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SPECIAL ISSUE: FURTHER DIRECTIONS IN WILLIAM JAMES

AND LITERARY STUDIES

Guest Editors: Todd Barosky and Justin Rogers-Cooper

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PERIODICALS

INTRODUCTION TO "FURTHER NEW DIRECTIONS IN JAMES AND LITERARY STUDIES"

TODD BAROSKY AND JUSTIN ROGERS-COOPER

This is the second of two consecutive special issues of *William James Studies* that explore the relationship between the work of William James and the field of literary studies. The five essays collected here reinvigorate established links, such as between James and modernism, and forge new connections between James and literary regionalism, speculative fiction, and working-class literature. The James who emerges in these pages is a dynamic thinker who probes different dimensions of human experience and communicates his discoveries in a language that is both accessible and adaptable. Indeed, James remains a vital presence in literary studies today not merely for the range, originality, and influence of his ideas, but also on account of what Paul Stob terms his unique "discursive posture."[1] As a writer and public speaker, James developed "a rhetorical style capable of animating individuals who stood outside the professional cultures of which [he] was a part."[2] If Stob is chiefly concerned with the "ordinary Americans" and "popular audiences" who bought James's books and thrilled to hear him lecture on psychology, religion, and philosophy, his insight also applies to the contributors to this special issue.[3] They, like many other literary scholars at work today, find in James an inspiration and a guide for formulating new

configurations between literary studies and other fields of intellectual inquiry.

This special issue picks up where the first left off, with further explorations of the links between James and modernism. The opening two essays attend to figures on the fringes of traditional modernist studies and so expand our sense of the scope of James's influence. In the first essay, "It's Not Personal: Modernist Remediations of William James's 'Personal Religion,'" Graham Jensen revisits James's provisional distinction in *Varieties of Religious Experience* between personal and institutional religion to argue, with reference to the poetry of E.J. Pratt, a prominent Canadian modernist, that James inspired a socially-pragmatic approach to religious belief that shaped poetic expressions of personal religion throughout the modernist era. For Pratt, poetry opened a space in which private religious belief could be publicly shared, and so have salutary social effects, without becoming dogmatic or institutionalized. In his study of Pratt's poetry, particularly *Brébeuf and His Brethren* and "The Truant," Jensen urges us to rethink two assumptions about modernist poetry: that it participates in, if it does not actively encourage, secularization; and that it tends toward obscurantism. While both James and Pratt were alive to the shortcomings and distortions of language, both stressed in their written work language's "pragmatic social applications" (148).

Emily Gephart's "Sensation and Suggestion: William James and Sadakichi Hartmann's Symbolist Aesthetics" redirects our conversation into the literature about modernism, seeking connections between James's work and modernist art. She focuses on Sadakichi Hartmann, an art critic who around the turn of the twentieth century published wide-ranging articles in venues such as *McClure's* and *Camera Work* that championed the emergent formal properties of modern art. Gephart makes a compelling case for the affinity between Hartmann and James. First, she reveals how

James's psychological theories permeated the avant garde circles in which Hartmann moved, providing a rigorous foundation for the kinds of aesthetic experimentation that Hartmann espoused. Second, and more specifically, Gephart links James's dynamic accounts of embodied perception and creative consciousness with Hartmann's aesthetic of the "suggestive"—a concept that appears prominently in James's oeuvre. Both Hartmann and James, too, fuse their writing with a literary style that reanimates their expertise for intellectual work beyond art criticism or philosophy. Gephart helps us see Hartmann, like James, as a "literary" author.

Ultimately, we see Hartmann and James as allies in the fight against "vicious intellectualism," which David H. Evans defines as "the imposition of a set of transcendental categories and fixed principles that provided the ultimate definition and foundation of reality. Such an approach," Evans adds, "inevitably sacrifices lived experience to the predetermined limitations of concepts."[4] In his criticism, Hartmann embraced "diversity and divergence" in both lived experience and modernist art; and, like James, he "affirmed the role of progressive modern culture in a heterogeneous democracy" (182).

James's own reflections on the heterogeneity of American democracy during an age of imperial expansion serve as the point of departure for the next essay in this special issue, Cécile Roudeau's "'Like Islands in the Sea': Intermingled Consciousness and the Politics of the Self in Sarah Orne Jewett's Late Stories." Roudeau posits an affinity between James and Sarah Orne Jewett, a regionalist writer best known for her local-color depictions of rural New England life. Reading James's "The Philippine Question" beside two of Jewett's stories, "The Queen's Twin" and "The Foreigner," Roudeau suggests that both writers sought to "psychologize imperialism" (194) by mapping the "cognitive patterns of selfhood in a world turned global" (192). Jewett's stories, Roudeau argues, are best read as Jamesian explorations at the

boundaries of the porous self. If imperialism threatens the integrity of the nineteenth-century liberal self, so too does it make possible for Jewett's characters new kinds of transatlantic communication and social combinations. "There is no point of view absolutely public and universal," James writes in his preface to *Talks to Teachers* (201). In her fiction, Jewett similarly resists a monolithic perspective, preferring to create "experimental spaces" (208) that open investigations into "alternative modalities of the commons" (194).

From rural New England to the planet of Anarras: the next essay traces James's influence within the more obviously "experimental spaces" of twentieth-century speculative fiction. In "'Variations on Theme by William James': Varieties of Religious Experience in the Writing of Ursula K. Le Guin," Amelia Z. Greene draws on original archival work to document Ursula Le Guin's engagement with James, while also suggesting that his description of religious experience in *Varieties* offers a conceptual framework for recognizing the animating impulses of speculative fiction more broadly. The first section of the essay, which shows how Le Guin's short story "The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas" was inspired by James's "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life," reminds us how James's unique discursive posture—his penchant, as Stob puts it, for locating philosophy among the "experiences and perceptions" of "ordinary people"—has repeatedly invited dramatic treatment of his philosophical ideas.[5] In her reading of *The Dispossessed*, Greene argues that Le Guin dramatizes James's conception of "the religious attitude" (223). Her hero, like James's informants in *Varieties*, is moved by powerful beliefs that remain unconfirmed by evidence and seeks new ways to harmonize with the universe. This is, not coincidentally, also the attitude of the writer of speculative fiction: "If we would envision a more ideal way of life, Le Guin contents, we must enter the realm of the unprovable, and proceed as if it might be possible" (232). Thus while Greene's essay

raises questions about science, religion, and epistemology, she is keen to emphasize how, for Le Guin, such questions ultimately also concerned the politics of utopia and the possibilities of new social worlds.

If politics is the art of the possible, then James's pragmatism offers us a powerful tool for charting the horizons of possibility in modern politics. This is the central claim advanced in our final essay, "'Truth Written in Hell-Fire': William James and *The Destruction of Gotham*," by Justin Rogers-Cooper. Arguing that we should not conflate James's personal politics with pragmatism's explanatory power, Rogers-Cooper adopts Joaquin Miller's 1886 sensational gothic novel *The Destruction of Gotham* as a means to test pragmatism's capacity to explain social and political change. Miller's novel carries its readers to an event horizon: the total devastation of New York City by a radicalized working-class insurgency. This apocalyptic event, and historical events like it, from the 1871 Paris Commune to the 1877 General Strike, might not have been countenanced by liberal pragmatists like James. But Rogers-Cooper, through a deft reading of representations of working-class reality in Miller's novel and James's own writing, demonstrates how the shared embodied sensations of hunger, disability, and abjection can result in eruptions of collective violence that are not criminal or irrational, "but pragmatic in the fullest sense of James's term" (272). Pragmatism is not a politics, liberal or otherwise; it is a philosophy that reveals how politics works. Pragmatism accounts for a range of political possibilities, even the most violent and extreme. Rogers-Cooper situates James within his political moment—the cascading crises of nineteenth-century laissez faire capitalism—but his essay might show us just how fully pragmatism can illuminate our own political predicaments as well. For we, too, live at a time when fantasies of urban destruction are de rigueur in popular culture, and when the liberal center seems ready to lose its hold on American politics.

The writers considered in these five essays–Pratt, Hartmann, Jewett, Le Guin, and Miller–have little in common save for their engagement with James; or, more accurately, what they share is James's capacity to engage with them. The divergent interests on display in the two consecutive special issues of *William James Studies* reflect our priorities as guest editors. We have not tried to circumscribe the field, and neither have we sought to engage only with traditional threads of scholarship. Just the opposite: even at the risk of neglecting established literary and critical canons, we have, in this special issue, in particular, endeavored to indicate the essential openness of James to sometimes neglected fields, texts, and authors. We did this because we believe each essay invites new lines of inquiry into James's relationship to literary studies, and because we are confident that they will lead in exciting, and often unanticipated, new directions.

Saint Martin's University
tbarosky@stmartin.edu

LaGuardia Community College, CUNY
jrogers@lagcc.cuny.edu

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NOTES

[1] Stob, *Art of Popular Statement*, xv.
[2] Ibid., xxiii.
[3] Ibid., xiv.
[4] Evans, "Unstiffening All Our Theories," 8.
[5] Stob, *Art of Popular Statement*, xxvii.

IT'S NOT PERSONAL: MODERNIST REMEDIATIONS OF WILLIAM JAMES'S "PERSONAL RELIGION"

GRAHAM JENSEN

This essay examines how James's distinction between "personal" and "institutional" religion in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* informs modernist literature. Specifically, it points to the inescapably social dimensions of "personal" forms of religious experience, demonstrating how modernists such as E.J. Pratt – once Canada's leading poet – extended James's notion of personal religion in relation to his pragmatic philosophy. I place James in conversation with modernists such as Pratt to challenge scholars to consider anew not only the nature of James's literary influence, but the many forms of religious expression that shaped the cultural landscape of the twentieth century.

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While most readers of William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience* are familiar with his unequivocally stated preference for "personal" over "institutional" forms of religion, the apparent antagonism between the private and the public in James's immensely popular text is all too often re-circulated as a kind of précis of his entire book—and understandably so: in order to limit the scope of his study, he announces early on that he would like "to ignore the institutional branch entirely, [. . .] to confine myself as far as I can to personal religion pure and simple."[1] But to distill James's notion of personal religion down to an anti-institutional, solipsistic essence is to risk misunderstanding the seldom-discussed social implications of his philosophy of religion. Even the words "as far as I can" in the passage above foreshadow both James's awareness of the arbitrariness of his separation of "the religious field" into the equally arbitrary categories of the personal and the institutional, and his inevitable failure to confine himself "to personal religion pure and simple."[2] Indeed, as Ulf Zackariasson posits in a 2016 essay on the public dimensions of belief as discussed by notable James scholars such as Richard Rorty, "the private/public-distinction seems much more porous than Rorty seems to think."[3] In the essay that follows, I echo Zackariasson's call for renewed critical consideration of this distinction; however, unlike Zackariasson, I am interested primarily in *Varieties*. More specifically, I am interested in examining how the tension between personal and institutional religion is operative in modernist texts, and how modernists familiar with James's writings might have nuanced or extended his notion of personal religions in relation to his pragmatic philosophy. I address both of these questions below with reference to E.J. Pratt, the ordained Methodist minister and lecturer in psychology who would go on to become "Canada's most influential modern poet."[4]

For good reason, James's influence in literary and particularly modernist circles is frequently summed up with reference to stream of consciousness narration and the shining stars of the Anglo-American modernist firmament.[5] This essay takes James in a new

direction altogether: it places modernist texts in conversation with aspects of *Varieties* – namely its notion of personal religions, and its related concerns about the difficulties of communicating one's personal religion – that have received little attention in literary circles.[6] But this essay also crosses borders, illustrating how James's book caused waves in Canada, and thus pushes the margins of a "New Modernist Studies" whose theoretical expansion in "temporal, spatial, and vertical directions" has not prevented critics from continuing to privilege certain Anglo-American figures and narratives in practice.[7]

Although the following pages focus on Pratt's relation to James, it should be noted that other Canadian modernists – who, in turn, inspired subsequent generations of writers in Canada and beyond – were influenced by *Varieties* long after it was first published: Anne Wilkinson's journal records her run-in with *Varieties* in the summer of 1950,[8] P.K. Page read James alongside Carl Jung, George Gurdjieff, and Idries Shah in the 1960s, and Margaret Avison tells of how her 1963 conversion to Christianity was preceded by her encounter with *Varieties*, which "got her going back to church."[9] Nevertheless, Pratt's illustrious poetic career, which spanned most of the first half of the twentieth century, serves as a more natural – and perhaps more productive – entry point into discussions of James's influence on Canadian literature for at least two key reasons: first, Pratt writes explicitly, at various points, and in greater detail than most Canadian authors, about James's influence on his life and poetry; and second, while Pratt's own anti-institutional religious tendencies appear at times to support the so-called "secularization hypothesis" – according to which modernization inevitably results in secularization – the Christ-centric nature of his personal religious beliefs intimates that modernity and secularity are in fact synonymous only if one adopts a rather limited notion of religion and what religion or religious expression might have looked like, for modernists such as Pratt, in the first half of the twentieth century.[10] Although Pratt's poetry articulates its non-dogmatic and unorthodox affirmations outside of, and occasionally against, more recognizable institutional forms

of religious expression, it is precisely in this respect that it most powerfully anticipates documented shifts in religion in the West – such as religion's accelerated privatization in the years following the Second World War,[11] or the concomitant movement in literature and culture towards non-doctrinal spiritualities and the expression of what Amy Hungerford refers to as a generalized "faith in faith."[12] In other words, Pratt's poetry, which enacts James's distinction between personal and institutional religion, simultaneously adumbrates the complex, plural varieties of personal religious experience that collectively counter dominant narratives of modernity or of literary modernism in which secularity is narrowly defined with recourse only to institutionally informed metrics of religious beliefs and practices.

Like James, Pratt was wary of institutional religion's fixed doctrines and codified rituals. However, Pratt's emphasis in his poetry on personal forms of religious expression did not prevent him from repeatedly acknowledging some of the unavoidably social dimensions of private religious experiences, which I examine throughout this essay. In particular, I provide examples of two ways in which personal religions might be deemed "social." First, drawing on scholars of religion such as Ann Taves and Wayne Proudfoot, I claim that religious experiences are necessarily social insofar as our responses to, and articulations of, these experiences are socialized responses and articulations. Second, I consider personal religion to be social to the extent that private religious experiences or convictions, when translated into words or deeds, have social repercussions – and I suggest a number of ways in which this process of articulation, of communicating one's spiritual insights, may pose linguistic, philosophical, or moral challenges.

As we will see, Pratt shares with James this understanding of the necessarily socialized and socially-oriented nature of genuinely held religious beliefs. Accordingly, after delineating James's influence on Pratt, I turn to Pratt's poetry, arguing that poems such as *Brébeuf and His Brethren* and "The Truant" place James's pragmatic and religious philosophies in tension by dramatizing the

necessity of moving beyond sequestered forms of religious experience and expression in order to effect social and historical change.

In 1923, Pratt, already in his forties, officially launched his poetry career with *Newfoundland Verse*. But it was only after publishing several narrative long poems, including *Titans* and *The Roosevelt and the Antinoe*, that Pratt gained a widespread following. These action-oriented narratives were read internationally and lauded by critics in his own time, quickly securing him a place in the pantheon of modern Canadian poetry; ironically, though, these long poems also seem to have been the reason that, after his death in 1964, many critics have ignored or actively marginalized Pratt – in part because his epic narratives routinely foreground a now-unfashionable fascination with "grand themes," such as bravery in war, sacrifice, and death.[13]

From 1907 until 1917, Pratt maintained his childhood interest in these grand themes as he continued with his formal education in philosophy, theology, and psychology at Victoria College in Toronto. His father had been a Methodist minister in Newfoundland, where Pratt was born and raised, but once Pratt moved to Toronto – after attending Newfoundland's Methodist College and serving as a candidate for the Methodist ministry – he gradually left the pulpit in order to pursue other personal and professional interests, such as poetry and psychology. Although he would remain a lifelong member of the Methodist and later United Church of Canada, he was also deeply curious about spiritualism, attending multiple séances with his wife Viola from 1928 on. Nevertheless, Pratt provided few religious testimonials of the sort that James analyzes in *Varieties*. As a result of his forced participation in "testimony meetings" from the age of ten, Pratt acquired what one biographer calls an "almost neurotic dread of public performance and display," so it is hardly surprising that Pratt later chose to express his beliefs – when he expressed them at all – in writing rather than in front of a congregation.[14] And yet, while the religious sentiments scattered throughout Pratt's poetry typically lack the directness, didactic quality, or hortatory zeal of

his father's fire-and-brimstone sermons, this body of work serves as a textual record of a profound faith, and its publication speaks to Pratt's deeply felt need to give public utterance to that faith on his own terms.

Many of the shifts and apparently contradictory elements of Pratt's personal religion – including his covert interest in spiritualism – can be explained with reference to the writings of one man: William James. Pratt had likely first encountered James during his formative years at Victoria College. Long before Pratt received his doctorate and privately published his first long poem in 1917, James was already a dominant figure in each of Pratt's three areas of study, but perhaps especially in the nascent discipline of psychology, the subject in which Pratt was a lecturer from 1913 to 1920. Many years later, in a letter to John Sutherland, Pratt would explicitly acknowledge his poetry's indebtedness to James: "It is only now in retrospect," he writes, "that I can feel the influence of two works which had to be thoroughly studied – The 'Principles of Psychology' by Wm James, and 'Immediate Experience' by [Wilhelm] Wundt. And I might add a third – James' 'Varieties of Religious Experience' [*sic*]."[15] Although *Varieties* is listed here as if an afterthought, a subsequent letter to Sutherland of 11 August 1952 provides confirmation of that particular book's impact on Pratt's own thinking and poetry. Furthermore, the frequent echoes of James's philosophy in Pratt's *oeuvre* suggest that James's influence was more than retrospective. In letters to Desmond Pacey dated 29 October 1954 and 11 November 1954, Pratt would cite both James and Wundt as two of the intellectuals "that most impressed [him] in undergraduate days."[16]

Despite Pratt's self-proclaimed familiarity with and appreciation of James's writings, few critics have elucidated the connections between *Varieties* and Pratt's poetry.[17] This oversight reflects a need for new directions not only in Pratt studies, but in studies of James and his influence on literature produced outside of Great Britain, Ireland, and the United States. James's preference for personal over institutional religions usefully provides an

intellectual context in which the non-doctrinal, unorthodox, yet distinctly religious poetry of modernists such as W.B. Yeats, H.D., or Pratt might be viewed as representative of certain twentieth-century attitudes towards *organized* religion, rather than symptomatic of any kind of definitive shift away from religious belief altogether. Still, James was aware that religion, even personal religion, cannot remain cloistered; it is never a "personal" matter entirely. Writing of "the ascetic impulse," for example, he opines that "[t]he practical course of action for us, as religious men," is "to discover some outlet for it of which the fruits in the way of privation and hardship might be objectively useful."[18] That is, if the kinds of religious convictions that inform this "impulse" are to be "objectively useful," they must be communicated or acted upon; they must become what James elsewhere labels the "positive content of religious experience."[19] Consequently, he could also conclude that mysticism "is too private (and also too various) in its utterances to be able to claim a universal authority."[20]

But James's separation of the personal and the institutional is deliberately over-emphasized in *Varieties* for several reasons, and even his apparent dismissal of institutional religion in this book does not seem to have been representative, in any definitive sense, of his overall attitude about religion's social significance. Of the distinction between private and public religious experiences, for instance, Jeremy Carrette observes that James:

> plays down (rather than ignores) the social dimension of religious emotion [. . .], although it is intriguing to note that, a few years later, when James fills in [J.B.] Pratt's questionnaire on religious belief, James is more affirmative of a social reading of religion. He responded to the question about whether religion is understood as "an emotional experience" by writing, somewhat surprisingly: "Not powerfully so, yet a social reality."[21]

In this same questionnaire, James's answer to the question "Why do you believe in God?" is "Only for the social reasons," and he defines religion's importance in terms of its "social appeal" as well as its corresponding ability to offer "corroboration, consolation, etc. when things are going wrong with my causes."[22] Significantly, these kinds of responses force readers to reconsider his attitude towards such social dimensions of personal religion and to grapple with the problem of how private religious experiences can be communicated or can yield pragmatic results in the public sphere.

To these reminders of the importance of the social dimensions of religious experiences that have been articulated or acted upon, one could also add that societies do not merely corroborate personal beliefs; they also mold them. While Pratt's personal beliefs shaped his written responses to and against the Methodist Church, theological modernism, and the Christian-inflected spiritualism with which he experimented in the 1920s and 1930s, these institutions and movements obviously shaped him, too. Indeed, there is no such thing as an unmediated personal experience or text, since individuals—and the narratives they create—are socially constituted and conditioned.[23] Just as James notes of some conversion narratives that "[t]he particular form which they affect is the result of suggestion and imitation,"[24] Pratt seems to realize even in his MA thesis that the inevitable socialization of individuals affects how subjectivities are embodied in written texts: he writes, "[w]ith each Evangelist writing from his own point of view, it would be the most surprising anomaly in the history of human literature, if some transfiguration of the acts and sayings of Christ had not in all sincerity crept in."[25]

What is more, James, who "does not leave religion merely in the hearts of individuals,"[26] and who would, in "The Pragmatic Method," define religion as "a living practical affair,"[27] seems to have inspired Pratt's views regarding the need to communicate one's personal religion in order to effect social and historical change. However, whereas in *Varieties* James eventually turns to philosophy as a means of shifting the focus of religion from the

self onto society, Pratt in his later writing would turn to a socially-oriented personal religion focused not on philosophy, nor on dogma, but on Christ, who (to Christians such as Pratt) models perfectly how selfless deeds can serve as the ultimate expressions of one's inner spiritual convictions. It is clear that neither James nor Pratt fails to see the socially transformative potential of private religious experiences as they begin to move beyond what Charles Taylor refers to as a "religion of the heart."[28]

Pratt believed in the pragmatic social applications of poetry as well: poetry should not be stripped, as he thought it was in "schools like Dadaism and Surrealism," "of all social value and social function."[29] "It is very hard," he argues, "to see the value of any artistic medium which is utterly contemptuous of communication."[30] But Pratt's poetry also evinces his belief in the pragmatic social applications of religion, and it is in this respect that James's influence on Pratt's poetic practice might be seen most clearly. To effect change in society, personal religious experiences and convictions must be communicated verbally or translated into action – hence Pratt, taking his cue from James's lecture on "Philosophy" in *Varieties*, disdains forms of religion that do not account for others, just as he critiques certain kinds of asceticism in part because he feels that they result in what James calls "unwholesome privacy."[31] By contrast, Pratt's poetic heroes, such as Jean de Brébeuf, perform remarkable acts of bravery and self-sacrifice, and they are responsible for single-handedly "raising the moral temperature of the community"[32] through their example: "There isn't one person among us," Pratt declares, "who, having witnessed a fine sacrificial action, hasn't felt like hoisting a flag to the masthead bearing the signal – 'Let no one do a mean deed today.'"[33] In this, Pratt again echoes James. In *Varieties*, James maintains that the self-sacrifice of any heroic figure "consecrates him forever."[34] The Christ-like sacrifice of oneself can ensure immortality in a secular as well as a religious sense.

Despite his emphasis on personal religion, James's pragmatism extends beyond the individual to the society in which the individual is embedded; he has no use for those forms of self-

abnegation that are really about the appearance of saintliness. Heroism is what redeems asceticism for James and Pratt, but only heroism such as Christ's – that is, a heroism that is authentic, vital, and "objectively useful."[35] James clearly understands the power of Christ's sacrifice, and of the metonymic symbols associated with that act: he writes, "The folly of the cross, so inexplicable by the intellect, has yet its indestructible vital meaning."[36] Nevertheless, both James and Pratt are wary of certain forms of self-abnegation or self-mortification – whether associated with institutional or personal forms of religion – that merely serve the self. In *Varieties*, for instance, James issues a call for "religious men" "to discover some outlet for [asceticism] of which the fruits in the way of privation and hardship might be objectively useful. The older monastic asceticism occupied itself with pathetic futilities, or terminated in the mere egotism of the individual, increasing his own perfection."[37] Like the Jesus of Matthew 23:25-29 or Luke 16:14-15, Pratt's poetry consistently excoriates figures who fail to live up to this standard, such as "priests put on parade / Before stone altar-steps"[38] or the "Self-pinched, self-punished anchorite, / Who credits up against his dying / His boasted hours of mortifying."[39] In *Brébeuf and His Brethren* too, Pratt's vital, self-sacrificing hero serves as a conspicuous character foil to the hermetic mystics and "whited sepulchres" of Matthew 23:27 who fail to translate their putative religious beliefs into morally responsible and socially transformative deeds.

In the wake of the First World War, and against the backdrop of Hitler's rise to power in Germany, Pratt would also deploy James's pragmatic philosophy and their shared disdain for religious hypocrisy as part of a trenchant critique of the notion of human "civilization" or "progress." In several key poems from the 1930s, Pratt berates society as a whole – rather than individuals or individual groups – for continually failing to live up to Christ's standard. For example, the emphasis in "The Highway" and "From Stone to Steel" is on a processual theology – a progressivist, evolutionary journey halted by what Robert Burns called "Man's inhumanity to man."[40] Humanity collectively disrupts the teleology

of Christ's sacrifice: in "The Highway," it steps off "the road" that leads to Christ and therefore seemingly outside of the Christian eschatological scheme, yet it is still within reach of God's "hand,"[41] frozen in space and time, a liminal site of latent possibility and choice that Pratt, using a compound noun, succinctly refers to as "our so brief a span."[42] Similarly, "From Stone to Steel" concludes with the image of Gethsemane,[43] which Pratt frequently invokes as a symbol of Jamesian free will but also of religious indeterminacy.[44] Pratt writes, "Between the temple and the cave / The boundary lies tissue thin" – but neither the cave nor the temple are appealing destinations: the cave is associated here with an atavistic "snarl Neanderthal," and the temple's civilized façade is stripped away to reveal personified "altars [that] crave" bloody sacrifices, "As satisfaction for a sin."[45] To a limited extent, such references might be said to collectively indict D.H. Lawrence's or other modernists' embrace of an idealized, primitive past as a means of addressing the ills and alienations of modern society. But while Pacey generalizes from this poem that the "ever-seeking pilgrim" of Pratt's poetry is on a quest "from the barbaric cave" towards the utopia of a "divine temple,"[46] such an idealized temple should not be conflated with the flawed structure figured here, nor should the sacrifices that its altars crave be confused with Christ's sacrifice: this is a rationalized bloodlust divorced from soteriology, and thus, like many of Pratt's poems, "From Stone to Steel" could be said to perform a moral critique of the human perversion of reason. Further, the dissolution of the "boundary" separating "the temple and the cave" means the dissolution of the idea of progress and civilization upon which Christendom has been built. However, Christ and Christ's ability to navigate Gethsemane seem to offer a way out of the plight, even if the salvation promised by such symbols is deferred within the context of the poem.

Despite James's and Pratt's grounding of religious experience in the heart rather than the head, and despite Pratt's awareness of the human tendency to willfully distort reason, neither James nor Pratt deny intellect or reason their place. Most notably, the

aforementioned section on "Philosophy" in *Varieties* acknowledges the importance of the intellect regarding the problem of communication, since "we must exchange our feelings with one another, and in doing so we have to speak, and to use general and abstract verbal formulas."[47] That James understood this problem as it pertained to the translation of religious convictions for personal and institutional causes suggests yet another way in which James's writings left their mark on the content as well as the form of modernist literature: James examines what could be called a modernist obsession with language's deformations (think, for example, of T.S. Eliot's Prufrock complaining, "It is impossible to say just what I mean!"[48]), but he does so in *Varieties* primarily with reference to the theological import of such deformations, rather than the psychological, social, or literary kind (as famously explored in many modernist texts, such as Stein's "Melanctha").

For his part, Pratt dramatizes the problem of communication most explicitly in *Brébeuf and His Brethren*, a twelve-part narrative poem about the seventeenth-century martyrdom in New France of the French Jesuit Jean de Brébeuf. The speaker of Pratt's epic affirms that for Brébeuf and the other priests attempting to convert the Huron people to Christianity, "the first equipment was the speech";[49] that is, language is essential to the Jesuits' civilizing mission.[50] When introducing the poem to one of his many audiences, Pratt confessed that he found it "rather amusing to find Brebeuf [*sic*] writing home to his general to get permission to alter the *nomine patris* formula. The Hurons could understand it only if it was stated – in the name of our Father, and of his Son, and of their Holy Ghost."[51] Like Paul, who is described in Pratt's *Studies in Pauline Eschatology* as having "adopted the customs, modes of thought and phraseology native to the peoples amongst whom he labored,"[52] Brébeuf adopts and adapts language to achieve a pragmatic, socio-religious end. He realizes that the intellect and speech are necessary to communicate one's spiritual vision to others, to educate and to proselytize. Inhabiting Brébeuf's consciousness, the speaker explains that "The efficacious rites /

Were hinged as much on mental apprehensions / As on the disposition of the heart."[53] But as the above reference to "the *nomine patris* formula" illustrates, the translation of doctrine, or of any theological concept, involves transformations that foreground the slippery, polysemic nature of language.

In his final moments, Pratt's Brébeuf, as he is being tortured by his would-be Iroquois converts, finds strength neither in institutional ceremonies and symbols nor in an entirely inward-looking personal religion, but in Christ, who mediates between and ultimately transcends the two:

> They would gash and beribbon those muscles. Was
> it the blood?
> They would draw it fresh from its fountain. Was it
> the heart?
> They dug for it, fought for the scraps in the way of
> the wolves.
> But not in these was the valour or stamina lodged;
> Nor in the symbol of Richelieu's robes or the seals
> Of Mazarin's charters, nor in the stir of the *lilies*
> Upon the Imperial folds; nor yet in the words
> Loyola wrote on a table of lava-stone
> In the cave of Manresa – not in these the source –
> But in the sound of invisible trumpets blowing
> Around two slabs of board, right-angled, hammered
> By Roman nails and hung on a Jewish hill.[54]

Like Christ, and like Ignatius of Loyola, who emerged from the mystic's cave to share his *Spiritual Exercises* and found the Society of Jesus, Brébeuf also moves beyond a cloistered Christianity while avoiding the moral snares and material trappings of institutional religion. Pratt's fascination with Brébeuf – whose source of strength lies neither in his heart (as the locus of "religious experience") nor his head, but in what James would call Brébeuf's "over-belief"[55] in a Christ whose transcendental nature is connoted here by "the sound of invisible trumpets" – may also

have been rooted in Pratt's knowledge of and respect for Wesley, who shared in common with Brébeuf an "incarnational spirituality" as well as "an ardent attachment to the person of Christ."[56] The conclusion of this poem may be read, then, as a fairly profound statement of faith on Pratt's part, even if it is couched within the narrative of Brébeuf's martyrdom, which is itself problematically emphasized at the expense of the underlying but largely unaddressed narrative of Canada's colonial past. In *Brébeuf*, as in the oft-anthologized poem "The Truant," the symbol of the cross functions as a metonymic stand-in for Christ. The constant presence of the cross in Pratt's poetry suggests that the cross is the crux upon which Pratt erects his life's philosophy and religion, and the lens through which his poetry's paradoxes begin to come into focus.

If in *Brébeuf* Pratt is concerned primarily with highlighting the Jesuits' faith and their attempts to share that faith with others, "The Truant" is concerned with articulating certain aspects of Pratt's own personal religion. As he told Pacey in 1954, "My own profession of faith was expressed in *The Truant*."[57] But what is the substance of this faith as it is manifested in Pratt's poem? While some early critics were "greatly puzzled" by this text[58] – in which the Truant defies the authority of a figure named "the great Panjandrum," who is introduced as a "forcibly acknowledged Lord"[59] – countless others have since sussed out its general message. Perhaps most concisely, it is, in Pratt's own words, "an indictment of Power by humanity."[60] It is an anti-materialist and anti-authoritarian anthem, an assertion of human agency in the form of a "rebel will."[61] The poem unfolds in a succession of verbal exchanges: the Panjandrum and his toady, the Master of Revels, bring charges of rebelliousness and pride against the Truant, who responds with an impassioned and stubborn defense of free will and humankind's need to reject all outmoded, oppressive, or deterministic forms of social and intellectual authority. Yet truancy is advocated here not simply as an empowering, secular life philosophy, but as a kind of recalcitrant messianic attitude and

orientation at the heart of Pratt's anti-institutional personal religion.

Despite the thematic obsession with the subject of free will in "The Truant," only Clark's "E.J. Pratt and the Will to Believe" traces this obsession back to James. Obviously, the question of free will was a major preoccupation for James, who "interpreted his personal distress in the terms of one of the great intellectual debates of the later nineteenth century, the question of free will versus determinism."[62] Still, the question of free will was for Pratt primarily a religious question, and the rebellious natures of some of his most treasured heroes – including Brébeuf – can be contained by, and understood within, a general Christian framework. To a certain extent, James and the liberal Protestant theologians of his time were all caught up in a subjective or experiential turn initiated much earlier by Friedrich Schleiermacher and others, but this turn did not spell the end of Christ-centred ethics or theologies.

For Pratt, the right to exercise one's free will is indistinguishable from the right to choose to align one's will with Christ's. Brébeuf, for example, aligns himself with Christianity and therefore falls on what Pratt ostensibly believed to have been the right side of history – with the result that "The Will / And the Cause in their triumph survived."[63] But a similar alignment occurs at the end of "The Truant," when the titular character bands together with his fellow human beings and rallies around "the Rood" and the sound of "bugles on the barricades,"[64] which are symbolic surrogates for *Brébeuf*'s "two slabs of board, right-angled" and its "invisible trumpets."[65] As in "From Stone to Steel" and the late poem "Cycles," beleaguered humanity finds salvation only in what Pratt's friend and colleague, Northrop Frye, calls "the enduring, resisting, and suffering Christ of *Gethsemane* who is at the centre of Pratt's religion."[66]

For James, the source of Christ's strength, or of the martyr's over-belief in moments of persecution, remains a mystery beyond the scope of reason. He writes, "If you ask *how* religion thus falls on the thorns and faces death, and in the very act annuls

annihilation, I cannot explain the matter, for it is religion's secret."[67] In "The Truant," however, the answer to this riddle is not a secret; it is provided in the Truant's final assertion of free will, in his oath sworn "by the Rood" against all that the Panjandrum represents.[68] Like Brébeuf's, the Truant's strength derives from Christ, whose symbol is the cross – though Sutherland would inexplicably remark of "The Truant" that it "concludes with a fervent expression of . . . secular faith."[69] If one considers a comment Pratt made in a letter to Dorothy Marie Doyle, it seems obvious that Sutherland was mistaken: without equivocation, Pratt asserts that "The *Truant* is a Christian who defies this giant of Might and is willing to prefer pain and death to submission. The poem ends on the Rood, the sublimest symbol of sacrificial love."[70] That Pratt would don the mask of the truant either in his own life[71] or in his poetic "profession of faith" indicates the importance of free will in his personal religion. But as a student of theology, he would have known that James's valuation of free will was compatible with many Christian traditions, including what he labels "the milder Arminianism" of the Newfoundland Methodism of his childhood[72] – that is, a tradition in which God's grace empowers human beings to exercise free will and choose salvation in spite of their inherently "fallen," sinful condition.

Finally, it must be noted that "The Truant" – which Pratt says he wrote "at the height of the Nazi regime"[73] – employs anti-authoritarian rhetoric not to impugn God, but to reject all human institutions that have become corrupted by what Pratt, explaining the poem to Pacey, refers to as "absolute power."[74] Only those systems that he rejected – such as materialism in science, fascism in politics, and fundamentalism in religion – are indicted in the poem itself. As Angela T. McAuliffe points out, though, the poem "has often been misinterpreted as an expression of either the poet's distorted notion of God or his complete rejection of the orthodox concept of the Deity."[75] To this she astutely adds that "[w]hat the Truant rejects is not God, but a god." She writes, "Pratt depicts, not his personal rejection of God, but humankind's general obligation to reject what Pratt knew God is not, and never could be – a source

of blind, impersonal power, either existing intrinsic to, or operating within, the confines of the universe."[76] In a letter to Margaret Furness MacLeod, Pratt, offering his own explanation of the kind of "god" the Panjandrum represents, further cites "Hitler's God or the Teutonic Creation."[77] Whatever the case, those critics who argue that the poem eschews God in favor of the individual[78] are surely mistaken: while it celebrates the individual and free will, these are rooted in Christ and in all that he represents as a transcendental rather than merely human figure. To be sure, Pratt was well aware what happens when we sing ourselves too much: in "A Prayer-Medley," a poem which prefigures "The Truant" in its praise of "unpredictable wills," Pratt had already painted a satirical portrait of those who pray, "Lord, how wonderful is the power of man; how great his knowledge!"[79] Such narcissism belies the fact that, in reality, human beings "have found no remedy for the deep *malaise* in the communal heart of the world."[80] By contrast, "The Truant" exhibits not just a stubborn faith in this flawed humanity, but a faith in God that actuates and enhances the former.

Pratt echoes James by focusing on Christ, Christian martyrs such as Brébeuf, and strong-willed figures such as the Truant, but ultimately strives to occupy the middle ground between the temple of institutional religion and the cave of personal religion, combining the strengths and rejecting the weaknesses of each. For Pratt, again, the point is that the "boundary" separating "the temple and the cave," or institutional and personal religion, "lies tissue thin."[81] Personal religion is never entirely personal, yet it is also true that, for James as well as Pratt, adherence to an established religious tradition does not necessarily preclude the possibility of private religious experiences. In poems such as *Brébeuf* and "The Truant," Pratt's attempts to move beyond the mystic's or ascetic's cave, beyond sequestered forms of personal religion, remain well within the Jamesian tradition, as do his poetic and epistolary nods to Christ and those figures whose Christ-like sacrifices impact others and thus resonate throughout history. Given Pratt's sustained poetic engagement with James's pragmatic and religious philosophies, then, it seems unreasonable to dismiss Pratt – as

some critics have done – "for not adequately expressing his world."[82] Indeed, Pratt's poetry squarely aligns his writing with that of James, whose finger remained firmly on the pulse of the psychological, philosophical, and religious debates of his time. But scholars both of James and of literary modernism would do well to move beyond a consideration of how such poetry captures its own intellectual or social world; we must also consider how, long after the publication of *Varieties*, modernist literature bolsters James's prescient observations about the persistence of complex, contingent, and plural forms of personal religion. While phrases such as "the secular age"[83] may usefully summarize certain present-day political and socio-religious realities, the extent to which the process of secularization shaped literary modernism – in Canada and elsewhere – must be carefully weighed in light of James's impact on modernists such as Pratt, and on the many varieties of religious experience and expression that continued to shape the cultural landscape of the twentieth century.

Dalhousie University
graham.jensen@dal.ca

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NOTES

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1. James, *Varieties*, 32.
2. Ibid.
3. Zackariasson, "Justification and Critique," 32.
4. Djwa and Moyles, Introduction, xi.
5. One thinks immediately of James's one-time student, Gertrude Stein, as well as James Joyce, Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf, and William Faulkner. Yet studies such as Frank Lentricchia's "On the Ideologies of Poetic Modernism, 1890-1913: The Example of William James," Patricia Rae's *The Practical Muse: Pragmatist Poetics in Hulme, Pound, and Stevens*, and David H. Evans's 2017 edited collection, *Understanding James, Understanding Modernism*, make clear James's literary-critical significance in other respects, and to other writers of the period.
6. There are exceptions, including Pericles Lewis's *Religious Experience and the Modernist Novel*, Erik Tonning's *Modernism and Christianity*, and Jamie Callison's "'Not for Me the Ultimate

Vision': T.S. Eliot's Ariel Poems and Religious Experience," but even in Tonning and Callison, the focus is predominantly on James's views regarding mysticism or on contemporary debates about "religious experience," rather than on the notion of personal religions or on the tension between personal and institutional religion.

7. Mao and Walkowitz, "New Modernist Studies," 737.

8. Wilkinson, *Tightrope Walker*, 74.

9. Avison, "Margaret Avison," 3.

10. The secularization thesis has now been challenged by literary critics and sociologists alike. See, for example, Lewis, *Religious Experience*.

11. For further information about the sources and effects of the privatization of institutional religion in the West, see, for example: Hammond, *Religion and Personal Autonomy* (regarding this shift in American religion); Bibby, *Fragmented Gods* (on similar shifts in Canada); and Stolz et al., *(Un)Believing in Modern Society* (for a recent European perspective).

12. Hungerford, *Postmodern Belief*, 3.

13. Kamboureli, *On the Edge of Genre*, 30.

14. Pitt, *Truant*, 31.

15. E.J. Pratt to Sutherland, 25 Feb. 1952.

16. E.J. Pratt to Pacey, 11 Nov. 1954.

17. Notable exceptions include Sutherland, who first advanced the idea that James had influenced Pratt's poetry ("E.J. Pratt," 37-40), and Clark, whose "E.J. Pratt and the Will to Believe" is the first and only protracted study of its kind—and therefore likely one of the first extended reflections on James's influence on Canadian literature. Aside from Sutherland and Clark, only Pitt, MacDonald, and McAuliffe identify a connection between James and Pratt, though none of these latter critics develop that connection at any length.

18. James, *Varieties*, 290. More than a century later, Taves would re-hash this complaint in relation to ongoing debates about

religious experience, noting that "any experience for which anyone wants to make claims [. . .] has to be represented publicly" (86).

19. Ibid., 405.

20. James, *Varieties*, 340.

21. Carrette, "Passionate Belief," 89.

22. James, "Answers," 1184, 1183.

23. I am alluding here to contemporary debates about religious experience, particularly the "constructivist" (as opposed to "perennialist" or "*sui generis*") position represented by critics such as Wayne Proudfoot and Taves. As Stephen S. Bush explains, in the constructivist view, "religious experiences are determined by the experiencer's culture" (101). For more general commentaries on social contexts or conditioning and James, see also Carrette, 81; Pawelski, 20-21; and Taylor, 23-24, 27-28.

24. James, *Varieties*, 165.

25. Pratt, "Demonology," 22.

26. Pawelski, *Dynamic Individualism*, 21.

27. James, "Pragmatic Method," 132.

28. Taylor, *Varieties*, 18.

29. Pratt, "Meaning," 252-53.

30. Ibid., 262.

31. James, *Varieties*, 341.

32. Pratt, "Memories," 8.

33. Pratt, "Highlights," 4.

34. James, *Varieties*, 290.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., 290-91.

38. Pratt, "Inexpressible," 369.

39. Pratt, "The Depression Ends," 265.

40. Burns, "Man Was Made to Mourn," 186.

41. Pratt, "The Highway," 257.

42. Ibid.

43. Pratt, "From Stone to Steel," 20.

44. See, for example, "Cycles," 196, and "The Truant," 131.
45. Pratt, "From Stone to Steel," 260-61.
46. Pacey, *Creative Writing*, 134.
47. James, *Varieties*, 342.
48. Eliot, "Prufrock," 6.
49. Pratt, *Brébeuf*, 53.
50. Although a discussion of race and Pratt's depiction of the Hurons and Iroquois in *Brébeuf* falls outside of the scope of this essay, it is an important issue that has been taken up by Smaro Kamboureli, Gwendolyn Guth, and many others. As well, Pratt himself provides relevant – if sometimes fawning and credulous – commentary on the Jesuits' activity in New France in texts such as "*Brébeuf and His Brethren*." Similarly, James tends to celebrate rather than censure the Jesuit's civilizing mission: in *Varieties*, he claims that the "early Jesuits, especially the missionaries among them, the Xaviers, Brébeufs, Jogues, were objective minds, and fought in their way for the world's welfare; so their lives to-day inspire us" (283).
51. Pratt, "*Brébeuf*," 125.
52. Pratt, *Studies*, 115.
53. Pratt, *Brébeuf*, 53.
54. Ibid.
55. In *Varieties*, James defines over-beliefs as "buildings-out performed by the intellect into directions of which feeling originally supplied the hint" (341).
56. McAuliffe, *Between the Temple and the Cave*, 187.
57. E.J. Pratt to Pacey, 29 Oct. 1954.
58. E.J. Pratt to A.J.M. Smith, 28 Jan. 1944.
59. Pratt, "The Truant," 125.
60. E.J. Pratt to Smith, 28 Jan. 1944.
61. Pratt, "The Truant," 128.
62. Evans, "Chains," 173.
63. Pratt, *Brébeuf*, 109.
64. Pratt, "The Truant," 131.

65. Pratt, *Brébeuf*, 108.
66. Frye, "Silence," 393.
67. James, *Varieties*, 48.
68. Pratt, "The Truant," 131.
69. Sutherland, *Poetry*, 20.
70. Quoted in McAuliffe, *Between the Temple and the Cave*, 180.
71. In *The Truant Years*, Pitt refers on multiple occasions to Pratt's truancy as a "mask" he used to fit in (19ff.), as part of a "need to compensate" (46), or as a "restless, even restive, truant spirit which seems to have overtaken him" (50).
72. E.J. Pratt to Sutherland, 21 May 1954.
73. E.J. Pratt to Pacey, 29 Oct. 1954.
74. Ibid.
75. McAuliffe, *Between the Temple and the Cave*, 62.
76. Ibid., 64.
77. E.J. Pratt to Margaret Furness MacLeod, 25 Jan. 1944.
78. For proponents of this argument in its various forms, see, for example, Clark, 115; Horwood, 203; and Sharman, 31-32.
79. Pratt, "Prayer-Medley," 295, 293.
80. Ibid., 297.
81. Pratt, "From Stone to Steel," 261.
82. Djwa, "Pratt's Modernism," 68.
83. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 89.

SENSATION AND SUGGESTION: WILLIAM JAMES AND SADAKICHI HARTMANN'S SYMBOLIST AESTHETICS

EMILY GEPHART

Although American art critic Sadakichi Hartmann made only one brief reference to William James's work, this essay argues for the philosopher's underlying influence on Hartmann's aesthetic beliefs. Some of James's most important insights regarding integrated sensation, cognition, and consciousness appeared just as Hartmann was establishing his critical voice. By exploring commonalities between James's pragmatic philosophy and Hartmann's endorsement of symbolist indeterminacy, I show how the critic was indebted to Jamesian models of embodied aesthetic experience. James's pluralistic inclusivity also fostered Hartmann's emphasis on interactivity between perception and interpretation, and nurtured his progressive belief in modern art's uplifting potential.

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A connection between William James and the eccentric German-Japanese-American art critic Sadakichi Hartmann (1867-1944) may not seem immediately apparent. Hartmann was a flamboyant bohemian intellectual and Greenwich Village habitué: he penned lyrical, symbolist poems; he authored scandalous plays about the private lives of Christ, the Buddha, and Mohammed; he composed dazzling multi-media theatrical spectacles; and he produced wildly experimental perfume symphonies.[1] But he is probably best known by art historians and cultural critics as an astute observer of America's changing aesthetic tastes in the years bracketing the turn of the twentieth century. His opinions helped to promote photography's artistic merits as well as to nurture emerging modernism in painting – particularly the incipient abstraction that came to define modern art in the later twentieth century.[2]

Hartmann lectured widely on these topics, and among several significant books, he wrote a two-volume *History of American Art*, a survey of Japanese aesthetics and a comprehensive study of James Abbott McNeil Whistler. His most substantive contributions to advancing the cause of modernism, however, were made in the wide-ranging essays he composed for periodicals, from his own short-lived publications *The Art Critic* and *Art News,* to mainstream magazines such as *McClure's*, *Musical America*, and *Brush and Pencil*. Above all, his essays for Alfred Stieglitz's groundbreaking journals *Camera Notes* and *Camera Work* supported the work of modern artists across multiple mediums, and offered valuable insights into modern art's developing formal priorities.

But although James and the younger writer both had a formative aesthetic education abroad, and both orbited Boston's cultural and intellectual spheres in the early 1890s, it is unlikely they ever met.[3] If Hartmann attended any of James's lectures, or found any specific texts useful to his advocacy of modernism, the critic never mentioned them. He made only one brief direct reference to James's influence, describing him as one of the "mightiest intellects" active during his brief residency in Boston.[4]

In like measure, James's writings never mention the eccentric aesthete, nor does he show much interest in the symbolist avant-garde to which Hartmann devoted favorable regard.

Although it is therefore hard to know for sure which of James's writings Hartmann encountered, striking if speculative commonalities emerge in their work. This essay seeks to shed new light on the Jamesian insights that ground Hartmann's symbolist aesthetics by exploring the productive entanglements between art, literature, philosophy, and psychology that animated American intellectual culture at the turn of the twentieth century. Prior writers such as Jane Calhoun Weaver and Rachael Ziady DeLue have evaluated the influence of physiological aesthetics and psychological discourses on Hartmann's writing, yet despite tantalizing suggestions that deeper connections between James and the critic might exist, these are hard to prove and have not been thoroughly investigated.[5] By placing James and Hartmann in conversation, I hope to enhance the understanding of two intellects whose ideas nourished new forms of modern American culture, since some of James's best-known proposals about integrated sensation, cognition, and consciousness were published just as Hartmann was establishing his critical voice in the early 1890s.

I contend that James's conceptualization of the stream of unified consciousness shares important affinity with Hartmann's emphasis on the totality of sensation and cognitive comprehension that arose from the psychological 'suggestiveness' of symbolist ambiguity. According to Hartmann, such indeterminacy was an invitation to interactive perception and interpretation, and thus the democratic ethos at the core of James's radical empiricism also corresponds with Hartmann's belief in art's progressive capacity to activate engaged viewership in a pluralistic nation. Even though James did not endorse avant-garde modernism directly, his pragmatic philosophy helped Hartmann establish art's underlying cultural and scientific worth: Hartmann proposed that when 'suggestive' art set a beholder's perception and imagination to work in concert, the interpretive problem-solving that resulted revealed dynamic consciousness in operation.

I build towards this analysis by assessing Hartmann's formative experiences and early critical writing, first considering James's influence on the avant-garde circles within which the critic assembled his aesthetic values. Hartmann's encounters with symbolism and psychology in Paris in the 1890s established the philosophical groundwork upon which he built his subsequent writing. Then, examining how James's affirmation of unified consciousness fostered Hartmann's emerging beliefs, I investigate how the critic nurtured reciprocity between art's material form and embodied experience. Emphasizing the primacy of experience, James's thought upholds Hartmann's proposal that all art – even the seemingly opposed representational aims of photography and increasingly abstracted painting – addressed the conscious and unconscious mind simultaneously. Ultimately, I explore how Hartmann framed the value of 'suggestion' in light of James's pragmatist aesthetics. The philosopher's ideas fostered the dynamic interpretation that Hartmann sought to cultivate in American beholders, and which his own criticism exemplified.

SYMBOLISM AND JAMES'S PSYCHOLOGY

Hartmann's background epitomized a kind of modern American pluralism: born to a Japanese mother near Nagasaki in the late 1860s, Hartmann spent his early childhood in his father's native Germany, receiving a thorough education in philosophy and languages. Reluctant to follow the naval career planned for him, Hartman ran away from boarding school, and was sent to live in Philadelphia with relatives in 1882, where he pursued independent studies while working in an engraving shop.[6] During his spare time, he offered his services as a translator and occasional secretary to Walt Whitman, whose metaphysical philosophies both he and James esteemed highly.[7]

Spending a year in Paris in 1892 as an international arts correspondent for *McClure's* before returning to settle in the United States, Hartmann discovered the symbolist avant-garde in literature and the visual arts. He encountered leading artists, critics, and symbolist writers at poet Stéphane Mallarmé's regular

Tuesday gatherings: among them painters Whistler and Claude Monet, playwright Maurice Maeterlinck, and poets Gustave Kahn, Jules Laforgue, and Remy de Gourmant.[8] Hartmann thrilled to rapport with Mallarmé; the two corresponded about the philosophical precepts of symbolist art, theater, and poetry.[9] Hartmann capitalized upon these experiences as his critical career subsequently flourished first in Boston and then in New York, beginning in the early 1890s.

Symbolists responded to the same uncertainties about the modern world's unsettling changes that motivated James's pragmatist philosophy of scientific knowledge. They investigated the slippery relationships between words, images, and meaning, and they evaluated the differential truth revealed by materially grounded experiences of reality and their imaginative, visionary counterparts. The movement, however, was extremely diffuse across media; in art it was equally diverse in style and substantive preoccupations, encompassing the proto-abstract form of Odilon Redon, as well as the tighter illusionism of Fernand Khnopff.[10] While some symbolists pursued lofty Swedenborgian correspondences, Wagnerian intermediality, or Neoplatonic idealism, others delved into perversity and decadent literature, esoteric doctrines, or the Catholic revival, traits visible in the occasionally bizarre work – like Jean Delville's occult fantasies – displayed at Josephin Péladan's Salons of the Mystic Order of the Rose + Cross, the first of which Hartmann may have attended.[11]

Still others, especially those in Mallarmé's orbit, were motivated by the philosophical questions at the heart of the contemporary science of the mind that also concerned James. As the discovery of the unconscious came together, symbolist artists and poets followed the emergent disciplines of physiological psychology and psychopathology, hoping scientific discoveries might shed light on the mechanisms of perception, consciousness, protean creativity and transcendent insight.[12]

Direct reference to the perception of art may be rare in James's publications, despite his early career ambitions to pursue painting, but his discerning observations about the relationship between the

sensation of aesthetic effects such as color, shape, or sound and consciousness developed across many published essays and lectures in the 1890s, and the seeds of his pragmatist aesthetics emerge in the publications from which Hartmann and his symbolist peers gleaned core philosophical beliefs.[13] Léon Marillier's extensive 1892 review of James's *Principles of Psychology*, published in four parts in *La Revue Philosophique*, animated discussion in these heady, avant-garde circles about the dynamic exchange between modern science and the arts.[14] Indeed, as Richard Cándida Smith has observed, "[p]ragmatism and symbolism were two parallel experiments in the reconstruction of 'science,' meaning, in this case, theorized knowledge rather than … practices for observing and classifying natural phenomena."[15] Claiming authority where imagery was concerned, as well as command of materialist and metaphysical debates, many symbolists believed their own cultural products could make vital contributions to modern science.

Symbolist artists and writers alike investigated purely imaginative experiences and tried to convey the veiled, mysterious, or irrational forces of the dipsychic mind that enabled unconscious or transgressive revelation. In shaping an evolving, mutable discipline in his *Principles*, James also synthesized a vast body of knowledge, some of which these symbolists had already mined for inspiration. Citing French neuropathologists such as Jean-Martin Charcot and Pierre Janet, physiological researchers such as Hermann von Helmholtz and George Trumbull Ladd, and leaders in psychometrical measurement such as Wilhelm Wundt and Hugo Munsterberg, James referenced scientific discourses that informed symbolist art's subject matter as well as its style.[16] But even as painters and poets regarded psychology as a scientific key to art's transcendent, enduring meaning, they hoped it would prove capable of unlocking many doors to the complexus of consciousness.

In his essay "The Hidden Self," James argued for investigation of the "exceptional mental states" that offered fascinating glimpses into the "effects of the imagination" that symbolists strove to

express.[17] This realm comprised the "unclassed residuum" of the mind's mechanisms that not only inspired continued symbolist pursuit of sacred trances, psychic visions, pathological hallucinations, and dreams, but also affirmed psychic and spiritual phenomena as vital sources of knowledge about perception and consciousness.[18] Citing Janet's popular psychopathological study *L'Automatisme Psychologique*, James acknowledged commonalities between the mind's arcane abilities and the practices of empirical psychology, freely crossing coalescent disciplinary boundaries even as he sought to provide rigor to often discredited spiritual phenomena.[19]

Inspired by this optimistic branch of symbolism upon which James's ideas took hold, Hartmann's aesthetic beliefs and ambitions resonated with the philosopher's noetic pluralism, even as it was still evolving in the later 1890s. Hartmann recognized art's powerful emotional, spiritual, and perceptual engagement with the embodied mind, and he embraced a pantheistic regard for cosmic consciousness in his own plays and poetry. James's proposal that every individual had the capacity to forge a sense of cohesive meaning from disparate yet integrated psychological forces validated the intuitive, visionary insights that Hartmann regarded as vehicles to modern revelation.[20]

Hartmann honed his judgments and expounded on his experiences in *The Art Critic,* founded in Boston in 1893. Determined to mold the future path he foresaw for modern American art, he minimized associations between psychological knowledge, cultural degeneracy, and mental pathologies; he focused instead on art's unifying potential.[21] Hartmann made early mention of modern painters such as Paul Gauguin, Maurice Denis, and Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, but he did not encourage American artists to emulate any European aesthetic traits directly. Rather, he tailored his analysis of the avant-garde to suit American sensibilities and, in alignment with James's pluralism, he emphasized the movement's progressive, utopian virtues.[22] He argued for "an American art, which would be characteristic of our

country," and for painters who "will test their talents in new realms," such as contemporary psychological discovery.[23]

Hartmann fostered these goals by coordinating symbolist interest in mystical phenomena with empirical science. He observed that symbolist artists were "not satisfied with their tangible existence, [but] want to trace their origin into the mysteries of mysteries that are weaving in ever changing visions around the throne of infinite eternity."[24] Yet, like James, Hartmann grounded these interests in scientific rigor, observing that modern artists take "delight in analysiation [sic] of all psychological phenomena," and seek "to wipe away the inconsistent theories of the past" by making the "boldest investigations into all sciences and especially into psycho-physiology."[25] Hartmann demonstrated erudite awareness of the science in question: after citing Charcot's work on hysteria, hypnosis, and perceptual pathologies, Hartmann also connected symbolism's modern ambitions to Wundt's psychometrical perceptual experiments.[26]

Hartmann's assessment of these fin-de-siècle aesthetic trends failed to credit James's important synthesis directly, but the critic set up pragmatic psychology as an essential tool for comprehending modern, symbolist art and its effects. Yet if Hartmann sought to provide some structure to symbolism's heterogeneity, its very diversity resisted dogmatic interpretation, and thus his description of modern art echoed the inclusive psychology of faith for which James argued in *The Will to Believe* in 1896 and thereafter.[27] This psychology was a secular science nonetheless capable, as Albert Pinkham Ryder's work showed, of inspiring "a picture impressive like religion, which is the highest art," as Hartmann affirmed in 1897.[28]

The Art Critic folded after only a few issues, but Hartmann's critical acumen won followers; and in the essays he wrote for *Camera Work* and other magazines starting in 1898, he advanced symbolist values and Whistlerian departure from conventional representation in pursuit of transcendent meaning. Hartmann and Stieglitz shared an abiding interest in art's underlying psychological effects; their publications served as testing ground

for articulating the scientific possibilities of modern forms across multiple, coevolving, and divergent styles and mediums.[29] In response to the heterogeneity he saw not only in symbolist art but also in America at large, Hartmann was equally heterodox in his praise, arguing for an inclusive national and cosmopolitan modernism. He endorsed the enigmatic painting of Whistler, Ryder, and Thomas Wilmer Dewing, as well as the percipient realism of Winslow Homer and Thomas Eakins, while later he supported the more forthrightly abstracted forms of Marsden Hartley, Max Weber and John Marin, among others, long before their reputations were established. His promotion of photography – still novel as an art form – ventured across arguments for the pictorial effects of Edward Steichen, Clarence White, and F. Holland Day, towards the increasingly un-manipulated aesthetics of Stieglitz's own work. By commending groundbreaking formal innovation while still extolling the progenitors of these aesthetic developments, Hartmann showed his own kind of Jamesian pluralism, emphasizing the underlying perceptual values on which aesthetic multiplicity rested.

CONVERGENCES IN THE STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Filled with imagery that served as essential scientific models, James's writing helped Hartmann and his symbolist peers to realize art's epistemological value: for them, art was not only capable of *stimulating* a mind through aesthetic form, it was also a body of knowledge capable of *simulating* the mind in action. Although not unique to James, his conceptualization of dynamic unity between sensation and perception, conscious and sub-conscious states in "*the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life*," was key to showing Hartmann and his symbolist peers how art could serve as a paradigm of transcendent, purposive knowledge.[30] The stream of consciousness was an aesthetically satisfying poetic metaphor from which deeper psychological premises took shape, demonstrating the power of analogy in all human understanding.

The inestimable importance James ascribed to the fluid currents at the fringe of consciousness was also consonant with symbolist belief that art's varied material stimuli transmuted even the smallest sensations into revelatory insight. Indeed, James attested to "the significance, the value of the image [that] is all in this halo or penumbra that surrounds and escorts it – or rather that is fused into one with it."[31] In this formula of synchronized consciousness, the body's senses were a vital counterpart to the mind's intellectual capacity for discriminating thought. "Our very senses [are] organs of selection," he wrote; they demonstrate a rudimentary episteme that orders the chaos of stimuli. For James, this was akin to artistic creativity: "The mind, in short, works on the data it receives very much as a sculptor works on his block of stone," extricating from all the possible figures within it the one that finally emerges. Thus "the world of each of us, howsoever different our several views of it may be, all lay embedded in the primordial chaos of sensations, which gave the mere *matter* to the thought of all of us."[32]

Indeed, amid such productive sensory chaos, there was plenty of room for exchange between the arts and the sciences. Whether revealed in poetic imagery or in pictorial form, art fashioned equivalents to the internal sensory and cognitive structures through which relationships between the immediacy of perception and the totality of consciousness were configured. For example, in one of the first mentions of Paul Gauguin's work in America, Hartmann echoed James's "great blooming, buzzing confusion" – his characterization of primordial, un-mediated perceptual experience.[33] Describing the dazzling but inchoate visual assault that some observers found typical of modern painting, Hartmann commended Gauguin's experiments with elemental, plastic form, in which the avant-garde artist "discovered that the first consciousness we receive of the outside world consists of a confusion of color dots."[34] Hartmann thus not only affiliated Gauguin's abstraction with experimental methods, but also with the formative perceptual experiences it offered to viewers.

In later essays, James's ideas continue to reverberate in Hartmann's descriptions of American artwork, and their ineffable effects on spirit and mind. "The emotional thrill, which is derived, sooner or later, from every work of art, is felt instantaneously and as a totality," he affirmed, and continued, "painting aims primarily at affording us the greatest pleasure of color, of the variegated reflection of this world, unalloyed by other considerations."[35] Hartmann particularly praised artists who distilled meaning from a wealth of sensory abundance: "No creative mind has ever come into the world without finding a chaos, either within or without or beyond him, which he has to fill with order and life." But he emphasized the coordination between interior and exterior perception necessary to a unified creative act. "The poet and the artist get their material out of two worlds – the outer and the inner," Hartmann argued, neither of which is sufficient in itself: "They have to forage in both and combine their treasures."[36] From discrepant, even chaotic sources – natural stimuli and internal images alike – artists interwove material sensation with immaterial, imaginative, and abstract concepts. Art, therefore, could model a Jamesian representation of unified consciousness.

"ABSOLUTELY SENSATIONAL EXPERIENCE"

Hartmann likely found James's emphasis on embodied sensation in *Principles* equally inspirational. The philosopher insisted that automatic responses to stimuli – from the most visceral reactions to the nuances of aesthetic discernment of art – arise prior to conscious awareness. Yet, these bodily phenomena combine seamlessly with emotional and cognitive understanding to produce a total, unified experience. This was, in fact, essential to art's form. "The pleasure given us by certain lines and masses, and combinations of colors and sounds, is an absolutely sensational experience," James insisted, producing a feeling that was not only an innate response, but simultaneous with a higher order class of thinking.[37] Hartmann similarly upheld the fundamental principle that art should speak to body and mind at once. "A painting should first of all appeal to our emotion," he claimed, eschewing

"practical information" in the search for "keener aesthetic enjoyment." Art's "essential pictorial qualities should directly delight our senses, just like an accidental play of sunlight and shadows," Hartmann insisted.[38]

But James had also observed that not all stimuli commanded equal value: we attend foremost to any "aesthetic characteristics [that] appeal to our sense of convenience or delight," since art's material form had the capacity to solicit and direct attention amid the continuous sensory and cognitive flow.[39] "Concords of sounds, of colors, of lines, logical consistencies [or] teleological fitness affect us with a pleasure that seems ingrained in the very form of the representation itself," he wrote, as they provide "aesthetic emotion, pure and simple."[40] James opined, however, that such sensory perception was its own fundamentally valuable kind of knowledge: it may have been pre-cognitive but was also selective and discriminating, enabling judgment and taste.

Even on a primal level, then, James explored how the mind organizes stimuli that attract attention, meet criteria of interest, or demand action, amounting to a kind of unconscious cognition that ordered bodily responses relative to memory and experience. According to Hartmann, art also delivered a primary, unconscious, but no less formative kind of knowledge: "Painting should be a visual language that speaks directly and distinctly to the cultured mind."[41] Yet its inherent visual order – its compositional grammar, syntax, and vocabulary – also revealed how an artist's formal choices coordinated with their dynamic, underlying perceptual habits.[42] Arguing in 1903 for *The Influence of Visual Perception on Conception and Technique*, Hartmann observed: "There exists some relationship between the visual perception of artists and the style of the work they are producing," and he proposed that all artists are "unconsciously influenced by their visual disturbances."[43] Their resultant forms revealed individual perceptual anomalies, habits of attention, and even, perhaps, the underlying structure of their thought.

However, these perceptual experiences were not merely encoded in the work of an artist *a priori*, they also produced *a*

posteriori effects on beholders, mobilizing both intuitive and cognitive interpretive processes. To Hartmann, art's 'appeal to delight' arose not only from primal, pleasurable bodily responses to the emotional effects produced by concordant color or mellifluous sound, but also from parallel recognition of the deeper totality of art's "structural units."[44] Like all sensory stimuli, art's pattern and design, geometrical shape and rhythm, or even poetry's meter and stanza directed selective sensory attention alongside higher-order representational frameworks. If initially perceived sensorially, these comprise "the intelligent and austere understructure of all arts, in a palace as well as a poem, in a symphonic movement as well as in a monument or a mural decoration." Hartmann continued, "A painter who pursues this path of the harmonic relation of parts will have the big conception of the generality of things, without which art lacks … inner harmony."[45] And in perceiving this "generality," a viewer's own responses synthesized discrete stimuli and generated interpretive satisfaction.

Hartmann believed that such convergence between artist, object, and viewer emerged free of any conscious determination, but was spontaneously produced by the totality inherent in a work of art itself. Assessing photographer and painter Edward Steichen, he observed, "[o]ne cannot fully grasp his intentions, and it is very likely that he is not conscious of them himself."[46] Indeed, such elusive, unconscious qualities crossed boundaries between art's form or style, creation and reception, and earned Hartmann's highest praise: "Steichen is a poet of rare depth and significance, who expresses his dreams… with the simplest of images," yet they "add something to our consciousness of life." Even in his representational photographs, "lines, blurred and indistinct" are "visionary forms which rise in our mind's eye."[47]

THE VALUE OF "A MERE SUGGESTION"

Such blur and indistinctness served an important underlying purpose to Hartmann, allied to the symbolist aim of providing perceivable form to elusive, immaterial experience.[48] The

ambiguity that Hartmann advocated most passionately across mediums demonstrated 'suggestiveness,' a term that appeared throughout his critical oeuvre, and which correlated with James's psychology. Writing in *Principles*, James noted, "Every one of our conceptions is of something which our attention originally tore out of the continuum of felt experience."[49] Yet, "every one of them has a way … of suggesting other parts of the continuum from which it was torn … This 'suggestion' is often no more than what we shall later know as the association of ideas. Often, however, it is a sort of invitation to the mind to play, add lines, break number-groups, etc. Whatever it is, it brings new conceptions into consciousness."[50]

Later, in *Talks to Teachers*, James connected this property more directly to the arts: "The words of a poem," or indeed "the properties of material things," had profound associative power. Therefore, one could "start from any idea whatever, and the entire range of your ideas is potentially at your disposal … there is no limit to the possible diversity of suggestions."[51] In "imaginative minds" he observed, this free play was particularly liberating: "one field of mental objects will suggest another with which perhaps in the whole history of human thinking it had never once before been coupled."[52] For artists as well as for their critics and beholders this playful proposal offered a wealth of possibility.

Hartmann's own process was analogous to James's complex writing-as-thinking, as he worked through his sometimes conflicted responses to art, and explored how his own perceiving, feeling, thinking mind sorted through aesthetic experience. He tested paradoxical proposals, praising Mallarmé's ability to produce "intelligible unintelligibleness" from "vague poetical suggestions."[53] Applying these principles to pictorial art, Hartmann's earliest mention of 'suggestion' appeared his 1896 review of Arthur B. Davies, a painter "like the French Symbolists" in his "suggestive, ultra-individual art."[54] Hartmann proposed that Davies possessed exceptional modern insight into the mind: the "striking characteristic of his suggestiveness is of psychological origin," the critic avowed.[55] Yet Hartmann could be inconsistent,

and he never precisely defined what he meant by 'suggestivism' or 'suggestive' form in art. He came closest to articulating these properties in a 1904 discussion of the "blurred effects" in painter Dwight Tryon's landscapes. As Tryon "begins the process of weeding out all unnecessary elements" from "mental notes" and "conceptions … developed in the mind," he makes "the forms appear less solid, and more ethereal, the colors dissolve into nameless nuances, the details lose all obtrusiveness and the composition … assumes a dream-like character."[56]

Hartmann did not discuss it, since he rarely mentioned specific artworks in any of his criticism, yet Arthur Davies' *Children of Yesteryear* (ca. 1897, oil on canvas, Brooklyn Museum) demonstrates such 'suggestive' elements. A procession of vaguely delineated children flow past the wide-open eyes of a woman to the right moving towards a distant, mist-shrouded river at the horizon. Engrossed in her apparent imagining, she gazes into the indeterminate, atmospheric landscape: the texture of Davies' conspicuous pigment obliterates detail, refusing to describe a clear or coherent space. The young figures are similarly rendered in small dots, dashes, smears, and daubs of color that blend into an undifferentiated mass. We may see these obscure bodies as illusions of the woman's introspective nostalgia, a tributary of all-but-forgotten memories made real. But in taking on a tactile, material form that requires a viewer's efforts to discern, these vague allusions also conjure associative images in the beholder's mind. The puzzling painting conveys fluid exchange between form and concept, between concrete evidence and imaginative interpretation.

Spanning discrete media, criticism, and literature, associative ambiguity was more than mere vagueness, however. It also served to model the unconscious responses and experiential processes provoked by the senses, and it compelled a viewer's active spectatorship. Describing Steichen's photographed landscapes again, Hartmann claimed, "A mere suggestion suffices him. It is left to the imagination of the spectator to carry them out to their full mental realization."[57] In such an encounter with a material

object, the significance a viewer ascribed to it exceeded the cognitive matching of memory to mimesis. Activating unconscious responses, 'suggestive' artists inspired states of revelatory confusion as viewers opened their minds to meaning beyond the limits of subject, surface, and superficial appearance; beholders were invited to participate in the production of meaning alongside artists, critics, and psychologists.

CONCLUSION

James and Hartmann both spent their careers testing ideas and working towards the reconciliation of many, and even competing, strains of thought. Like many critics of his generation, Hartmann sought to distinguish his own voice as he nurtured artists whose work upheld his beliefs. Embracing coalescing sciences and philosophies helped him generate an equally variable, inclusive kind of criticism that made room for diversity and divergence. Hartmann saw his own role related to the kinds of psychological discoveries that James forecast, in his ability to ascribe significance to the 'suggestive' properties that modern artists increasingly pursued: "It is the art critic's duty," he wrote, "to enter an artist's individuality, to discover his intentions – intentions of which the artist himself is perhaps unconscious – to judge how far he has realized them, and then to determine what place he occupies in the development of a national and cosmopolitan art."[58]

Thus, the echoes of James's ideas that resonate throughout Hartmann's writing suggest more than casual familiarity or coincidental correspondence. If at best such claims must remain speculative, the importance of psychological knowledge to modern self-awareness was a core belief for both that affirmed the role of progressive modern culture in a heterogeneous democracy. Above all, Hartmann argued that the role of all art, pictorial and literary, should "elevate humanity." Across American arts, "there is enough to satisfy every taste," he avowed. Advocating common, psychologically significant aesthetic values between superficially dissimilar modes and media was essential to "a future in which art

will show herself … a worthy leader in the great cause of social and moral improvement."[59]

School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts
Emily.gephart@tufts.edu

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NOTES

[1] Hartmann's biography is assessed by Weaver in her book *Sadakichi Hartmann: Critical Modernist*, who also re-published a few poems and most important essays, and who provides a full bibliography and checklist of artists named in Hartmann's essays. Conerning his imprisonment at Christmas, 1893, on obscenity charges brought about by the publication of his play *Christ*, which contained scenes of an erotic nature, see Knox, *The Life and Times of Sadakichi Hartmann, 1867-1944,* 3; Hartmann's perfume concerts are discussed in Bradstreet, "A Trip to Japan," 51-66.

[2] Hartmann, *Valiant Knights*; many of the critic's pivotal essays on modern art and photography are republished in Weaver, *Sadakichi Hartmann: Critical Modernist.*

[3] For a valuable biography of James, see Richardson's *William James in the Maelstrom of American Modernism*.

[4] In Hartmann's unpublished autobiography, written April, 1915. Box 1, Sadakichi Hartmann Papers, Rivera Special Collections, University of California, Riverside.

[5] Weaver, *Sadakichi Hartmann, Critical Modernist,* 1-44*;* DeLue, "Diagnosing Pictures," 42-69.

[6] The most detailed biographies of Hartmann are provided by Knox, *The Life and Times of Sadakichi Hartmann*, and Weaver, *Sadakichi Hartmann: Critical Modernist.*

[7] Hartmann connected James and Whitman in his unpublished bibliography, designating both capable of "true national expression." See also Hartmann, *Conversations with Walt Whitman*; and James, "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings."

[8] "A Tuesday Evening at Stéphane Mallarmé's," 26-30.

[9] Weaver, *Sadakichi Hartmann*, 2.

[10] Many authors have addressed the interpretive challenges of symbolist diversity, among these see particularly Facos, *Symbolist Art in Context*; the essays in Facos and Mednick, *The Symbolist Roots of Modern Art*; and Goldwater, *Symbolism*.

[11] Hartmann translated the preface to the catalog of the first Salon de la Rose + Croix for the first issue of *The Art Critic*.

[12] I borrow here the title of Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious*.

[13] For the development of James's aesthetic principles, see Shusterman, "The Pragmatist Aesthetics of William James," 348.

[14] Reference to James's essays appeared in French periodicals from the 1870s to the late 1880s. He was reviewed by Marillier in 1892, and then appeared regularly again after 1900. See Smith, *Mallarmé's Children*, 268 n23.

[15] Ibid., 111.

[16] Brain's *The Pulse of Modernism* assesses the research in physiological aesthetics and psychology most informative to the European avant-garde.

[17] James, "The Hidden Self," 361.

[18] Morehead, "Symbolism, Mediumship," 77-85; Taylor, *William James on Consciousness beyond the Margin*, and Harrington, *Medicine, Mind and the Double Brain*, 140-41.

[19] James, "The Hidden Self," 363. For insightful examinations of James's boundary-crossing psychology and philosophy, see Bordogna, *William James at the Boundaries.*

[20] Taylor, "Metaphysics and Consciousness in James's *Varieties,"* 18.

[21] Hartmann was familiar with Max Nordau's controversial 1895 book, *Degeneration*, but was ambivalent about its condemnation of avant-garde art. See DeLue, "Diagnosing Pictures," 47.

[22] The utopian aims of American symbolism are evaluated by Eldredge, *American Imagination and Symbolist Painting*.

[23] Hartmann, "A National American Art," 44-49.

[24] Hartmann, "Modern French Painting – An Art Historical Study,' 29-30.

[25] Hartmann, "Notes on the *Fin-de-Siècle* movement in Art and Literature," 7. Hartmann's awkward neologism 'analysiation' attests to the novelty of the science he discussed.

[26] Hartmann, "What is Fin-de-Siècle?," 9; and "Notes on the Fin-de-Siècle Movement,"6.

[27] For more on the early demonstrations of James's 'thick pluralism' in *The Will to Believe*, see Algaier, "Reconstructing James's Early Radical Empiricism," 47.

[28] Hartmann, "A Visit to A. P. Ryder," in Weaver, *Sadakichi Hartmann*, 263.

[29] Assessing "La Modernité in Painting," Hartmann observed two 'antagonistic' yet coexistent trends, neither of which was determinant. See Weaver, *Hartmann: Critical Modernist*, 87.

[30] James, *Principles* 1, 239.

[31] Ibid., 255.

[32] Ibid., 284 and 288.

[33] Ibid., 488.

[34] Hartmann, "Modern French Painters," 29.

[35] Hartmann, "On Pictorial and Illustrative Qualities," 183.

[36] Hartmann, "On the lack of culture," 21-22.

[37] James, *Principles* 2, 467 and 468.

[38] Hartmann, "On Pictorial and Illustrative Qualities," 181 and 183.

[39] James, *Principles* 2, 305.

[40] Ibid., 468.

[41] Hartmann, *The Whistler Book*, quoted in Weaver, *Sadakichi Hartmann*, 322.

[42] DeLue, "Diagnosing Pictures," examines Hartmann's adoption of a medicalized model of art analysis in his appropriation of perceptual science as a tool.

[43] Hartmann, (as Sidney Allan), "The Influence of Visual Perception on Conception and Technique," 23.

[44] Hartmann, "Structural Units," 19.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Hartmann, (as Sidney Allan), "A Visit to Steichen's Studio," 26.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Concerning indeterminacy in late nineteenth century art, see Gamboni, *Potential Images.*
[49] James, *Principles* 1, 465.
[50] Ibid.
[51] James, *Talks to Teachers*, 81
[52] Ibid., 85.
[53] Hartmann, "A Tuesday Evening at Stéphane Mallarmé's,"10.
[54] Hartmann, "A Word About Mr. Dodge and Mr. Davies," 7.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Hartmann, "The Technique of Mystery and Blurred Effects," 24.
[57] Hartmann, "A Visit to Steichen's Studio," 27.
[58] Hartmann, "Art and Artists," 39.
[59] Hartmann, "A National American Art,"47.

“LIKE ISLANDS IN THE SEA”: INTERMINGLED CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE POLITICS OF THE SELF IN SARAH ORNE JEWETT’S LATE STORIES

CÉCILE ROUDEAU

This essay investigates Sarah Orne Jewett and William James’s shared interest in reconfiguring modes of relationality between “selves” at the turn of the century. It examines two of Jewett’s late stories, “The Foreigner” and “The Queen’s Twin,” as responses to a problem James also addressed in his interventions on the Philippine crisis, the imperial turn of US politics, and the ensuing changes in cognitive patterns of selfhood. Not unlike James, Jewett psychologized imperialism, but she did so through a *literary* reworking of the borders of her regionalist tales. To experiment with alternative modalities of transoceanic consciousness in her fiction, she used the language of regionalism as a privileged medium where such psychological, political, and cognitive reconfigurations could best be tried out.

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> … we with our lives are like islands in the sea, or like trees in the forest. The maple and the pine may whisper to each other with their leaves […] But the trees also commingle their roots in the darkness underground, and the islands also hang together through the ocean's bottom. Just so there is a continuum of cosmic consciousness, against which our individuality builds but accidental fences, and into which our several minds plunge as into a mother-sea, or reservoir.[1]
>
> ~ William James, "The Confidences of a 'Psychical Researcher'" ~

> … where the imagination stops and the consciousness of the unseen begins, who can settle that, even to oneself? [2]
>
> ~Sarah Orne Jewett, Letter to Annie Fields~

Among the many admiring letters sent to New England regionalist writer Sarah Orne Jewett upon publication of her *The Country of the Pointed Firs* in 1896, was a word from William James. "It has that incommunicable cleanness of the salt air when one first leaves town," he wrote.[3] James was apparently sensitive to Jewett's attraction to the incommunicable and her explorations of the fringes of wakefulness that he had initiated as a "psychical researcher." While much has been made of Henry James's ambivalent praise of Jewett's artistic achievement and the complex transfers between Henry's novelistic style and William's philosophical propositions, remarkably little has been said of the commonality of inquiry between Jewett and William James.[4] And yet, their work shared an interest in the crisis of their understandings of the self and new horizons of common experience amidst imperial expansion beyond national borders.

Sarah Orne Jewett, a local color writer who navigated between her family house in Southern Maine and the literary salon that she and her companion Annie Fields held in Boston, knew of "Dr. James's" intellectual ventures.[5] She had attended his oration at the unveiling of Augustus Saint Gaudens' Robert Gould Shaw relief at the edge of the Boston Common on May 31, 1897, and there is evidence that she held an epistolary correspondence with him from the 1890s onward.[6] As prominent Bostonians, both Henry and William James, as well as Jewett and Fields (the latter the widow of publisher James T. Fields), belonged to the same cosmopolitan artistic circle. This essay, however, does not attempt to trace a specific influence of William James on Jewett's literary endeavors, nor does it purport to be yet another defense and illustration of the validity of the Jamesian "stream of thought"[7] for literary studies or its influence on modernist or proto-modernist narratives. Jewett's turn-of-the century stories are not taken here as illustrations nor inspirations; rather, they may be interpreted, I propose, as responses to a common problem, to take up a word that James would not have recanted: specifically, the imperial turn of US politics and the ensuing changes in cognitive patterns of selfhood in a world turned global.

While William James philosophically addressed the questions of his time, such as "The Philippine Question" or "The Philippine Tangle," Sarah Orne Jewett used the tools that she knew best, those of literary fiction, and turned the pages of *The Atlantic Monthly* into a testing ground, taking up a task that James seemed to have renounced: namely, transforming aesthetics into an alternative practice of philosophy and politics. As Ross Posnock has recently emphasized, towards the end of his life the philosopher turned away from words themselves, as he had previously done with painting, believing that renouncing words was the only way out of the confinement of concepts and the condition of an otherwise impossible immersion into the flux of communal experience.[8] To read Jewett's fiction alongside James's revision of the politics of the self in a new imperial context, where the relations between self and other proved increasingly illegible,

is to test James's somewhat hasty conflation of words with the definitiveness of concepts, in the hope of reaching outside language what he called "the feeling of relation."[9] The language and form of Jewett's turn-of-the-century fiction, I contend, was not complicit *per se* in the cutting up of the real into bodies, selves, and concepts; rather, her late artistic experiments partook, through words, of that incommunicable muchness that ever challenges the neat distribution of the sensible into fixed categories. Driven by the same impulse to combat "the desire of monistic imperialism to establish only one way of knowing the world," Jewett's late sketches, "The Queen's Twin" and "The Foreigner," might well have out-*jamesed* James himself, capitalizing on the powers of fiction so as to think, or shall we say, to feel and make us feel philosophically without the concept.[10] In that sense, her late stories invite us not only to shift the disciplinary register from philosophy to literature, but also to explore the unprobed efficacy of fiction in the Jamesian struggle with the fixities of concepts, the paradigmatic law of language, and the deludingly secure borders of the self.

Reading Jewett with James, and assuming her "imperial sketches" to be one fictional exploration of the impact of US imperialism on conceptions of selfhood in the context of the Jamesian challenge to the bastion of a sovereign and self-possessed consciousness, is not a covert attempt to clear the New England regionalist writer from her unpalatable–and well-established–complicity with the Bostonian elite's blindness to (at best), and support of (more likely), the nation's imperialist ventures across the seas.[11] In "The Queen's Twin" and "The Foreigner," published in the *Atlantic*–and never included in *Pointed Firs*, however much they revisited the place and characters of Jewett's well-acclaimed oeuvre–empire comes to prominence in two ways: in the unlikely guise of a New England widow convinced that she and Queen Victoria are twins, and in the fascinating, if tragic, fate of a West-Indies sea-captain's wife stranded in the tight-knit community of Dunnet Landing. These two stories stand out in Jewett's legacy because they are not content formulaically to conjure up a

community of women on the rural edge of urban America, but venture to telepathically or extrasensorily pair and interlace consciousnesses that would have been unlikely to commune but for Jewett's fictional imagination. "The Queen's Twin" conjoined an old eccentric from the Maine backwoods to the Queen of England and Empress of India; "The Foreigner" conjured up a spectral sympathy between a mulatto from the French Indies and the very pillar of the community of Dunnet, the New England village *par excellence*. Taking up James's cue when, in the first installment of his "Talk To Teachers on Psychology," published in the same issue of the *Atlantic* as "The Queen's Twin," he defended "divination and perception" as tools of a national pedagogy, Jewett did more than just use a séance-like dramaturgy in her turn-of-the-century stories. I propose that she challenged the integrity of selves across divides social, racial, national or imperial. Not unlike William James, then, Jewett psychologized imperialism,[12] and did so within the borders of her regionalist tales as an attempt, I argue, to experiment in fiction with alternative modalities of the commons in a world where gender affinities were increasingly feeble correctives to the binary logics of war, and at a time when issues of national allegiances and racial differences made it ever more difficult to perform the work of (national) sympathy. In that sense, and *pace* James, Jewett's fiction did not so much attest to the incommunicable cleanness of a pleasant local color excursion; rather, it was a complex testimony to the incommunicable messiness of the times.

Regionalism, Imperialism, and the Politics of the Self

The August 1900 issue of the *Atlantic,* in which Jewett's "The Foreigner" was published, also featured an essay by Talcott Williams entitled "The Price of Order," which emphasized an unexpected transatlantic kinship between Britain and the United States, while acknowledging their former differences when it came to expansiveness:

> The United States, it is scarcely necessary to remind an American, for the first time in its history, finds itself with possessions–whether rightly or wrongly won is of no consequence for this phase of the problem–which it cannot assimilate, and which it cannot admit to that full share of mutual and associate rule which is the essence of the federal system. In some way the American republic in its new possessions has to use the experience of the British Empire, and learn to pay its price for order.[13]

In 1900, the United States had newly spread outside its continental bulk as a result of the Spanish-American War, and was in the midst of another imperial conflict in the Philippines. This turn in American politics, in the words of English geographer Halford Mackinder, contributed to transforming the world into an echo chamber where "every explosion of social forces, instead of being dissipated in a surrounding circuit of unknown space and barbaric chaos, will be sharply re-echoed from the far side of the globe."[14] Put differently, what used to be an ever-expanding world had yielded to a still uncertain conception of space as closed, intensive, and relational. Such a paradox had multiple repercussions and fostered many anxieties among those who were at a loss to envisage a national continuum when "there is no point of view absolutely public and universal" any more, and for whom the "universe" was a result of the crisscrossing of strange perspectives.[15] The price of the imperial turn of the 1890s was high and its cash-value yet to be set. For others, like William James, the new political climate offered unheard-of possibilities to test out the boundaries separating the individual self from society and those separating different individuals within a world turned global.[16] If space had indeed become intensive and relational, then, the time had come to envision interactions between monistic selves that, unlike those of the isolated trajectories of classical liberal thought, embraced porosity as the condition of solidarity.

For U.S. regionalists, including Jewett, the question of how "to make people acquainted with each other" was not a new one, but

its meaning in the new imperialist context suddenly needed disambiguating.[17] The political, ethical agenda of regionalist literature as devised by William Dean Howells, influential editor of the *Atlantic*, consisted in warding off the fear of cognitive failure between townspeople and country people, or inhabitants of distant parts of the nation. The other, in this vision, was geographically and linguistically marked, yet remained compatible with the construction of a national commons, as he or she belonged to what Howells called "our kind."[18] "Men are more like than unlike one another," he declared in his September 1887 Editor's Study. "[L]et us make them know one another better, that they may be all humbled and strengthened with a sense of their fraternity."[19] Jewett's Maine herbalists, the Tennessee mountaineers of Marie Noailles Murfree, were not the genteel readers of the *Atlantic*; yet regionalist fiction could make them "acceptable" by teaching us "to see the inner loveliness and tenderness … of those poor, hard, dull, narrow lives, with an exquisite sympathy."[20] Howells's agenda was not transformative. "Sympathy" was to teach the genteel readers of magazines like the *Atlantic* what was going on inside the hearts and minds of others without eluding their difference or particularity. Knowing the other meant knowing the other as such; doing away with the fear of cognitive failure did not mean questioning the notion of selfhood as bounded. More importantly, however pluralistic, Howell's agenda for regionalism did not envisage a racial or ethnic plurality of selves.[21]

The turn-of-the-century massive immigration of an ethnically diverse population, as well as the imperialist ambitions of the nation, challenged the regionalist utopia of a unity-in-manyness based on the literary performance of a universal acquaintance between regional white selves, however singular. While the emerging science of sociology investigated the notion of a "social self," and the young science of psychology, with William James at its head, explored the margins of consciousness, others turned to an individualist self as the last bastion against the overwhelming homogenizing forces of capitalism and the "invasion" of foreigners. The idea of an autonomous, circumscribed self,

however, became more and more impracticable, and new inquiries into the idea of an open self with leaky, or at least porous, contours, more urgent. Literary fiction, in the guise of the utopian experiments of an Edward Bellamy (to cite but one among the many authors who pushed the moment to its crisis), but also, more unexpectedly perhaps, in a specific avatar of the language of regionalism like Jewett's, turned out to be a privileged medium where such social, political, and psychological reconfigurations could best be tried out.

Tales of Relation

In the frame of Jewett's sketch entitled "The Queen's Twin," the narrator and Mrs. Todd, the pivotal character of *Pointed Firs* whom the reader again meets in this later story, decide to visit an old eccentric who live in an "out-o'-the-way place," and thinks of herself as Queen Victoria's twin sister:

> Our visit to Mrs. Abby Martin seemed in some strange way to concern the high affairs of royalty. I had just been thinking of English landscapes and of the solemn hills of Scotland with their lonely cottages and stone-walled sheepfolds and the wandering flocks on high cloudy pastures. I had often been struck by the quick interest and familiar allusion to certain members of the royal house which one found in distant neighborhoods of New England; whether some old instincts of personal loyalty have survived all changes of time and national vicissitudes, or whether it is only that the Queen's own character and disposition have won friends for her so far away, it is impossible to tell. But to hear of a twin sister was the most surprising proof of intimacy of all.[22]

Going to see the Queen's Twin involves a disorienting experience that forces the two travelers to lose their footing (Mrs. Todd has literally got in deep crossing the swamps). Space, time, and hierarchy are shaken up and redistributed along new axes. The New England countryside is oddly reminiscent of English and

Scottish moors; and not only is space displaced, time also is out of joint: in order to visit the Queen's Twin, Mrs. Todd and the narrator must take chronology backwards. Literalizing Disraeli's figure of "distant sympathies" as the foundation of the British Empire, Jewett's text moves "beyond [the] national vicissitudes" of the American Independence to re-instantiate "personal loyalty" and "intimacy" between Old and New England.[23] And it is not yet clear, at this stage in the story, what will come out of this renewed assertion of kinship between an old and a newer empire.

A decade or so before, Jewett had already–infamously–harped on the same historical tie in her *Story of the Normans*, published in Putnam's series "The Story of the Nations" in 1886, when she wrote of the "kindred ties" between England and North America via the "Norman."[24] As both Mitzi Schrag and Sandra A. Zagarell have shown, in the sketches published after *The Story of the Normans*, Jewett indexed the post-Reconstruction "healing work" of regionalist literature on her theory of Norman superiority, suggesting that an infusion of Norman blood into the collapsing southern aristocracy would result in a resurgence of national unity.[25] The rapprochement with Britain serves here and elsewhere as a strengthening of national and international prominence, as in a letter dated 20 January 1900, the logic of which might recall that of Talcott Williams in the aforementioned *Atlantic* piece:

> It is a delightful winter here as to weather, and yet the shadows and sorrows of war make it dark enough. The questions of our difficult Philippines are half forgotten–it is almost strange to say so in the anxiety about South Africa; but I like to take comfort from this, and other signs, and remember how much closer Old England and New England have come together in the last two years. That is good, at any rate. I had a most delightful proof of it in the way that many quite unexpected persons felt about a sketch I wrote (and meant to send to you!) called "The Queen's Twin."[26]

In his article on "The Foreigner," Jewett's other imperial sketch, Patrick Gleason notes how Jewett's letter "connects imperial wars in the Philippines and South Africa by consolidating the American and British Empires, the Old England attempting to retain its massive colonial territories at the close of the Victorian era and a New England (a synecdoche for the United States) building an expanding global empire."[27] He rightfully and censoriously points out that "this union of the old and new becomes possible through the destruction and subjugation of colonial bodies and the concomitant purposeful forgetting of their histories, something from which Jewett can 'take comfort.'"[28] What this interpretation ignores, however, is how the "the Queen," in Jewett's sketch, is also–above all–the distorted reflection of an odd New England woman's fantasy of love, not the Queen and Empress of India. "['T]was a very remarkable thing; we were born the same day, and at exactly the same hour, after you allowed for all the difference in time. My father figured it out sea-fashion. Her Royal Majesty and I opened our eyes upon this world together; say what you may, 'tis a bond between us," begins Miss Abby Martin (alias the Queen's Twin), who spends her day framing and reframing the official portraits of Victoria and insists on patterning her life on the life of the monarch, naming her children after the royal scions, even if it meant "ma[king] excuse to wait till I knew what she named her[s]."[29] Kinship is made up; it is a fiction that thrives more than it suffers from distance and difference.

Jewett was not alone in exploring the possibility of a common consciousness across distances. This had been one of the objects of study of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) founded in England by Frederic Myers, which William James joined in 1884.[30] Even if she eventually stopped going to séances after the numerous scandals that threw suspicion on spiritism, she remained deeply convinced of, and fascinated with, the possibility of mind communication "independently of the recognized channels of sense," to quote from Myers' definition of telepathy.[31] If "The Queen's Twin" does not stage a séance proper, we do witness a case of community of sensation across space or ESP (extrasensory

perception).[32] "'I've often walked out into the woods alone and told her what my troubles was, and it always seemed as if she told me 't was all right, an' we must have patience […]. We do think alike about so many things,' said the Queen's Twin with affectionate certainty."[33] A veritable "stream of thought" is established between Abby Martin and her "twin." The ocean that it took weeks to cross is turned into a bond, a way of "holding hands": "An' I dream about our being together out in some pretty fields, young as ever we was, and holdin' hands as we walk along. I'd like to know if she ever has that dream too."[34] By the turn of the century, the telepathic dream had been established as a common fact in psychology as one of these moments, not unlike mystical experiences, where, to quote James, "the sense of relation will be greatly enhanced."[35] But Jewett's tale goes further. Neither reciprocal nor symmetrical, such "sense of relation" inaugurates a subversive affectionate commensurability in which "fundamental differences in wealth, position, family, and geography are emphasized yet never neutralized."[36] In Jewett's tale of relation, difference and individuality abide even as intimacy allows for a common consciousness across class and national disparities.

Jewett–and this, too, she shared with William James–had evinced an early interest in the writings of Swedenborg through her friendship with Theophilus Parsons, a professor of Law at Harvard who believed in the "transmigration of consciousness," or occult communication with the spirit world. Jewett, however, like James, progressively distanced herself from Swedenborgian doctrines and became more interested in the new technologies of communication –electricity and the telephone–as palpable ways of implementing on a larger scale what had been already telepathically experienced. "All this new idea of Tesla's," she wrote to Annie Fields, in the 1890s, "must it not, like everything else, have its spiritual side, and yet where imagination stops and consciousness of the unseen begins, who can settle that even to one's self?"[37] Not too long before her death, she harped on the same electrical theme, convinced that wireless telegraph or telephone merely systematized the telepathic communication between kindred

spirits: "I have never been able to believe that wireless telephones were a new discovery; if you love people enough you can be your own battery, the only thing is to teach us how to use it,–so often it seems to go off by accident only."[38] If electricity was about to unify the world, annihilating time and abolishing space, Jewett certainly favored this new human achievement–not, however, from the disembodied and abstract point of view of science and empire. "The truth is too great for any one actual mind, even though that mind be dubbed the 'Absolute,' to know the whole of it," James wrote in his preface to *Talks to Teachers*.[39] "There is no point of view absolutely public and universal. Private and uncommunicable perceptions always remain over, and the worst of it is that those who look for them from the outside never know *where*."[40] In Jewett's tale as well, the silencing of the Queen and Empress' voice, the erasure of her focus, discards the absolute viewpoint that once constructed a global geography on clocks and compasses. Unlike Gleason, then, I do not read the sketch as part of Jewett's manifest imperialist agenda. Even if regionalism cannot be seen as "merely reacting against, but actively participating in, imperial projects,"[41] the interest of Jewett's sketch lies rather in the extent to which it complexifies the articulation between regionalism as a reenactment of an imperial femininity and regionalism as critique of a masculinist form of empire relying on the "vi and armis" of Theodore Roosevelt's America.[42]

The melodrama of mutual recognition, which has been characterized as the phantasm of colonial domesticity, is only part of Jewett's tale;[43] its climax and denouement conjures up the "unity-in-manyness" that was to be the hallmark of a pragmatic modernism. Indeed, the sketch dramatizes a triangulation of sympathies: the closeness between Mrs. Todd and Abby serves as a mediation for the budding friendship between Mrs. Todd and the city-dweller, the condition of this triangulation being that the narrator and the Queen's Twin also get along together. Somewhere at the intersection of these multiple focuses and linkages, the truth of an affective space is delivered to the reader, whose own point of view is conjured up as yet another set of coordinates in this new

relational geography that can only be shared and constructed from the inside of this female New England triangle. Gradually, what had been first advertised as timely entertainment loses its triviality and the figurative performance of the Queen's Twin, staged by Mrs. Todd for her host, comes to create a new, and rather unexpected, bond. While enjoying the show, the narrator agrees to take Abby's kinship with the Queen for granted. Casting off her ethnographic/colonial stance and her "interest" in the Martin case, the narrator is willing to take part in the telepathic game conjuring up the Queen's presence in that poor New England parlor; Mrs. Todd herself gradually discards her showwoman's apparel and, forgetting about the incongruity of it all, "with a sudden impulse" proposes to show the Queen around when she arrives.[44] At the end of the story, "one" has yielded to "we," and from this common viewpoint, both the narrator and Mrs. Todd know intimately that they are not leaving the Queen's Twin alone. A relational space has been delineated, conflating scales, shrinking distances, and performing a manner of global consciousness that eschewed the complications of war.

Intermingled Consciousnesses: What Literature Can Do

"I don't really feel able to explain, but she kind o' declared war, at least folks thought so," says Mrs. Todd about Mrs. Captain Tolland, the unnamed title character of Jewett's "The Foreigner."[45] Published eighteen months later in the same magazine as "The Queen's Twin," in the context of the Philippine-American War, Jewett's other imperial sketch undertook yet again to challenge the turn-of-the-century insensibility to the inner significance of alien lives–of lives, that is, that the New England community of Dunnet, standing as a synecdoche of a white nation, was at a loss to integrate, let alone commune with. Reflecting on "our American greenness in problems of armed conquest and colonization" apropos of the Philippines, William James lamented: "We meant no special trickery, but just handled our new problem after the pattern of the situations to which we were accustomed, viewing it as a new business enterprise. The Filipino mind, of course, was the

absolutely vital feature in the situation but this, being merely a psychological, and not a legal phenomenon, we disregarded it practically."[46] "The Foreigner" of Jewett's story is no Filipina. We come to learn her story bit by bit–how she claimed to be of French ancestry and came from "one of the Wind'ard islands." Left alone in Kingston to take care of herself after the yellow fever had killed all her relatives, she was "rescued" in the 1840s by three Dunnet sea-captains as they routinely took their part of the traffic in Maine timber, Caribbean sugar, and human bodies.[47] However different the colonial context, the writing and publishing of "The Foreigner" while the U.S. was "entangled" in the Philippines pushes us to read Jewett's sketch as her own way of dealing with the Philippines question, or, more accurately, of trying to "practically," that is fictionally, in her case, address the "vital feature" of the mind of the racial other.

An unrelated story of sorts (it had to wait more than half a century to be republished), "The Foreigner" is a story of and about relation.[48] On a stormy night, Mrs. Todd, worrying about her mother who lives away on a lonely island, invites herself in the narrator's apartment for a comforting chat. As the night grows old, reminiscences creep in of another stormy night when "old Miss Captain Tolland" (alias "the foreigner") died–a strange night that ended with the apparition of the foreigner's mother's phantasmal appearance to both the dying woman and Mrs. Todd. This hallucination, to take up the contemporary psychical terminology, could have contributed to further ostracizing the mulatto from the French Isles, as the "dark" figure of the mother reiterated the racial otherness of the so-called "foreigner."[49] Instead, Mrs. Todd, who had promised her own mother, however half-heartedly, to take care of the stranger, suddenly found herself holding hands with the dying woman, bonded with her by their common experience of the beckoning of the occult. As Mrs. Todd remembers that strange night and the intimate relation between mother and daughter across the great divide of death, the threatened link between herself and her own mother is restored, as her intimacy is strengthened with

the narrator, who finds herself participating in this border experience of "join[ing] worlds together."[50]

"The Foreigner," along with other sketches by Jewett, has been read as the construction of a feminist utopia (Pryse), as a spiritualist, Swedenborgian-inspired story (Heller), and more recently, as a meditation on social and racial exclusion (Schrag, Foote) via the use of the Gothic and the genre of the ghost story as tools of imperialist amnesia and nostalgia (Gleason).[51] But it may also be useful to go back to her sketch in the more specific context of turn-of-the-century U.S. imperialism that raised the question of the boundaries of selves anew when they were no longer of "our kind." Unlike "The Queen's Twin," "The Foreigner" did not content itself with pairing two consciousnesses through extrasensory perception. It shattered the partition between selves and attempted to imagine a commons, indexed on the binding of permeable particularities and the agency of subliminal selves across a racial and imperial rift. Making the most of the possibilities of fiction, the sketch tried out another of the research topics of the newly founded American branch of the SPR–the occult correspondence between the living and the dead that enabled the linkage of selves through the sharing of mystical or hallucinatory experiences of connection across the metaphysical divide of death. "All of a sudden she set right up in bed with her eyes wide open, an' I stood an' put my arm behind her; … an' I looked the way she was lookin', an' I see someone standin' there against the dark," confides Mrs. Todd in her own dialectal tongue – "the way," as "in the direction of" or "in the same manner as."[52] What is happening is a conjoining of selves through an intermingling of viewpoints.[53] To catch a glimpse of the "dark face," Mrs. Todd has to discard the position of the external spectator which condemns us to remain blind to the "inner significance" of the lives of others, to quote James in *Talks to Teachers*.[54] James explains:

> We are but finite and each one of us has some single specialized vocation of his own. … only in some pitiful

> dreamer, some philosopher, poet or romancer, or when the common practical man becomes a lover, does the hard externality give way, and a gleam of insight into the ejective world … the vast world of inner life beyond us, so different from that of outer seeming, illuminate our mind. Then the whole scheme of our customary values gets confounded, then *our self is riven and its narrow interest fly to pieces, then a new center and a new perspective must be found* (italics mine).[55]

When apperceiving the "dark face" of the foreigner's mother, Mrs. Todd's "whole scheme of customary values" indeed gets "confounded." Her self, because of love, or because of "the poet or romancer['s]" art of fiction, is riven, and "its narrow interest fly to pieces." No longer focusing on her own troubles, the New Englander becomes aware of a new center, or, more technically, her own center of consciousness shifts to its indeterminate margins: the penumbra of the self where, according to James, things of which we are dimly aware or even unaware suddenly beckon us. In the chiaroscuro of the death chamber, something happens around the unlit edges of perception. If we follow James's topology, Mrs. Todd's shift of focus allows the marginal, or subliminal, regions of her consciousness to come momentarily to the fore; open as these regions are to the influence of other consciousnesses, what happens in this mystical moment of interaction is the performance of an odd continuity between formerly discrete selves. In *Human Immortality*, published in 1898, James inserts a graph displaying one horizontal line (the threshold between the subliminal and the superliminal) cutting through a wave that represents a stream of consciousness.[56] "The graph," says critic Francesca Bordogna, "illustrates not only the threshold of consciousness of one individual but also the fact that different 'organisms' could intermingle below the threshold of consciousness. … If the threshold 'sank low enough to uncover all the waves,' the consciousness (or consciousnesses) surfacing above the threshold line might also become continuous."[57] In the

shared hallucinatory experience described in Jewett's tale, Mrs. Todd and the foreigner's selves are no longer circumscribed and insulated. They have become porous, permeable not only to the influence of the departed spirit–which, according to James, may have a subliminal consciousness of her own–but open also to each other's influences within what he calls a "cosmic consciousness" or a "mother-sea."[58] Plunging into a mother-sea, indeed, Mrs. Todd and the foreigner mingle their selves for a moment across divides at once racial, cultural, imperial, and metaphysical. Never does Mrs. Todd lose her self entirely, however. The first person pronoun "I" abides and recurs in her narrative. She and the foreigner remain different even as they "ha[ve] hold of hands."[59] Thus Jewett's late sketch also takes place in the unstable space of confluence *cum* difference that fascinated James in the last years of his life. Offering the reader a series of triangulations between consciousnesses–Mrs. Todd, the foreigner, and "Mother"; Mrs. Todd, the narrator, and the foreigner; the reader, the foreigner, and the narrator–the text implements the self-compounding of consciousnesses so dear to James, in which continuity is established without doing away with difference, and "pulses of experience" throb in sync and in defiance of selfishness and exclusion.[60]

Such intermingling of selves–that of the mixed-raced woman from the West Indies, who, the story suggests, may have tried to run away from slavery in Martinique, only to be caught up by the fate of the tragic mulatta on the cold New England coast[61]–only happens in death, which may be–and has been–interpreted as an ultimate safeguard against cultural or literal miscegenation. Something remains, however, that cannot be too easily dismissed: the persistence within the community, in its very heart–Mrs. Todd's garden–of "some strange and pungent odors that roused a dim sense and remembrance of something in the forgotten past. Some of these might once have belonged to sacred and mystic rites, and have had some occult knowledge handed with them down the centuries; but now they pertained only to humble compounds brewed at intervals with molasses or vinegar or spirits

in a small caldron on Mrs. Todd's kitchen stove."[62] What has been read as a survival of New England witchery begs a new interpretation once the reader has been acquainted with the "other" story of Dunnet Landing. In the distorted mirror of Mrs. Todd's self, there lurks an "Africanist" presence, to take up Toni Morrison's phrase, that will not pass.[63] The foreign, in the end, does not abide as a ghost only, but as a throbbing presence within the fantasmatic New England self.

Apropos "The Philippine Question," James complained in 1899: "If ever there was a situation to be handled psychologically, it was this one. … [W]e have treated the Filipinos as if they were a painted picture, an amount of mere matter in our way. They are too remote from us ever to be realized as they exist in their inwardness."[64] Jewett's "foreigner," as we remember her, is not "a painted picture," but an eloquent inwardness brought close to us in the mother-sea of intermingled consciousnesses. Handling the situation "psychologically," I suggest, may even be what Jewett purposed to do in her late sketch–to use the possibilities of fiction to try out alternative solutions to the "problem" raised by the intrusion of a foreign inwardness in the community of Dunnet.

CONCLUSION

It may not be mere chance that Jewett never included "The Queen's Twin" nor "The Foreigner" in *Pointed Firs*. They are "with" her other sketches, yet never quite made it into an all-inclusive whole, or œuvre. They are tales of relation, of conjunction across geographical distances and unbridgeable differences that do not however preclude intimacy and love–or, vice versa, tales of intimacy and love that never quite dismiss difference. "Things are 'with' one another in many ways, but nothing includes everything, or dominates over everything. The word 'and' trails along after every sentence. Something always escapes," James wrote in *A Pluralistic Universe*.[65] "The pluralistic world is thus more like a federal republic than like an empire or a kingdom," he adds.[66] When consciousness is no more a substantive entity but "a particular sort of relation towards one another"–and

Jewett's "foreigner," after all, even her "Queen," are nothing but relations, stories that are shared and used as links conjoining regional and national and imperial porous selves–there emerge new possibilities of interaction that can never be circumscribed within the neat boundaries of a system or an empire.[67] Jewett's late sketches do participate in this search for, and more importantly in this practice of, shattering the essential foundations of the self; because they require readers to try out new perspectives and ask us to experience the multifariousness of truth in the making, they are experimental spaces where frontiers tremble and words lose their fixed referents to become deictics. The Queen's Twin and the foreigner are not stand-alone units; those substantives are deceiving inasmuch as, to take up a Jamesian phrase, neither of them exist as "substantive parts."[68] Both only acquire meaning in and as relation–to other characters, to the reader. Such an aesthetic tour-de-force, I propose, is Jewett's way of doing philosophy and politics–turning substantives into empty signifiers, fragile spaces to be inhabited; sentient non-essences that also, however, and disturbingly so, tend to possess, or invade, or conquer, one's self. This should not be dismissed. Reading Jewett's tales of the compounding of selves does not erase the anxiety that somehow goes unacknowledged in James's description of a self that could actually step out of the body and invade physical space. Neither in Jewett nor in James does the thrill of such intimacy of consciousnesses across difference go without the fright of (com)penetration, the ambivalent excitement of possession. We are puzzled and should remain so, left as we are to trust that "something [which] always escapes," the "unclassified residuum" of experience that defies interpretive closure and the confines of Jewett's ever unsettled œuvre.[69]

Université Paris Diderot
cecile.roudeau@gmail.com

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NOTES

[1] James, "Confidence of a 'Psychical Researcher,'" 374.

[2] Jewett, *Letters of Sarah Orne Jewett*, 110-111.

[3] Matthiessen, *Sarah Orne Jewett*, 101.

[4] On Henry and William, see Posnock, *The Trial of Curiosity*, and Lapoujade, *Fictions du pragmatisme.* Henry James's esteem for Jewett's work is well known; see Bishop, "Henry James Criticizes the Tory Lover." Their literary friendship, though possibly begun as early as 1881, did not flourish until September, 1898, when she and Annie Fields visited James at Lamb House. Soon after, in his notebook entry for February 19, 1899, he acknowledged that her story "A Lost Lover" in the *Tales of New England* had provided him with the germ of an idea for a story. In "Mr. and Mrs. Fields," he famously and ambiguously hailed *Pointed Firs* as her "beautiful little quantum of achievement." See Henry James, "Mr. and Mrs. Fields," 278.

[5] Jewett, *Sarah Orne Jewett Letters*, 225.

[6] See "Sarah Orne Jewett Correspondence."

[7] James, *Principles of Psychology*, 224 and *passim.*

[8] See Posnock, *Renunciation*, 67-73.

[9] James, *Principles of Psychology*, 244; 248.

[10] Carette, *William James's Hidden Religious Imagination*, 182.

[11] Jewett's contribution to American letters, once hailed as the work of sympathy, has been revisited as complicit in the turn-of-the-century racialist imperialism that was not uncommon among the New England elite. The turning point in Jewett's reception is June Howard's edited collection *New Essays on* The Country of the Pointed Firs, in particular Sandra Zagarell's "*Country*'s Portrayal of Community and the Exclusion of Difference" and Susan Gillman's "Regionalism and nationalism in Jewett's *Country of the Pointed Firs*." In "Sarah Orne Jewett's 'The Foreigner' and the Transamerican Routes of New England Regionalism," Gleason also points to Fields and Jewett's friendship with Thomas Aldrich, a well-known Bostonian nativist, and their 1896 cruise in the Caribbean, during which they dined with Haitian president Florvil Hyppolite. Jewett's letters from the Caribbean are fraught with a racialized rhetoric reminiscent,

Gleason contends, of the nostalgic plantation literature of the 1850s.

[12] Beisner, *Twelve Against Empire*, 46.

[13] Williams, "The Price of Order," 219.

[14] Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot," 422.

[15] James, *Talks to Teachers*, v.

[16] Bordogna, *William James at the Boundaries*, 191.

[17] Petrie, "'To Make Them Acquainted,'" 104. On the cultural and political work of "acquaintance" in postbellum U.S. regionalism, see Petrie's full article.

[18] Howells, "Editor's Study," 639.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., 638-39.

[21] See Roudeau, "Geographies of difference," 130-131; 143-149 and Wonham, "Writing Realism, Policing Consciousnesses," 702-706.

[22] Jewett, "The Queen's Twin," 238.

[23] Disraeli, "The Maintenance of Empire," 272.

[24] "To-day the Northman, the Norman, and the Englishman, and a young nation on this western shore of the Atlantic are all kindred who, possessing a rich inheritance, should own the closest of kindred ties." Jewett, *The Story of the Normans*, 366.

[25] See Schrag, "'Whiteness' as Loss,'" 189; 195 and Zagarell, "Crosscurrents," 358.

[26] Jewett, *Sarah Orne Jewett Letters*, 168-169.

[27] Gleason, "Sarah Orne Jewett's 'The Foreigner,'" 41.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Jewett, "The Queen's Twin," 242; 243.

[30] "James's interest in supernormal phenomena has been traced back to the late 1860s, but he started more actively investigating psychic phenomena in the 1880s. In 1884 he joined the SPR of London, serving as president of the society in 1894-5, and as vice president for the subsequent decade. He was also one of the

founders for the American SPR, established in 1884." Bordogna, *William James at the Boundaries,* 100.

[31] On Jewett and spiritism, see Heller, "Living for the Other World," 80-81; 88-90 and Myers, *Human Personality*, xxii.

[32] It is also the case in other stories by Jewett, most notably in *The Country of the Pointed Firs* between Mrs. Todd and her mother. See Folsom, "'Tact is a Kind of Mind-Reading,'" 68-70 and also Solomon, "'The Queen's Twin,'" 359.

[33] Jewett, "The Queen's Twin," 244.

[34] Ibid., 245.

[35] James, "A Suggestion about Mysticism," 87.

[36] Solomon, "'The Queen's Twin,'" 365.

[37] Jewett, *Letters*, 65.

[38] Jewett, *Sarah Orne Jewett Letters*, 242.

[39] James, *Talks to Teachers*, v.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Gleason, "Sarah Orne Jewett's 'The Foreigner,'" 40.

[42] James uses the expression "*vi et armis*" to characterize "the pretension of our nation to inflict its own inner ideals and institutions *vi et armis* upon Orientals." James, *Talk to Teachers,* vi.

[43] Rafael, "Colonial Domesticity," 661.

[44] Jewett, "The Queen's Twin," 245.

[45] Jewett, "The Foreigner," 157

[46] James, "Diary of a French Naval Officer," 685.

[47] See Walsh, "Sugar, Sex, and Empire," 313-314.

[48] Green was the first to include "The Foreigner" in his 1962 edition, *The World of Dunnet Landing.*

[49] Jewett, "The Foreigner," 166.

[50] Ibid., 167.

[51] See Pryse, "Woman at Sea," 247-250; Heller, "Living for the Other World," 79-80, 88-89; Schrag, "'Whiteness' as Loss,'" 188-190, 199; Foote, "'I Feared to Find,'" 51-56; and Gleason, "Sarah Orne Jewett's 'The Foreigner,'" 24-25, 29-39.

[52] Jewett, "The Foreigner," 166.
[53] Ibid., 167.
[54] James, *Talks to Teachers*, 242.
[55] Ibid., 240-241.
[56] James, *Human Immortality*, 64.
[57] Bordogna, *William James at the Boundaries*, 207-208.
[58] James, *Human Immortality*, vi.
[59] Jewett, "The Foreigner," 166.
[60] James, *A Pluralistic Universe,* 282. He wrote, "On the principle of going behind the conceptual function altogether, however, and looking to the more primitive flux of the sensational life for reality's true shape, a way is open to us, … The concrete pulses of experience appear pent in by no such definite limits as our conceptual substitutes for them are confined by."
[61] Gleason, "Sarah Orne Jewett's 'The Foreigner,'" 34.
[62] Jewett, *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, 4.
[63] Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*, 6; Schrag, "'Whiteness' as Loss,'" 195.
[64] James, "The Philippine Question," 159.
[65] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 321
[66] Ibid., 321-322.
[67] James, "Does 'Consciousness' Exist?," 478.
[68] James, *Principles of Psychology,* 246.
[69] James, "The Hidden Self," 361.

"VARIATIONS ON A THEME BY WILLIAM JAMES": VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE IN THE WRITING OF URSULA K. LE GUIN

AMELIA Z. GREENE

This paper reads Ursula K. Le Guin's utopian writing in the light of William James's philosophy, approaching her celebrated novel *The Dispossessed* alongside James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*. While Le Guin's explicit references to James in archival documents and published works are few, James's essay "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life" has long been acknowledged as a source for Le Guin's celebrated short story, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas." This paper seeks to deepen the connection between Le Guin and James, and to comment on James's potential relevance for readings of utopian and speculative fiction more broadly.

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At the conclusion of Ursula K. Le Guin's handwritten draft of "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas," she includes a note identifying William James's essay "The Moral Philosopher and Moral Life" as the "inspiration for the tale."[1] As the manuscript page and later references to James in published editions of the story make clear, Le Guin wished to keep the connection between her utopian narrative and James's essay at the fore of her readers' minds. The story's most recent appearance in *The Unreal and the Real: The Selected Short Stories of Ursula K. Le Guin* includes the now standard parenthetical under the title: "Variations on a theme by William James."[2] In Le Guin's other utopias, however, overt references to James disappear. In the case of her novel *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia,* James's influence is only acknowledged in early notebook entries on the various theoretical formulations of time at play in her fictional universe.[3] As I argue, however, the subtlety of Le Guin's references to James belies the pervasiveness of his influence on her utopian thinking and writing.

As Le Guin acknowledges in a recent edited edition of Thomas More's *Utopia*, she has always rejected "the blueprint utopia, the builder's kit for a rationally conceived Good Society," in favor of a less "rationally conceived" model.[4] In order to create more satisfying utopian foundations, she reaches beyond the purely rational toward categories of belief that cannot be empirically observed or tested in everyday experience. Le Guin's formation and description of such foundational and structuring beliefs is heavily reliant on forms of thinking and feeling that James gathers into the category of "religious experience."[5] This essay will focus primarily on Le Guin's novel *The Dispossessed* in relation to James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*, attending first to Le Guin's engagement with "The Reality of the Unseen" as James examines it in Lecture III of the *Varieties,* and then to characterizations of the "Mystic" that find their way into *The Dispossessed* from Lectures XVI and XVII. Before approaching these larger texts, however, I will begin by examining Le Guin's one explicit reference to James in her published work. These initial

observations pave the way for the final section of the essay, where I will comment on the implications of reading Le Guin's utopian fiction in the light of Jamesian philosophy for utopian studies more broadly.

THE STRENUOUS MOOD

"The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas," first published in 1973, features a utopian society founded on the suffering of one individual, a child imprisoned in a dark cell. Le Guin mirrors the scenario that James originally posits in "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life" in order to test the reader's tolerance for the utilitarian position that the suffering of a few individuals is acceptable if it ensures the happiness of many. Most residents of Omelas accept the child's suffering as the condition of their own happiness, which "is no vapid, irresponsible happiness," but one deepened and strengthened by the knowledge of the suffering child, whom all residents are brought to see in their adolescence.[6] The child's suffering plays a crucial role in the emotional and intellectual lives of Omelas' inhabitants. As Le Guin writes, "it is the existence of the child, and their knowledge of its existence, that makes possible the nobility of their architecture, the poignancy of their music, the profundity of their science."[7] Some individuals, however, cannot accept this condition, and choose to leave the city. "Each alone," Le Guin explains, "they go west or north, towards the mountains. They go on. They leave Omelas, they walk ahead into the darkness, and they do not come back."[8] Le Guin does not explain the particular reasoning of these individuals, who reject the conditions of the society they were born into. She makes no claims regarding their particular abilities or strengths, but simply acknowledges that such individuals exist, and that they declare their rejection of utilitarianism by responding independently, affectively, rather than collectively or intellectually, to the moral test of the child's existence.

In "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life," James proposes a similar test, and offers a clearer explanation for the possibility of independent resistance in the context of collective

complacence. James likewise locates this possibility in the affective responses of decision-making individuals, whom he places at the center of any truly ethical society. The utopian vision that James initially offers and Le Guin later develops is a particularly stark example of society built upon inequality. In each example, the happiness of some depends on the suffering of others. The strongest possible counter to such a system, for James and for Le Guin, lies not in the logical arguments of philosophers, but in the emotional repugnance of the feeling individual: the independent person in whom affective responsiveness has grown particularly strong, counterbalancing the weight of logically sound but morally repugnant systems of moral philosophy. "What," James asks in reference to the collective happiness gained in return for the suffering of a single individual, "except a specifical [sic] and independent sort of emotion can it be which would make us immediately feel … how hideous a thing would be its enjoyment when deliberately accepted as the fruit of such a bargain?"[9] James calls this "specifical and independent" emotion "the strenuous mood," and asserts that only "the wilder passions … the big fears, loves, and indignations" can awaken this affective ethical capacity.[10]

Such an awakening is also depicted in the draft of another of Le Guin's short stories, untitled and never published on its own. Composed in the same notebook as the first recorded draft of "Omelas," this second story follows an alien from a utopian world founded on socialist-anarchist principles as he is abducted by inhabitants of a neighboring planet, where he encounters structural inequality for the first time. This short story would grow into her 1974 *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia,* one of many novels set within Le Guin's Hainish universe (an interlocking system of immense complexity and intricacy developed over many loosely grouped texts), which follows the life of Shevek, a theoretical physicist who works to unify two opposing theories of Time. The "Ambiguous Utopia" of the novel's subtitle is not founded upon the suffering of this one individual, however, but upon socialist-pacifist-anarchist principles that demand shared

experience and therefore shared suffering.[11] On his planet Anarres, collective well-being is paramount, and Shevek's unique approach to the physical sciences is interpreted as an inappropriate assertion of individuality – or "egoizing."[12] The principles of cooperation and shared resources (including ideas) that pervade life on Anarres are collectively referred to as "Odonianism" after the writings of the movement's revolutionary founder. Nearly two centuries before Le Guin's novel is set, Odo's followers rebelled against the capitalistic system of their home planet, Urras, and established an egalitarian society on its orbiting moon. Shevek is caught between his commitment to Odonian principles and his sense that the Annaresti revolutionaries have lost their way.

The Odonians living on the moon-planet Anarres are anarchists in the purist sense (in ideology if not always in practice). Odonianism admits of no fixed or unchangeable principles, is suggestive rather than prescriptive, and Odo's original writings are available to all for interpretation and re-interpretation. The Anarresti are, in name and deed, responsible for perpetually recreating their society in all that they do, but in its efforts to do away with excess – with everything that is, in Odonian terms, "excremental" – Odonianism has succumbed to stagnation and censorship. Shevek's work in theoretical physics and his attempts to share that work with scientists on Urras lands him before a government tribunal. Rather than give up his research, he chooses to leave Anarres – to walk away as from Omelas – and to travel to Urras in order to continue his work unfettered by Anarresti dedication to insularity and utility.

Shevek's journey to Urras, and his efforts to reestablish communication between two separated cultures under the aegis of scientific discovery, causes controversy and disruption on both planets. The novel's chapters alternate between Shevek's childhood, leading up to his departure from Anarres, and his journey to Urras, leading to his return home. Le Guin structures the novel as a simultaneously developmental and circular narrative that is, like the theory of time that Shevek works to develop, both linear and recursive.

The Dispossessed is thus an embodiment as much as a depiction of the circularity of time and experience. Alternating chapters trace two parallel journeys; the first introduces Shevek at the moment of his departure from Anarres, and serves as both the reader's and Shevek's introduction to Urrasti life. The second begins with Shevek's childhood, and serves as his and the reader's introduction to Anarresti life. Both begin with the protagonist learning to orient himself within a new language, a new social structure, a new reality, and both end with a departure that might also be characterized as a return: one with Shevek's departure from Anarres and return to the "home" planet, and the other with his departure from Urras and return to the new circumstances coming into being on Anarres. The reader must alternate between these two paralleled trajectories throughout the novel, while numerous smaller and more intricate parallels continually insist on the circularity of experience throughout linear time, which forms the basis of Shevek's work in theoretical physics. *The Dispossessed* is not, like "Omelas," simply concerned with the act of walking away from an unethical society; Shevek's journey takes him full circle, and the novel concludes with his return to a reinvigorated and open-minded Anarres. Le Guin's utopian thinking finds more complete and, as I argue, more Jamesian expression in *The Dispossessed*, as she acknowledges the importance of return as well as progression: of finding new names for older ways of thinking and feeling that shaped, if not utopia, at least the desire for it.

In an archival document in which Le Guin consolidates many months of drafting *The Dispossessed*, elements of Jamesian philosophy appear in two passages that critique traditional elements of utopian fiction. The first again places affect at the heart of her interest in larger social and political structures: "What is wrong with most utopias," Le Guin writes, is that "*They lack emotion*."[13] The second reflects the principle of continuous societal change and adaptation that underlies James's understanding of ethical philosophy in "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life." As James writes, his "main purpose … is to show that there is no

such thing possible as an ethical philosophy dogmatically made up in advance. We all help to determine the content of ethical philosophy so far as we contribute to the race's moral life. In other words, there can be no final Truth in Ethics any more than in Physics, until the last man has had his experience and said his say."[14] Ethical philosophy, in Jamesian terms, is the product of a slow accretion of individual experiences and findings which, if shared, subsequently guides communities in reshaping their social and political environments. Knowledge of ethical philosophy will continue to adapt and evolve, James insists, for as long as new individuals come into being. As Le Guin posits, utopian writing traditionally suffers from the exclusion of such a principle of inevitable adaptation and change:

> All utopias are postulated or pictured as unchanging . . . Of course the fact is nothing we can do is perfect, and therefore it <u>will</u> change, and there isn't a bloody thing we can do about it, except educate ourselves and our children to seek harmony with the world and one another, to combine courage with caution, to dislike waste, to accept loss, to refuse to be bossed about, to refuse to boss others about, and to keep a religious attitude towards life and society: by which I mean – what do I mean? – A sense that things are larger, broader, and much longer than they seem on the surface.[15]

This passage signals a shift in Le Guin's thinking about *The Dispossessed* that points toward James's project in *Varieties*. Her solution to the problem of "unchanging" utopias involves, at least in part, an acknowledgment of the "religious attitude" that forms the foundation of tenets like the ones she lists here. Readers must turn to James's *Varieties,* not "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life," in order to examine the epistemological effects of the "religious attitude," which James identifies at the beginning of Book III as "the belief that there is an unseen order, and that our

supreme good lies in harmoniously adjusting ourselves thereto."[16] Like James, Le Guin's interest in the "religious attitude" and "the unseen order" it aims to harmonize with is driven by a more foundational concern with unverifiable but powerful beliefs, and the individuals that hold such beliefs in defiance of a lack of concrete evidence. Reading *The Dispossessed* alongside the *Varieties* widens the field of search for James's influence on American literature, deepening our understanding of contemporary utopian fiction that explores the processes by which foundational beliefs – whether in ethics or in physics – come into being and find expression. Guided by Jamesian philosophy, Le Guin investigates the role such foundational beliefs come to play in the everyday experiences and actions of individuals who would work to create more defensible, even utopian, social and political environments.

THE REALITY OF THE UNSEEN

In Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*, as in James's *Varieties*, "religion" is postulated as a constant feature of human psychology that does not vanish with the removal of institutionalized or even formalized belief systems.[17] Like James, Le Guin does not investigate a particular system of belief, instead asking a larger question about the nature of unverifiable beliefs: how an individual comes to accept or deny certain foundational precepts without the ability to definitively test them. If James's central project in the *Varieties* is to explain or rationalize the proliferation of unverifiable beliefs while "[ignoring] the institutional branch entirely," Le Guin's project in *The Dispossessed* is to ask what forms of "religious experience" exist in the absence of any institutional or formal religion as such.[18]

Like James, Le Guin approaches the topic through particular informants, focusing on the "personal religion" of individuals.[19] Shevek, referred to throughout drafting documents as "Saint Shevek," is singled out and eventually ostracized from Anarresti social and scientific communities for his willingness to pursue knowledge outside the proscribed bounds of custom. Shevek's academic advisor criticizes and later censors his work as

"superstitious-religious speculations," adding Shevek to a growing list of Anarresti citizens who are unofficially but effectively punished for expressing individual initiative outside established norms.[20] The punitive actions taken by members of the central Anarresti bureaucracy strengthen Shevek's view that Odonian principles of equality and cooperation have calcified into a tyranny of the majority. His decision to leave Anarres and attempt to reestablish communication with Urras becomes necessary for the continuation of his work, but also leaves him branded as a traitor, unsure of whether he will be allowed to return.[21]

In one of Le Guin's first depictions of Shevek, he converses with Kimoe, an Urrasti doctor (resident of the home planet) on his journey from Anarres to Urras. The two men speak to each other in Iotic, one of the dominant languages on Urras, as Kimoe has no familiarity at all with Pravic, the first "rationally invented language that has become the tongue of a great people."[22] Pravic contains few possessive pronouns, lacks most transitive verbs, and has no words for things like "hell," "damn," or "prison." These entities, and the ideas behind them, do not exist on Anarres. As Le Guin's narrator explains:

> The singular forms of the possessive pronoun in Pravic were used mostly for emphasis; idiom avoided them. Little children might say "my mother," but very soon they learned to say "the mother." Instead of "my hand hurts," it was "the hand hurts me," and so on; to say "this one is mine and that's yours" in Pravic, one said, "I use this one and you use that."[23]

The effect of Le Guin's banishment of possessive pronouns is a prioritization of function over essence: of what a thing does instead of what it is. A person (like a mother) or an object (like a hand) is defined by the activity it performs, not to whom it belongs. Like James's distinction between transitive and substantive parts of thinking in "The Stream of Thought" chapter of *Principles of*

Psychology, Le Guin's rethinking of object and agency urges readers to resist the ease with which our language collapses form and function.

The absence of ownership and hierarchy in the social structure of Anarres is mirrored in its speech; the ideal is practiced and reinforced in the communicative practices of all its inhabitants. Odonian philosophy is woven, and can be unraveled, on the basis of linguistic framing, and Le Guin's novel immediately brings this principle to bear on questions of religious knowledge and religious experience. What would such experience look like, she implicitly asks, within a linguistic structure that does not admit of fundamental essence: that does not entertain the notion of a "soul" apart from a functioning body? As Shevek and Kimoe continue to converse, it becomes clear that each man "took for granted certain relationships that the other could not even see. For instance, this curious matter of superiority, of relative height, was important to the Urrasti; they often used the word 'higher' as a synonym for 'better' in their writings, where an Anarresti would use 'more central.'"[24] The Urrasti conflation of "higher" with "better" is, of course, familiar to Le Guin's readers in English.

One of the uses of a constructed (or in Le Guin's case, partially constructed) language is, of course, to comment on her reader's own habitual linguistic practices, and reveal the hidden or unseen forces at play in ordinary language. The most important miscommunication between Shevek and the doctor concerns Kimoe's conflation of the word "religion" with the idea of institution or a fixed organizing body. Because the Odonians acknowledge no deity and have no institutions that could resemble a church, Kimoe assumes that there is no religion on Anarres. Shevek attempts to correct him:

> "The vocabulary makes it difficult," Shevek said … "In Pravic the word *religion* is seldom. No, what do you say – rare. Not often used. Of course, it is one of the Categories: the Fourth Mode. Few people learn to practice all the Modes. But the Modes are

> built of the natural capacities of the mind, you could not seriously believe that we had no religious capacity? That we could do physics while we were cut off from the profoundest relationship man has with the cosmos?"[25]

Shevek's description of "religion" on Anarres comes close to paraphrasing the definition James offers in his "Circumscription of the Topic." "Religion," he writes, "shall mean for us *the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine*."[26] Although "solitude" is as rare on Anarres as the word "religion," Shevek likewise frames his thoughts on the religious capacity in terms of individual experience: one's experience of relationality to a "cosmos" that surrounds and involves the self. In the absence of prescription or institution, Le Guin postulates, religious experience or "the religious capacity" becomes one of many equivalent "Modes" of understanding.

Shevek's decision to leave Anarres is conditioned by his commitment to Odonian, though originally Jamesian, principles of continuous societal change and adaptation. That his commitment to such principles necessitates a break with and eventual exile from his native culture also aligns him with the saints and mystics under consideration in James's text. As James Campbell notes in his recent consideration of the early reception of the *Varieties*, James framed his lectures as an investigation of "the inner experiences of great-souled persons wrestling with the crises of their fate."[27] That such persons based their beliefs upon hypotheses that could not be validated by scientific experimentation was, as Campbell notes, a difficulty for James's early readers. The data upon which James's informants construct their concept of the unseen constituted an affront to empirical scientific discovery. However, as James demonstrates throughout *Varieties*, the spiritual and the scientific coexist at the point where the scientific pursuit of humanity's

"profoundest relationship … with the cosmos" touches the neighboring field of religious experience.[28]

Le Guin's novel is one example of a larger body of utopian fiction that takes the proximity of theoretical science and religious experience as a given, and highlights the experiences of individual protagonists working through tensions between experiential and empirically demonstrable versions of what might be called "the real." In doing so, protagonists like Shevek rely upon a hybrid of speculative and scientific methodology that mirrors what Frederic Jameson has recently called Einstein's "thought experiments" or "pedagogical demonstrations."[29] As Jameson writes, these are "texts more closely related to children's books than to applications for a grant. Yet these 'examples' are not to be understood as mere rhetoric: they pioneered a form of schematism which authorised the early writers of science fiction to take their cosmological fantasies literally."[30] Jameson is far from the only critic to identify overlaps between Einstein's theories and the development of utopian science fiction as a popular genre. He is also not the first to draw connections between science fiction and the scientific and philosophical movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, of which Jamesian Pragmatism played such a major role.[31] The connection Jameson draws between Einstein's writing and "children's books" merely deepens the larger question of genre and influence that I attend to in the case of Le Guin. Just as Einstein's texts provide theoretical scaffolding within which science fiction writers could postulate new worlds and new forms of social and political life, James's writing proves foundational for speculative projects that attempt to portray both the rational and irrational elements that imbue all such reimaginings.

ACTING 'AS IF'

In *Pragmatism and American Experience*, Joan Richardson reminds readers of James that a central feature of what he called "religious experience" was its adaptive potential. As Richardson writes, religious experience was for James "an aspect of human nature serving as successful adaptation to changing

environments."[32] The content of religious belief, and the appearance of the religious figure, should necessarily evolve as individual believers find themselves in new circumstances. Toward that end, Richardson asserts, James sought to identify or offer "a new mythology … a new kind of imagining, a new kind of spiritual exercise" that would satisfy the spiritual needs of modern individuals.[33] Such a mythology is offered up, I argue, by the speculative writer, who re-imagines the saint or the mystic as the impassioned scientist, driven onward by a theory that they are (as yet) unable to prove.

Shevek is one of Le Guin's many contributions to this relatively new mythological category. He investigates Time, and seeks to develop a mathematical formula that reconciles two competing concepts of its shape as linear (Sequency) and as circular (Simultaneity). In the midst of narrating Shevek's work on his second book, Le Guin offers the one explicit connection between Shevek's experience as a scientist and the experience of the religious believer. His partner, Takver, recognizes but does not have words to describe his condition:

> On days when he had no classes, when she came in he might have been sitting at the table for six or eight hours straight. When he got up he would lurch with fatigue, his hands would shake, and he was scarcely coherent. The usage the creator spirit gives its vessels is rough, it wears them out, discards them, gets a new model. For Takver there were no replacements, and when she saw how hard Shevek was used she protested. She would have cried out as Odo's husband, Asieo, did once, "For God's sake, girl, can't you serve Truth a little at a time?" – except that she was the girl, and was unacquainted with God.[34]

Le Guin reaches back into Odonian history to find a parallel for Shevek's zealous dedication to the "Truth." Although Takver is

"unacquainted with God," her world was founded by one of those chosen by "the creator spirit" that Le Guin names in this passage, and that returns to take control of Shevek while he is working. Odonian ontology dictates that such a "spirit" becomes discernible not in essence but in function; Takver and Shevek recognize it for what it does in relation to themselves as individuals, and do not concern themselves with what it is outside of that relation. In this scene, connections to James's *Varieties* become especially pertinent, since he prioritizes the effects of religious experience on "our practice" rather than a connection to an identifiable deity. As James writes:

> Our conceptions always require a sense-content to work with, and as the words 'soul,' 'God,' 'immortality,' cover no distinctive sense-content whatever, it follows that theoretically speaking they are words devoid of any significance. Yet strangely enough they have a definite meaning *for our practice*. We can act *as if* there were a God; feel *as if* we were free; consider Nature *as if* she were full of special designs; lay plans *as if* we were to be immortal; and we find then that these words do make a genuine difference in our moral life.[35]

James's reiteration of Kantian principles is limited to the "use" of religious concepts for "our moral life." It is Le Guin's license as a writer of fiction, rather than philosophy, to illuminate their potential use in matters of science. While Shevek's research does not directly probe the conceptions James identifies in this passage, his chosen area of study is similarly devoid of "sense-content." In conversation with Shevek, an Ioti citizen accuses the Simultaneity view of denying the "most obvious fact about time, the fact that time passes." Noting that "in physics one is careful about what one calls 'facts,'" Shevek explains:

> We think that time 'passes,' flows past us, but what if it is we who move forward, from past to future, always discovering the new? It would be a little like reading a book, you see. The book is all there, all at once, between its covers. But if you want to read the story and understand it, you must begin with the first page, and go forward, always in order.[36]

Time, here, is a function of consciousness. We are conscious of particular moments, while all around us the "book" of time spreads out in every direction. Shevek's rejoinder is drawn from James's notion of the "block universe," which Le Guin cites in her single explicit reference to his writing in early notes toward *The Dispossessed.* Toward the conclusion of his lectures on mysticism, James reflects on the existence of experiential realities apart from the particular page we find ourselves on – or, in his words, the particular "frames exhibited to us" at any particular moment.[37] "Rational consciousness," he writes, "is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different."[38] James reflects on the subtlety of such timeless or unconscious states of being in Lectures XVI and XVII, noting that "we may go through life without suspecting their existence," but "apply the requisite stimulus, and at a touch they are there in all their completeness, definite types of mentality which probably somewhere have their field of application and adaptation."[39] James's project can be characterized, in some ways, as an attempt to identify the "requisite stimulus" by which these modes of understanding come into play. It is the occasion of religious experience that primarily interests him, and any knowledge gained as a result of these experiences is secondary.

Shevek's culminating discovery takes the form of a spiritual revelation that hinges on the "as if" function that James figures as the "use" or practical function of concepts, like religious concepts, that lack sense-content:

> [Did] the unprovability of the hypothesis of real coexistence – the problem which Shevek had been pounding his head against desperately for these last three days, and indeed these last ten years – really matter? He had been groping and grabbing after certainty, as if it were something he could possess. He had been demanding a security, a guarantee, which is not granted, and which, if granted, would become a prison. By simply assuming the validity of real coexistence he was left free to use the lovely geometries of relativity; and then it would be possible to go ahead. The next step was perfectly clear … The wall was down, the vision was both clear and whole. What he saw was simple, simpler than anything else. It was simplicity: and contained in it all complexity, all promise. It was revelation.[40]

The "unprovability" of Simultaneity physics, its lack of "sense-content" and the necessity of "assuming" rather than demonstrating its validity, is ultimately what allows Shevek to establish a unified theory. Like James's informants, and like pragmatist philosophers, Shevek must put aside the question of absolute provability and assess his theory according to its results, proceeding *as if* coexistence between opposing principles is valid and testing its validity in terms of its applicability. Belief in that which we cannot yet see is at the root, Le Guin contends, not only of the "religious attitude," but also of the attitude maintained by the visionary: the individual who would defy the conventional or customary and seek alternative forms. Such belief is also shared by the writer of utopian fiction. If we would envision a more ideal way of life, Le Guin contends, we must enter the realm of the unproveable, and proceed as if it might be possible.

WIDENING THE FIELD OF SEARCH

Speculative texts like Le Guin's are at liberty to create a version of scientific exploration and discovery that mirrors the actual

functioning of the theoretical sciences enough to shed light on their inherent mysticisms, and to suggest that new scientific principles, like religious ones, must be felt as well as understood in order to take hold in the minds of ordinary individuals. While James postulates, "science in many minds is genuinely taking the place of a religion," texts like *The Dispossessed* allow contemporary readers to more fully understand the inverse scenario: how and why religious principles are so often mistaken for scientific ones.[41] While the religious and the scientific are never conflated in the *Varieties* in the way Le Guin is free to blend them in *The Dispossessed*, James nevertheless confesses to a heartfelt conviction regarding the potential offerings of revelatory experiences for our practical, in addition to our moral, life. Such experiences, he insists, "converge towards a kind of insight to which I cannot help ascribing some metaphysical significance. The keynote of it is invariably a reconciliation. It is as if the opposites of the world, whose contradictoriness and conflict make all our difficulties and troubles, were melted into unity."[42] The value of texts like *The Dispossessed*, in Jamesian terms, is that they continue to offer such unifying experiences, creating what Jane Bennett calls "the right mood or landscape of affect" for "ethical will formation."[43]

The search for James's continuing influence leads in many directions, but Le Guin's explicit engagement with his work widens the field to encompass contemporary speculative and utopian literature. Writers like Le Guin engage with Jamesian philosophy in a genre of literature better known for its popularity than its literary merit, implicitly demonstrating a further affinity with Jamesian philosophy: a commitment to popular forms. Perhaps because of its poor literary reputation, interviewers often inquire whether Le Guin is comfortable with the term "science fiction." The name, she insists, is perfect; the problem is with writers who poorly officiate the marriage of empiricism and imagination in the making of new worlds. Speculative fiction that explores the various mysticisms of scientific practice, therefore, might draw close to what Paul Stob calls James's "different

epistemology, a view of science, religion, and philosophy that revolved around ordinary people and their experiences and perceptions."[44] The blend of science, religion, and philosophy that permeates utopian texts like Le Guin's encourages readers to consider the various ways in which they too blend forms of understanding in their own thinking and feeling. As Jameson observes, "utopias are non-fictional, even though they are also non-existent. Utopias in fact come to us as barely audible messages from a future that may never come into being."[45] Like James's *Varieties*, utopian texts entertain possible worlds in which individuals contemplate their relationship to the universe in ways that allow readers to investigate and seek to revise existing forms.

Ultimately, reading utopian speculative fiction like Le Guin's alongside James's *Varieties* results in the emergence of a particular and relatively unexplored subgenre. Writers in this subgenre draw upon varieties of religious experience in order to schematize, in Jameson's words, "worlds either too large or too small" to be depicted by realists, featuring protagonists that blend scientific and spiritual modes in their efforts to learn more about our relationship to the cosmos.[46] Shevek is joined in this category by figures like Carl Sagan's Eleanor Arroway and Philip Pullman's Mary Malone. Both, like Shevek, are alienated from surrounding social and intellectual communities on the basis of their quasi-religious approach to scientific study. Each protagonist struggles to justify their work in the face of rationalistic or utilitarian opposition, committed to not-quite-provable theories that involve continuous leaps of faith. These protagonists, like James's informants, are ultimately rewarded in the form of a revelation framed in religious terms.

That such protagonists constitute a distinguishable type in speculative utopian fiction is less important than what readers of spirituo-speculative texts might gain by considering them in the light of James's *Varieties*. Texts like *The Dispossessed* trace one individual's continuous struggle to reconcile the speculative with the experimental, the seen with the unseen, and frame belief in as-yet-indemonstrable theories as one of many epistemological tools

at their disposal. As an alternative to "demystification," which Bennett and so many others acknowledge as an "indispensible tool in a democratic, pluralist politics," writers like Le Guin offer readers a form of re-mystification that posits "positive, utopian alternatives" to the unsatisfactory conditions in which we so often find ourselves.[47]

The Graduate Center, CUNY
agreene@gradcenter.cuny.edu

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NOTES

[1] Le Guin, Handwritten draft.

[2] Le Guin, *The Unreal and the Real*, 329.

[3] Le Guin, Notebook entry.

[4] Le Guin, "A Non-Euclidean View of California as a Cold Place to Be," 163.

[5] Religious themes in speculative and utopian fiction are elucidated more fully in the work of Kreuziger, List, Cowan, McGrath, and Hrotic. Critical work on Le Guin's approach to SF and speculative genres, especially studies that investigate her

literary and philosophical influences, include Jameson, Rabkin, and Myers, as well as the more recent critical approaches to Le Guin by Knapp, Tshachler, Jaekle, and Jones.

[6] Le Guin, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas," 334.

[7] Ibid..

[8] Ibid..

[9] James, "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life," 333.

[10] Ibid., 351.

[11] In "A Non-Euclidean View of California as a Cold Place to Be," Le Guin accounts for her turn to anarchist political ideology in *The Dispossessed* as an effort to "[reject] the identification of civilization with the state, and the identification of power with coercion … anarchism and Taoism converge both in matter and manner, and so I came there to play my fictional games." See Le Guin, "A Non-Euclidean View," 186.

[12] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 30.

[13] Le Guin, Notebook entry, 3.

[14] James, "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life," 330.

[15] Le Guin, Notebook entry, 3.

[16] James, *Varieties,* 55.

[17] The leap from Le Guin's engagement with "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life" to a possible engagement with the *Varieties* demands further support. Fortunately, Le Guin substantiates the connection in archival documents. In an essay from her time as a graduate student at Columbia University, she compares Freud's concept of "the Oceanic Feeling" to James's description of "the Yes function" in Lectures XVI and XVII of the *Varieties*, indicating at the very least that Le Guin had read and written about James's *Varieties* before she wrote *The Dispossessed*. See Le Guin, "The 'Oceanic Feeling,'" 8.

[18] James, *Varieties,* 34.

[19] James begins to refer to his subjects as "informants" in Lecture III of the *Varieties* (62), though it is in Lecture II (Circumscription of the Topic) that he locates his interest in the "personal" rather than collective or institutional realm (35).

[20] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 239
[21] Ibid., 239.
[22] Ibid., 339.
[23] Ibid, 58.
[24] Ibid., 15.
[25] Ibid.
[26] James, *Varieties,* 36.
[27] Campbell, *Early Reception of the Varieties*, 74.
[28] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 15.
[29] Jameson, "In Hyperspace," 19.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Freeman-Moir considers utopian writing "from the perspective of Dewey's pragmatist understanding of action, habit, and artful experience," while Partington draws a direct line from William James to H.G. Wells. Freeman-Moir, "Crafting Experience," 202.
[32] Richardson, *Pragmatism and American Experience,* 34.
[33] Ibid., 43.
[34] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed,* 188.
[35] James, *Varieties*, 56.
[36] Le Guin, *The Dispossessed,* 221.
[37] "Passage of time is a feature of consciousness w no objective counterpart. Weyl + Einstein's universe is the "block universe" (Wm James' term) -- The film is all there, tho' we see only the frames exhibited to us" [sic]. Le Guin, Notebook entry.
[38] James, *Varieties,* 350.
[39] Ibid., 349.
[40] Ibid., 280.
[41] Ibid., 56.
[42] Ibid., 350.
[43] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, xii.
[44] Stob, *William James,* xv-xvi.
[45] Jameson, "The Politics of Utopia," 54.
[46] Jameson, "In Hyperspace," 19.
[47] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, xv.

"TRUTH WRITTEN IN HELL-FIRE": WILLIAM JAMES AND *THE DESTRUCTION OF GOTHAM*

JUSTIN ROGERS-COOPER

This essay reads Joaquin Miller's 1886 novel *The Destruction of Gotham* for how it resonates with strands of "radical pragmatism" in William James's thought. It argues for the ways James's philosophy might explain political and social movements beyond liberalism, including general strikes and class revolt. The essay emphasizes the many political possibilities immanent in pluralistic pragmatism, from the "revolutionary suicide" we see in the novel's class insurgency to the ways such collective violence also registers as an incipient mode of American fascism, or what the essay calls "bad pragmatism."

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Louis Menand writes that "one of the lessons the Civil War had taught" William James and the metaphysical club was that "the moral justification for our actions comes from the tolerance we have shown to other ways of being in the world," adding that the "alternative was force. Pragmatism was designed to make it harder for people to be driven to violence by their beliefs."[1] Menand thus sees pragmatism as "the intellectual triumph of unionism": the creation of a marketplace of ideas in which everyone participates equally and without coercion.[2] Menand's interpretation of the political valences of pragmatism is more or less commonplace; it recalls, for instance, Charlene Haddock Seigfried's similar summation that "the guiding principle ought to be to satisfy at all times as many demands as possible."[3] For Menand, the possibilities of pragmatism are circumscribed by the personal politics of the members of metaphysical club. In his reading, pragmatism becomes a liberal politics of maintenance, an effort to keep everyone "equally in the game."[4]

But this interpretation of pragmatism imports the key contradiction of liberal politics: it is impossible to pretend everyone is "equally in the game" when capitalist repression prevents the emergence of democratic forms of political participation that liberals contend exist already. John Dewey notes this contradiction when, in a discussion of *laissez faire*, he writes liberals' "failure to grasp the historic position of the interpretation of liberty they put forth served to later solidify a social régime that was a chief obstacle to attainment of the ends they professed."[5] Slavoj Zizek calls this contradiction the "basic paradox of liberalism," which he associates with an "anti-utopian stance" and a "profound pessimism about human nature."[6] Zizek argues that "while democracy can more or less eliminate constituted violence, it still has to rely continuously on constitutive violence."[7] Returning to the primal scene of nineteenth century *laissez faire*, this essay starts from the premise that such constitutive violence, and the forms of resistance it inspired, both haunt and inspire the pragmatist philosophy of William James.

In the hopes of forging new links between James and the fields of working-class studies, American studies, and nineteenth-century literary studies, this essay argues for what I call the "radical pragmatism" of the insurgent and revolutionary politics of nineteenth-century violence. While I focus on just one emblematic novel about class war in New York City—Joaquin Miller's sensational 1886 novel *The Destruction of Gotham*—I frame the novel's violence within nineteenth-century historical movements for what Angela Davis and W.E.B. Du Bois call "abolition democracy," a concept which dramatizes the need for "new institutions" in the post-emancipation period to bring formerly enslaved people into material security and social dignity, and which reflects an "understanding among forever slaves that slavery could not be truly abolished until people were provided with the economic means for their subsistence."[8] In this sense, I situate radical pragmatism alongside Cornel West's call for a "prophetic pragmatism" that could speak to the "plight of the wretched of the earth" and go beyond "the limits of capitalist democracy."[9] From within this black Marxist framework, the idea of abolition democracy points to the snuffed-out experiments of Reconstruction, but also toward movements for insurgent democratic and socialist politics by American workers in the second half of the nineteenth century, such as the Chicago anarchists of the 1880s. Radical pragmatism explains why the racial and gender norms of American democracy can explain the violent logic of strikes, riots, and insurrections of the era as pragmatic. At the same time, this essay also argues that radical pragmatism contains what I call a contradictory pluralism. As an extension of what James calls pluralistic pragmatism, radical pragmatism shelters an irrepressible ambiguity whereby the emotions of violence open the possibilities of revolutionary insurgency but also democratic collapse. For this reason, I turn to Miller's *Gotham*, a representative fiction that that contains just such contradictory pluralism.

Casting James beside *Gotham* also inserts him within the cascading crises of liberal capitalism during the long depression that spanned 1873-1896 and helps contextualize the appearance of

working-class insurgents that surface in his writing.[10] *Gotham* offers a kind of test case for showing the radical pragmatism of violent politics, including the radical empiricism of working-class reality, the pragmatism of the strike and general strike, and what I call the "revolutionary suicide" of the nineteenth-century radical tradition. In my reading of *Gotham*, violence erupts out of radical pragmatism's contradictory pluralism into two equally distinct directions. On the one side, I read that violence next to consonant concepts in the Marxist tradition. On the other darker side, or what I am calling "bad pragmatism," I reconsider pragmatism's relation to European fascism by speculating on the ways American racial masculinity might antecede both.

Clearly, then, this essay is an exercise that entails promiscuously enflaming James's thought beyond his personal beliefs or intentions; here, we are searching for the James beyond James. Yet, in following Alexander Livingston's observation that studies of "William James often attribute privileged importance to his personal biography in explaining his philosophy,"[11] I agree that we therefore must aim to "unsettle elements of the received portrait of James's political thought."[12] My method therefore involves detecting the features of radical pragmatism within the contradictions, ironies, play, and images of working-class politics in his work, and by taking for granted what Deborah Whitehead calls the "indeterminacy and controversy" of the pragmatist tradition and its reception.[13] In this respect, I hope to enlarge the project of feminist philosophers such as Erin C. Tarver and Shannon Sullivan by repairing "promising features"[14] of James's philosophy, such as James's insistence on the "bodily nature of emotions," in order to decode the novel's representation of working-class racial masculinity.[15] Indeed, it is only by locating radical pragmatist politics within the bodily nature of emotions that we can fully understand how James's thought points beyond the nature of the liberal self and toward the collective politics of insurgency.

RADICAL PRAGMATISM: A STREET PHILOSOPHY

Radical pragmatism opens a different perspective on the post-Civil War United States, one that pressures Menand's ironic formulation that the war validated the "American experiment," except for the fact "that people who live in democratic societies are not supposed to settle their disagreements by killing one another."[16] Here, Menand frames the war's violence as exceptional and undemocratic. By contrast, in *Black Reconstruction* Du Bois narrates the organization of formerly enslaved Americans into the Union army, following a general strike that transformed the war's outcome, as decisive to the war's movement for abolition democracy.[17] Du Bois's understanding of the relationship between democracy and violence is thus quite different from Menand's. For the former, the war did not reflect a failure of democracy: it was *creating* democracy. Following this logic, the United States in 1861 was not yet a "democratic society," nor was it in, say, 1877. This confusion over democratic definition signals what Fred Moten calls "formal democratic enclosure," whereby elections operate "at the level of the demonstration" to prevent "outlaw" forms of collective politics.[18] For "outlaw" democrats of the nineteenth century, democracy was still to come. We thus might reform Menand's ironic formulation into a new question: if people living in democratic societies are not supposed to settle their disagreements by killing one another, what about people living within putatively democratic societies but beyond the demos circumscribed by the extension of the franchise?

In a nation restricting the vote on the basis of birthplace, race, and gender, this question haunted nineteenth-century Americans. In an excellent critique of Menand's interpretation of "Unionist impulses," Robert Barndom argues that such impulses "led to the post-Reconstruction accommodation of white Southern sensibilities by segregation sanctioned by the state in the form of the shameful Jim Crow laws."[19] This notion certainly wasn't controversial at the time; as David Blight relates in *Race and Reunion*, by 1883 a national black assembly in Louisville castigated the Fourteenth Amendment as "nothing more than dead letters."[20] The fact that the

war's major constitutional achievement became "dead letters" had profound implications for all American workers. Republican-led governments legislated a capitalist political culture in which corporate titans could secure a "political system fashioned to their order" and railroad executives accumulated capital through "violent" and "corrupt" methods.[21] After Appomattox, the bifurcation of sectional war fractured into a cascading field of violence, ranging from campaigns of extermination against Native Americans, class war against urban immigrants, and sadistic rituals of white supremacy in the South. Backing "railroad imperialism," the legal-juridical order simultaneously smothered both a militant labor movement fighting for living wages and post-emancipation movements by black Americans for civil rights, voting rights, and human rights.[22]

Against the *thermidor* of white supremacy and anti-communism following the war, however, a range of insurgencies and philosophies persisted in imagining new projects for abolition democracy. Just as Amy Kittelstrom has clarified the importance of James and his intellectual circle in the long progressive movement leading toward the New Deal, we might also return to moments where James's thought directs us to the relation between radical pragmatism and abolition democracy.[23] James's comment on Haymarket, which occurred during what "may have been the most highly mobilized urban revolutionary movement in American history," points to the ways working-class insurgencies surface in his writing through contradiction and irony, and thereby point toward a James beyond James.[24] A week after the bomb exploded in Chicago, James's letter to his brother Henry transitions from recounting a meeting with the politician John Hay, who had recently authored a best-selling novel on the 1877 General Strike, to the politics of labor militancy:

> Don't be alarmed about the labor troubles here. I am quite sure they are a most healthy phase of evolution, a little costly, but normal, and sure to do lots of good to all hands in the end. I don't speak of the senseless "anarchist" riot in

> Chicago, which has nothing to do with the "Knights of Labor," but is the work of a lot of pathological Germans and Poles. I'm amused at the anti-Gladstonian capital which the English papers are telegraphed to be making of it. All the Irish names are among the killed and wounded policemen. Almost every anarchist name is Continental.[25]

Coming just five days after the bomb exploded, this comment is remarkable in several respects, as Joshua Miller notes.[26] Given the prevalent anti-radicalism then in the press, James's tone stands out. His emphasis on the Knights is notable because they were an inclusive coalition of trade assemblies and associations open to women, immigrants, and black Americans, and notable for boycotts and sympathy strikes.

At the same time, James's desire to isolate the Knights from the "anarchist" riot is both understandable and contradictory. His bracketing of the word "anarchist" gives it an ironic gloss; it radiates as both a press epithet and an indeterminate signifier for radicalism. Yet, it becomes doubly ironic by contrast with the aforementioned "labor troubles," which James figures as "costly" but also "sure to do lots of good to all hands *in the end*" (italics mine). During the 1894 Pullman boycott, Dewey made a similar statement: "the men will be beaten almost to a certainty—but it's a great thing & the beginning of greater."[27] Far from being necessarily opposed, the consonance between "costly" troubles and "anarchist" riot opens into the contradictory pluralism of radical pragmatism. It's hard to gauge how much violence James accepted as too "costly," but it seems both he and Dewey invested the violent *failures* of the labor movement with a tragic hope, an idea that reappears later in this essay in what I call the "revolutionary suicide" in Miller's *Gotham*.

James's letter about Haymarket is indicative of a broader interest in working-class life within his thought, including in his lecture, "What Makes a Life Significant?" As a trigger for one of his major revelations in the essay, James invokes the "great fields of heroism" of the working class, seeing their heroism on "freight trains, on the decks of vessels, in cattle-yards and mines."[28] James even calls these

worker-heroes "soldiers…these our sustainers, these the very parents of our life" (a sentiment with relevance for his thoughts in "The Moral Equivalent of War").[29] While he imagines working-class masculinity here in ways that echo what Erin Tarver calls James's "presumption of masculine neutrality," we might nonetheless note the central spectacle of working-class bodies in his meditation.[30] These images of class-bound masculinity help authenticate his philosophy.

A further key example opens his pragmatist lecture "The Present Dilemma in Philosophy." Recall it is the exclusion of "concrete facts and joys and sorrows" in "rationalistic philosophy" that creates a need for pragmatism.[31] In a revealing illustration, James refers to a student thesis that "illustrated my point so clearly" because it posed a cleavage in philosophy between the classroom and "the street."[32] The student felt studying philosophy meant severing oneself from the "world of concrete personal experiences to which the street belongs."[33] James describes the street as "multitudinous beyond imagination, tangled, muddy, painful and perplexed," as opposed to the merely "simple, clean and noble."[34] Linking pluralistic pragmatism to the world of the street, literally and figuratively, James continues by faulting professional philosophy because the "contradictions of real life are absent from it," a phrase with echoes of nineteenth-century Marxism.[35] In authenticating the genesis of pragmatism as a "street" philosophy capable of containing the painful "contradictions of real life," James here offers a point of entry for radical pragmatism.

At a minimum, these passages affirm James's belief, as John McGowan puts it, "that each member of society is equally entitled to a meaningful life."[36] In the lecture "Pragmatism and Humanism," James even introduces the character of the "radical pragmatist," albeit rather playfully as a "happy-go-lucky anarchistic sort of creature," whom he contrasts to the "rationalist mind" of an "authoritative complexion," one akin to a "veteran official in the Russian bureau of censorship," who finds in pluralistic pragmatism a "tramp and vagrant world."[37] James's illustration of radical pragmatism here is meaningful for its consistency with what he later

calls pluralistic pragmatism, but also for the rather politicized imagery he deploys. While James's tone doesn't suggest he takes this "anarchistic sort of creature" quite so seriously, he's clearly sympathetic to him and makes figurative use of the tramps and vagrants populating his own social world.

Taking James beyond James, we might see his radical pragmatism as more than an exercise in contemplating the painful realities of the street. After all, pragmatism's concern with "the interdependence of contemplation and action" renews the suggestiveness behind James's belief that the labor troubles of the 1880s would lead to better futures.[38] By embedding the "anarchistic sort" within pluralistic pragmatism, James opens the possibilities of radical pragmatism toward the very direction of "anarchist" riot seemingly foreclosed by a superficial reading of his letter to Henry. Indeed, Albert Parsons, in his Haymarket autobiography, also stresses the indeterminacy of the label anarchist, which started as a "dishonor" before becoming something he would "defend with pride."[39] Like James, Parsons situates the struggle of anarchism in the workers' struggle for "the right to live."[40] Turning to revolutionary discourse inherited from Marx, Parsons declares, "the crisis is near at hand. Necessity, which is its own law, will force the issue. Then whatever is most natural to do will be the easiest and best to do."[41] Parsons' stress on "whatever is most natural to do" should ring out through the long corridor of pragmatism. While Parsons undoubtedly accentuates the logic of James's "labor struggles" more explicitly than James would probably admit, it's nonetheless clear how, for Parsons, militancy and violence might be, in a word, pragmatic.

TRUTH WRITTEN IN HELL-FIRE

The anarchist riot of Haymarket was not James's first or last encounter with militant labor or radical socialism. Abolition democracy in the nineteenth century was a global project; indeed, one of its most memorable fronts occurred during the 1871 Paris Commune, an event apocalyptically linked in the American imagination to the devastating Chicago fire, and shingled to specters

of class war for years to come.[42] The armed seizure of the government by socialists and working classes of Paris brought global attention to an imperial state collapsing into the determined utopianism of working classes, with shades of the failed revolutions of 1848 and *The Communist Manifesto* haunting the minds of transatlantic ruling classes far beyond France. Indeed, many believed (or claimed to believe) that communist insurrections threatened the United States.[43] Yet, as Kristin Ross argues, the Commune also tested "the possibilities and limitations of *living differently now* within a thriving—if crisis-ridden—global capitalist economy."[44]

Both the revolutionary commune and urban apocalypse were potential futures lurking beyond crises of nineteenth-century *laissez faire*. With ghosts of the Civil War and 1871 French Commune ever present, novelists imagined new ways to narrate the deepening problems of nineteenth-century poverty and rebellion, particularly during the long depression sparked by the panic of 1873. At least since Harriet Beecher's Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, of course, popular fiction had been a contested site of cultural production, one whose narratives projected political and economic crises into resolutions both realistic and tragic. Two years after John Hay anonymously fictionalized the 1877 General Strike into an indictment of the labor movement in his best-selling 1884 novel *The Breadwinners*, Joaquin Miller published *The Destruction of Gotham.* Although *Gotham* focalized its drama through a network of characters from both the working and ruling classes, the novel makes clear that the deep inequalities of Gotham led to its collapse. In this sense, it acted as a counterpoint to Hay's vision in *The Breadwinners* of working-class demagogues succumbing to the moral authority of capitalists.

Gotham belongs to a genre of the urban gothic pioneered by antebellum writers like George Lippard. With its vision of urban catastrophe likely modeled on uprisings in Pittsburgh and Chicago during the 1877 General Strike, it echoes Lippard's 1851 sensation novel *The Killers*, which turned the 1849 California House Riot in Philadelphia into popular fiction. Like Lippard, Miller also

"prioritized arguments on behalf of the working class over aesthetic concerns," and "protested the betrayal of the Founding Fathers' republican ideals in nightmarish visions of nineteenth-century America ruined by capitalist exploitation, religious hypocrisy, and class divisions."[45] *Gotham* certainly made an impression on these counts. One contemporary review in *The Critic* called it "an inexcusable record of horrible things" that should be thrown into a fire.[46] After publishing Miller's rebuttal, the editors maintained their objection to images of a city destroyed "for its sins…at the hands of a riotous mob, maddened by their wrongs, who sacked and burned the houses of millionaires, and then sacked and burned the city."[47]

Of course, such criticisms misread the stakes of Miller's story. The specter of the 1871 French Commune opens the novel, for example, with the narrator foretelling the conclusion in advance by asking the reader to "remember Paris? her [sic] twenty-five years of glory, recklessness, irreligion, ill-gotten riches? And then the conflagration!"[48] He invokes "the graveyards, where Parisians, slain by Parisians, lay as thick on top of the ground as under it."[49] The allusion to the civil war in France leads to a further prediction: since the poor are in the majority—"We the People"—they will be the ones that "retire" the rich.[50] At the outset, then, the social cataclysm of the novel refers readers back to the real crisis of the Paris Commune, which in turn enfolds the working poor of the United States into its revolutionary realignment.

Linking the uprising of the poor with the history of revolution elevates the novel's importance as well as the historical significance of the 1877 General Strike, which Miller figures into his construction of the insurrection. For instance, early in the novel one of the main characters, a journalist named Joe Walton, frets over the "mighty events of the day," including "a great strike, talk of riots, rebellion against the hard and lawless government of the great city."[51] Later, he stumbles across a "pale factory-girl" whose brother, a printer, was on strike.[52] If the novel asks us to consider these "mighty events" through the tragic but historical vision of the French Commune, so too does it speak to the ways radical pragmatism might address the "great strike"—in particular the 1877

General Strike, which mutated from a wage strike by trainmen on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad into a cascading series of nationwide confrontations between police, militias, and mercenaries against strikers, their families, waged and unwaged workers, and communities with grievances against the railroads.[53] In addition to paralyzing freight traffic for almost two weeks, strikers and rioters fiercely resisted efforts to break their blockade. Brutal police and militia attacks led to particularly acute bloodshed in Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Reading, and Chicago. The participation of so many people beside the trainmen underscore how the "great" strike became a "general" one. The mass participation signaled a larger crisis in American life and politics.

Miller complicates the relationship between general strike and urban insurgency, however, by pointing to the ways deep class divisions in Gotham created embodied sensations that, once circulating and activated, exceeded the agency of any authority to control them. Similar to James's ideas in "The Moral Equivalent of War" about the "pain and fear economy" and the "ease-economy," in the prologue the narrator explains that the "great city lies trembling, panting, quivering, in her wild, white heat of intoxication, excitement, madness—drunken and devilish pursuits of power, pleasure, and gold."[54] The narrator's emphasis on the autonomy of affects here, particularly excitement and intoxication, suggest a contagion of pleasure that overwhelms urban political management. The excitements associated with the pleasure economy not only distract the ruling class from proper political management, but allow Miller to present the poor as the moral center of the city—isolated from rapacious accumulation, they are "more honest" than the wealthy.[55] In this way, the melodrama of the novel comes to symbolize the circulating economies of pleasure and pain within Gotham at large. One of the main plots, for example, traces a story of sexual exploitation of a vulnerable girl named Dottie, who is trafficked by a French "Madame" to John Matherson, a corrupt customs officer romantically linked to Dottie's cousin Hattie.[56] The poor journalist Walton, himself in love with Hattie, becomes the protector of Dottie and her illegitimate child Dollie, and works to

expose her trafficker. The putative hero of the story, Walton embodies the honest worker literally fighting to uncover ruling-class avarice rendered as systemic sexual exploitation.

By trying to provoke outrage in readers, Miller's narrative strategy figures the eruption of social violence as an extension of embodied working-class experience. While posing class war as the irrepressible consequence of inequality, Miller offers sensational fiction as a way to excavate the emotional foundations of violence, and thus asks us to consider James's pragmatism alongside his psychology. As Walton and other journalists slowly expose the French trafficker, they direct the city's rising "indignation" to her Fifth Avenue mansion, explaining her power to bribe city officials "while they plundered the treasury" and silence a "purchased press."[57] Miller cinematically interweaves scenes of Walton's concern for Dottie, now ill and hiding from her victimizer Matherson in a tenement with Dollie, with descriptions of rising insurrection: "The city, the people, were ready for the attack."[58] A crowd attacks the trafficker's mansion, led by journalists "forcing the action and expression of the law," although the Madame escapes to Paris by faking her suicide.[59] This eruption of violence against her mansion presages the city's eventual destruction by pointing to the violated body as a site of revolutionary potential. While it is the imagined sexual violation of women's bodies that sparks the riot, the moment also calls our attention to the indignation of the attacking crowd. Here we can see the emergence of radical pragmatism as a street philosophy, one bursting with the pain and sorrow of exploited bodies. Yet the attack on the mansion also invites us to consider the corruption of democratic institutions meant to protect the people. Strangely, the act of destruction might also be a first step in abolition democracy: the dismantling of oppressive institutions.

The scope of radical pragmatism's relation to the working-class reality, and the way violence can become "whatever is most natural to do," raises another major plot line of the novel. In this thread, we follow Walton's professional connection to a Wall Street tycoon named Stone, a character with resemblances to New York financier

Jay Gould. Anticipating later characters such as Curtis Jadwin in Frank Norris' 1903 novel *The Pit*, the "great railroad king" Stone becomes progressively sicker through stock speculation.[60] In full gothic mode, Miller scolds Stone's accumulative strategies through ghastly hauntings, but it is Stone's role as the trigger for the coming insurrection that concerns our discussion here. Late in the novel three of his workers appear representing "car-drivers" to ask for his help. The lead car-driver is "gaunt" and "lean," and his "hands were dirty and hard. His work was hard and dirty work."[61] Pointing to the radical empiricism of working-class experience, these descriptions gesture to the politicization of hunger in the revolutionary history of the long nineteenth century, recalling Arendt's compelling notion that a "biological" reality structures the "necessity of historical processes," such as "when the poor, driven by the needs of their bodies, burst on to the scene of the French Revolution."[62] Moreover, the worker's "gaunt" body now transforms the site of radical pragmatism from the body of a sexually-violated woman to the emaciated body of the working-class man.

Referring to an event similar to the 1877 General Strike, the car-driver explains in class dialect that he represents the "car-drivers that was true to yer all through. When the freight hands' strike came, we uns and the four hundred that we have come to yer to speak about did not stop work, but kept right on. And we uns had to fight to keep on."[63] Becoming excited, one of the two other drivers points to an "ugly wound in the face," while the other "looked earnestly and eagerly at the great millionaire with his only remaining eye."[64] At this point, the narrator reveals that Stone recognizes them as "wounded veterans in the war for the rich man's interests," likely sent to him in the hopes that their wounds would earn his sympathy.[65]

This moment of recognition is significant in several respects. The workers' status as veterans sutures their abjection and disability to the failed promises of the Civil War. By describing the war as one fought for "the rich man's interests," too, the narrator evacuates it of romance and moral authority, emptying their sacrifice of national significance. The moment elevates the contradictions of postwar

liberal capitalism into explicit relief: the freedom of emancipation could not secure the financial independence for millions of workers that depended on wages to survive, both black and white. Miller deepens the links between postwar poverty and the wartime sacrifice of workers by elaborating how they had "shouldered muskets and marched down to the greatest battles the world has ever witnessed."[66] Miller's re-imagination of the Civil War here was part of a broader trend among leading writers and intellectuals. Cody Marrs argues events like the 1877 General Strike heralded a "futural turn" in authors like Walt Whitman, as "the labor rebellions of the 1870s and 1880s made it painfully clear that the *future* the Civil War was supposed to usher in was probably quite far off" (my emphasis).[67]

Reading the coming insurrection through the lens of such a "futural turn" in *Gotham*, however, posits the Civil War less as an epic exception to democratic norms, as Menand would have it, than as part of a much broader crisis of capitalist democracy. It is just after this reference to their wartime participation and scene of disability and disfigurement, for example, that Miller introduces a racial politics into the struggle over wages in the long depression:

> They had fought through the terrible campaigns for the freedom of the black man. But it was the white man that was enslaved now. They themselves were slaves. But they were not eloquent in their own cause. They were dull, sodden, stupid. They had not taken sides with any of the strikers against the rich men who employed them and for whom they had toiled on steadily for twenty years.[68]

While the conflation of wage labor with chattel slavery echoes a problematic rhetoric already circulating for decades, the identification of the white worker with slavery here is important for other reasons. The racialization of worker as "the white man" effects a transformation from class identification to one based on race and gender, which in turn erases on-going forms of "slavery" for waged and unwaged women, children, immigrants, and workers of color,

particularly black and Chinese Americans. In this sense, the moment is analogous to real historical trends in the working class in the late nineteenth century. This racialization of the worker's masculine identity—his whiteness—also frames his presumed fealty to the speculator Stone, suggesting a racial and gender identification that David Roediger renders in part as the psychological wage of whiteness.[69]

At the same time, however, their representation as "dull, sodden, stupid" disrupts the racialization of the worker into "the white man." In combination with their "hard and dirty" hands and wounds from the war, the wage of whiteness and masculinity can no longer forestall a parallel emergence of a solidarity along the lines of disability and class; their arrival to ask for higher wages speaks both to this solidarity and to the divergent possibilities of action from their experiences. Reflecting on their "gaunt" bodies again next to Arendt, we can detect the radical pragmatism emerging from her statement that "poverty is abject because it puts men under the absolute dictate of their bodies, that is, under absolute dictate of necessity as all men know it from their most intimate experience."[70] The solidarity of their demands, and the implicit threat of their strike, therefore exists in tension with their racial and gender identification. In this way, the white working-class men represent an ambiguous site of insurgent politics.

Returning to the scene, the lead car-driver tries to win Stone's sympathy further by narrating the loss of his family from time working, explaining he wasn't present to raise his daughter: "that baby is growed up, an' – an' gone – gone where?"[71] He explains his daughter is now missing because he had no money to "edicate her" nor had "time 'nough to look after her."[72] Reminding us of Dottie's trafficking, he reveals that the car-drivers want more *time* in addition to more money: "We don't want sixteen hours…We want less time an' more money, or we strike!"[73] Perhaps best disclosing the radical pragmatism of the working-class militant, he continues by figuring his disability as a condition of being worked to death. He tells Stone, "an old man like me an' my battered pards can't stand it, gov'nor. The pegs gien out, gov'nor. The pegs git paralyzed, an' a man lies

down after his sixteen hours a day, an' don't get up ag'in…A wagon comes up the alley; a little, red pine box; the Pauper's Island, gov'nor."[74] Crucially, by pointing to his "paralyzed" parts, the novel once more locates the site of radical pragmatism as a philosophy emerging from the radical empiricism of the worker's body. It wasn't simply the work that was killing the car-driver; by presenting his narrative to Stone as one with power to change working conditions, the car-driver made it clear Stone was killing him. This moment echoes how one contemporary explained that the 1877 General Strike occurred because "they had no alternative but to strike or die."[75] The mortal labor of the car-drivers exposes the terror of nineteenth-century capitalism more generally, in that during moments of crisis even wage work rendered the worker close to the absolute abjection of unemployment, which, with no social security, could mean death. This is the constitutive violence of liberal capitalism; and this, in turn, is how acts of radical pragmatism might express violent outbursts as a self-defense against capitalist extraction. By framing his demand as life-or-death, the worker recalls the anarchist Albert Parsons' notion of revolution as "whatever is most natural to do."

James actually comments upon this relation to death in his pragmatist lectures, particularly in his extended citation of the "valiant anarchistic writer" Morrison I. Swift, who, like the "anarchistic sort" in "What Makes a Life Significant?" occupies a pivotal scene in a pragmatist lecture.[76] In a long quotation from Swift, James relates the story of John Corcoran, an unemployed father of six, who, after finding his family starved and almost homeless, committed suicide by drinking carbolic acid. With Corcoran in mind, Swift condemns philosophers like Josiah Royce, who explain away the "evil and pain" experienced by men like Corcoran.[77] Quoting Swift, James writes that the consciousness of workers like Corcoran are legitimate perspectives on the universe: what "these people experience *is* Reality."[78] James further quotes Swift's relation of the murder-suicide of another "Cleveland workingman" as "one of the elemental stupendous facts of this modern world and of this universe."[79] Revealingly, James glosses

Swift's passage by concluding that such "is the reaction of an empiricist mind upon the rationalist bill of fare."[80] Recalling aforementioned moments when James turns to working-class reality to authenticate pragmatism, this particular example is suggestive for announcing the specter of suicide and murder. It also opens the possibility, to be considered in more detail later, that suicides like Corcoran's or even mass killing (as on the Civil War battlefield) can be instances of radical pragmatism.[81]

Unmoved by the car-driver, however, Stone has his bodyguards expel the workers, thus making the insurrection of Gotham "whatever is most natural to do." Stone's refusal to negotiate, even at the point of killing workers, reveals the contradictory pluralism in pragmatism, as well as the emotional foundation of pragmatism in psychology. James would have been the first to explain class conflict, like Miller, as a clash between competing economies of emotion circulating within disparate classes. In "The Sentiment of Rationality," James writes that nothing "could be more absurd than to hope for the definitive triumph of any philosophy which should refuse to legitimate, and to legitimate in an emphatic manner, the more powerful of our emotional and practical tendencies."[82] Likewise, Henry De Man observes in *The Psychology of Marxian Socialism* that no one "can understand the proletarian mentality unless he takes unemployment into account, either as an actual or as a dreaded experience."[83] But the capitalist and the worker inhabit different experiences of reality. Stone's refusal to legitimate his workers' sentiments represents the larger refusal of *laissez faire* capitalists to negotiate because they do not or cannot legitimate the embodied reality of working-class life. This gestures back to James's contention that "*the relations that connect experiences must themselves be experienced relations, and any kind of relation experienced must be accounted as 'real' as anything else in this system*."[84] The problem between Stone and his workers, then, stems from the fact that they perceive two different realities.

Far from being the basis for reconciliation, we see here how the contradictory pluralism within radical empiricism explains the emergence of social insurrection, but also civil war. James's speech

dedicating a monument to Robert Gould Shaw develops this revelation further. There, James imagines something like a radical pragmatism that drove the Civil War, which, in his view, corrected the "horrible self-contradiction" of the nation by violently interrupting "policy, compromise, and concession."[85] Beyond the expression of mass violence as a form of historical progress, James exclaims that the Civil War in fact revealed that a "truth was to be possible under the flag. Truth, thank God, truth! even though for the moment it must be truth written in hell-fire."[86] In this exclamation we see the conflation of catastrophic violence with radical pragmatism. In a discourse that perhaps shades James's street philosophy with black Marxism, we hear James explain the war's violence as an explosion of "horrible self-contradiction" (which in turn echoes his critique of rationalist philosophy as unable to describe the "contradictions of real life"). Here, too, we see the truth of the war's ideas as "validated only in activity," which is to say violence; and we also come to recognize this truth as "inherently historical."[87] In other words, the racial and class contradictions within pluralistic pragmatism created a "truth written in hell-fire."

REVOLUTIONARY SUICIDE

After Stone's refusal to raise wages and cut hours, Miller describes his subsequent death in gothic fashion; he dies at the hands of an apparition, vaguely guilt-ridden. Miller then narrates how "the strikers that night enrolled them and all their honest and industrious following. And this was the beginning of the end of Gotham."[88] The trigger for insurrection is a hastily passed law condemning property "on which a false return" was submitted to the tax assessor, saying the property would be "forfeited to the city."[89] When workers on a "great strike" learn that Stone has died, they decide to enforce the tax law on their own terms.[90] They begin looting Stone's mansion, seizing possessions and gold.[91] Miller uses the imagery of "prairie wolves" and "big wolves" to illustrate how the crowds seized Stone's possessions, urged on by demagogues "firing the hearts of the hungry railroad employees, car-hands, drivers, and freight-hands against the claimants of his colossal wealth."[92] The crowds soon

attack more houses of the wealthy. The "wolves" leading the pillage persuade more "overworked people" to join them. Miller frames the rioting as revenge for their mortal labor: "They had begged for better pay, for fewer hours. They had seen their little children die in the long, hard, and perfectly well-ordered and regular strike, while they stood by with tied hands and helpless, because of the millionaire's brutality."[93] Now, having "tasted blood," the crowds set fire to the city, which "had been told by the people that the people had built New York and the people would destroy New York if they chose. And they had chosen!"[94] The novel concludes with Walton carrying Dottie's daughter Dollie over the Brooklyn Bridge, behind them a "burning island."[95]

By emphasizing the rioters' *choice* to burn the city, Miller explains their act of urban destruction, one still associated with irrationalism and criminality, as one of radical pragmatism. The narrator explains the destruction, too, through the labor theory of value: the city belonged to those that built it, not those that owned it. Like the tax law that inspired crowds to enforce their own justice, the labor theory of value suggests the crowds have incinerated property belonging to them. While this choice doesn't appear rational when viewed from a liberal perspective, it is an act of violence consistent with radical empiricism. The real question here concerns how their act of rebellion also foreclosed their own futures: their act of destruction was also an act of collective suicide. Echoing the suicide of the unemployed father John Corcoran, who drank carbolic acid after watching his family starve, and whom James cites from Morrison Swift in his pragmatist lecture, the crowd's choice to destroy New York appears to be a collective suicide—their riot overturns class rule, but they destroy themselves in the process. Set against the Paris Commune and American Civil War, Gotham's destruction was a collective suicide, however, in the tradition of revolution: a revolutionary suicide. In *Gotham*, Miller transposes the "futural turn" of postwar American capitalism in a narrative of urban collapse. Crowds that commit revolutionary suicide seek to control politics through simultaneous acts of collective self-sacrifice and class violence, a sort of mass "murder-suicide."

From the perspective of revolutionary suicide, Miller's emphatic repetition they "had chosen!" affirms how radical pragmatism can propel acts of creative violence. While Corcoran's suicide could not stop the reproduction of agony for other workers, however, Miller's final scene suggests revolutionary suicide may create the new reproductive conditions for those that manage to survive—in Miller's novel, this is represented by Walton crossing the bridge with Dollie. The accumulation of *laissez faire*'s victims, which we might imagine as Corcoran's starving family, the missing daughter of the car-driver in *Gotham*, and the deaths of other children lost in the strike, suggests the ways the violence of the capitalist economy already threatened the security and reproduction of family life. As an act of radical pragmatism, revolutionary suicide transforms the submission of the working class to hunger, disability, abjection, and terror into forms of heroic agency derived from revolutionary traditions. Ironically, during such moments the long death of wage work requires workers to accelerate their encounter with dying—in exchange for control over the means and politics of it. As such, Miller's *Gotham* contextualizes prior historic experiments of radical pragmatism in the nineteenth century, including the 1871 French Commune and 1877 General Strike—and possibly also Nat Turner's 1831 revolt or John Brown's 1859 raid on Harper's Ferry.

This particular genealogy of radical pragmatist history pushes us back to James's contention that we must find "the ways in which existing realities may be *changed.*"[96] Like his notes on "the contradictions of real life" in his pragmatist lecture and the "self-contradiction" of the United States in his Robert Gould Shaw speech, James's register here can be read through Marxist philosophical traditions attacking *laissez faire*. "With the Marxists," Giles Gunn aptly summarizes, "pragmatism believes that the problem is not simply to interpret the world but actually to change it."[97] Gunn's reading isn't anomalous. Writing in defense of pragmatism in the *New York Times*, James himself writes "the *use* of most of our thinking is to help us to *change* the world," while Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach states: "Philosophers have hitherto only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to

change it."[98] James Livingston takes for granted that "Marxism and pragmatism are commensurable or continuous moments in the Western intellectual tradition," and even "interwoven threads in the fabric of American thought until the 1940s."[99]

Observing the continuity between Marx's "Theses on Feuerbach" and James' radical empiricism, Livingston cites Sidney Hook's insights into the "similar origins" of Marxism and pragmatism.[100] Livingston's turn to Hook, a Leninist, is interesting because of Lenin's emphasis on how action transforms reality. "Socialist revolution may break out not only in consequence of a great strike, a street demonstration, a hunger riot, a mutiny in the forces, or a colonial rebellion," Lenin writes, "but also in consequence of any political crisis, like the Dreyfus affair."[101] Believing in the capacity of the masses to seize moments of crisis to redirect history, Lenin argues for demanding the impossible, "not in a reformist, but in a revolutionary way; not by keeping within the framework of bourgeois reality, but by breaking through it."[102] For him, breaking through reality occurs by "drawing the masses into real action, by widening and fomenting the struggle for every kind of fundamental, democratic demand, right up to and including the direct onslaught of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie."[103] Echoing Lenin, Che Guevara writes it is "not necessary to wait until all conditions for making revolution exist; the insurrection can create them."[104] In her meditation on the Paris Commune, Kristin Ross writes "actions produce dreams and ideas, and not the reverse."[105]

Lenin's vision of revolution deepens our understanding of radical pragmatism by pointing to the ways that social crises can circulate the kinds of emotional experiences that make revolutionary acts increasingly possible. The destruction of oppressive economies creates the possibility, but not inevitability, of abolition democracy. C.L.R. James suggests as much: one "cannot prove logically that Marxism is right. It will prove itself right when it shows what it is able to do."[106] In his discussion of the Russian Revolution, James stresses that nobody "invented" or "taught" the Soviet form of political organization, underlining that Soviets "formed

spontaneously."[107] Crowds and masses, then, must test their truths, too, knowing full well the "cash-value" of those truths might fail. This tradition provides a parallel genealogy for considering how the revolutionary suicide in Miller's novel might be read more optimistically—that is, the destruction of New York might appear to be collective suicide only in hindsight. The question then becomes, perhaps, why it failed. From this perspective, too, the collapse of the people's revolution into violent failure is interesting because Miller's version of the future did not, in actuality, come to pass. The future was progressive rather than revolutionary: a new kind of liberalism won the day—a liberalism that was "pragmatic" in the ordinary sense of the term. At the same time, this new liberalism rested atop a racial capitalism that excluded people of color from the civil and human rights, and only formally recognized worker rights in the New Deal (which in turn excluded many workers of color).

BAD PRAGMATISM

Considering how Marxism and pragmatism are "interwoven threads" in American thought, it may not be surprising to learn that in a recently transcribed interview C.L.R. James calls William James "one of the greatest intellectuals of the period."[108] In a discussion of Du Bois's intellectual development, C.L.R. James notes that "by 1900, it was clear that the ideas on which the American democracy had been founded had gone by the board, and these capitalistic monsters now dominated the world."[109] C.L.R. James argues that William James, "and a whole lot of these others, were searching for ways in which to develop the old American principles established in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, et cetera, against this monster which had appeared as a result of the Civil War."[110] In C.L.R. James's radical history of philosophy connecting William James to W.E.B. Du Bois, the postwar "capitalistic monsters" continued the "self-contradiction" of racial capitalism not fully resolved during the Civil War. In this reading of (C.L.R.) James on (William) James, the truths of the war's "hell-fire" were still burning in the twentieth century.

As we see in Miller's novel, too, the racial and sexual identification of the workers as the enslaved "white man" gives their revolutionary acts a peculiar cast. Indeed, Miller's rendering of *their* sacrifice during the Civil War, and *their* wounds from fighting "on behalf of the black man," signifies the ways they, as members of the white working class, derive a form of violent agency from their imagined status as racial victims. They narrate their demands for higher wages and fewer hours as a debt owed to them by the rich, and, implicitly, African Americans. In contrast to the 1871 French Commune, it is an American form of racial politics that informs the revolutionary suicide haunting their destruction of Gotham. Miller's novel, then, also offers us insight into the dark side of radical pragmatism, one grounded in the bodily experience of American racial and sexual conflict, exploitation, and violence.

Following this final turn in my argument requires us to renew the links between James's pragmatism and his psychology. In "What Pragmatism Means," James famously states "our beliefs are really rules for action."[111] Locating the emergence of creative action in beliefs does more than suggest a historicity or cultural specificity for individual ideas; James's statement also proposes a theory of ideology. In *Principles*, James qualifies this insight when he writes, "the more a conceived object *excites* us, the more reality it has."[112] This excitement, he argues, "carries credence with it."[113] The stronger our emotional excitement, James suggests, the more *real* reality feels: excitement creates "credence," and credence becomes belief. James calls this excitation "*mental vertigo*," comparing it to mystical experiences.[114] This formulation of mental vertigo reappears in "The Sentiment of Rationality" when James writes we "believe what we desire. The belief creates its verification."[115] Our beliefs are rules for action, then, and also we believe what we desire. The more a "conceived object" of desire excites us, the more real it seems. This feedback loop—desire, belief, excitement, mental vertigo—provides a compelling, if unexpected, explanation for how, recalling Ross on the French Commune, "actions produce dreams and ideas, not the reverse."[116]

Yet James's conception of mental vertigo explains how the crowds of *Gotham* might also author their own nightmares. While we can imagine the city's destruction within the radical pragmatism of the revolutionary Marxist tradition, the scale of the killing, the presence of "wolves," and the excitement of "tasting blood" suggest the emergence of sadistic "rules for action."[117] What Miller's novel demonstrates, however, is how the abjection of labor and the sexual violation of bodies trap working classes within a pain economy: the escape from humiliation into vengeance and violence becomes a form of pleasure. The initial acts of destruction, too, transform possible revolution into the nightmare of mental vertigo; the city only really began to burn *after* the people "tasted blood" and the "wolves" appeared. Their destruction introduced them into a pleasure economy—of material plunder, racial pride, and urban power—that foreclosed abolition democracy, and activated the necro-politics of revolutionary suicide.

Read in this way, Miller's novel reveals the emancipatory limits of radical pragmatism. Far from creating democracy, their revolt expressed sadistic creativity. This dark side of radical pragmatism is what I call "bad pragmatism." By bad pragmatism, I follow Samin Amin's notion that capitalist crises frequently "lead to a violent backlash" that takes the form of an "illusory consensus founded on religion or ethnic chauvinism."[118] Remembering Miller's emphatic repetition that the crowds "had chosen," however, I would insist that bad pragmatism reveals how violent acts nonetheless express the testing of "truths." Bad pragmatism places the utopian possibilities of revolution back within the shell of racial capitalism, and in this sense echoes Marx's famous (and rather Jamesian) contention that men "make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past."[119] In a similar vein, Hans Joas contends "American pragmatism is characterized by its understanding of human action as *creative* action," but clarifies that its creativity "is always embedded in a situation."[120] Bad pragmatism suggests that the persistent humiliation and austerity resulting from the "millionaire's

brutality" make the rupture of sadism a consistent probability within the field of *laissez faire* futures.

By understanding the legacy of racial masculinity formed during slavery as the "circumstances existing already" in American *laissez faire*, we might also contemplate the ways the violence in Miller's novel suggests a relation between bad pragmatism and emergent forms of fascism. Considering fascism as "a mass movement" of the "dispossessed and despairing petty bourgeoisie" that "surges up from below," we might see the sadistic emergence of "wolves" and "tasting blood" in Miller's novel as literary antecedents for the rise of European fascism in the next century.[121] Understanding emergent fascism in this sense, as a populist collaboration between those "tasting blood" and the "wolves" rising from them, posits the emotional matrix of white male supremacy as the trans-historical and transnational trigger for fascist politics. The history of the United States, too, clearly reveals how modes of racial masculinity became expressed sadistically, whether in the ritual abuses of the plantation or the extermination campaigns against indigenous peoples. This history funnels into the narrator's announcement in the novel that the car-driver imagined his debasement as an enslaved "white man." Rather than embrace other modes of solidarity, the car-driver fantasizes his emaciation through the frame of racial enslavement. Bad pragmatism, then, expresses radical acts of violence through such racially-inscribed beliefs in reality; the "experience" of race becomes a truth of radical empiricism. In this way, the working-class experience of whiteness complicates how "beliefs" in justice become "rules for action."

In *Principles,* James treads near to this racial experience when he claims that mental vertigo inspires the "sudden beliefs which animate mobs of men when frenzied impulse to action is involved" —action, he claims, akin to the "starting of a forlorn hope."[122] While we might guess who James meant by "mobs of men," we might also see the destruction of Gotham as an act of "forlorn hope" that might help explain how a tax law could transform the city's general strike into revolutionary suicide.[123] After all, James writes, whatever the action, "whether the stoning of a prophet, the hailing of a conqueror,

the burning of a witch, the baiting of a heretic or Jew…the fact that to believe a certain object will *cause that action to explode* is a sufficient reason for that belief to come."[124] James's surprising connection of forlorn hope to the "frenzied action" of mobs can refer back to racialized movements of fascism "from below."[125] Forlorn hope communicates how fascist dreams pose utopian futures through acts of mass violence against social others, with the hope that violence against such objects will actually make utopian dreams real.

From here we can better understand how Gustave Le Bon, who was allegedly read by both Mussolini and Hitler, attempts to capture forlorn hope "from below" and control it through symbols and narratives created by ruling classes. He claims that "to move the multitude its hopes must be awakened. This can only be effected by the action of the affective and mystic elements which give man the power to act."[126] While James's idea of mental vertigo describes the ways forlorn hope emerges "from below" as an expression of crowds exciting their own reality, the reactionary conservative Le Bon wants to exploit such hopes to manage the multitude. Both Le Bon and James offer interpretative context for Gotham's destruction because they allow us to imagine how emergent forms of American fascism frame the rise of violent, racist, working-class politics as a transnational phenomenon of post-emancipation racial capitalism.

It's through this prism that we might return to Alexander Livingston's recent discussion of Ralph Barton Perry's influential 1935 biography of James, in which Perry defends James against associations of pragmatism with fascism—Perry calls James a "prophet for the *other side* as well" (italics in original).[127] While Livingston thoughtfully "focuses on both the imagined and real connections between American pragmatism and Italian fascism,"[128] his motive is to provide historical context for Perry's liberalism. He recounts William Y. Elliot's claim that pragmatism's lack of "moral orientation" gave it fascist potential; Elliot writes that "[f]ascism has come to mean to the popular imagination just this application of pragmatism to politics."[129] In Italy, Giovanni Papini found James "an enthusiastic supporter."[130] Papini's idea for a "post-Christian

civil religion" sought a pragmatism that "taught how, through faith, beliefs not corresponding to reality could be made true," and elaborated that pragmatism "promised spiritual powers of self-transcendence to both the individual and the nation through the pursuit of militant self-assertion."[131] Whether we believe that Mussolini read James or not, Livingston is clear that many intellectuals found the comparisons made by those like Elliot "overblown, if not preposterous," calling Georges Sorel's revolutionary syndicalism a "sort of reductio ad absurdum of James's pragmatism for Perry in how it disfigures the humanitarian impulse by extending the notion of justification by faith into a license of revolutionary immorality."[132] Contrary to what I see as Livingston's understandable disarticulation between fascism and pragmatism, I would argue that James's emotionally-embodied pragmatism explains how revolutionary "impulses," whether "humanitarian" or otherwise, might become expressed as "militant self-assertion." Just as both Lenin and James suggest that beliefs might excite action as much as action might excite new beliefs, I believe pluralist pragmatism incorporates the entire range of embodied realities we can imagine as the outcome of politics. Radical pragmatism teaches us about radical politics, including fascism, without anyone having to claim that the historical intellectual movement of pragmatism *is* or *was* fascist.

Exploring the relation between pragmatism and fascism exposes how the latter might actually work. In a discussion of Heidegger and James, Hans Joas relates that a "much less well-known fact is that it was American pragmatism, and not Heidegger's own version of a pragmatic philosophy, which was adopted as the ideology of a whole group of German intellectuals who sympathized with National Socialism," including Arnold Gehlen and Eduard Baumgarten.[133] Baumgarten, who published on James and praised pragmatism as a National Socialist, links the American reverence for "the nation's greatest glories," and its nationalistic "strength" and "enthusiasm," to Hitler's belief in a "democratic" Fuhrer.[135] Baumgarten found precedent for Hitler's seizure of power in 1933 in American frontier history, by which he presumably meant the

genocidal violence of settler colonialism. However unintentionally, Baumgarten's alignment of German fascism and American imperialism underscores the transnational matrix of fascism as a violent expression of white masculinity.[136]

Although horrified at the formulation, Joas offers another interpretation of James by Baumgarten, who writes that "[l]eadership for James means: allowing *one* party in life to gain victory by killing off the other party, or possibly *many* other parties."[137] To be certain, this is less a true statement about James than a claim about a radical pragmatism beyond his philosophy. While the context of German fascism makes this passage initially shocking (and derivative of Carl Schmitt's 1932 book *The Concept of the Political*), it is also consistent with the indigenous genocides of settler colonialism in the United States, not to mention *laissez faire*, Social Darwinism, and the Civil War. In addition to echoing Lenin and Guevara, this formulation also captures the revolutionary suicide in *Gotham*. In other words, violent expressions of radical pragmatism are not necessarily "reductio ad absurdum" instances of James's philosophy. If we accept "bad pragmatism," we might admit how beliefs becomes rules for action, and vice versa, but also how those desires and beliefs are embodied in historical situations in which bodies are imagined through emotional economies of race, sexuality, and gender, as well as experiences of privation, emergency, hunger, and pain.

It is thus possible to hear James outline both sides of radical pragmatism in his essay "The Moral Equivalent of War." On the one hand, he engages in a critique of pacifism by pointing to its lack of "war's disciplinary function."[138] James contrasts socialism with militarism by praising the latter's "service of the collectivity," although his definition is striking for how his praise of militarism equally describes participation in a labor union, an anarchist cell, or a fascist party: "If proud of the collectivity, his [a man's] own pride rises in proportion. No collectivity is like an army for nourishing such pride."[139] James conflates pacifism with the problems of "utopias" too "weak and tame to touch the military-minded," citing Tolstoy as an exception for his emphasis on the "moral spur" of

fearing God.[140] Strikingly, James's link between pacifism and socialism must have been somewhat puzzling for readers of *The Communist Manifesto,* or witnesses to the 1871 French Commune, the 1877 General Strike, and Haymarket Affair.[141] This discussion makes it all the more striking when James later disavows the "war-function" in favor of a "reign of peace" and the "gradual advent of some sort of socialist equilibrium."[142] Like James's letter on Haymarket, the irony of his comment on socialism suggests why we must isolate radical pragmatism within contradictions in his work: here, we can see how militant socialism might actually *be* a moral equivalent of war James imagines, even as he claims to be in the "anti-militarist party."[143]

In the essay James also attacks "pacific cosmopolitan industrialism" by questioning its "contempt for life, whether one's own, or another's[.] Where is the conscription? Where is the blood-tax?"[144] James's paradoxical respect for "blood-tax" recalls Gotham's destruction anew, revealing how collective acts of violence can create forms of solidarity absent from the abjection of capitalist labor economies. We hear this as the militarism of the workers in *Gotham* transforms into a "blood-tax" in their literal and figurative acts of "tasting blood," with that blood consumption becoming a fuel for "nourishing their pride."[145] It is here that the car-driver's self-identification as "the white man" escaping *his* enslavement implicitly realizes a kind of solidarity in destruction; it's difficult, then, to separate revolutionary suicide in *Gotham* from elements of fascism. At the same time, this very collective solidarity of the "blood-tax" presumably attacked white rich men, too; as in Italy and Germany during the rise of fascist parties, we thus find contradictions in the ways the politics of class war are activated through racial identifications.[146] At the risk of being a "bad" scholar of James, I propose, in turn, that we enfold fascism into radical pragmatism. When Joas observes the "repeated charge that pragmatists merely posses a theory that is a philosophy of adaption to given circumstances," I would contend this charge in fact reveals how radical pragmatism "merely" explains different political realities.[147] What we historically call fascism thus becomes a

consistent probability for political modernity; it is an emergent form of racial politics conditioned by the pain economies of capitalist crisis.

The connection between fascism and pragmatism in Perry's biography underscores the contradictory pluralism of radical pragmatism. Perry writes that "the more powerful impulse communicated by pragmatism to social and political thought seems to spring from another source, mainly from its exaltation of direct action, and hence both of revolution and of dictatorship."[148] This "exaltation of direct action" signals a James beyond James, a James intertwined with genealogies of Marxism and fascism, and reinforces why it is precisely the multiplicity of potential mutations bound up within the contradictions of pragmatism that makes it historically compatible with the rise of progressive liberalism *and* forms of populism, socialism, and fascism.

Maybe surprisingly, these very possibilities of radical pragmatism are perhaps related to why Menand says Oliver Wendall Holmes "would never have called himself a pragmatist."[149] In Menand's account, Holmes believed "that life is an experiment," but unlike James or Dewey, he "did not believe that the experimental spirit will necessarily lead us, ultimately, down the right path."[150] This idea of an experimental spirit, one that leads down the paths of dreams and nightmares, echoes Holmes's belief that democracy "is an experiment, and it is in the nature of experiments to fail."[151] Remembering the necessity of abolition democracy, I would insist that what Holmes imagines as the failure of democracy actually points to the violent horizons of modern politics, including abolition democracy, revolutionary suicide and fascism "from below." Indeed, Miller's novel tells us that the revolution of abolition democracy failed long before the revolutionary suicide—it failed when Stone refused to negotiate, which is also when liberalism, conditioned by capitalist accumulation, also failed. In that way, then, the choice to destroy Gotham wasn't an act of the working class alone. It was collective suicide in all senses of the word: the capitalist culture of violence, abjection, and disability led to "the choice" of destruction. We must remember that such violence is

neither irrational nor exceptional, but pragmatic in the fullest sense of James's term.

LaGuardia Community College, City University of New York
jrogers@lagcc.cuny.edu

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NOTES

[1] Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*, 442.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Seigfried, *Pragmatism and Feminism*, 225.
[4] Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*, 442.
[5] Dewey, *Liberalism and Social Action*, 44. Also see Seigfried, *Pragmatism and Feminism*, 13.
[6] Zizek, *End Times*, 38.
[7] Zizek, *Zizek Presents Trotsky*, xvi.
[8] Davis, *Abolition Democracy*, 95.
[9] West, *The American Evasion of Philosophy*, 212.
[10] See Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory*, 153.
[11] Livingston, *Damn Great Empires!,* "Crises, Contexts, Contingency," paragraph 1.
[12] Ibid., paragraph 4.
[13] Whitehead, *William James, Pragmatism, and American Culture*, 42.
[14] Tarver and Sullivan, *Feminist Interpretations*, "Introduction," paragraph 3.
[15] Sullivan, "James and Feminist Philosophy," paragraph 10.
[16] Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*, x.
[17] See Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 65-68.
[18] Moten, *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, "Democracy."
[19] Brandom, "When Philosophy Paints," 43.
[20] Quoted in Blight, *Race and Reunion*, "Black Memory and the Progress of Race," paragraph 13.
[21] Cochran and Miller, *The Age of Enterprise*, 130-131.
[22] Ibid., 131.
[23] See Kittelstrom, *The Religion of Democracy*, 348-352.
[24] Hirsch, *Urban Revolt*, xiv.

[25] James, *Letters*, 252.

[26] See Miller, *Democratic Temperaments*, 13.

[27] Quoted in Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*, 295.

[28] James, "What Makes a Life Significant?," 291.

[29] Ibid., 292.

[30] Tarver, "Lady Pragmatism," paragraph 12. This image of the working class might also be developed next to his description of the "strenuous type of character." See Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory*, 127.

[31] James, *Pragmatism*, 13.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid., 13. The idea of contradiction in Marxist thought has a long life in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. One way to approach the subject is how Marx imported the idea from Hegel. For example, see Crocker, "Marx's Use of Contradiction," 558-563.

[36] McGowan, *Pragmatist Politics*, 71.

[37] James, *Pragmatism*, 114.

[38] Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory*, 86.

[39] Quoted in Foner, *Haymarket Martyrs*, 43.

[40] Foner, *Haymarket Martyrs,* 45.

[41] Ibid.

[42] See Smith, *Urban Disorder*, 107-109; Katz, *From Appomattox to Montmartre*, 161-183; and Coghlan, 4-5, 10-22.

[43] See Grob, "The Railroad Strikes of 1877," 16-34; Smith, *Urban Disorder*, 107; and Rogers-Cooper, "Downfall of the Republic," 386-408.

[44] Ross, *Communal Luxury*, "Introduction," paragraph 2.

[45] Cohen and Wong, *The Killers*, "Introduction," paragraph 6.

[46] *The Critic*, 151.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Miller, *Gotham,* 7.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid., 64.
[52] Ibid., 108.
[53] See Nelson, *Beyond the Martyrs*, 24.
[54] Miller, *Gotham*, 7. James, "The Moral Equivalent of War," 321.
[55] Miller, *Gotham*, 74.
[56] Ibid., 129.
[57] Ibid., 120-121.
[58] Ibid., 125
[59] Ibid., 127.
[60] Ibid., 135.
[61] Ibid., 164-165.
[62] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 59.
[63] Miller, *Gotham*, 165.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Marrs, *The Long Civil War*, 52.
[68] Miller, *Gotham*, 166.
[69] See Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*, 6-14.
[70] Arendt, *On Revolution*, 60.
[71] Miller, *Gotham*, 166.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid., 167.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Quoted in Heywood, "The Great Strike," 562.
[76] James, *Pragmatism*, 16.
[77] Ibid., 16-17.
[78] Ibid., 17.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid., 18.
[81] See James, *Pragmatism*, 16-17; and James, "Robert Gould Shaw," paragraph 7.
[82] James, "The Sentiment of Rationality," 88.
[83] De Man, *Psychology of Marxian Socialism*, 99.

[84] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, 42.
[85] James, "Robert Gould Shaw," paragraph 7.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory*, 65; 109.
[88] Miller, *Gotham*, 168.
[89] Ibid., 174.
[90] Ibid., 175.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid., 176.
[93] Ibid., 178.
[94] Ibid., 208.
[95] Ibid., 213.
[96] James, *Pragmatism*, 26.
[97] Gunn, *Thinking Across the American Grain*, 4.
[98] Quoted in Perry, *William James,* 479; Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," paragraph 11.
[99] Livingston, *Pragmatism, Feminism, and Democracy*, 88.
[100] Ibid., 89.
[101] Lenin, "The Socialist Revolution," 49.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*, 47.
[105] Ross, *Communal Luxury*, "Introduction," paragraph 6.
[106] James, *Modern Politics*, 45.
[107] Ibid.
[108] James, "The Race Question," paragraph 47.
[109] Ibid., paragraph 50.
[110] Ibid.
[111] James, *Pragmatism*, 23.
[112] James, *Principles* (Volume Two), 307.
[113] Ibid., 308.
[114] Ibid., 309.
[115] James, "The Sentiment of Rationality," 103.
[116] Ross, *Communal Luxury*, "Introduction," paragraph 6.
[117] James, *Pragmatism*, 23.

[118] Amin, *The Liberal Virus*, 47.

[119] Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, paragraph 2.

[120] Joas, *Pragmatism and Social Action*, 4.

[121] Novack, *Democracy & Revolution*, 164. In reply to the work of Paul Gilroy, Robert Reid-Pharr argues that "camp thinking" has a "complex history" in the United States, Spain, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, one that "predates the struggles against the Axis powers." In turn, he resists "the deployment of the term 'fascism,' to the extent that it presumes a distinction, clear or otherwise, between slavery, colonization, forced migration, and the atrocities committed by Germany, Italy, Japan, and their allies." See Reid-Pharr, *Archives of Flesh*, 41.

[122] James, *Principles* (Volume Two), 309.

[123] Ibid.

[124] Ibid., 309.

[125] Ibid.; Novack, *Democracy & Revolution*, 164.

[126] Le Bon, *The Psychology of Revolution*, 13.

[127] Quoted in Livingston, *Damn Great Empires!*, "William James: Fascist?," paragraph 17.

[128] Ibid., "Constructing a Usable Past," Footnote 4.

[129] Ibid., "William James: Fascist?" paragraph 7.

[130] Ibid., paragraph 11.

[131] Ibid., paragraph 10.

[132] Ibid., "Inventing an American Philosopher," paragraph 13..

[133] Joas, *Pragmatism and Social Action*, 107.

[135] Ibid., 109.

[136] Not incidentally, this connection is pondered in James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*, and, in a religious sense, Orlando Patterson's *Rituals of Blood: The Consequences of Slavery in Two American Centuries.* See Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*, 37, 52-53. See Patterson, *Rituals of Blood*, xv. Also see Reid-Pharr, *Archives of Flesh*, note 115.

[137] Baumgarten quoted in Joas, *Pragmatism and Social Action*, 110.

[138] James, "The Moral Equivalent of War," 321.

[139] James, "The Moral Equivalent of War," 322.
[140] Ibid., 321.
[141] Ibid., 322.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid., 323.
[144] Ibid., 322.
[145] Ibid.
[146] See Foster, "This Is Not Populism," paragraph 15.
[147] Joas, *Pragmatism and Social Action*, 4.
[148] Perry, *William James*, 574.
[149] Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*, 432.
[150] Ibid., 433.
[151] Ibid.

Review of *Altered States: Buddhism and Psychedelic Spirituality in America*. By Douglas Osto. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016. 300 pp. $ 35.00

Sacred Knowledge: Psychedelics and Religious Experience. By William A. Richards. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015. 244 pp. $ 29.95

Psychedelics—particularly due to their promise to treat a host of medical conditions—have been staging a comeback in recent years, as evidenced by several features published in *The New Yorker, The Atlantic*, and other high profile popular publications. It was thus only a matter of time until a major university press jumped into the fray. The two books under review here are brought out by Columbia, and – while not belonging to a series *per se* – both take up the theme of psychedelics and "religious experience" in different yet related ways.

Altered States, a study of the relationship between American convert Buddhism and psychedelics, is by Asian Studies professor Douglas Osto, a self-professed experimenter with psychedelics and a Buddhist convert, who teaches at Massey University in New Zealand. For his book, Osto conducted a large online survey and interviewed a number of contemporary Buddhists and Buddhist practitioners about their views and personal experiences with psychedelics.

Although Osto does not position his work in this manner, *Altered States* continues a once fertile tradition in the American study of religion, which produced several texts around the turn of the 20th century. These texts regarded conversion as a singularly

powerful tool with which to probe religious experience: James Leuba's "A Study in the Psychology of Religious Phenomena," E.D. Starbuck's *Psychology of Religion*, and, of course, William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*. The similarities between Osto's book and these predecessors are striking: a focus on conversion, on individual, experiential narratives, a naïve sociology,—Starbuck and Leuba's questionnaires on one hand and Osto's online survey on the other, which he himself agrees it offers only "some anecdotal evidence" (3)— and an attempt to offer a psychological narrative that underscores the subjects' experience. In a sense, one could refer to Osto's book as a case study of the chemical adjuvants to conversion.

The book is divided into seven chapters, with an introduction, a conclusion, and a biographical postscript in which the author recounts his personal history with psychedelics and Buddhism. After an opening statement of the problem and a review of the existing literature (chapter 1), Osto offers an outline of the history of psychedelics and the history of Buddhism in America (chapters 2 and 3), a description and commentary of the interviews with contemporary students and practitioners of Buddhism (4,5,6), and a more theoretical discussion comprising the debates around: chemical mysticism, Buddhism and the psychology of altered states, and the epistemological status of experience (chapter 7). The bulk of the book is comprised of the three central chapters that describe Osto's interviews with American Buddhists and Buddhist psychedelic explorers, among whom are included a number of well-known names like Lama Tsony, Surya Das, Geoffrey Shugen Arnold, Charles Tart, and Rick Strassman. As a structuring device for his chapters, Osto uses the metaphor of the "opening/closing of the door,'" a phrase he borrows from his subjects. Accordingly, the three chapters deal with "Opening the Door" (those who think psychedelics drew them to Buddhism), "Closing the Door" (those Buddhists who gave up psychedelics or never used them in the first place), and "Keeping the Door Open" (those Buddhists who

continue to use them in their practice). While these chapters contain a good deal of biographical material pertaining to the lives of contemporary Buddhists and their intersection with psychedelics, Osto unfortunately neglects any more general discussion of the debates about intoxicants in the history of Buddhism. At the same time, he gives no clear statement about the ways in which the positions outlined by his interview subjects fit into this larger story. To be fair, Osto does point out that there is some similarity between psychedelic Buddhism and traditional tantric practices. In fact, he goes as far as to claim that contemporary psychedelic Buddhism is actually a form of Tantra (213). Such a claim would have merited a bit more elaboration: do Osto's psychedelic subjects agree with this categorization? are the practices and beliefs of psychedelic Buddhists commensurate with those of historical or even contemporary Tantrikas? It is not sufficient merely to point out that historical Tantrikas ingested mind-altering substances, or that they shrouded their practices in secrecy—as Osto's subjects also do. For not all secrets are kept for the same reason, nor are all mind-altering substances eaten with the same intention. One would have to show that there is actually a continuity here, otherwise the term "Tantra" becomes merely a rhetorical sleight of hand, a way of legitimizing the psychedelic Buddhists through a term that is custom defined to fit them—as well as any other group that might have ever practiced "the secret ingestion of transgressive substances for religious/spiritual purposes" (213).

Moving on from this, of particular note is Osto's foray into the psychology of religion, in a section in which he attempts to prove that the "opening the door" metaphor is rooted in human neurophysiology (115-119). Osto draws on a three-stage model that seeks to account for ancient cave art through speculation about altered states of consciousness. According to this model, developed by archaeologist David Lewis-Williams, the visionary transformation of consciousness during trances (shamanic, meditational, drug-induced) progresses from "entoptic phenomena"

(stage 1) through "iconic forms" (stage 2) and into "iconic hallucinations" (stage 3) (115-16). These three stages represent levels of "intensified inward consciousness" that correspond to visual phenomena of corresponding complexity (115).

The key for Osto is the fact that entrance to stage 3 is supposedly accompanied by the experience of passing through a tunnel or vortex—this passage is (questionably) assimilated to the "opening the door" metaphor. And there are several problems with this argument. First, even if Lewis-Williams is correct that all "visionary states" follow this trans-cultural and trans-historical model, it is nonetheless the case that Osto's subjects seem to be describing a general change of direction in life through their metaphor (i.e. a kind of conversion) and not merely a visionary experience. If the visionary moment and the lasting conversion are related, Osto does not clearly specify how. Moreover, it is not clear if the Lewis-Williams model is a description of what is "actually" happening in the minds of visionary subjects, or in fact itself merely a metaphor, and thereby less illuminating than Osto might think: are there "stages," "vortices," and "portals" in consciousness? Indeed, in what way does the term "iconic hallucination" tell us more about what's happening than a more simple formula like "seeing a bodhisattva"? Finally, one might wonder why it matters that a metaphor is "rooted" in neuropsychology. Are the meaning and value of a metaphor merely a function of their being psychological epiphenomena, or are such meanings and values socially and culturally constructed, such that their "rootedness" in psychology is a matter of indifference for Osto's purposes?

Despite failing to answer these questions, in chapter 7 Osto does a good job of outlining the theoretical issues raised by his inquiry. After carefully laying out the terms of the debates about chemical mysticism and after questioning whether unmediated experiential knowledge is possible, Osto nonetheless claims not to be able to answer questions such as: "Are psychedelics the true Dharma?," "Can psychedelics be used as an adjunct to religious lives?," or "Are

drug-induced mystical or religious experiences authentic?" The only answer Osto can provide to these questions is "maybe" (200). Some readers may see this response as evasive, an attempt, perhaps, not to alienate any of the groups Osto is studying. However, in a very real sense, Osto is right to say that the aforementioned questions are "unanswerable" (199), for they are theological questions posed in a context devoid of an ultimate authority to which all of his subjects would likely defer. As it stands, the answers his subjects give to such questions depend less on tradition and theology than on the particular epistemology common to "contemporary alternative spiritualities," according to which "the individual's own experience functions as the highest source of authority for them" (128-29). Osto might have pursued this line further. In addition to critiquing the notion of an unmediated experience that is not to some extent constituted by the subject's own ontological presuppositions, or pointing out that his subjects fit well into what Catherine Albanese in *A Republic of Mind & Spirit* has called "American metaphysical religion," it would have been useful to look more deeply at the origin of this experiential epistemology in the psychology of religion and the Liberal Protestant tradition upon which the former drew. It would have also been instructive to compare his subjects' views with those of other contemporary religious groups who use psychedelics. At the end of the book one is left wondering if there is indeed a deeper connection between Buddhism and the psychological effects of psychedelics, or if in fact a host of other groups might not have also been opening the door to alternative beliefs in their own experimental tunings in and turnings on.

Psychologist William Richards's *Sacred Knowledge* is largely a statement of the author's personal theological beliefs, which he calls "perennialist" (11), but which might also be described as Liberal Protestant with a strong psychedelic component. Richards, one of the pioneers of the use of psychedelics in psychotherapy and palliative care, divides his book into five chapters, together with a preface, an introduction, and an epilogue. This work is a mixture of

autobiography, theological reflection, anecdotes, and psychology of religion, and also draws on Richards's personal collection of narratives of cancer patients whose lives were improved by taking psychedelics.

The first chapter sets the stage, discussing the revival of psychedelic research and introducing some of the author's terminological choices: "mystical consciousness," "psychedelic substances," etc. Chapter 2 delves into an analysis of the said "mystical consciousness," with sections that explore intuitive knowledge, the distinction between mystical experiences of internal and external unity, the changed perception of time and space, and "visions and archetypes." Chapter 3 discusses "interpersonal dynamics," with reference to topics like the experience of meaninglessness, somatic discomfort during psychedelic experiences, conversion, death, and the integration of religious experiences into one's life. Chapter 4 outlines the future prospects of psychedelic research in areas such as medicine, education and religion, and offers tips on how to get the best results out of a psychedelic session. The final chapter is a conclusion, which (among other things) puts forward Richards's belief that we are entering a new paradigm presaged by the insights gained from mystical states of consciousness, psychedelically induced or not. Finally, a brief epilogue offers a list of theological statements for further reflection: for example, "1. In case you had any doubts, God (or whatever your favorite noun for ultimate reality may be) is" (211).

The best sections of the book are those in which the author recounts snippets of his own life story: his friendship with Walter Pahnke, his first psilocybin trip, the meeting with Timothy Leary, his wife's struggle with cancer and her untimely death, and the personal narratives he has gathered in the course of his work with terminally ill patients.

However, the book suffers from theoretical indulgence related to Richards's unwillingness to interrogate his assumptions and from

a lack of scholarly apparatus (quotes are not referenced and the bibliography is only "selected"). One of Richards's main claims is that psychedelics can engender mystical states of consciousness. However, the author has not absorbed the recent literature that looks critically at the concepts of "mysticism," "religion" and "experience"—Wayne Proudfoot's *Religious Experience*, Grace Jantzen's *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism*, Richard King's *Orientalism and Religion*, Robert Sharf's essays on "Buddhist Modernism" and "Experience," or Timothy Fitzgerald's *The Ideology of Religious Studies* to name just a few. Richards claims to have experienced mystical states while on psychedelics, and to have observed them in others. In keeping with his avowed perennialism, psychedelic mystical states are assimilated to whatever similar "state of spiritual awareness" one gets in any of the "world religions": *samadhi*, *nirvana, wu wei*, etc. (10). Richards views "unitive consciousness" as a hallmark of the mystical state, and in a later section (78-96) he argues that visions are not a part of mystical consciousness *per se*, as visions still preserve a subject-object distinction. Whatever the case may be, according to Richards, visions bring one to see "archetypes," and he further considers Jung's collective unconscious to have been "empirically validated" by "the records of psychedelic researchers" (80). While Jungians may be thrilled to hear this, I would only point out that the problem with the collective unconscious has never been a lack of archetypal encounters.

Ultimately, there is little that is new in Richards' psychedelic mysticism. His book is one more riff on an idea that can be traced back to Benjamin Paul Blood's *The Anesthetic Revelation and the Gist of Philosophy* and William James's musings on nitrous oxide, and which was reactivated by the psychedelic revolution of the 1960s. Richards does not add much to the discussion, and though he writes about "mystical consciousness," he says little about the debates surrounding consciousness itself: whether there are different forms of it, what those forms might be, or even if "consciousness"

is the correct term to use. In his own words, he takes a "'meat and potatoes' approach to discussing the mysteries of our being" (22). Nor is anything particularly insightful in Richard's Jamesian description of the types of noetic content ("intuitive knowledge" as Richard calls it) that one gets with "mystical consciousness": about God, immortality, love, etc. (39 ff.). One would have expected that a psychologist would have something to say about "intuition": what is it, how does it function, and how does one distinguish the intuitive other sources of knowledge? Instead of offering a psychological elucidation, Richards treats the reader to a familiar perennialist litany: it does not matter if you call God "God" or "Shiva," or "the Void," or "the Numinous." Words are too small to contain the divine majesty and, at any rate, "the greater the awareness of the eternal grows in human consciousness, the less preoccupied the everyday personality becomes with its own favorite collection of words and concepts" (43). What's troubling about Richards's descriptions is not the fact that he does not take the words of other traditions seriously enough to assume that they may tell a different story than that of his "mystical consciousness"; his aim, after all, is to present his own theology. What's troubling is that he does not even appear to realize that he is propounding a Christian model, and that the very conceptual framework that he is using—the distinction between an essential experience and a secondary translation of that experience into words, rites and institutions—is a Liberal Protestant framework, one originally developed by Friedrich Schleiermacher, and later taken up by the American psychologists of religions, including James (58).

The question that needs to be asked is: what role do psychedelics play in this model? As Richards would have it, "these molecules do indeed appear to be intrinsically sacred" (185), an understandable statement given that they are taken to reliably induce those private, ineffable experiences Richards holds so dear. Another way of phrasing this idea is to say that psychedelics can induce conversions, those same conversions or psychological states of transformation

that James thought could heal "the divided self." Richards makes this suggestion himself, but without developing the link with James (113-18). The difference from James seems to be that whereas for the pragmatist philosopher conversions were ultimately mysterious phenomena, for Richards they are demystified. Conversions can be reliably induced, provided one respects Richards's ritual prescriptions: the right dosage, a comfortable setting, a trained guide, a sleep mask, and soothing music (a playlist is provided in the appendix). It is perhaps only a slight exaggeration to suggest Richards's book is an argument for instituting psychedelics as the principal sacraments of the Liberal Protestant faith.

The fact that Richards's book reiterates this Liberal Protestant model should give us pause, especially when we consider (as Richards himself does) the "new frontiers" these substances might open up in the study of religion or in education. I am not as convinced as Richards that a trip on psychedelics could offer much insight into the life and experience of a Jewish prophet (172); similarly, I am doubtful whether such a trip would offer any new philosophical insight into Plato's myth of the cave (154). These proposals are based on the supposition that the experience of a contemporary tripper can somehow simulate the experience of the prophet or of Plato. Not only is this an enormous *if*, but the discussion about the truth value of this statement is not one that can be settled by simply taking psychedelics. We should, I submit, be careful about thinking that there is any easy, "experiential" solution to our intellectual quandaries, and we should also be wary of finding in psychedelics a magic bullet with which to treat our loss of meaning or quench our thirst for transcendence. If Richards's book shows anything, it is that what we actually may need is not more psychedelic experiences, but more critical engagements with those experiences. Only in this way may we perhaps stop ourselves from using these substances as a way of covertly promoting our personal theological convictions.

Altered States and *Sacred Knowledge* are both useful books in that they may spark conversations about the contemporary meaning of psychedelics, the nature of the experiences which these substances can induce, as well as (particularly in Osto's case) the role that psychedelics played in the 20th century rise of Buddhism and other new religious movements in the West. Specialists in American religious and cultural history will derive some profit from critically engaging with the views contained in the two volumes. These positive qualities notwithstanding, their respective weaknesses make them difficult to recommend with the same enthusiasm that their authors appear to have put into their composition.

Matei Iagher
University College London
matei_iagher@yahoo.com

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Review of *Marcel Proust in the Light of William James: In Search of a Lost Source*. By Marilyn M. Sachs. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2014. 311 pp. $105.00

Marilyn M. Sachs's *Marcel Proust in the Light of William James* takes part in a narrow scholarly tradition of studies that focus on the influences of a single author. Though whole monographs have been committed to identifying individual writers as important sources for Marcel Proust—including Henry James and Henri Bergson—none, Sachs argues, have done justice to the influence of William James. Her book rectifies this oversight by providing a thoroughly researched, exhaustively detailed account of the many correspondences between James's writings and Proust's novels. Sachs illuminates how Proust's aestheticized depictions of mental life echo James's scientific discoveries, leaving larger Jamesian concerns mostly in the shadows. Accordingly, the book will appeal primarily to scholars of Proust, and secondarily to scholars of James or early psychology. Beyond the highly focused beam of scholarly attention devoted to Proust's reading habits, personal relations, and psychological insights, Sachs's study sheds passing light on the relationships between French modernism and American pragmatism, literature and neuroscience, and French literature and psychology.

The primary argument of the book is that James served as an important source for *À la recherche du temps perdu*. Traces of Jamesian thought can be discovered in both its form and its psychological preoccupations. As there is scant evidence that Proust read James directly or even in translation, Sachs surveys discussions of James's work in the French press and Paris's intellectual circles, arguing that his ideas had penetrated Parisian social life sufficiently to influence Proust's conception of mental life. Chapter One argues

that Proust actively drew upon James's ideas, mediated by book reviews, commentaries, and mutual relations. Sachs's meticulous documentation of James's reception in Proust's circles is valuable for its suggestion that indirect influence can still be profound. The Proustian term "pénombre" [penumbra] provides an apt image for such indeterminate spheres of relation. The implications of this suggestion, however, are eclipsed by Sachs's desire to uncover evidence of more direct, conventional influence. Lacking this evidence, Sachs resorts to speculation, leaving the bulk of the chapter's research under-utilized. Fortunately, the remainder of the book sits more comfortably with the notion of indirect influence. Chapters Two through Four argue that Proust's novel aestheticizes James's philosophy and psychology. With wide-ranging knowledge of each author's œuvre, Sachs assesses the degree to which Proust and James shared ideas about consciousness, habit, attention, and emotion. This is the book's primary contribution, more comparative than argumentative. Finally, Chapter Five suggests that contemporary neuroscience has confirmed the depiction of mental life found in Proust and James, despite Sachs's contention that neuroscientists have neglected the importance of the latter. Though this chapter ventures into exciting new territory, it is also slowed by its one-note advocacy of James's importance and its literature-review qualities, thus missing an opportunity to clarify James's potential contributions to the intersections of literary studies and neuroscience.

Sachs's knowledge of Proust's biography, intellectual context, and œuvre are expansive, and her first chapter lays out in great detail the extent to which James's works and ideas permeated Proust's circles. It describes James's favorable reception in Europe, discussions of his work in the French media (e.g., *Le Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, which Proust read), and commentaries about his work that Proust might have read (by Bergson, Émile Boutroux, and Paul Sollier). This contextual work is most fruitful when Sachs describes the proximity of Proust and James with abnormal psychology in France. For example, the novelist's father, Adrien Proust, was a medical doctor with close

connections to Jean-Martin Charcot, the preeminent French neurologist whose work James draws upon in *The Principles of Psychology*. Paradoxically, however, the success of Sachs's contextualization undercuts one of her repeated claims—namely, that James deserves a privileged place as a "source" for Proust's writings. For example, Sachs describes the elder Proust's work on neurasthenia, hysteria, and "automatisme ambulatoire" [involuntary ambulation]—all concepts important to James's psychology—as forming "a template for some of the thematic material that appears later in *À la recherche du temps perdu*" (15). Yet Sachs makes no further comment on this connection, preferring to make James the point of origin—rather than part of a milieu—for nearly every psychological concept described in Proust's novel. Indeed, Sachs casts her goal in almost mythic terms, as a "quest to identify Proust's provenance"—a search for the "lost source" of the title that would confirm a more direct form of influence (21). Framing the endeavor in this way has the unfortunate effect of de-emphasizing the fascinating contextual ties Sachs uncovers between Proust and James, and it puts an unbearable burden of proof on the book's foremost argument. Consequently, the chapter sometimes resorts to rhetorical questions in lieu of argumentation: "Might Bergson himself have served as a vector for James's ideas to Proust?" (22). Readers are left to supply their own answers.

One of Sachs's central claims is that Proust's masterpiece is thematically structured around distinct aspects of James's psychology: the "stream of consciousness" (Chapter Two), the "fringe" of attention (Chapter Three), and introspective subjectivity (Chapter Four). Most discussion of James in these chapters is devoted to *The Principles of Psychology* and the *Briefer Course*, though Sachs has read widely across his œuvre. Her emphasis is notable, given that Proust's two direct references to James both refer to *Pragmatism*, the work most widely known in France—a text that appears less integral to Sachs's reading. Nevertheless, her comparisons between Proust and James are impressive in scope. They encompass "how inner feelings arise as personal emotions known only to ourselves; how subsequent thinking about our

sensory experience is a route to knowledge, becoming the '*conceptions* and *judgments*' through which we acquire understanding; how attention and interest drive experience in fits and starts; how sensation, memory, habit, and the experiences of an adaptive pragmatic self allow us to observe, select, and create the reality around us," and much more (64). Sachs repeatedly juxtaposes long passages by the authors, sometimes revealing how they share strikingly similar imagery. In one such case, James's image for the "stream" of thought and his critique of psychological quantification are echoed in a passage where Proust's narrator watches children filling carafes in the Vivonne River; in another, both authors comment on the subjective nature of interested attention by focusing on the image of a railroad timetable (85-86, 265). Even if such comparisons fall short of demonstrating the more direct form of influence Sachs quests after, they offer flashes of insight into how psychological concepts are conveyed through aesthetic forms.

The drawback of this comparative technique is that Sachs tends to find correspondences everywhere, minimizing the differences between the two thinkers. For example, Sachs argues that for Proust, habit is a "blunt instrument" that "masks the underlying reality" of things; thus, his narrator is "escaping habit to attain novelty," exploring instead a world of fleeting impressions and diffused attention (120-21). Though James would have agreed that habit masks the complexity of reality, he praised this trait for its pragmatic utility, identifying habit as society's "most precious conservative agent."[1] Sachs thus obscures the different attitudes Proust and James held toward habit, focusing instead on their similar conceptions of psychological phenomena. By downplaying James's more pragmatic orientation, Sachs ultimately confirms the modernist canard that habit is antithetical to creativity—a proposition James would have vigorously contested. Habit's tendency to render certain actions automatic or half-conscious may dull the multiplicity of sensory experience, but it also enables some of our most complex thoughts and creations: "A glance at the musical hieroglyphics," James writes in *The Principles of Psychology*, "and the pianist's fingers have rippled through a cataract of notes."[2] Sachs also

underplays to the extent to which the "pure experience" of sensory life connotes, for James, a "quasi-chaos" that must be restrained for us to make sense of the world.[3] In other words, Sachs often substitutes James the pragmatist with James the modernist, bringing him more in line with Proust's aesthetic than is probably merited—especially given that Proust's only references to James are to *Pragmatism*, not his psychology.

Though such discussions show Sachs's wide reading across James and Proust, they often miss the opportunity to connect with the subfields most relevant to her discussion. Lisi Schoenbach's *Pragmatic Modernism*, for example, neatly deconstructs the false binary between modernist aesthetics and Jamesian habit, and includes a substantial discussion of habit in Proust.[4] It is also striking that the single paragraph devoted to distinguishing Proust from other "stream of consciousness" writers (James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Richardson) neglects to mention any critical work on the subject (64). Instead, Sachs builds a scholarly edifice almost entirely out of the two œuvres at hand. Her fourth chapter, "From Jean to Je: Experience in the First-Person Singular," is a case in point. Though its title promises linguistic or narrative analysis, Sachs treats the "first-person singular" as synonymous with first-person point of view—a narrative technique that is discussed in general terms, without reference to any relevant critical or literary discussions. Instead, the chapter primarily compares descriptions of experience in James and Proust; Sachs argues that James's model of consciousness influenced Proust's shift from a third-person narrative in his early autobiographical novel *Jean Santeuil* to a first-person account of subjective experience in *À la recherche du temps perdu*. The claim is intriguing in terms of Proust's œuvre, but the argument about narrative point of view remains shakily supported by a number of unarticulated assumptions wanting explication or critical grounding. Ultimately, Sachs makes it difficult for the book to live up to its own arguments, and misses many chances to discuss the larger relations between modernism, psychology, and pragmatism.

Sachs's fifth and final chapter, on James and Proust in contemporary neuroscience, provides a wider framework than the previous chapters. It argues that James's theories about cognitive brain functions and Proust's representations of them have been confirmed by modern science: "James summarized the thinking of his time on these questions, Proust explored them in painstaking detail in his art in ways very reminiscent of James's theory, and neuro-cognitive science now has better tools with which to revisit the same questions and explain the mechanisms" (236-37). Scientists have affirmed James's theory about the brain's essential plasticity, Sachs claims, yet they fail to credit him as frequently as they credit Proust. Though one might agree that Proust gets more attention in studies like (the prelapsarian) Jonah Lehrer's *Proust Was a Neuroscientist*, it's hardly the case that James has been ignored—as one reviewer quips, an alternate title for Lehrer's study could have been *James Was a Psychologist*.[5] Unfortunately, aside from a few "chicken or egg" discussions about the relations between art and science, Sachs's argument does not advance beyond repeated assertions of James's primacy. Instead, the chapter is primarily structured as a literature review. In several passages, Sachs questions whether the authors under review are "forgetting" James, and in one case, because of an omitted page reference, whether they "had actually read James—something that may not be the case" (259, 234). As with prior chapters, Sachs appears most interested in confirming James's importance for Proust, and for those who have followed in his wake. If contemporary neuroscience has discovered ways in which James or Proust were inaccurate about neuro-cognitive functions, Sachs isn't interested; her priority is to ensure James gets credit where she believes he is due.

In sum, *Marcel Proust in the Light of William James* offers a comprehensive assessment of Jamesian psychology in *À la recherche du temps perdu*, and will be useful for those interested in biographical questions of Proust's reading. Those looking for insight into how psychological concepts are translated into narrative aesthetics will find much relevant material, but insufficient nuance in discussions of literary method or technique. Readers interested in

questions about the intersections between psychology, literature, modernism, pragmatism, or science will likely prefer more wide-ranging studies.

Joshua Lam
Michigan State University
jdlam@msu.edu

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NOTES

[1] James, *Principles*, 125.
[2] Ibid., 119.
[3] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, 32-33.
[4] Schoenbach, *Pragmatic Modernism*, 19-48 and 134-46.
[5] Engber, "Proust Wasn't a Neuroscientist."

Notes on *Pragmatism, Kant, and Transcendental Philosophy*. Edited by Gabriele Gava and Robert Stern. New York and London: Routledge, 2016. 298 pp. $150.00

Pragmatism, Kant, and Transcendental Philosophy offers a substantial contribution to a recent trend in pragmatist scholarship: an increasing focus on the complex relationship between pragmatism (both "classical" and "neo") and Kant's intellectual legacy. The exact nature of the relationship between pragmatism and Kant has been in question from the beginning; the problem is seemingly birthed out of Peirce's own complicated debt to Kant, but careful observation shows roots reaching even further back, as Kant is already entangled in the Transcendentalism of Emerson and Thoreau, having been earlier "shipped" across the Atlantic thanks to English Romanticism, and in particular Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 1825 *Aids to Reflection*. Despite this heritage, for many years the relationship between pragmatism and Kant was treated either as a damaging inheritance that all true pragmatists must disavow (i.e. James's assertion that we must "go around" Kant), or as a matter of curious but ultimately inconsequential history (170). Rarely was the pragmatist-Kant relationship taken seriously as a fruitful connection that might be, if not fully embraced, then at least cautiously welcomed. The essays collected in this volume show that this state of affairs has finally, perhaps, begun to change.

The editors of *Pragmatism, Kant, and Transcendental Philosophy* articulate the aims of the book in five general categories: (1) To consider explicit statements (both favorable and critical) made by the pragmatists concerning Kant; (2) to consider what implicit influences Kant may have had that were not acknowledged by the pragmatists; (3) to consider what similarities exist between Kant and the pragmatists, even if no historical influence can be established; (4) to articulate what aspects of Kant's thoughts are pragmatic or proto-pragmatic; and (5) to consider the relationship

between pragmatism and modern thinkers inspired by Kant, especially modern instances of "transcendental" argumentation (2).

Each article in the volume falls under one of these five categories. In the first category, for example, we find two articles that evaluate the pragmatist's response to Kant's "Copernican Revolution"—James O'Shea's "Concepts of Objects as Prescribing Laws: A Kantian and Pragmatist Line of Thought" and Jean-Marie Chevalier's "Forms of Reasoning as Conditions of Possibility: Peirce's Transcendental Inquiry Concerning Inductive Knowledge." Also under this heading the editors note three contributions dealing with Kant's notion of regulative principles—Cheryl Misak's "Peirce, Kant, and What We Must Assume," Sebastian Gardner's "German Idealism, Classical Pragmatism, and Kant's Third *Critique,*" and Daniel Herbert's "Peirce and the Final Opinion: Against Apel's Transcendental Interpretation of the Categories."

All three papers falling under the third category have to do with William James—Robert Stern's "Round Kant or Through Him? On James's Arguments for Freedom, and their Relation to Kant's," Marcus Willaschek's "Kant and Peirce on Belief," and Graham Bird's "Consciousness in Kant and William James." Stern challenges James's claim to have gone around Kant, positing that James's arguments for freedom are relevantly similar to Kant's approach to practical reason. Along these lines, Willaschek argues (in the midst of a point concerning Peirce), that James's position of allowing action to warrant belief is similar to the Kantian position. Bird argues that James's criticism of Kant for failing to see the role of psychology in understanding consciousness is misplaced; he believes that James has failed to account for the importance of the *Anthropology* in Kant's system. James scholars may find the contrasting positions of Stern and Willaschek on the "evidentialism" of Kant and James to be interesting.

Papers dealing with the fourth category include David Macarthur's "A Kant-Inspired Vision of Pragmatism as Democratic Experimentalism" and Gabriele Gava's "The Fallibilism of Kant's Architectonic." The remaining three articles deal with the fifth category—Sami Pihlström's "Subjectivity as Negativity and as

Limit: On the Metaphysics and Ethics of the Transcendental Self, Pragmatically Naturalized," Wolfgang Kuhlmann's "A Plea for Transcendental Philosophy," and Boris Rähme's "Transcendental Arguments, Epistemically Constrained Truth, and Moral Discourse."

Together, these thirteen articles do an admirable job demonstrating the complexity and relevance of the pragmatist-Kant connection. If I had to point to a weakness in the volume, it would be that no article seems (per the editors own reckoning) to *explicitly* address aim number two (i.e., Kant's implicit influence on the pragmatists)—an omission that is not fully acknowledged or explained. Even if some of the articles touch on this aspect tangentially, it would have been nice to find a more explicit articulation of this concern, considering that it is listed by the editors as one of the five major aims of the volume. Nevertheless, the volume remains excellent. Finally, those scared off by the three digit hardcover list price will be happy to know that Routledge plans to release a considerably less expensive paperback edition by the end of this calendar year.

Jared Kemling
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
jaredkemling@gmail.com

Notes on *Saving Faith: Making Religious Pluralism an American Value at the Dawn of the Secular Age*. By David Mislin. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015. 215 pp. $45.00

Drawing largely upon primary and archival sources, Mislin examines the challenges faced by America's liberal Protestants from 1875 to 1925, when they felt their cultural influence threatened by profound economic, political, and intellectual change: the influx of Catholic and Jewish immigrants; the rise of scientific authority that fomented doubt and even agnosticism; and competing cultural institutions—labor unions, for example, and ethnic associations—that offered a sense of community and shared identity. Responding to these challenges of secularism and modernity, Mislin argues, progressive, educated Protestants chose to tamp down denominational rivalry and instead embrace religious diversity that included not only Catholicism and Judaism, but Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. Only by attesting to the social, intellectual, and personal value of religious life, they believed, could they insure that religion would not become irrelevant in the modern world.

Besides confronting the influence of other religions, liberal Protestants were faced with the thorny problem of faith in an age increasingly persuaded by scientific evidence. They were interested, therefore, in the work of three psychologists investigating spirituality and the mental processes involved in religious belief: William James, George Albert Coe, and Edwin Diller Starbuck. Starbuck had been James's student as a Harvard undergraduate and earned a doctorate in psychology at Clark University; his research for *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Study for the Growth of Religious Consciousness* much intrigued James. Starbuck had based his study on responses to a questionnaire about religious practices that he circulated in the Harvard community, and he shared

his data with James for his Gifford Lectures and *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. Although neither Starbuck nor James is central to Mislin's study (both are dispatched in a few pages), Mislin notes that "The Will to Believe" and *The Varieties* underscored the Protestant argument that faith and doubt were not contradictory, and that religious belief did not require "absolute certainty in all matters of faith" (32). Mislin sees that James's "depiction of faith and unbelief in 'The Will to Believe' mirrored discussions taking place in Protestant churches. The denial of absolute certainty paralleled assertions made by many Protestants about the absence of finality in the quest for religious truth" (34). *The Varieties*, moreover, provided evidence of the rich diversity of spiritual life.

Mislin cites the World's Parliament of Religions, held in conjunction with the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, as an important event introducing Americans to alternative faiths. Despite liberal Protestants' purported celebration of other practices, the Parliament, Mislin sees, was infused by assumptions of Christian superiority; and despite liberal Protestants' professed embrace of the integrity of other religions, they were uncomfortable with the idea that the Parliament sent a message "that all religions were equally true and thus interchangeable" (43). Some Protestants, afraid that Christianity's uniqueness was being undermined, "sought to identify as many similarities as possible between Christianity and other traditions and then invoke the parallels as evidence for Christian superiority" (43). Other beliefs, therefore, would be respected, but Christian tenets and ideals would be seen as overarching.

This underlying conviction of Christian superiority was not surprising among liberal Protestants: they were, after all, members of social elites; their congregations were more likely to consist of professionals and business owners rather than immigrant laborers; and they failed to see how many members' condescension toward immigrants fueled their churches' reputation as inhospitable. They made a valiant effort to construct a vision of America as Judeo-Christian; since they were by nature social reformers, they strived to oppose anti-Semitism and racism, efforts, Mislin asserts, that did not

always "translate to an acceptance of divergent cultural practices" (159). Mislin addresses conflicts among Protestants, some of whom believed that liberals were diluting the meaning of Christianity, but the rise of evangelicals and fundamentalists as a counter force to liberal Protestants is beyond the scope of this book.

Although James plays only a small role in this book, Mislin's first chapter, especially, focused on doubt, is useful in contextualizing the cultural moment — characterized by crises of faith and Protestants' fear of the erosion of their authority — in which "The Will to Believe" and *The Varieties* appeared.

Linda Simon
Skidmore College, Emerita
lsimon@skidmore.edu

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Breslauer, Samuel. "The morality of faith in Martin Buber and William James." International Journal for Philosophy of Religion *82, no. 2 (2017): 153-74.*

> Some philosophers have become atheists because of "intellectual probity." Martin Buber relates two occasions during which he advocated his view of the term "God" and rejected alternative perspectives. He never justified the basis for either his advocacy or his rejection, yet both play an important role in all his writing, especially his specific type of Zionism. Using what has been called the mere theism of William James' "The Will to Believe" and the criteria for faith that James advances in that essay illuminates both Buber's general view of the divine and more particularly his Zionism. Once Buber, no less than James, is understood as a mere theist the basis of what he accepts and what he rejects as true religion becomes clearer. Buber's theism meets James' requirement of being a live, forced, momentous option and his Zionism also strives to meet those standards.

de Freitas Araujo, Saulo. "Psychology between science and common sense: William James and the problems of psychological language in the Principles*."* New Ideas in Psychology *46 (Aug 2017): 39-45.*

> The suspicion that language can become an obstacle to human knowledge is not new in the Western intellectual tradition. Following the empiricist legacy, many authors have suggested the perils and pitfalls of common sense language for science. Applied to psychology, this leads to the issue of the reliability of psychological language for scientific psychology. William James, in his *Principles of Psychology*, was one of the first psychologists to address this problem explicitly. The goal of this paper is to situate his position and contrast it with contemporary debates over the status of folk psychology. The results indicate that James conceived of common sense psychology in a very complex manner, and pointed to a kind of illusion that remains

ignored in the current literature, with negative consequences for psychology. I conclude by suggesting the relevance of James for contemporary debates in theoretical and philosophical psychology.

Erchinger, Philipp. "Reading Experience: William James and Robert Browning." Journal of Literary Theory *11, no. 2 (August 2017): 162-82.*

The topic of this essay is the concept of experience which, in the field of literary studies, is often used as if it were divided into an objective and a subjective aspect. Advocates of so-called ›empirical‹ approaches to the study of texts and minds tend to proceed from experience only to abstract impersonal (or objective) ›data‹ from it. By contrast, phenomenological and hermeneutic methods are frequently said to work through more immediately personal (or subjective) responses to, and engagements with, literary works. Thus experience, it seems, must either be read in terms of statistical diagrams and brain images, or else remain caught up in an activity of reading that, being characterised as singular and eventful, is believed to resist most attempts to convert it into such allegedly objective forms.

Drawing on the radical empiricism of William James, this essay seeks to reintegrate the experience of reading and the reading of experience, both of which are ambiguously condensed in my title. The main argument of the piece therefore hinges on James's and John Dewey's claim that experience is »double-barrelled« (James 1977, 172), which is to say that it refers to »the entire process of phenomena«, to quote James's own definition, »before reflective thought has analysed them into subjective and objective aspects or ingredients« (James 1978, 95). Made up of both perceptions and conceptions, experience, as James views it, is the medium through which everything must have passed before it can be named, and without (or outside of) which nothing, therefore, can be said to exist. With this radical account of

empiricism in mind, I revisit some of the assumptions underpinning cognitive literary criticism, before turning to an interpretation of the dramatic poetry of Robert Browning, which has been described as a version of »empiricism in literature« because it is concerned with »the pursuit of experience in all its remotest extensions« (Langbaum 1963, 96).

More specifically, my article engages with »Fra Lippo Lippi« and »An Epistle Containing the Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the Arab Physician« in order to show that Browning's dramatic monologues make experience legible as an activity by means of which perceptions come to be turned into conceptions while conceptions, conversely, are continuously reaffirmed, altered, or enriched by whatever perceptions are added to them as life goes on. As I argue, Browning's personae speak from the inside of an experience in the making, rather than about a series of events that has already been brought to an end. Readers of these poems are therefore invited to read along with, as well as to reflect upon, the creative activity through which characters and circumstances come into existence and through which they are sustained and transformed. It follows that Browning's writings offer their readers nothing to be processed from a mental vantage point above, or outside of, them. Instead, they involve the act of reading in the generative action through which experience comes to be made into meaningful text. Ultimately, the purpose of this essay is not only to indicate commonalities between James's radical empiricism and Browning's dramatic poetry. More importantly, I wish, by way of this endeavour, also to propose a process- or performance-based corrective, inspired by James and Dewey as much as by contemporary scholars (Ingold, Massumi), to what I regard as a rationalist or intellectualist bias in some representative work in the field of cognitive literary studies (Turner, Zunshine).

Fischer, Clara. "Feminist Philosophy, Pragmatism, and the Turn to Affect: A Genealogical Critique." Hypatia*, 31 (4):810-826.*

Recent years have witnessed a focus on feeling as a topic of reinvigorated scholarly concern, described by theorists in a range of disciplines in terms of a "turn to affect." Surprisingly little has been said about this most recent shift in critical theorizing by philosophers, including feminist philosophers, despite the fact that affect theorists situate their work within feminist and related, sometimes intersectional, political projects. In this article, I redress the seeming elision of the "turn to affect" in feminist philosophy, and develop a critique of some of the claims made by affect theorists that builds upon concerns regarding the "newness" of affect and emotion in feminist theory, and the risks of erasure this may entail. To support these concerns, I present a brief genealogy of feminist philosophical work on affect and emotion. Identifying a reductive tendency within affect theory to equate affect with bodily immanence, and to preclude cognition, culture, and representation, I argue that contemporary feminist theorists would do well to follow the more holistic models espoused by the canon of feminist work on emotion. Furthermore, I propose that prominent affect theorist Brian Massumi is right to return to pragmatism as a means of redressing philosophical dualisms, such as emotion/cognition and mind/body, but suggest that such a project is better served by John Dewey's philosophy of emotion than by William James's.

Friesen, Lowell, and James Cresswell, "Rethinking priming in social psychology: Insight from James' notions of habits and instincts." New Ideas in Psychology *46 (Aug 2017): 17-25.*

Research on priming is commonly taken to establish that much of human behavior is automatic and caused by largely subconscious processes. This research has recently come under increased scrutiny as some classic studies have proved

difficult to replicate. In this essay, we bring the views of William James to bear on priming. Though James leaves room for instinct and habit, he rejects the view that human psychology is ultimately mechanistic on the grounds that it is naïvely simplistic. James is also able to explain why priming studies are bound to face replicability issues: human behavior unfolds in a dynamic multifarious constellation of interrelationships among people, consciousness, and the world. To offer researchers a productive direction for studying cognition, we conclude by briefly introducing an approach known as enactivism – an approach that resonates with the ideas James puts forth.

Haye, Andrés, and Manuel Torres-Sahli. "To feel is to know relations: James' concept of stream of thought and contemporary studies on procedural knowledge." New Ideas in Psychology *46 (Aug 2017): 46-55.*

The theory of William James concerning the temporal and dynamic nature of mind is analyzed as implying that thought is a flow of subjective experience that belongs to the material flow of living beings, and therefore, that knowledge is primarily affective and practical rather than declarative and contemplative. In this context, we will discuss contemporary theory and research relevant to the discussion about declarative and procedural knowledge, with the focus on a literature review in the neurosciences of knowledge. Then we reconstruct James' theory of mind as flow, in terms of relatedness, feeling, and temporality of experience. The Principles suggest that declarative knowledge is not independent, but derived and supported by a more basic knowledge that is both procedural and affective in nature. Finally, we discuss possible lesson for nowadays efforts to develop a dynamic account of the procedural nature of knowledge.

Kay, William K. "William James: a re-examination of The Varieties of Religious Experience*."* Mental Health, Religion & Culture *20:4 (Apr 2017): 299-310.*

The centenary edition of William James' classic account of religious experience, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, was first published by Routledge in 2002 with a new forward as well as the preface of the original 1902 edition. This paper reviews aspects of James' work and briefly considers its later development.

Koopman, Colin. "The Will, the Will to Believe, and William James: An Ethics of Freedom as Self-Transformation." Journal of the History of Philosophy *55, no. 3 (July 2017): 491-512.*

William James's doctrine of the will to believe is one of the most infamous arguments in modern philosophy. Critics frequently interpret it as a feeble defense of wishful thinking. Such criticisms rely on treating James's ethics of belief independently from his moral psychology. Unfortunately, this separation is also implicitly assumed by many of his defenders. James's *ethics* of willing, I here show, relies on his robust *psychology* of the will. In his 1896 essay, "The Will to Believe," James carefully circumscribes those situations in which willful belief is defensible in a way that closely matches his description of decision by effort in the "Will" chapter of his 1890 *The Principles of Psychology*. Explicating this match helps show why the will to believe is not a defense of wishful thinking, but rather a naturalistic account of the value of sculpting our habits, or of what I describe as Jamesian self-transformation.

Lacasse, Katherine. "Going with your gut: How William James' theory of emotions brings insights to risk perception and decision making research." New Ideas in Psychology *46 (Aug 2017): 1-7.*

The basic premise of William James' theory of emotions – that bodily changes lead to emotional feelings – ignited

debate about the relative importance of bodily processes and cognitive appraisals in determining emotions. Similarly, theories of risk perception have been expanding to include emotional and physiological processes along with cognitive processes. Taking a closer look at *The Principles of Psychology*, this article examines how James' propositions support and extend current research on risk perception and decision making. Specifically, James (1) described emotional feelings and their related cognitions in ways similar to current dual processing models; (2) defended the proposition that emotions and their expressions serve useful and adaptive functions; (3) suggested that anticipating an emotion can trigger that emotion due to associations learned from past experiences; and (4) highlighted individual differences in emotional experiences that map on well with individual differences in risk-related decision making.

Robertson, Ritchie. "Everyday transcendence? Robert Musil, William James, and mysticism." History of European Ideas *43, no. 3 (Aug. 2017): 262-72.*

In the early twentieth century, as a reaction against scientific positivism, a widespread interest in mysticism developed, especially among German writers. Mystical experience in the form of 'epiphanies' was described by the psychologist William James and explored by the novelist Robert Musil. In his novel *The Man without Qualities*, Musil proposes an approach to mysticism which captures the phenomenology of the experience and makes it available for scientific study without subjecting it to a religious, or any other, interpretation.

Shaw, Jane. "Varieties of mystical experience in William James and other moderns." History of European Ideas *43, no. 3 (Aug. 2017): 226-40.*

In 1902, William James gave his Gifford Lectures in Edinburgh, entitled *The Varieties of Religious Experience*,

in which he claimed that such experience was a part of human nature, and was necessarily the foundation of all institutional religion. His work has often been singled out as leading to an increasingly private and individualistic understanding of religion, but this paper places his work in a broader movement of the early twentieth century that heralded a revival of interest in religious experience and, especially, mysticism. It explores the work of two English writers, W.R. Inge and Evelyn Underhill, in relation to James, and argues that the revival of interest in mysticism was a significant response to the intellectual challenges to faith in modernity.

Sullivan, Paul. "Towards a literary account of mental health from James' Principles of Psychology.*"* New Ideas in Psychology *46 (Aug 2017): 31-38.*

The field of mental health tends to treat its literary metaphors as literal realities with the concomitant loss of vague "feelings of tendency" in "unusual experiences". I develop this argument through the prism of William James' (1890) "The Principles of Psychology". In the first part of the paper, I reflect upon the relevance of James' "The Psychologist's Fallacy" to a literary account of mental health. In the second part of the paper, I develop the argument that "connotations" and "feelings of tendency" are central to resolving some of the more difficult challenges of this fallacy. I proceed to do this in James' spirit of generating imaginative metaphors to understand experience. Curiously, however, mental health presents a strange paradox in William James' (1890) *Principles of Psychology*. He constructs an elaborate conception of the "empirical self" and "stream of thought" but chooses not to use these to understand unusual experiences – largely relying instead on the concept of a "secondary self." In this article, I attempt to make more use of James' central division between the "stream of thought" and the "empirical self" to understand unusual experiences.

I suggest that they can be usefully understood using the loose metaphor of a "binary star" where the "secondary self" can be seen as an "accretion disk" around one of the stars. Understood as literary rather the literal, this metaphor is quite different to more unitary models of self-breakdown in mental health, particularly in its separation of "self" from "the stream of thought" and I suggest it has the potential to start a re-imagination of the academic discourse around mental health.

Thayer-Bacon, Barbara J. "Exploring William James's Radical Empiricism and Relational Ontologies for Alternative Possibilities in Education." Studies in Philosophy and Education *36, no. 3: 299-314.*

In *A Pluralistic Universe*, James argues that the world we experience is more than we can describe. Our theories are incomplete, open, and imperfect. Concepts function to try to shape, organize, and describe this open, flowing universe, while the universe continually escapes beyond our artificial boundaries. For James and myself, the universe is unfinished, a "primal stuff" or "pure experience." However, James starts with parts and moves to wholes, and I want to start from wholes and move to parts and back to wholes again. This is an issue between us I further consider, for while he describes himself as a *radical empiricist*, emphasizing the parts, my descriptions are in terms of w/holism. I use this opportunity to explore James's contributions to my metaphor of "pure experience" as being like an infinite Ocean and the fishing nets we create represent our ontologies and epistemologies that help us catch up our experiences and give them meaning. I also make the case for why a better understanding of ontology matters for us as educators, using Maria Montessori's curriculum and instruction design, Dinè Primary School, and Cajete's theology of place and culturally based science as

examples of relational fishing nets we could be using to teach our children.

Valsiner, Jaan. "Beyond the three snares: Implications of James' 'psychologist's fallacy' for 21st century science." New Ideas in Psychology *46 (Aug 2017): 26-30.*

William James in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890, pp. 194–197) warned psychologists against their own habits of assuming that other human beings are like they are. He outlined "three snares" which he considered as obstacles for psychology becoming a science: 1. The misleading influence of language, 2. The confusion of one's own standpoint with that of mental fact, and 3. The assumption of conscious reflection in the participant as that is the case for the researcher. His challenges remain valid to the discipline also in our 21st century, yet an unsolved problem remains: development of formal theoretical systems that generalize from the "pure experience" of living in irreversible time to basic principles of meaning-making. By pointing to the three snares 125 years ago, William James himself created a new one—that of pragmatism.

Williams, Neil W. "Kidnapping an ugly child: is William James a pragmaticist?." British Journal for the History of Philosophy *(2017): 1-22.*

Since the term 'pragmatism' was first coined, there have been debates about who is or is not a 'real' pragmatist, and what that might mean. The division most often drawn in contemporary pragmatist scholarship is between William James and Charles Peirce. Peirce is said to present a version of pragmatism which is scientific, logical and objective about truth, whereas James presents a version which is nominalistic, subjectivistic and leads to relativism. The first person to set out this division was in fact Peirce himself, when he distinguished his own 'pragmaticism' from the broad pragmatism of James and others. Peirce sets out six

criteria which defines 'pragmaticism': the pragmatic maxim; a number of 'preliminary propositions'; prope-positivism; metaphysical inquiry; critical common-sensism; and scholastic realism. This paper sets out to argue that in fact James meets each of these criteria, and should be seen as a 'pragmaticist' by Peirce's own lights.

Zhao, Shanyang. "Self as a second-order object: Reinterpreting the Jamesian 'Me.'" New Ideas in Psychology *46 (Aug 2017): 8-16.*

Existing definitions of the self can be lumped into three groups: self as self-reflectivity, self as self-concept, and self as the individual. This article traces current disagreements over the definition of the self to a crucial ambiguity in William James's original delineation of the "Me." Implicit in James's delineation was a distinction between first-order objects and second-order objects: while first-order objects are things as they are, independent of the perception of a knowing subject, second-order objects are things as perceived by a knowing subject. This article makes this distinction explicit and argues that the self is a second-order object associated with the first-person or "emic" perspective. Defined as the empirical existence of the individual (first order) perceived by the individual as "me" or "mine" (second order), the self is distinguished from the "I" which is the mental capacity for self-reflection; the self-concept which is the mental representation of the individual's existence; and the individual which is the empirical referent of the self-concept. As a second-order object, the "Me," i.e., the self, is the unity of the existence and perception of the individual.