



PETER A. DORSEY

Sacred  
Estrangement

*The  
Rhetoric of Conversion  
in  
Modern American  
Autobiography*

# Sacred Estrangement The Rhetoric Of Conversion In Modern American Autobiography

**Craig Monk**



## **Sacred Estrangement The Rhetoric Of Conversion In Modern American Autobiography:**

Sacred Estrangement Peter A. Dorsey,1993-07-01 Sacred Estrangement analyzes certain works by important American writers and thinkers in the context of the rhetoric of conversion Such analysis is especially valuable because it provides a reliable index of the relationship between the self and larger communities Traditionally conversion has served a socializing function signifying that one has come into alignment with certain linguistic behavioral and cultural expectations The socialization process is particularly apparent in the Christian conversion narratives of the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries by publicly testifying to a conversion experience believers became empowered members not only of God s elect community but also of a local population As modern autobiography developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Christian pattern was secularized and individualized Conversion became a model for many kinds of psychological change With the coming of the twentieth century however the authors upon whom Peter Dorsey focuses including William and Henry James Henry Adams Edith Wharton Ellen Glasgow Zora Neale Hurston and Richard Wright radically revised conversion rhetoric If conversion had traditionally linked the search for illumination with the search for a defined social role these writers increasingly used conversion as an index of estrangement from mainstream America Dorsey documents this profound change in the way American intellectuals defined the self not in terms of personal orientation toward or away from a given community but as a resistance to such an orientation altogether as if social forces by their nature were a threat to personal identity

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**Political Conversion** Don Waisanen,2018-04-20 Stories of religious conversion

have been told for millennia Yet many prominent figures such as Ronald Reagan Hillary Clinton and Rick Perry have also used stories of their change from one political worldview to another as a communication strategy aimed at winning the hearts and minds of the public This book is about political conversion stories in public discourse in their evolution from and interactions with religion From a historical perspective it charts the development of conversion narratives from religious contexts to their contemporary applications as specifically political messages Since these narratives continue to be used in the culture wars this book examines several related autobiographies that contributed to the use of this strategy in contemporary U S politics Each case shows how shifts during the postwar period called for conversion texts under varying guises and illustrates how and why the majority of these stories have been of conversions from the ideological left to the right Examining political conversion as a form of public persuasion Political Conversion ultimately provides insight into what these types of civic religious stories mean for democratic communication and communities

*Declarations of Independency in Eighteenth-century American Autobiography* Susan Clair Imbarrato, 1998 In this ambitious work Susan Clair Imbarrato examines the changes in the American autobiographical voice as it speaks through the transition from a colonial society to an independent republic Imbarrato charts the development of early American autobiography from the self examination mode of the Puritan journal and diary to the self inventive modes of eighteenth century writings which in turn anticipate the more romantic voices of nineteenth century American literature She focuses especially on the ways in which first person narrative displayed an ever stronger awareness of its own subjectivity The eighteenth century she notes remained closer in temper to its Puritan communal foundations than to its Romantic progeny but there emerged nevertheless a sense of the individual voice that anticipated the democratic celebration of the self Through acts of self examination this study shows self construction became possible In tracing this development the author focuses on six writers in three literary genres She begins with the spiritual autobiographies of Jonathan Edwards and Elizabeth Ashbridge and then considers the travel narratives of Dr Alexander Hamilton and Elizabeth House Trist She concludes with an examination of political autobiography as exemplified in the writings of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson These authors Imbarrato finds were invigorated by their choices in a social political climate that revered the individual in proper relationship to the republic Their writings expressed a revolutionary spirit that was neither cynical nor despairing but one that evinced a shared conviction about the bond between self and community

*The Self and the Sacred* Rodger Milton Payne, 1998 From about 1740 to 1850 evangelical Protestantism became a major cultural force in virtually all areas of America Emerging from this religious movement was a rich vernacular literature of conversion narratives and spiritual autobiographies writings in which believers described their own salvation in hopes of converting others In *The Self and the Sacred* Rodger M Payne examines these neglected texts in depth focusing particularly on what they reveal about notions of selfhood and how those notions were incorporated into Christian orthodoxy As Payne explains conversion narratives point to a fascinating paradox that became evident among

evangelicals as they were confronted by the disruptions and discontinuities marking their culture's passage into modernity. On the one hand these narratives asserted the traditional Christian values of humility and self-effacement, an annihilation of the self in the divine. On the other hand they created a discourse that allowed one to embrace the modern idea of an autonomous self only by speaking from personal experience: could a convert testify to the power of God? Despite protests to the contrary, Payne writes the central character of any conversion account, spiritual diary or spiritual autobiography, was the convert, not God. Using the theology of Jonathan Edwards as a key example, Payne shows how Puritan piety encouraged the development of autobiographical spiritual narratives. He goes on to explain the ways in which the discourse of conversion functioned apart from the control of the church and marked the growth of evangelicalism into a discursive community. Finally, he considers how the language of conversion functioned as a rhetorical space in which believers situated themselves individually within sacred space and time before turning back to society with a renewed regard for others. Drawing throughout on the insights of such theorists as Michel Foucault and Victor Turner, Payne's penetrating analysis reveals the early conversion accounts as mythic texts through which the modern self emerged.

The Author: Rodger M. Payne is an associate professor of religious studies at Louisiana State University. He is editor in chief of *The Journal of Southern Religion*, an electronic publication available on the World Wide Web.

*Conversion and Catastrophe in German-Jewish Émigré Autobiography* Abraham Rubin, 2024-11-30. *Conversion and Catastrophe in German Jewish migr Autobiography* is a collective biography of four German Jewish converts to Christianity recounting their spiritual and confessional journeys against the backdrop of the Holocaust and its aftermath. Focusing on personal testimonies that fuse historical trauma and spiritual illumination into one narrative, the book explores how Jewish emigrants interpreted their experiences of persecution and displacement through the hermeneutics of Christian conversion. It draws on autobiographies, novels, religious writings, and newspaper articles, as well as unpublished archival materials such as diaries, lecture notes, and private correspondence. The book explores how chosen genres of writing both enabled and hindered self-understanding. It also assesses whether the literary paradigm of Christian conversion, highlighting an individual's separation from a past sinful self, is suitable for expressing a collective catastrophe. Applying psychoanalysis, disability studies, and autobiographical theory to the life-writing of converted Jews, the book offers new avenues for conceptualizing the Jewishness of historical subjects who disavowed their ties to Judaism. Published in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

**Character and Conversion in Autobiography** Patrick Riley, 2004. Thinking of conversion as a radical turning point or fulcrum on which incompatible configurations of character are precariously balanced, Riley examines both historically and tropologically the paradoxes of identity and life-writing that conversion raises.

*African Americans and Jews in the Twentieth Century* Vincent P. Franklin, 1998. In recent scholarship, academics have focused primarily on areas of conflict between Blacks and Jews, yet in the long struggle to bring social justice to American society, these two groups have often worked as allies in both the organized

labor and the civil rights movements Demonstrating the complexity of the relationship of Blacks and Jews in America African Americans and Jews in the Twentieth Century examines the competition and solidarity that have characterized Black Jewish interactions over the past century These essays provide an intellectual foundation for cooperative efforts to improve social justice in our society and are an invaluable resource for the study of race relations in twentieth century America Copyright Libri GmbH All rights reserved *W.E.B. Du Bois and the Africana Rhetoric of Dealienation* Monique Leslie Akassi,2018-11-02 As the rich words from the African proverbs resonate into the twenty first century regarding the importance of identity and telling the stories of people of African descent through the eyes of the people the grand rhetorician and griot of the twentieth century Dr William Edward Burghardt Du Bois s infamous problem remains so today the problem of the colour line After the election of Barack Hussein Obama the first African American president of the United States after the Civil Rights Movement after Brown versus the Board of Education after the students right to their own language after Plessy versus Ferguson and the murders of innocent young African American males including Emmett Till Timothy Thomas Trayvon Martin John Crawford III Tamir Rice Jordan Davis Eric Garner and Mike Brown people of African descent are still battling with being labelled a problem in one s own country while the USA continues to strive for a post racial era W E B Du Bois s rhetoric and motives in general are more relevant today than ever in reassessing what he so eloquently describes and unveils through the phrase double consciousness in *Souls of Black Folk* 1903 through which he reveals the feeling of a problem This ground breaking volume featuring contributions from W E B Du Bois s great grandson Arthur McFarlane II among others is organized into three parts Part I focuses on the foundation of Du Bois s Africana Rhetoric through the origins of Africana Studies Pan Africanism and Africana Critical Theory Part II focuses on Du Bois s rhetorical strategies and rhetorical analyses in his scholarship and life Part III focuses on gender and sexuality in Du Bois s selected works This work the first of its kind devoted exclusively to Du Bois s rhetoric and motives can serve as a blueprint for today as the struggle toward a post racial society continues **Writing the Lost Generation** Craig Monk,2010-11 Members of the Lost Generation American writers and artists who lived in Paris during the 1920s continue to occupy an important place in our literary history Rebelling against increased commercialism and the ebb of cosmopolitan society in early twentieth century America they rejected the culture of what Ernest Hemingway called a place of broad lawns and narrow minds Much of what we know about these iconic literary figures comes from their own published letters and essays revealing how adroitly they developed their own reputations by controlling the reception of their work Surprisingly the literary world has paid less attention to their autobiographies In *Writing the Lost Generation* Craig Monk unlocks a series of neglected texts while reinvigorating our reading of more familiar ones Well known autobiographies by Malcolm Cowley Ernest Hemingway and Gertrude Stein are joined here by works from a variety of lesser known but still important expatriate American writers including Sylvia Beach Alfred Kreyborg Samuel Putnam and Harold Stearns By bringing together the self

reflective works of the Lost Generation and probing the ways the writers portrayed themselves Monk provides an exciting and comprehensive overview of modernist expatriates from the United States

**Interpreting the Self** Diane Bjorklund, 2000-04-15 In this ambitious study Diane Bjorklund explores the historical nature of self narrative Examining over 100 American autobiographers published in the last two centuries she discusses not only well known autobiographies such as Mark Twain and Andrew Carnegie but also many obscure ones such as a traveling book peddler a minstrel a hotel proprietress an itinerant preacher a West Point cadet and a hoopskirt wire manufacturer Bjorklund draws on the colorful stories of these autobiographers to show how their historical epoch shapes their understandings of self A refreshingly welcome approach to this intriguing topic Bjorklund's extensive and systematic approach to her source material is impressive and enriches our understanding of this essential subject Virginia Quarterly Review Bjorklund studies both famous and obscure writers and her clear prose style and copious quotations provide insight into the many aspects of the changing American self Library Journal

**The Claims of Experience** Nolan Bennett, 2019-08-21 Why have so many figures throughout American history proclaimed their life stories when confronted by great political problems The Claims of Experience provides a new theory for what makes autobiography political throughout the history of the United States and today Across five chapters Nolan Bennett examines the democratic challenges that encouraged a diverse cast of figures to bear their stories Benjamin Franklin amid the revolutionary era Frederick Douglass in the antebellum and abolitionist movements Henry Adams in the Gilded Age and its anxieties of industrial change Emma Goldman among the first Red Scare and state opposition to radical speech and Whittaker Chambers amid the second Red Scare that initiated the anticommunist turn of modern conservatism These historical figures made what Bennett calls a claim of experience By proclaiming their life stories these authors took back authority over their experiences from prevailing political powers and called to new community among their audiences Their claims sought to restore to readers the power to remake and make meaning of their own lives Whereas political theorists and activists have often seen autobiography to be too individualist or a mere documentary source of evidence this theory reveals the democratic power that life narratives have offered those on the margins and in the mainstream If they are successful claims of experience summon new popular authority to surpass what their authors see as the injustices of prevailing American institutions and identity Bennett shows through historical study and theorization how this renewed appreciation for the politics of life writing elevates these authors distinct democratic visions while drawing common themes across them This book offers both a method for understanding the politics of life narrative and a call to anticipate claims of experience as they appear today

*Early Modern Trauma* Erin Peters, 2021-08 This edited collection explores what trauma seen through an analytical lens can reveal about the early modern period and conversely what conceptualizations of psychological trauma from the period can tell us about trauma theory itself

**Bringing God to Men** Jacqueline E. Whitt, 2014-02-17 During the second half of the twentieth century the American military chaplaincy

underwent a profound transformation Broad based and ecumenical in the World War II era the chaplaincy emerged from the Vietnam War as generally conservative and evangelical Before and after the Vietnam War the chaplaincy tended to mirror broader social political military and religious trends During the Vietnam War however chaplains experiences and interpretations of war placed them on the margins of both military and religious cultures Because chaplains lived and worked amid many communities religious and secular military and civilian denominational and ecumenical they often found themselves mediating heated struggles over the conflict on the home front as well as on the front lines In this benchmark study Jacqueline Whitt foregrounds the voices of chaplains themselves to explore how those serving in Vietnam acted as vital links between diverse communities working personally and publicly to reconcile apparent tensions between their various constituencies Whitt also offers a unique perspective on the realities of religious practice in the war s foxholes and firebases as chaplains ministered with a focus on soldiers shared experiences rather than traditional theologies **A Place**

**Somewhat Apart** Philip E. Harrold,2006-10-01 The story of secularization and religious disestablishment in American higher education is told from the standpoint of a lively community of professors students and administrators at the University of Michigan in the late nineteenth century This campus culture one of the most closely watched of its day sheds new light on the personal and cultural meanings of these momentous changes in American intellectual and public life Here we see how religion was not so much displaced or marginalized in the heyday of university reform as translated into new arenas of public service and scholarly pursuit The main characters in this story professors Calvin Thomas and Henry Carter Adams underwent profound religious crises of faith accompanied by major adjustments in their interpersonal relationships Together with students and administrators their lives constituted a communal biography of religious deconversion A close examination of these private and public worlds provides a more complete understanding of the dynamics behind new academic policies and intellectual innovations in a leading public university The non cognitive intersubjective gendered quasi religious shadings of academic modernism and early pragmatist philosophy in particular come to light in vivid ways As John Dewey later observed Michigan became an experimental laboratory for new meanings to unfold new acts to propose **George Mackay Brown**

**and the Scottish Catholic Imagination** Linden Bicket,2020-03-31 This lively new study is the very first book to offer an absorbing history of the uncharted territory that is Scottish Catholic fiction For Scottish Catholic writers of the twentieth century faith was the key influence on both their artistic process and creative vision By focusing on one of the best known of Scotland s literary converts George Mackay Brown this book explores both the Scottish Catholic modernist movement of the twentieth century and the particularities of Brown s writing which have been routinely overlooked by previous studies The book provides sustained and illuminating close readings of key texts in Brown s corpus and includes detailed comparisons between Brown s writing and an established canon of Catholic writers including Graham Greene Muriel Spark and Flannery O Connor This timely book reveals that Brown s Catholic imagination extended far beyond the small green world of Orkney

and ultimately embraced a universal human experience

**The Art of the Black Essay** Cheryl Blanche Butler, 2003 First Published in 2003 Routledge is an imprint of Taylor Francis an informa company

**Rhetoric, Scripture and Theology** Stanley E. Porter, Thomas H. Olbricht, 1996-09-01 Rhetoric Scripture and Theology aptly describe the contents of this collection of essays from the 1994 Pretoria Rhetoric Conference The conference marked a significant dialogue among scholars gathered from many nations to consider how rhetoric engages with the study of scripture and theology South Africa provided a suitable context for such discussion Although the contributors are not only from South Africa the addressing of issues pertinent to a South African context shows through in many of the essays Those that do not address particularly South African issues raise equally important issues regarding the topic of rhetoric and its relation to contemporary theological discourse

**The Paranormal and Popular Culture** Darryl Caterine, John W. Morehead, 2019-02-18 Interest in preternatural and supernatural themes has revitalized the Gothic tale renewed explorations of psychic powers and given rise to a host of social and religious movements based upon claims of the fantastical And yet in spite of this widespread enthusiasm the academic world has been slow to study this development This volume rectifies this gap in current scholarship by serving as an interdisciplinary overview of the relationship of the paranormal to the artefacts of mass media e g novels comic books and films as well as the cultural practices they inspire After an introduction analyzing the paranormal s relationship to religion and entertainment the book presents essays exploring its spiritual significance in a postmodern society its post modern representation in literature and film and its embodiment in a number of contemporary cultural practices Contributors from a number of disciplines and cultural contexts address issues such as the shamanistic aspects of Batman and lesbianism in vampire mythology Covering many aspects of the paranormal and its effect on popular culture this book is an important statement in the field As such it will be of utmost interest to scholars of religious studies as well as media communication and cultural studies

**Identity's Strategy** Dana Anderson, 2007 This work is an investigation into the persuasive techniques inherent in presentations of identity Anderson constructs a rhetorical theory for understanding persuasive strategies involved in the expression of personal identity Drawing on Kenneth Burke s Dialectic of Constitutions Anderson analyzes conversion narratives to illustrate how the authors of these autobiographical texts describe dramatic changes in their identities as a means of influencing the beliefs and action of their readers The concept of Identity conveys the idea that people possess a certain capacity for self understanding and self definition Communicating this self interpretation is inherently rhetorical Expanding on Burkean concepts of human symbol use Anderson works to parse and critique such inevitable persuasive ends of identity constitution Anderson examines the strategic presentation of identity in four narratives of religious sexual political and mystical conversions Catholic social activist Dorothy Day s The Long Loneliness political commentator David Brock s Blinded by the Right Deirdre McCloskey s memoir of transgender transformation Crossing and the well known Native American text Black Elk Speaks Mapping the strategies in each Anderson

points toward a broader understanding of how identity is made and how it is made persuasive

## Decoding **Sacred Estrangement The Rhetoric Of Conversion In Modern American Autobiography**: Revealing the Captivating Potential of Verbal Expression

In a period characterized by interconnectedness and an insatiable thirst for knowledge, the captivating potential of verbal expression has emerged as a formidable force. Its capability to evoke sentiments, stimulate introspection, and incite profound transformations is genuinely awe-inspiring. Within the pages of "**Sacred Estrangement The Rhetoric Of Conversion In Modern American Autobiography**," a mesmerizing literary creation penned by a celebrated wordsmith, readers set about an enlightening odyssey, unraveling the intricate significance of language and its enduring affect our lives. In this appraisal, we shall explore the book is central themes, evaluate its distinctive writing style, and gauge its pervasive influence on the hearts and minds of its readership.

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