreadful homesickness. After all, in

leaving white America, he had also left black America—all that he loved and knew.” “God!,” he internally exclaims, “he never dreamed how much he loved that soft, brown world which he had so carelessly, so unregretfully cast away” (7). Mathew understands that his conflicted attachment to the US is defined by simultaneous hate, love, and shame. Shame, Tavia Nyong’o argues, underlies the American formation of race. “Race emerges in its modern form,” he claims, “only when it becomes possible to be ashamed of it.”<sup>47</sup> In this case, Du Bois, via Mathew, wants to disavow race as a product of shame. But Mathew’s love for black America pulls him back to the nation, despite his hate and shame. This painful affective state, then, highlights the necessity of rejecting US attachment as well as the intense feeling of loss that results from such rejection. Drawing on this longstanding assertion in African American thought, which goes back to Martin Delaney’s black nationalism of the 1850s, Du Bois shows what this conflicted state feels like through Mathew’s conflicting affects.<sup>48</sup> In other words, Mathew can leave and hate America, but he still seeks the feeling of “home” found only in its “soft, brown world.” Mathew’s journey through the novel, then, is precisely such a seeking—an affective treasure hunt for an attachment unburdened by conflicting and hidden emotions. More than anything, what Mathew seeks is a sense of transparent affective communion—a union between souls and sociopolitical space.

The novel imagines the possibility of secure attachment not through reshaping the US, as Du Bois calls for in “Criteria of Negro Art,” but instead through a “vast

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<sup>47</sup> Tavia Nyong’o, *The Amalgamation Waltz: Race, Performance, and the Ruses of Memory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 88.

<sup>48</sup> For more on Du Bois’ inheritance and development of black nationalism and Pan-Africanism, stemming from Delaney, Henry Turner, and Edward Blyden, see Eric Sundquist’s chapter, “The Spell of Africa,” in Sundquist’s *To Wake the Nations*.

emancipation of the world.” In Germany, Mathew meets Kautilya, who invites him to join a “great committee of the darker peoples; of those who suffer under the agony and tyranny of the white world” (16). Initially elated by this invitation, he finds that within this committee, as with the nation, he experiences a “color line within a color line” (22). This color line takes shape takes shape in relation to class, taste, nationality, color, and ideology. Unlike those gathered, Mathew is neither royalty nor national dignitary. He does not (yet) have their sophisticated and expensive taste in art, in food, or dress. Most importantly, with the exception of Kautilya, the members of the coalition express a clear prejudice towards “the black race in Africa or elsewhere”—their ideology and their complexions (21). The representative from Egypt, for instance, snidely remarks that their coalition currently includes “All the darker world except the darkest” (19). As the Japanese representative “slowly and gravely” explains, they have “real doubts” about the “ability, qualifications, and real possibilities” of the race to which he belongs” (21). Mathew experiences this line as “a prejudice within a prejudice, and he and his again the sacrifice” (22). Mathew is shocked, too, to learn that this coalition, as formulated by its current ideology, re-instantiates racial hierarchy. It believes that “the darker people are the best—the natural aristocracy, the makers of art, religion, philosophy, life, everything except brazen machines” (25). But, as he has already learned from their earlier conversation, they hierarchize even within the collective “darker people.” For Mathew, such hierarchies produce affective barriers. As a result of this internal color line, Mathew finds increased affective barriers to forming attachment to the novel’s third world coalition. While at dinner, he feels forced to keep his affects veiled as he struggles to prove not only his own worthiness, but also black America’s readiness to reject US

belonging and join the movement against Western imperialism. As with America itself, this new form of belonging becomes increasingly “impossible.” After returning to the US, he thus begins to seek new forms of attachment where he might feel affectively acknowledged.

The insecure, disoriented, or disorganized attachment Du Bois enacts through Mathew Towns mirrors Du Bois’ affective aims for racial uplift in and beyond the nation. At the same time, it reflects the bitterness Du Bois claims black America feels despite their refusal to leave the US. John Bowlby’s early attachment theory helps illustrate this point. A pioneer of attachment theory, Bowlby claims that (as Jillmarie Murphy outlines): “in order for one to achieve mental health and emotional well-being as an adult, ‘the infant and young child should experience a warm, intimate, and continuous relationship with his mother (or permanent mother-substitute) in which both find satisfaction and enjoyment;’ Bowlby eventually coined the term ‘maternal deprivation’ to identify what happens to a child when circumstances prevent this mutually sustaining bond from occurring.”<sup>49</sup> In this chapter, I use early attachment theorists Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth’s “attachment styles” to think about black America’s ongoing attachment to the nation.<sup>50</sup> What happens when the nation itself does not provide a “warm, intimate,

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<sup>49</sup> Jillmarie Murphy, *Monstrous Kinships: Realism and Attachment Theory in the Nineteenth-and Early Twentieth-Century Novel* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2011), 14.

<sup>50</sup> Lauren Berlant, Sara Ahmed, Jillmarie Murphy, and Peter Coviello offer helpful readings of the ways individuals form attachment to groups, ideologies, and national identities. See Lauren Berlant, *The Anatomy of National Fantasy: Hawthorne, Utopia, and Everyday Life* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), *The Queen of American Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), and *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004); Jillmarie Murphy, *Attachment: Place, and Otherness in Nineteenth-Century American Literature: New Materialist Representations* (New York: Routledge, 2018); and Peter Coviello, *Intimacy in America: Dreams of Affiliation in Antebellum Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005). In Berlant’s *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City*, she offers a theory of the “infantile citizen” who bases his or her “faith in the nation” in “a belief in the state’s commitment to representing the best interests

and continuous relationship” with part of its citizenry, but instead displays “erratic changes in behavior” that cause the “fear, uncertainty, and emotional turmoil” characteristic of “disorganized or disoriented attachment”?<sup>51</sup>

Black America’s attachment to the nation is not “mutually sustaining.” As Mathew Towns’ experience dramatizes, it creates a constant state of affective “turmoil” characterized by fear and uncertainty. Hence Mathew shifts from being “a wooden automaton with no feelings [or] wishes” to being “a quivering bundle of protests, nerves—a great oath of revolt” (67). Mathew’s shifts in feeling correspond to the novel’s generic shifts between realism and romance.

These shifts, like Mathew’s attachment to the US, are disorienting, and so have confounded critics and readers alike. Arnold Rampersad calls *Dark Princess* a “queer combination of outright propaganda and Arabian tale, of social realism and quaint romance.”<sup>52</sup> Rampersad argues that *Dark Princess*’s generic shifts reveal the novel’s tension between its secular and sacred ambitions, and Tate claims that the romance’s eroticism undermines “the novel’s social objectives.”<sup>53</sup> Brent Hayes Edwards argues, in turn, that the novel’s “generic ambivalence” undoes “readerly expectations.”<sup>54</sup> Commenting on these continued debates on the novel’s generic status, Dohra Ahmad concludes that, while critical responses “tend to be split between those put off by the novel’s mix of registers between realist and romantic, and those who celebrate its turn to

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of ordinary people” (27). This belief, she argues, is “said to be what vitalizes a person’s patriotic and practical attachment to the nation and to other citizens” (28).

<sup>51</sup> Murphy, *Monstrous Kinships*, 15. These terms were coined by Mary Ainsworth, another.

<sup>52</sup> Arnold Rampersad, *The Art of Imagination of W.E.B. Du Bois* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 204.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 217. Claudia Tate, *Psychoanalysis and Black Novels: Desire and the Protocols of Race* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 80.

<sup>54</sup> Edwards, 237.

prophetic messianism,” its generic unruliness is “too deliberate to be ignored.”<sup>55</sup> Ahmad links Du Bois’ deliberate shifts between realism and romance to the novel’s three primary locales: Chicago, the US South, and India. She contends that Du Bois renders India with “the decadent, otherworldly Orientalism of Baudelaire and other figures of the romanticist Oriental romance,” the US South “as the hazy agrarian motherland” familiar to readers of the Harlem Renaissance, and Chicago with “the hard realist mode reminiscent of Theodore Dreiser and Upton Sinclair.”<sup>56</sup> Like Ahmad, I argue that Du Bois deliberately shifts between literary modes that he links to particular locales. Moving from a focus on the importance of geography itself, I argue that both realism and romance, as they are tied to persons and places, function as models for alternative types of attachment and therefore alternate possibilities for affective life.

What kinds of affect transmission and affective transparency do these genres and their attendant spaces produce or impede? Can romance cure the affective self-alienation Mathew suffers in the social-realist realm of Chicago, a place he considers “the center of the world’s sin” and thus the place he remains strangely attached to (284)? To what extent does the novel’s and Mathew’s final embrace of the terms of romance allow Du Bois to forego his difficult attachment to the US and achieve his utopic vision of full affective transparency as the goal of politics?

Social realism tends to be regional in scale, and rarely moves beyond national boundaries. Its concerns are local and often deeply embedded in place. At least this is the case for *fin de siècle* and early twentieth-century American realist novels. Romance, in

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<sup>55</sup> Dohra Ahmad, “‘More than Romance’: Genre and Geography in *Dark Princess*,” *ELH* 69.3 (Fall 2002): 775-803, 775.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 776.



contrast, ripples outward to the unknown in its ability to imagine alternate forms of attachment to place and to possible futures. Each of these modes similarly corresponds to registers of feeling.

As a response to nineteenth-century sentimental novels, realist writers rejected overt representations of excess feeling. Realist authors were quite skeptical about “idealized emotional connections,” which were a hallmark of sentimental writing.<sup>57</sup> Lauren Berlant notes that sentimentalist writers aimed to reduce social differences by creating a “fantasy of national feeling.”<sup>58</sup> Through scenes of heightened emotional pain, a sympathetic exchange would occur between characters and readers. Consider how Harriet Beecher Stowe intends her depictions of Eliza Harris and Eva St. Clare’s heightened emotions in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* to teach readers not only how to feel right, but in fact to feel with her characters.<sup>59</sup> In this sense, sentimental writing aims for an affective transparency that transmits from character to reader in order to reshape feeling at the national scale. When realist writers refused the sentimental mode and its political ambitions, they also refused “many of its basic beliefs in emotional clarity and in bodily transparency.”<sup>60</sup> Melanie V. Dawson argues, however, that realist writers nonetheless “took up emotional subjects obsessively” and that they sought “representational strategies that reimagined emotion’s work, absent an idealism about emotion’s ability to perform

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<sup>57</sup> Melanie V. Dawson, *Emotional Reinventions: Realist-Era Representations Beyond Sympathy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015), 26-27. Glenn Hendler argues, as well, that realists rebelled against sympathy’s “fantasy of experiential equivalence” (7). *Public Sentiments: Structures of Feeling in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

<sup>58</sup> Lauren Berlant, “Poor Eliza,” *American Literature* 70.3 (1998): 641, 646.

<sup>59</sup> Frances Ellen Watkins Harper’s 1854 poem, “The Slave Auction” clearly challenges white sentimental writer’s belief that they had access to or could understand the pain of others. As Hendler states, Harper’s poem “bluntly admonishes white readers” that “they cannot truly ‘know’ the emotional specificity of the slave’s suffering” (7).

<sup>60</sup> Dawson, 13.

transformations.”<sup>61</sup> The social realist portions of *Dark Princess* reflect the “emotional obsessiveness” Dawson attributes to literary realism. But the novel’s heightened attention to emotion in the realist mode centers on the ways social environments impede Mathew’s ability to feel, as well as his blocked desire to express his feelings transparently to others. When working as a Pullman Porter, for instance, he becomes “the wooden automaton that his job required”: outwardly, “he ha[s] no feelings, no wishes,” was “accurate and deferential.” He hides completely the internal “oaths of revolt” that arise in moments when his affects, briefly, rear up (67). His deadened affects, produced in situations of sustained affective turmoil, suggests that realism reproduces the affective constraints that Du Bois’ thinks artistic propaganda must work to undo. The novel’s realism thus critiques realism itself.

Romance, in contrast, functions more like sentimental modes of writing in that “the reader’s investment must be one of identification and recognition.”<sup>62</sup> Unlike sentimental writing, though, it relies on a different affective register. Northrop Frye contends that romance is “the structural core of all fiction: being directly descended from folktale, it brings us closer than any other aspect of literature to the sense of fiction, considered as a whole, as the epic of the creature, man’s vision of his own life as a quest.”<sup>63</sup> Romance gets at mankind’s most fundamental needs and desires. Duncan A. Lucas therefore argues that, “in terms of emotion, romance represents what humans want” and ultimately works “to maximize[e] positive affects.”<sup>64</sup> When it comes to

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Duncan A. Lucas, *Affect Theory, Genre, and the Example of Tragedy: Dreams We Learn* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018) 76.

<sup>63</sup> Northrop Frye, *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 15.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 79. Lucas compellingly reads genre alongside Silvan Tomkins’s theory of “affect scripts.” He argues that romance “deals predominantly with what Tomkins calls the affluent scripts of the affects

characterization, the romance “embodies a society’s central values in the hero’s actions.”<sup>65</sup> In this case, romance seems perfectly suited to Du Bois’ mission. If he aims to secure “black folks’ right to love and enjoy,” then Mathew’s journey towards “love and enjoyment” does not get in the way of the novel’s politics—politics generally associated with social realism—but rather serves that function. Similarly, if the “hero’s actions” embody society’s “central values,” then the novel feeds this value through Mathew’s final conjugal union with Kautilya, but also through the form itself. Finally, if romance, as Lucas argues, “represents what humans want,” then Mathew’s drive toward transparent, shared affect is not just a fortunate consequence of meeting and uniting with Kautilya, but the precondition of their union.<sup>66</sup>

While the tension between realism and romance remains important to *Dark Princess*’ conflicting affective register, by ending the novel in the romantic mode, Du Bois suggests his allegiance primarily lies with this form and its attendant affects. The form’s affect is catching, not in the manner of white sentimentalists who exploit black emotional suffering, but in its vision of Mathew’s and Kautilya’s love and joy

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interest-excitement and enjoyment-joy” (11). In this way, the genre’s affect script aligns with Du Bois’ commitment to love and enjoyment.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>66</sup> However, in constructing a “romance” with its origins in folklore and mythology around a union with an “Indian Princess,” Du Bois reifies troubling notions of the brown female Other. Along these lines, Weinbaum argues in “Interracial Romance and Black Internationalism” that “Although the international interracialism of the novel dictates that the Princess be cast as India, as racially distinct from Mathew—after all, she must bring the entire continent of Asia into their union—it is also important that she be associated with the fecundity and spiritually transcendent blackness represented by Mathew’s formally enslaved mother, an All-Mother’ [...] Through identification with Mathew’s mother, Kautilya’s own imminent maternity becomes global and ancient, racially specific and transcendent.” (111-112) Physically, the Princess also represents Mathew’s “orientalist” desire “for foreign intimacy” (111). Weinbaum explains further that Du Bois fully develops his term “All Mother” in “The Damnation of Woman,” where he “paints an unapologetically orientalist portrait of the black mother as the lifegiving goddess of the entire world capable of rescuing black women from historical occlusion, scorn, and racist stereotype” (footnote 20, 121). For more on Du Bois, India, and the troubling gender and racial politics posed by his representation of the Princess, see Admed, “More than Romance,” and Arnold’s Rampersad’s “Du Bois’s Passage to India,” in *W.E.B. Du Bois: On Race and Culture*, edited by Bernard W. Bell, Emily R. Grosholz, and James B. Steward, 161-176 (New York: Routledge, 1996).

transmitting throughout and transforming the globe. The realist sections, however, remain in place as an impediment to this dreamlike possibility. They serve, as well, as a warning of the kinds of affective veils, internal blocks, and emotional turmoil engendered by being black in America. These barriers to transparent affect call to mind the internal divisions within the racial uplift movement itself, and, in doing so, suggest the movement was fighting its internalization of the emotional turmoil characteristic of “disorganized, disoriented” attachment styles.

## II. “Discomfort of Soul”: Realism’s Affective Unrest

While Mathew Towns’ “affective persona” is often at odds with his environment, he is nonetheless highly susceptible to affective environments.<sup>67</sup> Despite this tendency, he does have an underlying, stable “affective persona,” or at least an idealized version of his own emotional life. He suppresses his distinctive affective persona when it does not match the environments in which he finds himself attached. Especially attuned to affective atmospheres given his highly sensitive nature, Mathew absorbs feeling almost against his will. As he becomes attached to a particular way of being in the world—one defined by a social protest movement, for instance—he attempts to adopt the appropriate affective persona. When in the service of the blood-thirsty revolutionary, Perigua—Du Bois’ Marcus Garvey parody—he mirrors Perigua’s rage while trying to ignore “the horror, the infamy, the flaming pain of the thing!” (85). The “thing” entails blowing up the train carrying Ku Klux Klan leaders and members, who recently lynched his friend

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<sup>67</sup> Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 7. While she dismantles the notion that subjects are self-contained and therefore entirely separate from the environment, she argues that we “are all of us at least somewhat distinctive in persona and phenotypically unique, as well as proprioceptive, even when our thinking and emotional responses are resolutely similar [...] The persistence of affect in a given individual raises the question of endogenous affects, as distinct from transmitted and transitory affects” (7-8). She argues further that “there is a personal affective history made up of objects and fantasies, and this leads us to expect continuity in affective disposition” (8).

and fellow porter, Jimmie. Mathew's own feelings, as demonstrated in this moment, revolt against such affective usurping. As such, while working in Chicago as a politician or while working as a Pullman porter, he feels an intense "discomfort of soul" equivalent to the incongruity of realism and romance (149). With a soul bent on romance and sympathetic connection, Mathew may succeed outwardly; inwardly, he struggles against realism's affective demands. In a state of constant affective turmoil, Mathew reveals the novel's pull between pragmatist national politics and idealist global dreams. The first seeks to destroy his feeling, and, in this seeking, nearly destroys Mathew's capacity to feel beyond national boundaries and to experience fulfilling affective communion. Mathew cannot independently transmit his feeling outward to transform the national and global political stage. He first needs a form of attachment, to persons and a conducive social and aesthetic environment, that facilitates interpersonal affect transmission. Personal happiness, in *Dark Princess*, puts global revolution in the realm of the possible.

Affect transmission occurs from the moment a subject comes into existence and interacts with others. While a person may have a relatively stable affective persona, or a continuous affective disposition, as Teresa Brennan argues, this does not mean that we are "self-contained in terms of our energies." "There is no secure distinction between the 'individual' and the 'environment,'" she writes.<sup>68</sup> Brennan is particularly invested in the transmission of affect and energy "between and among human subjects." Simply put, the transmission of affect means that "the emotions or affects of one person, and the enhancing or depressing energies these affects entail, can enter into another."<sup>69</sup> Brennan argues that there are two forms of affect transmission between persons: one in which

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 3.

“people become alike,” and one in which “they take up opposing positions in relation to a common affective thread.”<sup>70</sup> Tellingly, the novel’s two romances, between Mathew and Kautilya, and Mathew and Sara (whom he marries while in Chicago), follow along these two forms of affect transmission. Mathew meets Kautilya first, but his imprisonment as well as her role in the world movement keeps them apart. When he meets Sara, he is in a depressive state, and feels very little—for himself or for her. While he does not marry Sara not out of love, he still initially hopes their marriage might offer him some sense of pleasure and peacefulness. The first romance, the coupling of Mathew and Kautilya, offers Mathew mutual fulfilment. In contrast, his second romantic entanglement, with Sara, causes internal as well as external opposition. With his body, mind, and feelings revolting against his decisions to give up his dreams of Kautilya as well as world emancipation, Mathew absorbs affects that stall the novel’s political and affective goals.

Mathew and Sara’s marriage is not a marriage of true minds, and certainly not a marriage of complementary affective personas. Mathew meets Sara Andrews after she witnesses his sentencing for refusing to give up the names of those who planned the train bombing he ultimately derailed after he learned, just in time, that Kautilya was also a train passenger. Sara sees in Mathew a political opportunity: a “self-sacrificing hero, [who] now looms as a race hero” (116). After convincing her employer, Sammy Scott, who, along with Sara herself, stands in for the crooked and seedy world of black Chicago politics, that they should arrange Mathew’s pardon and release, Sara puts Mathew to work. As she tells Sammy, with Mathew by his side, he can soon “own black Chicago” (116). Dazed by his release, Mathew complies, beginning by speaking to a crowd of

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 9.

Chicago's "black dignitaries" along with the city's mayor, congressmen, a flurry of reporters, venerable clergymen, and a whole host of varied audience members who have between them "every conceivable color of skin glow[ing] and reflect[ing] beneath the glare of electricity" (121). In much the same way that Hopkins' Dianthe Lusk captures and heightens the feelings of the audience when performing with the Fisk Jubilee Singers, Mathew moves his listeners. Rather than solely communicating the pain of African American history, Mathew's story works its way into each listener's personal history. As an "everyman figure," he functions, at least in this moment, as a mirror for accentuating and heightening the experiences of others. Indeed, he is the kind of romantic hero that, as Frye argued, represents "man's vision of his own life." Beginning with his birth in Virginia, Mathew proceeds to tell of "his boyhood and youth; of his father and mother; of the cabin and his farm" rather than the repeating the speech Sara carefully prepared (122). As they listen to the tale of his "student days, of his work and struggles, of the medical school and prizes, of his dreams," the audience sits "in strained silence, craned forward, scarcely breathing." Mathew's "twice-told human tale that touched every one of them, that they knew by heart, that they had lived through each in its thousand variations" works "unconsciously to its perfect climax (123-4). Affectively fulfilled, the audience embraces Mathew, and, by turn, Sammy Scott. Only Sara remains unmoved. She, it seems, is impervious to the affects his story transmits to the audience; as a character who refuses sympathetic connection, she proves unreceptive to affect transmission.

Nonetheless, she recognizes that he serves as a potentially powerful political tool, if an unpredictable one she will have to deploy with especial care. This kind of care, or, rather,

control, extends from her political aspirations to her marriage, to her self-image, to her own feelings.

Where Mathew feels too much and too easily, or so the narrator and the novel's characters state, Sara feels too little. From her curated appearance, which gives the "impression of cleanliness, order, cold, clean hardness, and unusual efficiency," to her reserved manner, to her "good intellect" devoid of morals, she manages to construct herself and the world to fit her own aspirations (109, 114). She sees politics as the means to an end—not the good of the race, but her own wealth, social status, and security. Without "scruple or conscious," Sara "casually accepts "lying, stealing, bribery, gambling, prostitution"; she can "lie through a typewriter in so adroit a way that it sounded better than the truth and was legally fireproof" (112). To Sammy Scott, then, she is the ideal partner, even though she refuses to be his wife. Adept as she is in such tactics, Sara's affects do not align with Mathew's own. She matches his desire for transparency with her power for subterfuge, her willingness to perform affective deception. By the time they are married, Mathew no longer maintains any illusions as to their affective compatibility, or his ability to transform her feelings to more closely match his own. Sara becomes "unendurable" because "she lacked the human element, the human sympathy." While he recognizes that she has "virtues," he feels that she is "too hard, too selfish, too utterly unscrupulous" (192-3). Without "human sympathy," Sara proves an impenetrable obstacle to his fantasy of affective communion. Sara, for her own part, finds Mathew "curiously weak and sensitive." To one who becomes "furious" and "ashamed" if "sympathy or sorrow seeped through her armor," Mathew is an entirely unsuitable



romantic partner, and, as she comes to learn to her own personally devastating effects, an uncontrollably political tool.

Mathew's and Sara's opposing feeling styles pose the greatest problem to either character's personal and political aspirations. Indeed, Mathew would not have acquiesced to Sara's machinations had he not already been affectively suppressed. Having failed in his political ambitions, having lost his dream of uniting with Kautilya, Mathew languishes in prison. He soon matches his affective state to the prison environment, which weakens him physically and emotionally. In jail, he "let his spirit die" and becomes "one with the great gray walls, the dim iron gratings, the thud, thud, thud which was the round of life, which *was* life." Feeling that the "seal of crime was on him," was grinding "down deep in his soul," he attempts to want "nothing," remember "nothing," and when he does remember Kautilya, associated here with sensual images—"the trailing glory of a cloudlike garment, the music of a voice, the kissing of a drooping, jeweled hand"—he "murder[s] the memory" (125). Thus living in an environment that helps him "murder" his feelings for Kautilya, Mathew has been affectively altered, at least temporarily, to accept Sara's offer and the world into which she invites him. Still, memories of Kautilya fight their way into his consciousness. He tries to suppress "flights," "dreams," and "foolishness." But this effort makes him feel "restless and dissatisfied" until he realizes that "the dream, the woman, was back in his soul" (136). Again, as when imprisoned, he "tries to kill" his memories of Kautilya and their "vision of world work." As he contemplates how to "fill that void," he remembers "an almost forgotten engagement" and soon finds himself "having tea in Sara's flat" (137). "Tea in Sara's flat" takes him out of the dream realm of world work and international romance. It

eases his unrest. He becomes calm, and alters his aspirations from the global to the local and domestic. In calm, collected, and immaculate Sara, he thinks he can find “a wife to stop his restless longing—this inarticulate Thing in his soul” (138). Mathew recognizes in Sara an opportunity to sublimate his lofty, romantic ideals. He imagines that, in marrying her, he can permanently alter his affective persona. Marriage, he thinks, will stop “secret longings and wild open revolt.” He would become “safe, settled quiet; with all the furies at rest, calm, satisfied; a reader of old books, a listener to sad and quiet music, a sleeper” (138). In other words, he thinks he can replace his old vision with a new one—one that is sedate, peaceful, but still, in its quiet enjoyment, satisfying because it quiets his soul’s desire to revolt. He thinks, as well, that he and Sara will experience a “calm communion of souls” with which they will go “hand in hand into the world” (138). Sara, of course, has other ideas. From the moment of their wedding, when she warns Mathew not to disturb her veil when he attempts to embrace her, their desires clash. Rather than curing Mathew’s restive soul, marriage only increases Mathew’s affective discomfort.

While Mathew’s “discomfort of the soul” blocks his desire to engage in emancipatory politics, his discomfort evidences his continued internal revolt against unfulfilling forms of attachment—romantic and national. Mathew’s affective persona, which consistently resists the cold world in which Sara traffics, aligns with that of the political revolutionary. Having a “revolutionary consciousness” means “feeling at odds with the world.”<sup>71</sup> To the extent he feels negative affects in the spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually draining realist environment and relationship, he resists its stultifying force, often against his will. Realism, in this case, attempts to contain revolution and its

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<sup>71</sup> Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* 168.

affects. Amy Kaplan maintains, for example, that realists construct “a cohesive social world to contain the threats of social change.”<sup>72</sup> Realist Sara tries, like Kaplan’s realist author, to “contain threats of social change” by containing Mathew’s affects. She needs to reign in his desires for love, for beauty, for soul communion. Even within the space of their home, she seeks to manage the environment so that it might transmit its atmosphere to Mathew. For instance, when he brings in a painting depicting a woman’s “long and naked body” done “with a flame of color,” a painting that speaks to him “of endless strife, of fire and beauty and never-dying flesh,” Sara promptly replaces it with “a big landscape” that “better suits the place and has a finer frame” (143). Similarly, though he dreams of a log-burning fireplace, an “obsession” because it means “home” to him,” Sara installs an electric log. Burning wood, she states, is “dirty and dangerous.” Mathew proceeds to “hate” with a “perfect hatred” their sterile home with its sterile atmosphere (143). Indeed, despite sharing “the closest of intimacies,” Mathew and Sara remain “unacquainted strangers.” They do not share “body, mind, and soul,” are not “a complete blending” (152). As with Sara’s refusal to hang his lavish, erotic painting and burn real wood in their home and so contain Mathew’s feelings to better match her own desires, Mathew finds that marriage “arrests” love’s “growth instead of stimulating it” (145). In the simplest terms, Mathew wants to live in a vibrant, sensual, passionate world and, in this world, to share a perfect and beautiful communion with another soul. But he, like his painting, does not “suit the place.” As a romantic character in a realist milieu, Mathew’s desires, feelings, and aesthetic sensibilities contradict those of the environment.

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<sup>72</sup> Amy Kaplan, *The Social Construction of American Realism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 12.

Mathew's desire for a such a world eats away at the novel's realist aesthetics and affects. Realism, I contend, does not align with Du Bois' artistic propaganda, aimed as it is to gain "the right of black folk to love and enjoy." At the same time as Du Bois critiqued social realism, Locke pushed for social realism as the dominant mode of black writing and performance. Locke also criticized black writers of the Harlem Renaissance whose art was contaminated by what he called the previous generation's "morbid amount of decadent aestheticism." The "task of the younger generation," he argued, was "to approach the home scene and the folk with [a] high seriousness" free from the spectacular and the melodramatic.<sup>73</sup> While Locke argued that "we need more informative and less escapist literature and art," Du Bois shows the limits of social realism.<sup>74</sup> In *Dark Princess*, social realism limits rather than expands opportunities for love and enjoyment. Yet, despite its incompatibility with Du Bois' politics, realism serves his aims by putting romantic and realist affects into stark relief. As realism clashes with romance, it demonstrates that the desire for "loving and enjoying" is the prerequisite to radical politics. The negative affects produced by this clash, in turn, show that the environment does not win over such powerful desire, straining out from within Mathew's soul. "Estranged" from "the world as it has been given," Sara Ahmed argues, the revolutionary "cannot adjust to the world":

As a structure of feeling, alienation is an intense burning presence; it is a feeling that takes place before others, from who one is alienated, and can feel like a weight that holds you down and keeps you apart. You shift, drop your head, sweat, feel edgy and uncertain. You are no longer well-adjusted [...] The revolutionary is an affect alien in this specific sense.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Alain Locke, "God Save Reality: A Retrospective Review of the Literature of the Negro for 1936." *Opportunity* 15 (January-February 1937): 8-13, 40-44, 9.

<sup>74</sup> Alain Locke, "Dry Fields in Green Pastures: A Retrospective Review of Literature and Art for 1939." *Opportunity* 13 (1940): 4-10, 4.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 168-9.

Du Bois positions Mathew as such an “affect alien.” He does not “flow,” he is “stressed,” he experiences “the world as a form or resistance in coming to resist the world.” His “bad feelings,” as with Ahmed’s “revolutionary consciousness,” are “creative responses to histories that are unfinished.”<sup>76</sup> Mathew, in this sense, embodies the conflict between the world against which Du Bois rails and the “love and enjoyment” he desires, as expressed in “Criteria of Negro Art.” He therefore cannot be satisfied in any environment and relationship in which he can neither love nor enjoy. Conscious that he is an “affect alien”—he knows that Sammy and Sara suspect him of “mawkish sentimentality” despite his effort to “bur[y] all sentiment down, down, deep down” (141)—Mathew eventually begins to carve out a world that better suits his revolutionary ideals, and that, in the process, unburies his sentiment.

Until reuniting with Kautilya, however, his revolutionary efforts are small, domestic, self-contained and containing. Furnishing his bachelor apartment, which he kept even after he married Sara, with beautiful art and furniture, Mathew creates a refuge where his affect does not alienate him from his environment. He is not reshaping the world, but rather creating a tiny, private grain of a world that seems closed to him forever. His small act of rebellion sets in motion a chain of rebellions. Soon after creating his “retreat,” he resigns from the legislature, upsetting all of Sara’s political machinations. Getting out of Sara’s grasp, which had firmly entrapped him in local politics, foreshadows the renewal of his global politics, a shift that only seems possible with an accompanying shift in affect. Indeed, early into his relationship with Sara, he turns down an invitation to serve as black America’s chairman to the “Great Council” of

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 217.

the “Darker Peoples” (151). At the beginning of the novel, Mathew fought to prove that black America was ready and qualified to join this movement. Now, he tells its emissary, the “Japanese statesmen” who appeals to him, that black America has “little interest in foreign affairs.” When “The Japanese,” who is never given a name, reminds Mathew that he once claimed that “American Negroes and other oppressed nations of the world might sensibly forward the uplift and emancipation of the darker peoples,” Mathew calls it a “false and misleading” dream. “We have nothing in common with other peoples,” he tells him, and therefore do not look “for help beyond our borders” (150). Outwardly, Mathew exudes coldness and confidence. Inwardly, he cannot account for his words. He knows they stem from his resentment towards this man who “wrecked the world” by impeding his relationship with Kautilya. Because Mathew now feels that “life” itself is “a great, immovable, terrible thing,” he cannot accept any version of the world that allows life to evolve (126). Without Kautilya, the world, as he knows and allows it to exist, does not move. Constricted by his involvement in local and formal politics, stagnated by affective conflict, Mathew too remains isolated, fixed in place and time. Without affective communion, Mathew cannot rise to romance’s expansive boundaries and radical potential. As long as realism retains its primacy, the novel too stagnates. In depicting the real, it forecloses the possible.

*Dark Princess* is not the only one of Du Bois’ fictional works in which losing romantic ideals gets in the way of racial revolution by disrupting affective communion. In his novel *The Quest of the Silver Fleece* (1911) as well as the short stories “The Comet” and “The Princess of the Hither Isles,” both of which appear in his 1920 collection *Darkwater: Voices within the Veil*, Du Bois also depicts romance as the means to

politics.<sup>77</sup> The “couple,” Elam and Taylor argue, “becomes the central trope and vehicle for social change” as early as *The Quest of the Silver Fleece*. *The Quest*, they contend, anticipates “the political nuptials” of *Dark Princess*.<sup>78</sup> In “The Comet,” the interracial couple who survive the apocalypse must become “the new Adam and Eve if the human race is to survive.”<sup>79</sup> In brief, “The Comet” tells the tale of a black man, Jim, and a white woman, Julia, who, until the end of the story, think that they are the sole survivors of a comet. When they realize that the fate of humanity’s existence lies with them, they overcome the race prejudice that would otherwise separate them. In the process, they experience an intense psychic union. Their potential physical union is thus more than “lust” or “love”; it is “some vaster, mightier thing that needed neither touch of body nor thrill of soul. It was a thought divine, splendid.”<sup>80</sup> For a long, potentially eternal moment, they are “face to face—eye to eye,” with “naked” “souls.”<sup>81</sup> Jim and Julia here experience a transformational intersubjectivity. As they are about to consummate their physical union, however, Julia’s father and boyfriend suddenly appear. The thwarted couple never meets eyes again. Unsurprisingly, Julia’s white boyfriend and father both assume that Jim

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<sup>77</sup> “The Princess of Hither Isles,” which I do not address at any length here, is a fantastical allegory of interracial love, sacrifice, failure. For a good reading of this text as well as “The Comet,” see Ryan Schneider, “Sex and the Race of Man: Imagining Interracial Relationships in W.E.B. Du Bois’s *Dark Water*,” *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory* 59.2 (Summer 2003): 59-80. There, Schneider contends that “these stories merit greater study not only for the fact that they stretch social boundaries and violate taboos, but also because, in the process, they establish their own specifically gendered limits as to who may participate in interracial liaisons, in what way and under what conditions.” They suggest as well, he argues, that “Du Bois’s otherwise enlightened, progressive vision of black-white relations is based on a restricted notion of black female agency” (60). These short stories also merit further study, I argue, because they evidence Du Bois’ interest in genre fiction. For more on his genre fiction, see Adrienne Brown and Britt Rusert’s “Introduction” to an unpublished Du Bois short story, “The Princess Steel,” *PMLA* 130.3 (2015): 819-829.

<sup>78</sup> Elam and Taylor, 223.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> Du Bois, “The Comet.” In *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil*, by W.E.B. Du Bois, 253-274 (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Howe, 1920), 270.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

was about to rape her. Julia prevents Jim from being lynched when she declares that he saved her. Despite avoiding a lynching, “The Comet” still ends in tragedy. As more survivors emerge from the rubble, Jim reaches into his pocket and pulls out “a baby’s filmy cap.” He gazes into the distance, his baby’s “cap” in hand. Then, without his noticing, a “brown, small, and toil-torn woman” enters the scene holding “the corpse of a dark baby.” When her eyes “fall on the colored man,” she “totter[s] toward him” with a “cry.” Hearing his name, Jim turns and, with a “sob of joy,” catches her in his arms.<sup>82</sup> Jim’s “sob of joy” suggests he has not yet realized that the child in her arms, whose cap he holds in his hands, has not survived. The story’s abrupt end leaves the reader to imagine the scene of grief that will follow. Rather than regenerating the world, realism reinstates interracial divides and African American loss.

While in “The Comet” contemporary reality separates the couple, in *Dark Princess* Du Bois allows his international “lovers” to be “architects of social change.”<sup>83</sup> But such a development only occurs in *Dark Princess* with a shift in genre from realism to romance—the kind of romance that combines Du Bois’ political, aesthetic, and affective ideals. In *Dark Princess*, Du Bois lets revolutionary romance—the communion of souls and bodies—survive. In a letter to one of his sources on Chicago—he carefully researched Chicago in hopes of maintaining representational accuracy—Du Bois stated that he needed to “work in enough realism to make my message clear.”<sup>84</sup> Du Bois’ realism clarifies that racial uplifters must choose romance and the affective possibilities it

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 273.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 224.

<sup>84</sup> Du Bois to Mrs. William C. Kenyon, 3 May 1934; and Du Bois to Carl D. Thompson, 17 November 1927, both cited in Aptheker’s introduction, 13, 15. For further details on Du Bois’ research for *Dark Princess*, see Ahmad.



opens for the individual and for the world. Indeed, Ahmad argues that Du Bois ultimately “unwrites the very realism which he himself worked so hard to construct.”<sup>85</sup> “The Comet” ends by reasserting realist limitations and thus shutting down world-altering affective communion. In contrast, *Dark Princess* pushes forward beyond such limits through its articulation of affective release and transparency. Not only do its characters realize an unbounded erotic relationship, but, by the end of the novel, *Dark Princess* also succeeds in pushing its social realist aesthetics and affective limitations out of the way. Its seething, simmering affects overwhelm its affective stagnation, a stagnation associated with formal national politics, closed borders, and racial isolation.

### III. “Twined Bodies” and “Flaming Hearts”: Affect Transmission and World Politics

Where realism stagnates progress and blocks shared feeling, romance propels the plot and opens the way for an energizing, radical form of affect transmission. Romance represents a coming together of archetypes that can model an intersubjectivity—intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual—that expands rather than contracts the novel’s political ambitions. This kind of expansion begins when Mathew’s affects become less environmentally and personally constricted. The novel cannot expand its political or affective parameters as long as its hero remains mired in local politics, fixed in place, or affectively stuck. Moreover, given Du Bois’ frustration with conflicts between racial uplifters, his idealized version of racial politics must be free from such conflict, particularly as it pertains to his affective aims. Hence, when Mathew struggles against Sammy and Sara’s politics of deception, an affective-masking for political and

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<sup>85</sup> 799.

personal gain, the novel suggests its goal lies in affectively-transparent relationships and political practice. Affect transparency, for Du Bois, heightens affect. Thus, as the novel transitions from realism to romance when “The Chicago Politician” comes to a sudden end, its affective register alters dramatically. The extreme contrast between *Dark Princess*’ realist and romantic affective registers exaggerates both affective possibilities: affective masking, conflict, “discomfort of the soul”; or, affect transparency, shared joy, and soul “communion.” The novel’s romantic register captures Mathew and Kautilya’s shared feelings of love, longing, desire, pleasure, and shamelessness. The novel’s prose, simultaneously, becomes increasingly luxurious and heady. *Dark Princess* expresses these feelings—at once physiological and emotional—in its lovers’ conversation, touch, physical proximity, and through the sensation that each recognizes and mirrors the other’s affects. This sensation is new for Kautilya, as it is for Mathew. Like Mathew, she too previously suppressed her affects while longing for the kind of love they now share. Indeed, when she once decided to let her “heart look unveiled” into the eyes of a previous suitor, she discovered him with another lover and learned that he only courted her for her “throne” and “fortune” (239). Until Mathew and Kautilya come together in the romance genre, both characters struggle to find an ideal romantic partner: a partner with whom they may safely “unveil” their affects. For Du Bois, only the romance’s affective register can produce the necessary conditions for world-wide racial revolution.

In 1886, William Dean Howells argued that the romance of the early nineteenth-century and the realism of “today” “are in a certain degree the same. Romance then sought, as realism in his time did, to widen the bounds of sympathy, to level every barrier

against aesthetic freedom, to escape from the paralysis of tradition.”<sup>86</sup> Howells was later “castigated beyond his deserts by the generation that emerged after 1920,” the period in which Du Bois wrote *Dark Princess*. George Joseph Becker claims that the younger generation of realist writers criticized Howells not just because he failed to adequately define realist aesthetics, but because his own novels “fail[ed] to convey the basic sense of blind, impersonal force which is the mark of the great realistic novels.”<sup>87</sup> Howells and the new generation of writers were clearly at odds when it came to realist ideals and aesthetics. “Blind, impersonal force,” quite simply, does not imply a “widen[ing] of sympathy” or a capacity to “level barriers to aesthetic freedom.” *Dark Princess* implies that Du Bois did not concur with Howells that realism could accomplish the aesthetic and affective work of he believed it capable. High realism of the 1920s, of which Becker speaks, obstructs feeling by emitting a “blind, impersonal force.” Du Bois uses realism, then, in order to demonstrate the ways personal desire and revolutionary political aims conflict with high realist aesthetics.

Du Bois’ artistic propaganda aims to “widen sympathy” not in the sense of evoking pity, support, or encouragement, but rather in the sense of creating fellow feeling, a harmonious accord between persons, politics, and the joyous world affective accord might bring into being. I highlight these conflicting views on realism’s affective capacity to emphasize the affective difference between the novel’s two couplings: Mathew and Sara, restricted to realism, and Mathew and Kautilya, who infiltrate a

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<sup>86</sup> William Dean Howells, “The Editor’s Study” Columns, May 1886 [Realism and Romance]. Reprinted in the appendix to *An Imperative Duty*, by William Dean Howells, edited by Paul R. Petrie, 171 (Toronto: Broadview Editions, 2010), 171.

<sup>87</sup> George Joseph Becker, editor to *Documents of Modern Literary Realism* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1963), 130.

realism that blossoms into romance.<sup>88</sup> That is, the full shift into realism does not take place until Kautilya enters Chicago to rescue Mathew. She provides an energetic force that alters the novel's affective register and literary mode.

When he reunites with Kautilya and rejects the cold, calculating, and cynical world of Chicago politics, Mathew's passion returns in full force. As problematic and essentializing as the novel's gender (and orientalist) politics are, Kautilya serves as a conduit to another way of being in the world, one that answers the "inarticulate longing" in Mathew's soul (138). The feeling that has been buried, or "caught" painfully in his "throat," rises out to meet Kautilya's own passionate intensity (62, 151). Finding Mathew soulless in Chicago, Kautilya claims him as her own: "I have sought you," she tells him, "in the depths of hell, to bring your dead faith back to the stars; and now you are mine" (210). Mathew and Kautilya subsequently experience a "quivering, tense," and "awful happiness" in which their souls reach out to meet with equal feeling (227). All veils fall away. Together, they dream and plan. "The mission of the darker peoples [black, brown, and yellow]," Mathew tells Kautilya, "is to raise out of their pain, slavery, and humiliation, a beacon to guide manhood to health and happiness" (257). Lit with the eternal "fire" of their "twined bodies" and "flaming hearts," Mathew and Kautilya eventually give birth to a world movement and its leader (259).

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<sup>88</sup> While I do not address either Du Bois' problematic racial essentialism or heteronormativity in *Dark Princess*, I do want to acknowledge that they need to be accounted for. As Alys Eve Weinbaum argues, Du Bois' interracial couplings and use of the romance genre had: "unintended consequence": each time Du Bois turned to romance/Romance, he made recourse to a highly troubling heterosexual logic of narrative resolution particular to the genre. As a result, he all too often created unanalyzed, racially essentialist representations of reproductive heterosexuality as the motor of black belonging in both the nation and world" (101) Alys Eve Weinbaum, "Interracial Romance and Black Internationalism." In *Next to the Color Line: Gender, Sexuality, and W.E.B. Du Bois*, edited by Susan Gillman and Alys Eve Weinbaum, 96-123 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

Creating the novel's world movement takes interpersonal energy—erotic, emotional, and intellectual. Therefore, it requires a relationship that generates energy rather than one that diminishes it. Early in their reunion, Mathew and Kautilya recoup their scattered and formally suppressed energy. With concentrated intensity, they bring feeling to the surface, creating an affective union powerful enough to energize their political vision. Brennan's work on affect is helpful here as it illuminates Du Bois' own affective aims. Brennan explains that "affects have an energetic dimension," which is why affect transmission can "enhance or deplete" the subject. Affects "enhance" when they are "projected outward, when one is relieved of them." They deplete, in contrast, when "they are introjected," when one has to "carry the affective burden of another." Yet "the other's feelings can also enhance. Affection does this." Indeed, affection creates a feeling of "warmth" because it enhances energetically.<sup>89</sup> Projecting his feelings outward to Kautilya, and introjecting her shared feeling, "warms" Mathew. As hyperbolic and overly-romantic as Kautilya seems when she tells Mathew that their "twined bodies" and "twined hearts" ignite "fire," her statement shows that sensual and emotional communion create political and personal energy. For Du Bois, this kind of energetic fuel only seems to ignite when affective personas match up.

As a genre, romance aims to maximize "the positive affects of interest-excitement and enjoyment-joy."<sup>90</sup> Aesthetically, it produces an energy-enhancing affect transmission. It situates an imagined world-to-be as the object to which such transmitted affects must be directed. Because "all things are possible" in romance, the world its

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<sup>89</sup> 6.

<sup>90</sup> Lucas, 79.

characters imagine and work towards becomes possible.<sup>91</sup> The desire to recreate a more hospitable world—one in which the characters can “create an existence”—allows them to send “happy objects forth, creating lines and pathways in their trail, as if we might find happiness by following these paths.”<sup>92</sup> If we consider *Dark Princess* one such “happy object” Du Bois “sends forth,” then we might consider the “lines and pathways” it creates. It serves, in this sense, as an example of how the novel might formally transmit affective energy to readers who might then create their own pathways towards a potentially boundless future—for the novel attempts to do away with boundaries between nations as well as bodies and souls.

Within the novel, Mathew and Kautilya’s future-oriented desire creates a present affective intensity that transcends the national and racial limitations to their union. Their personal happiness both precedes their politics and makes that politics possible by affectively-sustaining both characters’ world vision. Mathew’s interest in Kautilya is, first, sensual. The first time he sees her, her beauty arrests him. Feeling “utterly, terribly, lonesome” after exiling himself from the nation, he internally rages against the US while sitting in a Berlin cafe. Into this melancholy scene, Kautilya appears on the page and before his vision: “—he saw the Princess” (8). With the em dash that suddenly and completely disrupts his loneliness, the text signals Kautilya’s ability to interrupt negative affect. With her entrance, she transforms melancholy into rejuvenating desire. The narrative tells us that “many many times in after years [Mathew] tried to catch and rebuild that first wildly beautiful phantasy that the girl’s face stirred in him.” From the first, he feels certain that “no human being could be quite as beautiful as she looked to

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>92</sup> Ahmed, 166, 160.

him,” and the memory of her beauty continues not only to sustain him, but to “thrill” and “revive” him (8). Eventually, he comes to be “thrilled and revived” by more than just her physical beauty.<sup>93</sup> Each soul seems to recognize their match in the other. Their affective union exceeds all the barriers the novel places before them. Despite having been kept apart by his marriage to Sara, by the Japanese emissary of the world movement who blocked their letters, and by Bwodpur’s ministers, they still find each other. Just as suddenly as Kautilya first appeared in the novel, their reunion in Chicago miraculously interrupts the scene of Sara’s political enterprise when she finds “two figures, twined as one, in close and quivering embrace” (206). Their embrace signals Mathew’s and the novel’s idealization and movement toward “harmony”: “ideal beauty, fitness of curve and line” (207). Such harmony creates boundlessness because it exceeds the most basic of boundaries, the subject itself. Offering Mathew “courage,” Kautilya declares that they are eternally “one wedded soul” that not even death can “part” (259).

What Elam and Taylor call Du Bois’ “ethical erotica” refuses the limitations of racial propriety and celebrates, in its stead, physical pleasure as a vehicle for affective and spiritual union.<sup>94</sup> As Mathew acknowledges after he and Kautilya retreat to his

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<sup>93</sup> Nonetheless, her beauty, too, matters to Du Bois’ political and aesthetic sensibilities. In “Of Beauty and Death,” Du Bois writes that “Beauty is fulfilment. It satisfies. It is always new and strange.” It helps compensate, as well, for “human ill and bitter hurt” (247). See Du Bois, “Of Beauty and Death.” In *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil*, by W.E.B. Du Bois, 221-248 (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Howe, 1920). Susan Gillman and Alys Eve Weinbaum write that Du Bois suggests that “the beautiful renders the oppressive tolerable through juxtaposition, for stark contrast breaks up harsh reality and reveals the possibility of struggle, even in the face of death” (32). Susan Gillman and Alys Eve Weinbaum, “Introduction: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Politics of Juxtaposition,” introduction to *Next to the Color Line: Gender, Sexuality, and W.E.B. Du Bois*, edited by Susan Gillman and Alys Eve Weinbaum, 1-34 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007). For a reading of how beauty operates in *Dark Princess*, see Elizabeth M. Sheehan, ““This Great Work of the Creation of Beauty”: Imagining Internationalism in W.E.B. Du Bois’s *Dark Princess* and Black Beauty Culture.” *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 62.3 (Fall 2016): 412-443.

<sup>94</sup> Mathew self-consciously acknowledges how he has defied the politics of respectability, telling Kautilya that “I am anathema to my people. I am the Sunday school example of one who has sold his soul to the devil. I am painted as punished with common labor for following lust and desecrating the home. People

apartment, by publicly leaving his wife and entering a sexual relationship with another woman while still married, he shames himself and his race more broadly. But he and the novel choose an ethics of erotic fulfilment over the politics of respectability. While married to Sara, Mathew was puzzled by the fact that their physical intimacy left them “strangers.” Sara refused, on principle, the sympathy Kautilya embodies. Kautilya offers not just her body, but, in doing so, her whole person, her future, and the world itself. In the “lusty indulgence and purple prose”<sup>95</sup> characteristic of Mathew and Kautilya’s scenes and the many letters they exchange (towards the end of the novel, a large chunk evolves into the epistolary form), Du Bois indulges in a sensual fantasy that creates a harmonious blending of bodies, feelings, and souls.

*Dark Princess* gave Du Bois a vehicle for imagining a world without respectability politics, without limitations to pleasure, and a world in which God ordains pleasure itself as something divine and productive. Reflecting on their relationship, Kautilya contemplates whether their feelings arose from “the physical urge of sex between us.” Regardless of its sexual basis, Kautilya acknowledges that “the magnificent fact of our love remains” (259). It “rises,” she tells him, “from the ecstasy of our bodies to the communion of saints, the resurrection of the spirit, and the exquisite crucifixion of Christ.” Their love “is the greatest thing in our world” (260). Such love is not lusty indulgence at the expense of the race or world progress. In fact, Kautilya states that she would not love Mathew if he did not “signify and typify to me this world and all the burning of worlds beyond, the souls of all the living, the dead and of them that are to be.

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who recognize me all but spit on the street.” Yet, as he acknowledges, he “followed” his “love and idealization” of her at “every cost” to save himself from being “sunk beneath hell” (263).

<sup>95</sup> Edwards, 134.



Because of this I love you, you alone.” Her love, though seemingly bound by the world and her sense that Mathew embodies all its possibilities, still cannot be limited by time or place. She tells him, “I would love you if there were no world. I shall love you when the world is not” (261). Their sexual union, though sinful in the eyes of man and shameful to the black middle class, seems to Kautilya “a high marriage with God alone as priest” (260). Like Christ, they give their lives and souls to holy work.

As early as 1893, Du Bois determined that personal happiness and enjoyment would not get in the way of racial progress. Racial progress, in turn, meant “the best development of the world,” as he declared in a journal entry on his twenty-fifth birthday. As Hazel V. Carby notes, Du Bois decided then that “the commitment he undertook did not require him to set aside the interests of self-desire and ambition.”<sup>96</sup> More than “ambition,” the fulfilment of “self-desire” seems to be what ultimately satisfied Du Bois, or, rather, what made his endeavor for racial progress worth the effort. At the conclusion of *Dusk of Dawn*, Du Bois reflects on the many joys he has experienced throughout his lifetime. He writes:

I am especially glad of the divine gift of laughter; it has made the world human and lovable, despite all its pain and wrong. I am glad that the partial Puritanism of my upbringing has never made me afraid of life. I have lived completely, testing every normal appetite, feasting, on sunset, sea and hill, and enjoying wine, women, and song. I have seen the face of beauty from the Grand Canyon to the great Wall of China; from the Alps to Lake Baikal from the African bush to the Venus of Milo.<sup>97</sup>

Much like Du Bois, Mathew and Kautilya “test every normal appetite,” enjoy “feasting,” and generally tasting the world’s beauty. Their enjoyment of life’s many beauties helps

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<sup>96</sup> Hazel V. Carby, “The Souls of Black Men.” In *Next to the Color Line: Gender, Sexuality, and W.E.B. Du Bois*, edited by Susan Gillman and Alys Eve Weinbaum, 234-268 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 234.

<sup>97</sup> Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 162.

them feel the beauty of world work. In *Dark Princess*, then, Du Bois defies the dominant ethos of uplift literature and culture. He does away with its politics of respectability, which certainly did not permit such luxurious testing of “every normal appetite.” The racial uplift movement’s respectability politics set clear restrictions on acceptable behavior and types of enjoyment, gender and sexuality norms, and permissible affective expression. At the same time, through Mathew and Kautilya’s political efforts towards world emancipation, *Dark Princess* maintains the racial uplift movement’s ethos of collective progress. For Du Bois, these two ideas do not have to be separate. Thus, Mathew and Kautilya experience their world work as a pleasure similar to that they feel in their sexual and affective union. They model their vision of the world after their own romantic ideal. This ideal depends on a secure form of attachment in which they “feel valued, understood, and accepted,” and so develop “a sense of self-respect and self-esteem that helps guide [their] behaviors and feelings in ways that are self-affirming.”<sup>98</sup>

In the case of *Dark Princess*, Mathew and Kautilya affirm their intersubjectivity through their joint investment in pleasure. Tate helps account for the way Du Bois applies the principles of “Criteria of Negro Art” to *Dark Princess*. Arguing that Du Bois himself “seems to have experienced the emotional effort of laboring for racial uplift like the pleasure of libidinal satisfaction,” she proposes the following equation: “propaganda=art=erotic desire; the goal of propaganda=freedom=erotic consummation.” This equation, she claims, appears “again and again in Du Bois’ writings.”<sup>99</sup> Tate contends that the novel’s eroticism overwhelms its politics, for his propaganda ends in

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<sup>98</sup> Murphy, 15.

<sup>99</sup> Tate, “Race and Desire,” 155.

eroticism rather than in political change.<sup>100</sup> I argue, however, that, to the extent that its erotic union “signifies and typifies,” as Mathew himself to Kautilya, “this world and all the burning of worlds beyond, the souls of all the living, the dead and of them that are to be,” *Dark Princess*’ politics *are* erotic. The novel’s eroticism cannot overwhelm its politics because its politics can only come to fruition through erotic fulfillment. Its eroticism, too, is as much spiritual and affective as it is sexual. Du Bois makes the world a place of unbounded love and enjoyment even as it is also full of “pain and wrong.” More specifically, Du Bois secures the novel’s attachment to its world vision by sustaining that vision through a potentially-transformational love. The union of the lovers, according to the novel’s logic, should transform the world. Mathew and Kautilya’s son, as Kautilya predicts in the novel’s final pages, will lead the world’s global affective revolution. While the novel guarantees this change, it cannot be realized within its pages. Rather than being motivated primarily by the world’s “pain and wrong,” Mathew and Kautilya’s world movement takes energy from an unlimited ethical eroticism centered in love and enjoyment.

This is not to say that the novel ignores the world’s “pain and wrong,” but only that Du Bois resists re-inscribing his ideal world-movement with only negative affects and insecure forms of attachment. It needs to be fueled by passionate intensity. Karl Marx argued that “passion is the essential force of man energetically bent on its object.”<sup>101</sup> Mathew’s own passion seems to operate much as in Marx’s definition. The more passionate Mathew becomes, the more he works towards his primary object—a world

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 192.

<sup>101</sup> Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (New York: International Publications, 1964), 182.

movement. Alternately, the more he feels that his environment and relationships dampen his passion, the less energy he directs towards his object. Such passion may come, of course, from “suffering,” but Du Bois implies passion has greater force when it comes from joy.

The moments in which *Dark Princess*’ movement to emancipate “the darker peoples of the world” seems most possible to its characters comes during heightened scenes of sensual and affective experience. At the same time, his world-vision is far more abstract than the world of US politics, racial and national. Mathew and Kautilya’s dreamlike interactions create a sort of hazy, thick atmosphere through which they re-envision the world in large, sweeping vistas rather than concrete reality. This haze, epitomized in the novel’s most languorous and dreamy passages, keeps their world secure. They only plan together after lying in Mathew’s apartment, which, cocoon-like, serves as a place of safety, psychic preparation, and affective evolution. The novel’s final section, “The Maharaja of Bwodpur,” begins with one such passage:

The rain was falling steadily. One could hear its roar and drip and splash upon the roof. All the world was still. Kautilya listened dreamily. There was a sense of warmth and luxury about her. Her tired body rested on soft rugs that yielded beneath her and lay gently in every curve and crevice of her body. She heard the low music of the rain, above, and the crimson, yellow, and gold of a blazing fire threw its long shadows all along the walls and ceilings. The shadows turned happily and secretly, revealing and hiding the wild hues of a great picture, the reflections of a mirror, the flowers and figures on the wall [...] Her head lifted; slowly, noiselessly, with infinite tenderness, she stretched her arms toward Mathew, till his head slipped down upon her shoulder. Then, on great, slow, crimson islands of dream, the world floated away, the rain sang; and she slept again. (217)

Out of this warm, dream-like, languorous, soft, yielding, intimate, and tender atmosphere comes an equally unreal and idealist vision. The novel’s political discourse is harsh, minutely-detailed and carefully depicted when Mathew is engaged in local and national

politics. It now expands and becomes vaguer, less grounded in depictions of reality and more invested in fantastical possibility.

Similarly, the novel's world-vision feels most at risk whenever Mathew's and Kautilya's connection feels weakened. After Kautilya leaves Mathew in Chicago, having convinced him they must sacrifice their love, in physical form, for the sake of the world's future, Mathew struggles to conceive of that future or a plan to achieve it. He needs the energy that comes from "the rubbing of a kindred soul—the answering flash of another pole" (272). Without being able to "rub" his soul against Kautilya's, Mathew starts to wonder whether she forced him to surrender their love because he somehow "disappointed her," or even more painful, because she has finally "unconsciously" adopted "some borrowed, strained, and seeping prejudice from the dead white world, that made her in her inner soul and at the touch, shrink from intimate contact with a man of his race; and perhaps without quite realizing it, they had faced the end and she had seen life and love and dreams die" (273). Without feeling that their love is secure, and without being able to transparently share his affects, Mathew becomes susceptible to doubt.

American racial feeling disrupts the novel's global ambitions. Critics have long been invested in Du Bois' internationalist politics. *Dark Princess*, as perhaps his most insistent fictional representation of these politics, also resists its international scope by retaining an attachment to the US, or, if not a conscious attachment, a refusal to move past its affective boundaries. Against his will, Mathew lets shame of America's race prejudice get in the way of communion with Kautilya. The novel has provided some precedent for this fear. Kautilya admits as much to Mathew when she tells him that, throughout the many meetings held by the "Committee of Darker Peoples," the

committee had remained strongly opposed to including black America. They thought, she explains to Mathew, “of Negroes only as slaves and half-men, and were afraid to risk their cooperation” (247). America also gets in the way of Kautilya’s feelings for Mathew. She recalls arriving in the US, and, “in the new intensity of my thinking, I forgot you as a physical fact. You remained only as a spirit which I recognized as part of me and part of the universe” (248). America’s racial history and politics remain an obstacle to global belonging and ethical eroticism. Forgetting Mathew “as a physical fact,” Kautilya periodically becomes absorbed in the US. In these moments, she deprives both of engaging in ethical eroticism on behalf of the world.

More than anything else, the novel dreams of forging connection between “the colored people of the world.” The US South becomes the locus from which to work towards global connection, even against its own hero’s wishes. As it turns out, American racial feeling brings the couple back together. Kautilya, after leaving Mathew to potentially return to Bwodpur, marry, and serve as her country’s queen, eventually reveals that she has been taking refuge in rural Virginia and has been living in his childhood home with his mother. In a rapid series of letters, Mathew and Kautilya debate strategies for uplifting the world’s darker peoples. The novel suggests their mission’s most pressing starting point—and sticking point—is place. Mathew thinks they must situate their home base in Chicago, “the center of the world’s sin,” where they can “kill the thing America stands for” and so “emancipate the world” (285). Mathew believes that Chicago “is the epitome of America.” It is “the American world and the modern world, and the worst of it.” More than any other place in the nation, Chicago embodies the way Americans have become “caught up in our own machinery”: greedy, rude, angry, without

“delicacy” of “feeling” or of manner, “starved in culture” while “rich in food and clothes.” In Chicago, “Justice” and “Courtesy” have died, and beauty, salvation, and God are nowhere to be found (285). Kautilya, for her part, refuses both Mathew’s belief that they must “kill” America and that Chicago serves as the ideal location for their movement. She argues for the US South as the central location for their world work. In Virginia with his mother, she finds “space apart and in quiet to think and hearken and decide.” Surrounded by beautiful, peaceful scenery—she writes of trees, wind, rain, rivers, the “symphony of the brook,” a landscape of “black earth around [her] breathing fancy”—she feels certain that the US South is the gateway to the world. Tracing her “geography” to Latin America in the south, to Africa in the east, and “east of east,” her “own Asia,” she finds multiple roads through which to transform the world (278). More importantly, perhaps, she finds in the American South a sentiment strong enough to affectively transform the world.

Mathew, however, recognizes the insecurity of living in a place he knows as a “breeder of slaves and hate.” The prospect of returning South makes him “shudder,” for he knows the “horror” which her “dear eyes are not yet focused to see and which the blindness of my old mother forgets.” “There is evil all about you,” he writes: “Down yonder lurk mob and rape and rope and faggot. Ignorance is King and Hate is High Prime Minister. Men are tyrants or slaves. Women are dolls or sluts. Industry is lying, and government is stealing.” He thus concludes that the land which she would make the center of the world is “literally accursed with the blood and pain of three hundred years of slavery,” and so would infect their world movement with its affective poison (279). Yet, because Mathew cannot surrender his love for Kautilya, her love of the South brings

him back. Once there, he learns that she has given birth to their son, their “Love Incarnate” (308), who will lead the world after growing up in a land where slavery’s affects still permeate the atmosphere.

The novel’s impulse towards the harmonious exchange of shared feeling thus paradoxically brings it to a close in the place that created Du Bois’ “veil” in the first place. In the days and weeks leading up to Mathew’s return, he and Kautilya are at odds—each expressing feeling the other refuses to share. Their affective discord in fact begins to enervate Mathew, who once again turns inward, back into a self-contained version of himself. Feeling that they grow “farther apart in spirit” (284), he has to resist the belief that saving “his own soul” may be enough (287). As he suppresses, too, the notion that Kautilya may have found “him and his people” “wanting,” he struggles to remain committed to a global political vision. He needs Kautilya to assure him that they “are not so far apart,” and are in fact “veiling the same truth with words.” Only then can he again believe that he and Kautilya “say, feel, want, and want with want fiercer than death” the same thing (295). With this belief in tact, Mathew reopens the possibility of intersubjective, boundless connection to Kautilya and to the world. When they finally reunite and he falls “sobbing” on the ground before her, he sees that she is princess “of the wide, wide world!” (308) and that his vision, and indeed his affects, can therefore be equally expansive.

Despite the novel’s glorious messianic end, it ultimately cannot escape a US racial structure of feeling that produces an insecure form of attachment and “emotional turmoil.” Reading *Dark Princess* alongside Hopkins’ *Of One Blood*, Tate believes that both authors maintain hope in a future that will be wrought, for Hopkins, from



providential will, and for Du Bois, from “human rather than divine agency.” Their shared messianic vision, she contends, “allowed them both to hold onto optimism even though it was tainted with continued disappointment.”<sup>102</sup> As I’ve argued in the previous chapter, Hopkins becomes quite pessimistic about the future, and *Of One Blood* is therefore far less optimistic than it may appear. Du Bois’ continued prominence as a racial leader, even as that prominence waned through the 1920s, may have fed his continued attachment to the US. At the time he wrote the novel, he also may not have believed that he had another home to claim. And, like Kautilya, he wanted to manifest his own ideal US “with a want fiercer than death.” Kautilya’s insistence on situating the movement to “emancipate the world” in the US South therefore registers Du Bois’ affective relationship to the nation. It registers, as well, *Dark Princess*’ refusal to imagine a form of world-revolution that did not hold onto black national belonging in the process. The “soft, brown” world of the American South, which caused Mathew so much homesickness when he first exiled himself from US, continually exerts its pull. As Mathew explains to Kautilya and the other members of the coalition during their initial meeting, his “soul” is “black,” as was his grandfather’s (19). For Mathew, “black blood” is “a matter of spirit and not simply of flesh,” and so his American blackness is part of his being he cannot leave behind, despite feeling the need to physically leave the nation itself (19). While arguing with the coalition about internal racial hierarchies, which place Africans and African Americans in the lowest rung, Mathew feels “his blood rush to his face.” This flush does not come from shame, but from love and pride in his homeland, family, and black American culture. Throwing back his head, he sings “the Great Song,”

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<sup>102</sup> Tate, “Race and Desire,” 190.

“Go Down Moses,” which his father used to sing “in the old log church by the river, leading the moaning singers in the Great Song of Emancipation” (25). Through his singing, Mathew breaks “the tension,” and instills in his listeners, at least temporarily, the belief that “America is teaching the world one thing and only one thing of real value”: “that ability and capacity for culture is not the hereditary monopoly of a few, but the widespread possibility for the majority of mankind if they only have a decent chance in life” (55). The US South, at least in *Dark Princess*, offers Du Bois the best chance for emancipation—but only as long as it imaginatively serves as a site—spiritual, affective, and erotic—for changing the world.

IV. “Which is really Truth—Fact or Fancy?”: Neither Uplift nor Renaissance

In 1933, Du Bois and Joel Spingarn arranged a second meeting of the Amenia Conference. In *Dusk of Dawn*, Du Bois recalled that the 1916 Amenia Conference was “epoch-making.”<sup>103</sup> The situation in 1933, however, was less hospital. Where in 1916 Du Bois felt a clear sense that he was part of a collective “racial uplift movement,” at the time of the second Amenia Conference, he sensed that the race’s leaders were “mentally whirling in a sea of inconclusive discussion.” The 1916 Conference ended in a spirit of hopeful accord and with a set agenda. In 1933, the attendees “could not really reach agreement as a group.” The sensation that they are “mentally whirling in a sea” of “inconclusive world discussion” implies that they could not find the affective harmony that so overjoyed Du Bois and the Spingarns in 1916. In failing to reproduce the joyful affective atmosphere of the previous conference, it could not eliminate affective boundaries between race leaders.

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<sup>103</sup> Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 150.

*Dark Princess*' desire for intersubjectivity, however, demonstrates the extent to which his novel hinges on the affect management characteristic of racial uplift well past the movement's political and literary decline. In 1926, the same year as Du Bois' "Criteria of Negro Art," Langston Hughes wrote his own manifesto for African American writers, artists, and performers, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain." As one the foremost poets of the Harlem Renaissance, Hughes is an example of what Locke termed the "New Negro," one who rebelled against the old leadership of the racial uplift movement. While Hughes pays homage to Du Bois in "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" by calling him the race's "finest writer of prose" until Jean Toomer in *Cane* (1923), he nonetheless uses this essay to mark a crucial shift in African American aesthetics, especially as this aesthetics relates to affect. He ends his essay by declaring:

We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear of shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too. The tom-tom laughs and the tom-tom cries. If the colored people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either. We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves.<sup>104</sup>

Hughes not only draws a line between the older and younger generations of African American artists, but, in doing, so, also states that this younger generation claims individual autonomy and refuses to be held accountable to the affective needs of others. "Free within [them]selves," the "younger" artists feel no need to "please" white people. They have no interest in their pleasure or displeasure; they do not attempt to create a sympathetic identification that could transcend the affective boundaries that continue to

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<sup>104</sup> Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain." *The Nation* 122.318 (June 23 1926). In *The Portable Harlem Renaissance Reader*, edited by David Levering Lewis, 91-95 (New York: Penguin Books, 1994), 94, 95.

exist between the races. They do not care, either, whether they “please” or displease black readers. Hughes proudly states that his generation writes only for the joy of expressing their own individual selves “without fear or shame.” As the at-best lukewarm reception *Dark Princess* received during the Harlem Renaissance suggests, the Harlem Renaissance had no place for what it deemed Du Bois’ fantasy of shared feeling.

In contrast to Hughes, Du Bois maintained that black art is necessarily part of the work of racial progress rather than simply a manifestation of black self-expression. He argues in “Criteria of Negro Art,” then, that “until the art of the black folk compels recognition they will not be rated as human.”<sup>105</sup> Art’s fundamental purpose, here, is to create mutual recognition. Unlike individual expression, which need only “please” the artist, successful artistic propaganda will, like the relationship between Mathew and Kautilya, facilitate affective intersubjectivity. Working “shameless[ly]” for a politics of “love and enjoyment,” Du Bois aimed his art outward. The affective dimensions of love necessarily imply a move from self to other. Within Freudian psychoanalysis, for example, “love is ever-present as an affective bond, which is crucial to the formation of subjectivity, sociality, and even civilization.”<sup>106</sup> Thus, where Hughes’ and the Harlem Renaissance’s affective aims centered on the individual, Du Bois retained racial uplift novelists’ investment in creating shared affective bonds and freeing African Americans from the movement’s affect management.

At the same time, Du Bois also shared the Pan-Africanist interests of many of his Harlem Renaissance peers, including those of Marcus Garvey. Here, too, he found himself at odds. Garvey promised to “build up in Africa a government of our own, big

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<sup>105</sup> Du Bois, “Criteria of Negro Art,” 297.

<sup>106</sup> Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 125.

enough and strong enough to protect Africa and Negroes everywhere.”<sup>107</sup> With his creation of the Universal Negro Improvement Association in 1914 and the Black Star Line in 1919, Garvey roused the sentiments of the African American masses in a way Du Bois never could. Inspired by Garvey, African Americans throughout the nation prepared to leave the US for Africa. Unlike Garvey, whose Zionism “meant a return to a homeland,” Du Bois’ was “a spiritual rather than a geographical idea—a ‘nation’ that consisted primarily of a transhistorical consciousness outside the property of the literal black body.”<sup>108</sup> Within *Dark Princess*, there is no real need to leave US national boundaries as long as its characters and its form reject the nation’s and the racial uplift movement’s affective limitations. The geographic move to Africa would, at least as imagined in *Dark Princess*, overemphasize the importance of physical space over its ability to enable spiritual and emotional connection. This connection brings with it love and enjoyment. By 1928, self-desire and sensual pleasure had become a constant in Du Bois’ philosophy and fiction. *Dark Princess* marks the political and aesthetic distance between his writing of the 1910s-1920s and his writing of the early racial uplift movement, which he articulated most clearly in *The Souls of Black Folk* in 1903. Yet, while his philosophy and fiction refuse the dominant ethos of uplift literature and culture, *Dark Princess* demonstrates that he still remained entangled in the movement’s complex and contradictory affective parameters. The novel’s ill-fitting affective registers—realism

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<sup>107</sup> Marcus Garvey, *Negro World* (February 12, 1921). In *Voices of a Black Nation: Political Journalism in the Harlem Renaissance*, edited by Theodore G. Vincent (San Francisco: Ramparts Press, 1973), 272-273.

<sup>108</sup> Sundquist, 559.

and romance—evidence its incompatibility with both the Harlem Renaissance and the racial uplift movement.<sup>109</sup>

Du Bois eventually did what *Dark Princess* and the racial uplift movement would not: reject America and US belonging as the horizon of politics. At the end of his life, Du Bois left a nation that he knew did not allow its citizens to share affects freely, that did not allow them to feel “great joys and great sorrows” collectively. In the end, Kwame Anthony Appiah writes, Du Bois’ “love of race and disappointment with America led him to renounce his American citizenship and take up with the new nation of Ghana.”<sup>110</sup> By 1963 he was no longer a US citizen. By becoming a citizen of Ghana, however, he did not belong to the world. He remained bound to a nation and so ultimately could not achieve the global spirit he glorified in *Dark Princess*. At the end of the day, Du Bois believed that the life of the race depended on continually fighting for love and enjoyment. Ideally, this would open the way for global affective communion. While *Dark Princess*’ desire for such an affective revolution—a desire Hopkins articulated over twenty years earlier in *Of One Blood* and which *The Sport of the Gods* and *The Marrow of Tradition* could not yet imagine—is not wrong, it simply does not fit when applied in the US.

Until a global revolution could take place, the form of the novel also functioned as a method for racial survival and self-preservation: “Life has its pain and evil—its bitter disappointments; but I like a good novel and in healthful length of days, there is infinite joy in seeing the Word, the most interesting of continued stories, unfold, even though one

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<sup>109</sup> For a reading of *Dark Princess* in relation to its contemporaneous African American novels, see Amrijit Singh, *Novels of the Harlem Renaissance: Twelve Black Writers, 1923-1933* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976).

<sup>110</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah, Introduction to *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Towards an Autobiography of a Race Concept*, by W.E.B. Du Bois, edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., xxv-xxxii (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), xxvii.

misses THE END.”<sup>111</sup> As the favorite of his books, perhaps *Dark Princess* was one such “good novel” that Du Bois imagined might provide a fleeting glimpse into “infinite joy.” Indeed, *Dark Princess* ends with a beginning, as if he refuses to represent a world in which his own vision can be cut short. While formally registering its emotional turmoil through its social realist passages, the novel surrenders to “infinite joy” with its final surrender to romance. *Dark Princess* thus gets to have a global future and stay in the US. This may be more fanciful wish than potential reality, but *Dark Princess* refuses to invalidate fantasy. Once the “tale is done,” the voice of the frame narrative asserts its own position. It “begs” the “*Queen of Faërie*,” the “*Mauve Majesty*” to whom Du Bois dedicates the novel, “to tell us hard humans: Which is really Truth—Fact or Fancy? The Dream of the Spirit or the Pain of the Bone?”<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 162.

<sup>112</sup> Du Bois, n.p.

## EPILOGUE

## “Free Within Ourselves”: Affective Strategies for Gaining Agency

In 1996, Hortense Spillers espoused a philosophy for “gaining agency” strikingly akin to the intersubjectivity Mathew and Kautilya represent in *Dark Princess*, and which Du Bois indicates occurred in spirit during the 1916 Amenia Conference. Spillers argues that the “arena of the emotionally-charged and discharged” is the arena from which the subject speaks in a “particular” “syntax.”<sup>1</sup> Speaking in this affectively-heightened, transparent syntax, the subject creates a “usable, recognizable social energy” with which it can productively exchange with others. “It is within this intersubjective nexus,” she claims, that “a solution can be worked out.” What she calls “ethical self-knowing” and “self-attention” comes from establishing affective relationships with others.<sup>2</sup> This intersubjective experience, in which one freely and consciously articulates his or her feeling, in turn frees one to attend to the self. Frantz Fanon expresses a similar desire for affective connection and self-knowing. His impulse for connection in many ways mirrors Du Bois’ own. He ends his 1952 *Black Skin, White Masks*—a title that calls to mind the affective masking of Dunbar’s 1906 poem, “We Wear the Mask”—with a call for intersubjectivity. He implores: “why not the quite simple attempt to touch the other, to feel the other, to explain the other to myself?” At the “conclusion of [his] study,” he “want[s] the world to recognize with me, the open door of every consciousness.”<sup>3</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> Hortense J. Spillers, “‘All the Things You Could be by Now, If Sigmund Freud’s Wife Was Your Mother’: Psychoanalysis and Race.” *boundary 2* 2.23 (Autumn 1996): 75-141, 107.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 108-109.

<sup>3</sup> Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, translated by Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 181.



affect-driven work in which uplift writers such as Chesnutt, Dunbar, Hopkins, and Du Bois engage clears the way for such recognition.

While key scholars of the affective turn, such as Sianne Ngai, Lauren Berlant, and Sara Ahmed, have attended to the relationship between critical race studies and affect theory, much crucial work remains undone. “Blushing Bitterly” has so far attempted to start bridging the divide between affect theory and studies of African American life and racialization in the US. In a recent article on the “unthinkability” of black affect, Tyrone S. Palmer argues that “Affect theory as an academic discourse has yet to substantially account for the problematic of blackness, the particular affective dispositions that emerge in reaction to processes of racialization and racial subjugation, or the ways in which affect serves as an exploitable tool of racial domination and anti-blackness.”<sup>4</sup> Part of this critical blindspot, I think, stems from a long history of African American affect management. Drawing on Claudia Rankine’s representations of black opacity in *Citizen: An American Lyric* (2014), Palmer claims that while “strategic opacity often serves as a crucial, invaluable function as a means of survival and psychic self-protection, of getting by in a world that mandates your destruction, often what is made opaque—Black interiority, feelings, desires—already *cannot be thought* within the onto-epistemological order of the Human-as-Man.”<sup>5</sup> I agree with Palmer on the unthinkability of black affect within the Western ontology of the Human. Yet “strategic opacity” may not be the right term for black affective strategies for survival, at least when applied to *fin de siècle* African American life. In the era of racial uplift, the blankness opacity suggests likely

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<sup>4</sup> Tyrone S. Palmer, “‘What Feels More Than Feeling?’: Theorizing the Unthinkability of Black Affect,” *Critical Ethnic Studies* 3.2 (Fall 2017): 31-56, 35.

<sup>5</sup> 41.

would have proved dangerous, as well as antithetical to the race's collective uplift endeavors. In the process of managing affect—that is, of suppressing some affects while amplifying others—the black subject must show some kind of feeling. The problem, then, becomes: which feelings are “real”? How to know what the other feels? In what ways might the subject lose access to his or her own unmanaged feelings? And how do these obstacles to reading and experiencing affects make the racialized subject/race feel unfree?

The authors in “Blushing Bitterly” who push against and reproduce the (black) cultural pressure to sublimate, disavow, and repress excess or socially-impermissible affects offer a way into better understanding “the particular affective dispositions that emerge in reaction to processes of racialization and racial subjugation.” At the same time, they reveal the ways affect indeed “serves as an exploitable tool of racial domination and anti-blackness.” Turning from the primarily interracial spaces of racialization to intraracial spaces and discourses through which uplift leaders attempted to manage black life, the novels in this study interrogate the affective conditions of racial life as shaped internally by African American cultural directives. For instance, Thomas Nelson Baker's 1906 essay, “Not Pity but Respect,” argues that it is not the “Jim Crow Car” but the “Jim Crow Negro” that African Americans must destroy.<sup>6</sup> In essence, Baker's argument hinges on a shift in racial affect. Baker certainly wants his race to feel free. But, in determining not only what African Americans should feel, but how precisely they should feel in response to the sociopolitical conditions of Jim Crow, Baker not only minimizes negative racial affects. He chastises and shames African Americans who do not feel according to

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<sup>6</sup> Thomas Nelson Baker, “Not Pity but Respect.” *The Congregationalist and Christian World* XCI.14 (April 7, 1906): 508.

the dictates he determines will best serve the race. Affect does then serve as an “exploitable tool” not just for “racial domination and anti-blackness,” but also as a tool for delimiting black culture from within.

“Blushing Bitterly” therefore suggests that a “particular affective disposition[] that emerges in reaction to processes of racialization and racial subjugation” is one in which the subject’s feelings constantly observed, interrogated, directed, made into a problem, and used in service of others, whether for the race’s collective advancement or for white domination. The struggle for freedom, then, may indeed begin, as Spillers suggests, with self-attention to the “arena of the emotionally-charged and discharged.” This struggle might need to move further from outside observation to delve more deeply into interior attention. This process of attending to one’s own state of feeling is not new, *per se*. Certainly Du Bois’ notion of “double-consciousness” comes from considering what it feels like to see oneself through the eyes of the “other.” Fanon develops Du Bois’ configuration further with his own notion of “triple-consciousness,” in which he feels “responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors.”<sup>7</sup> Fanon, like Du Bois, experiences himself from the outside looking in. After being hailed by a white child’s exclamation, “Look, a Negro!,” Fanon experiences himself become an “object” when what he wants, simply, is to be “a man among other men.” The moment gives him back “his body” “sprawled out, distorted.” The “epidermal schema” of race means that he is “overdetermined from without.” “*Fixed*,” “laid bare,” he experiences a “shame” and “doubt” that makes him ill.<sup>8</sup> In this example, Fanon does quite manage his affects. Rather, he loses full affective agency. His “shame” and “doubt” manifest as a desire his

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<sup>7</sup> 84.

<sup>8</sup> 84-88.

body refuses. He wants to “laugh [him]self to tears, but laughter had become impossible.”<sup>9</sup> Made an object, his body and mind do not respond to his feelings—he cannot express the affects he wants to feel. By the end of *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon refuses the feeling of “fixed[ness]” and articulates the desire to view himself and others freely, from within, without the mask of racialized discourse. In other words, he wants to see himself and others as they alone determine, and, through this kind of altered seeing, to have the freedom to allow his body to show the affects he wants expressed. The kind of subject of which Fanon dreams and works for are not told what and how to feel, but instead asked what they feel and want to feel.

What would it mean to move from trying to manage feeling to attending seriously to the way one feels? How might that shift contribute to the project of becoming free rather than trying to gain citizenship rights and national belonging? Here is where both Spillers and Fanon become particularly helpful. Fanon’s desire to “touch” and “feel” the other, to “explain the other to myself,” pushes against the desire to manage the other, the self, or the race. His desire to affect and be affected by an “open consciousness” refuses internal and exterior boundaries. Such is also the case for Spillers. Their radical openness and connection refuses the either-or dynamics of Baker’s “pity” versus “respect,” or Du Bois’ claim to bitterness versus Booker T. Washington’s disavowal of bitterness. Instead, the impulse to reach out to feel and know the other, and to know the self, functions as inquiry rather than imperative. Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* aligns with Spillers own politics of affective unmasking.

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<sup>9</sup> 84.

Affective unmasking may begin, too, with reclaiming the right to one's own body. In Spillers' seminal essay, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," she argues that slavery constituted a "theft of the body—a willful and violent . . . severing of the captive body from its motive will, its active desire."<sup>10</sup> Following this statement, Spillers makes the now canonical distinction between "body" and "flesh." She writes:

before the 'body' there is the 'flesh,' that zero degree of social conceptualization that does not escape concealment under the brush of discourse [...] Even though the European hegemonies stole bodies . . . we consider this human and social irreparability as high crimes against the flesh, as the person of African females and males registered the wounding. If we think of the 'flesh' as a primary narrative, then we mean its seared, divided, ripped-apartness, riveted to the ship's hole, fallen, or 'escaped' overboard."<sup>11</sup>

The subject feels affect on and in the flesh. A crime against flesh is thus a crime against affect, a violence aimed at destroying the capacity for feeling. Thus, while critical theorists, including many affect theorists, relegate emotion to the mental realm, as they consider emotion the conscious recognition or articulation of a state of feeling without the accompanying physiological sensation, Spillers reminds us that stealing the flesh comprises a theft of feeling—at once somatic and emotional. Hence Baby Suggs, Holy of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) gathers the newly emancipated and encourages them to claim their flesh, their bodies, their organs, their hands and feet and hearts. "We flesh; flesh that weeps, laughs; flesh that dances on bare feet in grass," Baby Suggs tells her congregation. And they must love this "flesh."<sup>12</sup> From this bodily reclamation and self-love comes affective release—men weep, women laugh, children dance. Of this critical scene in *Beloved*, Michelle Stephens writes that Baby Suggs "is not asking them to *see*

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<sup>10</sup> Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics* 17. 2, Culture and Countermemory: the 'American' Connection (Summer 1987): 64-81, 67.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Vintage International, 2004), 103.

themselves differently. Rather, she is asking them to rediscover themselves through a different sense of their bodies.” Stephens emphasizes the importance of the “haptic experience of self” offered here.<sup>13</sup> Morrison’s focus on body also gives the subject, or, more accurately, her characters, agency to feel the physiological and emotional sensations of affect simultaneously, freely, without concern for those who might watch, measure, judge, or attempt to manage.

The shift from managed affect to free feeling would have been revolutionary indeed, given the realities of African American life in the era of Jim Crow and the racial uplift movement. While the novels I examine in this study demonstrate their authors’ desire to formally enact or enable this cultural shift, it is helpful to recall how difficult, dangerous, and idealistic this process/ambition would have been. In *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois spends considerable time describing the bitterness of Northern, educated, and middle-class African Americans. This bitterness is often a response to the subtler forms of racism from which African Americans in the North suffer. The affect management required of black Americans in the South is more visible and more clearly compelled by questions of life and death. “The young Negro of the South who would succeed,” Du Bois explains,

cannot be frank and outspoken, honest and self-assertive, but rather he is daily tempted to be silent and wary, politic and sly; he must flatter and be pleasant, endure petty insults with a smile, shut his eyes to wrong; in too many cases he sees positive personal advantage in deception and lying. His real thoughts, his real aspirations, must be guarded in whispers; he must not criticise, he must not complain. Patience, humility, and adroitness must, in these growing black youth, replace impulse, manliness, and courage. With this sacrifice there is an economic opening, and perhaps peace and some prosperity. Without this there is riot, migration, or crime. Nor is this situation peculiar to the Southern United States,—is it not rather the only method by which undeveloped races have gained the right to share modern culture? *The price of*

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<sup>13</sup> Michelle Ann Stephens, *Skin Acts: Race, Psychoanalysis, and the Black Male Performer* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 2.

*Culture is a Lie.*”<sup>14</sup>

Is that lie upheld through affect management? The answer seems to be yes. More than culture is at stake, here. Life itself depends on managing feeling. Without affect management, “there is riot, migration, or crime.” With affect management, as well, comes the feeling of unfreedom. As in Booker T. Washington’s version of *The Colored American Magazine*, there is no room for complaint or criticism. There is only room for “patience, humility, adroitness.” “Real thoughts, real aspirations,” and the real feelings which undergird them, must be hidden through “deception and lying.” How, in such conditions, does the racialized subject find and claim the “freedom / to feel”?

In his 1964 essay collection, *Shadow and Act*, Ralph Ellison reflects that “the greatest difficulty for a Negro writer was the problem of revealing what he truly felt, rather than serving up what Negroes were supposed to feel, and were encouraged to feel.”<sup>15</sup> This difficulty was certainly even more extreme at the turn of the century. The racial uplift movement attempted to determine, both explicitly and implicitly, “what Negroes were supposed to feel.” The encouragement Ellison notes here was felt more keenly, as an imperative rather than nudge. This project makes no claim that black novels reveal what their writers “truly felt.” These novels nevertheless express the tension between individual feeling and the feeling rules the uplift movement put in place, and in doing so, they offer crucial insight into a study of affect that accounts for the particularity of American racialization.

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<sup>14</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* [1903] (New York: Penguin Classics, 1996), 166-167. Emphasis mine.

<sup>15</sup> Ralph Ellison, *Shadow and Act* (New York: Vintage International, 1995) xxi.

Richard Wright called the African American literary tradition “a tradition of lament [...] a vast reservoir of bitterness and despair and infrequent hope.”<sup>16</sup> Baldwin later stated that in Wright’s novels he found “expressed for the first time in my life, the sorrow, the rage, and the murderous bitterness that was eating up the lives of those around me.”<sup>17</sup> This project has demonstrated that such “murderous bitterness” and other negative affects, even if veiled, appeared in black novels long before Wright came on the literary scene. While “Blushing Bitterly” highlights the importance and liberatory potential that comes from expressing negative affects, authors in this tradition find freedom, too, in expressing affects like joy. Zora Neale Hurston declared in her 1928 essay, “How It Feels to be Colored Me,” that she is not “tragically colored” and does not “belong to the sobbing school of Negrohood.” Hurston does not “weep at the world,” for she is “too busy sharpening her oyster knife.”<sup>18</sup> Or, as Langston Hughes stated in 1926, young black artists were beginning to feel “free within [them]selves,” and so expressed themselves, whether joyously or bitterly, however they liked.

Chesnutt believed there “is no more powerful factor than sentiment in the conduct of human affairs.”<sup>19</sup> Following Chesnutt, this project considers the realm of sentiment a vital starting point for thinking about what it means to be free, and how African American literature and the racial uplift movement itself understand the conditions under which affect can and cannot be freely expressed in relation to the degree of freedom a person or group can claim. What would it mean to be able to blush without also being

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<sup>16</sup> Richard Wright, “The Literature of the Negro of the United States.” In *White Man, Listen!* (New York: Doubleday, 1957), 79.

<sup>17</sup> James Baldwin, *Nobody Knows My Name: More Notes of a Native Son* (New York: Dial Press, 1961), 191.

<sup>18</sup> Zora Neale Hurston, “How It Feels to be Colored Me.” *World Tomorrow* 11 (May 1928): 215-216.

<sup>19</sup> Charles Chesnutt, “Obliterating the Color Line,” *Essays and Speeches*, 171.



bitter? Under what circumstances could one overcome the conditions that make one bitter, rather than hiding bitterness behind a blush? Unmanaging affect through the novel was one way for uplift authors to imagine such a feeling of affective freedom.

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