"A Plea for Color"

Color as a Path to Freedom

in Nella Larsen’s Novel *Quicksand*

Julia Nordquist
Abstract

Author: Julia Nordquist
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Supervisor: Piia Posti
Examiner: Maria Olaussen

The aim of the study is to investigate how double-consciousness operates through contrastive color imagery in Nella Larsen’s novel Quicksand. A focal point of the analysis is to show how Larsen thematizes the ability to benefit from bright colors and how color choice determines the quality and level of freedom in life.

Together with W. E. B. Du Bois’s theory of double-consciousness, a few other literary works by writers of the Harlem Renaissance have been considered in order to further support my arguments. I link these other writers’ perspectives to Quicksand and to the novel’s theme of color as a path to freedom.

In Quicksand, a broader path of colors, more bright than dull, leads to freedom, as is made evident through the novel’s connection of bright colors with Harlem’s freedom of expression. Furthermore, a narrow path of colors is contrastively figured as the course towards tragedy, which is clearly seen in the novel through the example of the protagonist Helga’s “sinking” due to an absence of color.

Keywords
Color imagery, double-consciousness, freedom, the Harlem Renaissance, Larsen, Quicksand
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1. Introduction

The primary source of this essay is Nella Larsen’s novel *Quicksand*. The novel is included in an edition called *The Complete Fiction of Nella Larsen*, originally titled *An Intimation of Things Distant*. The setting is the Harlem Renaissance (1918-1937), which is described by George Hutchinson as “the most influential single movement in African American literary history” (Hutchinson i).

Emily Bernard says that during the Harlem Renaissance “Harlem, New York, was unique as a city that spoke to black hopes and dreams” (Bernard 31). In 1928, the same year in which *Quicksand* was first published, “Harlem alone claimed 200,000 black residents” (Bernard 32), which makes it a place of at least 200,000 dreams. These “black hopes and dreams” in *Quicksand* are represented by colors as a path to freedom but, as the main character Helga Crane experiences, dreams of freedom could be led astray during the process of searching for sense in a double-conscious identity.

1.1 Theoretical background

The theory of my research is William E. B. Du Bois’ ideas of the double-consciousness. Du Bois used the double-consciousness to discuss the “complexity of African American life [which] requires more than one perspective” (Wells 120). The use of this theory is valid for my research due to the double-consciousness of African American life.

What must also be mentioned is that the focus will be on Du Bois’ theory, and not “a mental disorder known in the nineteenth century as double consciousness” (Wells 120). Although, the consciousness refers to the mind and the way it works, the struggle that it brings into the life of blacks is not to be regarded as a mental disturbance in need of medication. Thus, I will throughout the essay refer to Du Bois’ view that refers to African American double-consciousness as a race problem.

The double-consciousness refers to an identity that consists of two different kinds of awareness that according to Du Bois is “the contradiction of double aims” that is “absence of power” but still “it is not weakness” (qtd. in Kalaidjian 976). This means that the double-consciousness creates a struggle in one’s mind, due to the need of balancing society’s ideals so that harmony may be. It is a lack of belonging that could be seen as weakness, but still it is a unique power as it involves insight in other peoples’ perspectives.

In addition, “contradiction[s] of double aims” may lead to interesting discussions, as each aim alone refers to a perspective of its own. This is supported by Bernard who describes
the Harlem Renaissance as “an era best characterized by its contradictions” where “every point of celebration [of blackness] was also a source of contention” (Bernard 28). A “contention” refers to a discussion in which there are differences in opinions.

This kind of discussion with conflicting perspectives is not necessarily a bad thing, which is supported through Du Bois’ writing that African Americans are “gifted with a second-sight in this American world” (qtd. in Kalaidjian 975). Being able to fuse two different worldviews together raises possibilities of creating uniqueness in different aspects of life. Despite its “curse of ambivalence” (Kalaidjian 975), double-consciousness therefore becomes an asset in search for freedom.

A double-conscious person, with contradicting white and black ancestry, might find it difficult to feel racial pride and achieve freedom due to this uncertainty of where one belongs. In order to achieve freedom one should turn to the colors of Harlem. Though, this path might be difficult to pursue and any misguidance might diminish dreams of freedom.

If these dreams of freedom are diminished life could take on prison-like characteristics that resemble hopelessness. Du Bois states that making sense of double aims might involve “false means of salvation” (qtd. in Kalaidjian 976). The tragic ending of Helga Crane’s search for freedom through colors is a representative of this, due to the false hopes of brightness invoked by her marriage to Mr. Pleasant Green.

1.2 Method of analysis
The method I will use in order to carry out my research is based on color imagery. Due to the double-consciousness it is difficult to know for certain which path of color one should choose, in order to achieve freedom. These choices are represented by the different comparisons of aspects of color which are part of Quicksand.

The novel’s path to freedom will be researched through different aspects of color. These are divided under four subheadings where contradictions are of high interest as they show differences in perspectives. These contrasting views resemble the way contradictions exist in the double-conscious mind.

The first area of my research looks into problems that face a person with a mixed heritage, due to two conscious sides that stand against each other. It deals with entrapment of pride and freedom due to denial of colors that already exist in nature. The struggle of a double identity is introduced by Langston Hughes’ expression of “[b]eing neither white nor black”. The discussion continues with Du Bois’ view that the African American soul should not be bleached, and thus lose its uniqueness in white ideals. Furthermore, this section turns to the
colors of nature to compare the extent of freedom among people in relation to their surroundings. Examples illustrate human absence of freedom and an inability to benefit from the colors of nature, the beauty from which un-human beings of nature itself thrives on.

The next stage compares the opportunities of belonging in different parts of the world, and the research focuses on where colors are used most efficiently in order to achieve freedom through a sense of belonging. “A Plea for Color” (51) becomes the method of that soul-searching which is involved in seeing opportunities of freedom.

Finally, this section compares colors of different places. It contrasts the paleness of Copenhagen in terms of spirituality to the colorful beauty of its surroundings, and compares it to Harlem where colors are alive and exist among both people and its surroundings. Through this comparison it becomes evident that Copenhagen, through failed hopes of belonging in its absence of complete satisfaction is, through an African American perspective, inferior to Harlem.

The third section investigates how the colors of the Harlem Renaissance effect people, and moreover how colors might help making sense of the double-consciousness. This part compares Harlem to the outside world. The white outside world has a limited amount of colors, which makes it into a narrower path to freedom. In addition, this section compares the effects that the colors of Harlem have on different people. The inner struggle of belonging seems to be lacking within some people who fully benefit from the colors of Harlem, whereas this struggle causes a lack in self-assurance for others, causing them to look beyond its colors in search for other solutions.

The final level handles the double nature of colors due to different viewpoints, and it is thus linked to the double-consciousness of the mind. This part of the research contrasts different life choices in African Americans’ search for freedom during the Harlem Renaissance. This area of my investigation shows a double nature of the color red, as it might be a symbol of both a wrong path taken and on the other hand one of freedom, due to different perspectives. Similarly, the double nature of green is studied, as hopes of freedom through a name that expresses green pleasantness turns out to be a false illusion that does not work in real life.

1.3 Aim and thesis
The main question that I will investigate is: How is color figured as a path to freedom in Larsen’s novel Quicksand? Furthermore, I will consider how the lives of the characters in this novel involve taking chances when it comes to choosing the right path, and if it eventually is
worth the risks involved. What is more, I will look at how color and freedom become sites in which the double perspective of double-consciousness appears and is explored by Larsen.

My thesis statement is that *Quicksand* shows a struggle caused by double-consciousness that may be solved through an ability to benefit from colors, and that the characters’ choice of colors will determine the quality and level of freedom they achieve in life.

2. The Harlem Renaissance

This section will provide some knowledge of the Harlem Renaissance, as this is the period of time that is the focus of my research.

2.1 Duration of the Renaissance

Hutchinson says that this Renaissance in Harlem, New York, took place approximately between 1918-1937, “while recognizing that periodization is always artificial and approximate”. Furthermore, he states that when the First World War (1914-1918) ended, it “contributed to the Great Migration of blacks in the southern United States to northern cities and new opportunities for work and education”, which created a new popular culture of African American literature, and flourishing Blues and Jazz. This new movement would mark the beginning of the Renaissance (Hutchinson 7).

Moreover, he links the end of the Renaissance to the death of James Weldon Johnson, “a key precursor, participant, and historian of the movement”. After his death in 1938, an archive of the Harlem Renaissance was put up at Yale. This collection of manuscripts from participants of the Renaissance was collected by Carl Van Vechten, which resulted in the James Weldon Memorial Collection, and which is described as “the most important archive of the movement”. A memorial is a remembrance of the past, which is partly the reason why Hutchinson argues that the Renaissance approximately lasted until the year of 1937 (Hutchinson 7).

2.2 Celebration of blackness

Bernard poses the question: “Was the Harlem Renaissance an actual renaissance?” She concludes that two possible meanings of a “renaissance” are “rebirth” or “revival” (Bernard 28). This indicates that black culture experienced a second birth from which an African
American identity evolved. Furthermore, she explains how some historians and critics do not support this definition, as they “believe that what took place during the Harlem Renaissance years was not a rebirth, as such, but only another stage in the evolution of African and African American art”. This shows how opinions differ when it comes to defining this era as a renaissance or “only another stage” in an on-going process.

Bernard’s perspective of the Renaissance is that it “was a moment when blackness was celebrated; but to be in vogue is to be in fashion, and fashions always die” (Bernard 28). To connect this to Hutchinson’s view, this “fashion” died around 1938, when the memorial of its participants was established at Yale.

2.3 Era of unique art

Jeffrey C. Stewart discusses the way that Harlem brought the hundreds of thousands of African American immigrants, during the First World War, together in a common purpose. He elaborates this common purpose by quoting Locke’s claim that Harlem’s mixing of different African American personalities was “heightening [African American] race-consciousness” through its way of creating “unique American art” (qtd. in Stewart 15-16).

Michael A. Chaney connects racial consciousness and the feeling of belonging somewhere, with a common heritage when he says that “all people of African ancestry, no matter how disconnected across the globe, have a common origin, which could and perhaps should unite them” (Chaney 53). Through this uniting, they would achieve what Locke described as “heightening [of] race-consciousness” and “unique American art”. Part of the Harlem Renaissance’s “unique American art” is Larsen’s novel *Quicksand*, which according to Hazel Carby “contains the first explicitly sexual black heroine in black women’s fiction” (qtd. in Scruggs 155).

The uniqueness of Larsen’s novel is also shown by a literary award it received from the Harmon Foundation in the year of 1928 (Larson xiv). Charles R. Larson, writer of the introduction of *The Complete Fiction of Nella Larsen*, describes *Quicksand*’s main character Helga Crane as “the most fully realized and convincing black woman depicted in American fiction to that date”. Additionally, he explains how Helga’s qualities could be seen in “any number of later works by African American women writers” (Larson xiv). *Quicksand*, with its “convincing” characterization of Helga, should be thought of and treated as a highly important piece of “unique American art” from the Harlem Renaissance.
3. Presentation and Analysis

3.1 “Being neither white nor black”

Nella Larsen introduces her novel *Quicksand* with a few lines by Langston Hughes. These persons were both “key figures” of the Harlem Renaissance (Hutchinson i).

> My old man dies in a fine big house.
> My ma died in a shack.
> I wonder where I’m gonna die,
> Being neither white nor black? (33)

This introduces the reader to the sense of double-consciousness that is part of African American identity, and it indicates that it is a problem of not being certain of where one belongs. This uncertainty in one’s identity makes it difficult to know if home is in a “fine big house” of lots of resources or rather in a “shack” of limitations. What is more, this lack of knowledge raises the question where one can find a sense of belonging in between these ultimate opposites of a home. The “wonder” of the African American voice of these lines represents the struggle of double-consciousness. This is due to the fact that the answer to the question posed is illustrated by that blank space in between the first and second line, indicating that something is lacking.

“*Being neither white nor black*” mirrors Helga Crane’s mixed heritage of having a white Danish-born mother and a black West Indies-born father. Through Helga’s conflicting identity, which is a focal point throughout the novel, Larsen illustrates the struggle that comes with the double-consciousness.

According to Du Bois, a black person “ever feels his two-ness – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body” (qtd. in Kalaidjian 975). He further expresses how African Americans wish to develop their own identity through this sense of double-consciousness:

> He would not bleach the Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face.
> (qtd. in Kalaidjian 975)
This mirrors the novel *Quicksand* in several ways. Helga searches for a way to merge the two sides of her mixed heritage together. The struggle Helga experiences through her split identity is shown when she says: “Why couldn’t she have two lives, or why couldn’t she be satisfied in one place?” (123).

In addition, through Helga, Larsen refers to the fact that the aim of life is not to “bleach” one’s African American identity into white ideals. She illustrates this through the point of view of the society at Naxos school for African American children, where Helga works in the beginning of the novel. In this society at Naxos, Larsen shows conflicting ideas of freedom through color imagery, as the same shade of one color might mean different things to different people.

Helga in particular desires bright colors over dull ones. The dean of women at Naxos expresses how bright colors are not suitable for black people and that they should wear colors that are closer to their skin tones:

> Bright colors are vulgar – Black, gray, brown, and navy blue are the most becoming colors for colored people – Dark-complected people shouldn’t wear yellow, or green, or red. (51)

Helga notices a black girl with an orange dress and she thinks it is “[o]ne of the loveliest sights” (51) ever seen, which shows that her worldview differs from the accepted one at Naxos. When one of the matrons changes the color of this dress into a dull color Helga feels upset and “[w]hy, she wondered, didn’t someone write *A Plea for Color*?” (51). This wish refers to a search for ways to celebrate bright colors. Helga disagrees with the dean of women and she feels that “bright colors were fitting and that dark-complexioned people should wear yellow, green and red. Black, brown, and gray were ruinous to them” (51). Through Helga’s dislike of the matron’s choice to change the color of the orange dress, Larsen points towards Du Bois’ view that African Americans’ goal is not to “bleach” their own colors, as they express their true nature.

Helga prefers bright colors because she links “race pride” with colors. She is upset about how the Naxos’ school keeps its African American children from developing pride and celebration of colors. The “spiritual beauty” of their future has been doomed to a bad fortune through “destruction” of “love of color” by Naxos. This is expressed in the following way:
These people yapped loudly of race, of race consciousness, of race pride, and yet suppressed its most delightful manifestations, love of color, joy of rhythmic motion, naïve, spontaneous laughter. Harmony, radiance, and simplicity, all the essentials of spiritual beauty in the race they had marked for destruction. (51)

To achieve this “[h]armony” and “spiritual beauty”, bright colors should be of preference. According to Helga dull colors fashion a path that leads away from freedom, and she reflects upon this in one of her descriptions of Naxos, in which she compares it to a lifeless machine programmed to create copies of white people in the white world:

[Naxos] had grown into a machine. It was now a showplace in the black belt, exemplification of the white man’s magnanimity, refutation of the black man’s inefficiency. Life had died out of it. It was, Helga decided, now only a big knife with cruelly sharp edges ruthlessly cutting all to a pattern, the white man’s pattern. Teachers as well as students were subjected to the pairing process, for it tolerated no innovations, no individualism. (39)

This mirrors how a lack of individualism leads to a loss in identity. Helga fears that this loss will lead to a lower level of freedom. Another example of Helga’s feeling that individualism is trapped in a “cage” at Naxos is when she contrasts it to the freedom she feels when she arrives in Chicago, after leaving Naxos: “the contrast between [Chicago’s] freedom and the cage which Naxos had been to her” (59). A “cage” like Naxos entraps a “racial need for gorgeousness” (51).

This “cage” and captivity of freedom at Naxos refers to its people. Through Helga, Larsen expresses how the African Americans at Naxos fail in freedom due to their refusal of a “radiant” and thus bright life. By using trees as a symbol of “beauty” and “pleasure” Larsen indicates that the colors to freedom are provided by nature, and available to anyone who is open to see and benefit from them. Naxos’ lack of bright colors therefore refers to a conscious choice by its leaders, creating unconscious absence of colors among the students who in the beauty of Naxos live as if in a prison. Larsen provides Helga with the ability to see this lack of knowledge as the problem it is. That is, the inability to benefit from the beauty and freedom of the nature at Naxos, which is illustrated in this passage:
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[Naxos] was so incredibly lovely, so appealing, and so facile. The trees in their spring beauty sent through her restive mind a sharp thrill of pleasure. Seductive, charming, and beckoning as cities were, they had not this easy un-human loveliness. The trees, she thought, on city avenues and boulevards, in city parks and gardens, were tamed, held prisoners in a surrounding maze of human beings. Here they were free. It was human beings who were prisoners. It was too bad. In the midst of all this radiant life. They weren’t, she knew, even conscious of its presence. (49)

Another way in which Helga’s plea for bright colors, and desire to transfer the beauty of Naxos’ nature to its people, is shown when she has a conversation with a woman named Margaret. When this woman tries to talk about Helga’s health and future, Helga is more focused on the colorful vision of the sun rising outside her window:

She was watching the sunlight dissolve from thick orange into pale yellow. Slowly it crept across the room, wiping out in its path the morning shadows. She wasn’t interested in what the other was saying. (47)

When Margaret tries to keep the conversation going, Helga now begins to wonder why Margaret is not more colorful to show off her “nice […] hair”, “smooth dark skin”, and “round features” (48). Helga is not very concerned about Margaret’s talk of her future health, and instead she feels more upset about the fact that this woman has turned “into a dead straight, greasy, ugly mass” (48).

It is ironic that Helga silently criticizes Margaret’s evident lack of nice appearance and, therefore, also health while being lectured about her own lack of health. Margaret’s lack of bright color is connected to her lack of health, and this proves Helga’s point that dull colors are “ruinous” to African Americans. She therefore also seems to be a representative of a view that colors could be a path towards a healthier life.

Margaret represents the “dull attire of the women workers” (51) at Naxos, and she is therefore most likely to be wearing black, gray, brown, and blue as they are considered “most becoming”. Helga’s way to describe Margaret as “dead straight”, “greasy”, and “ugly” could be linked to the dullness of the color brown. It is a fact that everything that dies eventually turns brown, and therefore this color possibly reminds people of death. So, besides being a school where dullness creates decay in healthy and harmonious freedom, Naxos could also be
seen as a place where ideas and visions of African American children were sent to ‘die’, instead of being used as tools to develop future pride in one’s race.

This future pride is dying at Naxos through its dullness of color. Thus dullness inhibits life opportunities, and this refers to a lack of life which means death. This is supported by the previous reference which says the “[l]ife had died out of [Naxos]”, and moreover that “dead” is used to describe the decay of Margaret’s hair. By using dull colors as a link to the decay of life, Larsen shows another link between bright colors and a better life.

Helga leaves Naxos due to its suppression of bright colors and its prevention of racial pride in its African Americans. Racial pride is very important to Helga, and she states that: “If you couldn’t prove your ancestry and connections, you were tolerated, but you didn’t ‘belong’” (43). This shows that a mixed identity of both white and black would not find a way to make sense at Naxos.

3.2 A “realization of a dream”?

_Quicksand’s_ message to African Americans of the Harlem Renaissance is that color might lead to a better life, where “the doors of [o]portunity” would not be slammed in their faces. Helga reflects upon this when she describes her sense of double-consciousness and compares the opportunities of finding freedom in Copenhagen, which is in Europe, and Harlem, which is in America: “This knowledge, this certainty of the division of her life into two parts in two lands, into physical freedom in Europe and spiritual freedom in America” (125).

Through new contacts and centers, Helga seems to be searching for ways to make sense of her double-consciousness by trying out the opportunities of freedom in two different countries, with hopes of finding race pride and love of colors. Locke said that a new life for African Americans “is not only establishing new contacts and founding new centers, it is finding a new soul” (qtd. in Krasner 57). This view reflects the way that Helga combines her search for freedom through colors, with soul-searching that would lead to sense in her double-conscious mind.

The new black soul of Harlem influenced not only African Americans, but whites as well. A poem by Ruth Dixon called “Epitome” is a reflection of how the Renaissance’s changed stereotypes of African Americans caused a positive difference in the way whites viewed blacks. Margo Natalie Crawford, who quotes the end of this poem, expresses how this new view was “a move away from unadulterated antiblack racism” and that it is a “white discovery of the beauty of the ‘Negro’” (Crawford 132). In the poem, “You” represent whites and “They” refer to black African Americans.
You fawn, you worship, you adore;
You see a human god and goddess
Hitherto unknown.
They show a new and interesting life – (qtd. in Crawford 132)

This shows a shift in consciousness within whites, as they show a “[h]itherto unknown” worshiping for blacks. It is a new divine admiration of African American beauty and their “interesting life”. Thus, the changed stereotype of African Americans, viewed as the New Negro, is linked to a new experience of a so far “unknown” world to whites, where “a new and interesting life” exists.

Furthermore, a worshipped deity is commonly seen as a force that is beyond humans being supernatural, and thus this strengthens the view that Harlem’s atmosphere brought new qualities into the spirits of people. Whites’ new recognition of African Americans is a positive presence that might improve confidence and through that bring forth harmony within blacks.

Still, harmony might be difficult to find when one is not fully certain of life. Helga experiences a struggle as she poses a question that reflects upon the difficulties of belonging with contentment, “somewhere” in the world:

Frankly the question came to this: what was the matter with her?
Was there, without her knowing it, some peculiar lack in her?
Absurd.
[…]
Why couldn’t she be happy, content, somewhere? (111)

This reflects how Helga searches for ways to fill her life with meaning, as she wants happiness but somehow does not seem to find it. The possible “peculiar lack” within Helga could refer to a missing part of identity that exists due to “[b]eing neither white nor black”, which refers to an incomplete sense of belonging. This lack of awareness of where one truly belongs may cause unhappiness if one is unsuccessful in filling this gap of one’s identity.

Helga refers to the “lack” within herself as “[a]bsurd” which points towards a feeling of not finding her “somewhere”, where she would feel happiness of belonging. One answer to
this struggle could be to express and feel the joy over colors that are beneficial to one’s inner and outer beauty, and thus fill this joy-inhibiting identity gap with happiness.

Furthermore, Helga uses the word “absurd” when she links spiritual contentment to Harlem’s world. She states that it had been “absurd” of her to live in another place than Harlem which provides her with “[t]ies that were of the spirit” (125). To leave Harlem is therefore of absurdity, as leaving breaks this hopeful bonding.

These spiritual “ties” that Larsen mentions are connected to the enjoyable colors of Harlem. One example of this connection is when Helga’s “aesthetic sense” is “in complete accord” (76) with Anne Grey’s home in Harlem. Helga describes Anne’s home with words whose meanings refer to spiritual joy and beauty in a way that makes more sense than any possible description of absurdism might do. Anne’s home is “admirably graced”, “tremendous”, “delicate”, “harmoniously and comfortably”, “luxurious”, “gleaming”, and “precious” (76). These are words that refer to “[t]ies” of spiritual beauty.

These pleasant attributes are prevented from being expressed among the people at Naxos. Helga realizes that “spiritual beauty” (51) will not be found at Naxos where individuality and bright colors are placed in captivity, which she expresses when she says that it is a place of “suppression of individuality and beauty” (53). Helga describes how Naxos’ rules against some colors, individuality, and beauty have turned it into “hardly a place at all” and that “[i]t is more like some loathsome, venomous disease” (53). This further proves Helga’s dislike of the dullness and forced ideas at Naxos, and also its inability to benefit and learn from the beauty of its surroundings.

Whereas the Naxos women do not live up to Helga’s expectations of the ideal racial woman, Anne, whom she stays with in Harlem, appears to fit the ideal. Helga describes her as a woman that is “brownly beautiful” with “the face of a golden Madonna” who seemingly “carried herself as queens are reputed to bear themselves”. Finally Helga concludes: “Yes, undoubtedly, Anne was almost too good to be true. She was almost perfect” (76).

In addition, Anne marries Robert Anderson who makes Helga feel a “desire” that “burn[s] in her flesh with uncontrollable violence” (137). To be an African American woman of golden wealth and beauty, that is blessed like the Holy Virgin and who carries herself like a highly respected queen, seems to have given Anne sexual advantages as she ends up married to ‘Helga’s man’.

What is more, the African American life in Harlem provides Anne with a certainty that this is where she belongs, and not in the white culture outside: “She would not have desired or even been willing to live in any section outside the black belt” (80). Anne wishes to
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raise the level of freedom for blacks, and refuses to live among whites due to jealousy. While she “hated white people with a deep and burning hatred”, nonetheless she “aped their clothes, their manners, and their gracious ways of living” (80). She desires whites’ level of freedom among Africans Americans, and as this means being free of white people’s “wrongs and shames” (79) directed towards blacks she “refused scornfully […] any invitation from white folk” (80).

Through Anne’s perspective, Larsen exemplifies the double-consciousness in Harlem during the Renaissance, as Anne imitates the life style of people whose presence she refuses. What is more, Anne becomes a representative of a woman who turns to a plea for equality in order to transcend dreams of freedom into reality, which is similar to Helga’s search for freedom through a plea for color. Anne’s plea for equality is part of her identity as “‘[e]qual opportunity for all,’ were her slogans, often and emphatically repeated” (79).

In comparison to Helga’s plea, Anne’s plea for equality, and therefore also freedom, is not easily solved. The way Helga describes Anne as “almost” perfect illustrates the difficulty African Americans might face on their path towards freedom. The illustration of Anne as a woman who is very close to perfection is an image that is not easy to live up to. This is supported by Cherene Sherrard-Johnson who says that “[Larsen’s] depiction of Anne “as almost too good to be true” and “almost perfect” accentuates both the illusory nature of such models and the difficulty of living up to them (Sherrard-Johnson 27).

This shows the difficulty of combining physical beauty such as Anne’s with spiritual beauty that creates harmony. Most likely, Anne is going to succeed in combining physical and spiritual beauty due to the fact that she seems to be very confident in her own abilities, and she is also convinced that “she herself was lovely – more beautiful than Helga – and interesting” (124). Larsen further emphasizes Anne’s belief in her own abilities when she states that: “It was impossible that she could fail. Unthinkable” (124). This unimaginable failure refers to Anne’s determination that “her marriage should be a success” (124).

On the contrary, Helga experiences a difficulty in seeing her own spiritual beauty, for example when she looks at the picture of her in Copenhagen by the Danish artist Axel Olsen. The painting of Helga “had attracted much flattering attention” and “collectors, artists, and critics had been unanimous in their praise” (119). This might be that Helga is seen as a physical beauty, but in her own mind she refuses to see herself as worthy of this admiration. This lack of belief in her own beauty is shown when she distances herself from the person in the painting, and as if it is not her at all she expresses that it is “some disgusting sensual creature with her features” (119).
This is seen through the eyes of Helga, but seen through *Quicksand*’s perspective as a whole novel it illustrates how Helga becomes a representative of the Danish misinterpreted view of African Americans. As Helga distances herself from this white society’s view of her as an exotic black beauty, she shows that the Danish society does not provide spiritual freedom of harmony and happiness for African Americans. Copenhagen therefore transcends into a representation of spiritual paleness, which creates a problem of achieving happiness although there is a great variety of colors at display. Similarly, this is also the case at Naxos where nature provides “pleasant” colors and is free, whereas the spirits of people are trapped.

This problem of complete harmony develops as Denmark eventually turns out to be inferior in the comparison between the “pale calm of Copenhagen” and the “colorful lure of Harlem” (125). Although Helga leaves Copenhagen, this city at first seems to be a dream coming true for Helga: “To Helga Crane it was the realization of a dream that she had dreamed persistently ever since she was old enough to remember such vague things as daydreams and longings” (97). When Helga goes to stay with her aunt in Copenhagen, her plea for color is answered through a beautiful variation of sensual clothes, and especially bright shades of yellow, green, and red that African Americans, according to preferences at Naxos “shouldn’t wear” (51).

The following choices of colors are considered as highly inappropriate to wear at Naxos, where the faculty “existed in constant fear that [Helga] might turn out in an evening dress” that is not in style with their “conventional garments” (52), whenever there is an occasion during the evening. With a contrasting plea for color, Copenhagen provides:

- batik dresses in which mingled indigo, orange, vermilion, and black; dresses of velvet and chiffon in screaming colors, blood red, sulphur yellow, sea green; and one black and white thing in striking combination. There was a black Manila shawl strewn with great scarlet and lemon flowers, a leopard-skin coat, a glittering opera cape. (103)

Besides Helga’s opportunities to wear “bright” and “exotic” (98) clothes and jewelry, there are also “beautiful surroundings” (97), which provide Helga with more than one aspect of colors in her life. At first, this makes it into a dream of color.

Eventually, this good dream transcends into a bad one, when the double identity’s doubts and questions of where to belong becomes symbolized by a dangerous “storm gathering far on the horizon” (110). It is so far an “intimation of things distant”, but it is
“nonetheless disturbing” (110). This disturbance “added to her growing restlessness and little mental insecurity”, and it became a “wearing down of her satisfaction” (111). How to avoid this “gathering storm” of unhappiness was a problem “she didn’t know how to solve” (111).

A further addition to this rising problem is Helga’s “urgent longings” to be among other African Americans. These people share the characteristics that the Danish people seem to admire in Helga’s different identity, which is regarded “as a precious thing, a thing to be enhanced, preserved” (113). When Helga witnesses how whites admire the black performances during a vaudeville show, she realizes that this is a city where African American colors enhance the enjoyment of life. After the show “it became quite clear to her that all along [white people] had divined [the] presence” of African American characteristics, as they differ “from any that they themselves possessed” (112-113).

This changes the definition of Copenhagen as a dream coming true, because now Helga is in another part of the world witnessing admiration of not only her own colors but the colors of other African Americans as well. She longs for Harlem where her “precious” traits of different colors do not need to be “enhanced” or “preserved” through an admired painting or as a symbol of the black actors in a vaudeville show. In Harlem these “exotic” traits already exist in reality.

Copenhagen changes into a ‘realization of failed hopes of belonging’, as it is biased in its objectifying colors, and Helga needs absolute completion in every aspect in order to feel satisfaction. This is supported by Barbara Johnson who says that “[f]or Helga, there is no middle, no compromise, no gray area – the only satisfaction must be total” (Johnson 53). So, why not leave this false illusion of a “realization of a dream” and go back to Harlem? Copenhagen provides her with bright colors of clothes and nature, but the dream fails, which also means that Helga’s hope to belong fails on this path.

3.3 The “miraculous joyousness of Harlem”

Another way in which Quicksand shows double viewpoints is through the African American world of “miraculous” Harlem contra the white world outside Harlem. Harlem and African Americans are described with a large variation of colors, whereas the white world outside Harlem seems to be restricted to only one shade. Naxos’ way of “cutting all to one pattern, the white man’s pattern” would therefore limit the opportunities of African Americans. The following section from the novel expresses the “moving mosaic” (90) of colors in Harlem, where a wide variation of shades are to be found, in contrast to the “one pattern” at Naxos.
There was sooty black, shiny black, taupe, mahogany, bronze, copper, gold, orange, yellow, peach, ivory, pinky white, pastry white. There was yellow hair, brown hair, black hair…

[...] She saw black eyes in white faces, brown eyes in yellow faces, gray eyes in brown faces, blue eyes in tan faces. (90)

Helga describes Harlem’s freedom of expression like a miracle when she refers to its atmosphere as something of “miraculous joyousness” (125). If one assumes that a miracle is something unique that is not part of everyday-life, this refers to Harlem’s success in African Americans’ struggle to find a “new soul” and convert popular stereotypes through a plea for color. The fact that there is a miracle is evidence that they succeeded in reshaping stereotypes, in order to create harmony in a person whose identity is split between white and black.

Furthermore, the life in Harlem is described as “intensely amusing, interesting, absorbing and enjoyable”, as a strong contrast to the life of the world outside, which is described in a degrading way as a world of “anxiety” and “insecurities of existence” (126).

Three locations in *Quicksand* that are outside Harlem are Naxos, Copenhagen, and the small town in Alabama where Helga begins her married life. As mentioned before, Naxos becomes a symbol of “suppression of individuality and beauty” (53) that alienated Helga from the other women workers as “this urge for beauty […] helped to bring her into disfavor” (41).

In the “miraculous joyousness of Harlem” there is a “moving mosaic” of colors in terms of surroundings and people that tend to draw her back into its charm. Helga expresses this with: “Leaving, she would have to come back” (125). She admires its “gorgeous panorama” (77) and the “gleaming bronze, gold, and copper” (90) colors. Helga feels more connected to the people of Harlem than with the Danes due to the fact that Copenhagen fails to provide her with the same colorful panorama as Harlem does. When she is back in Harlem she concludes that: “These were her people. Nothing, she had come to understand now, could ever change that” (125). Furthermore, this illustrates how Harlem is a place where bright colors are alive, whereas Naxos changes brightness into dullness, and Copenhagen merely shows off brightness as some sort of “exotic” decoration in paintings or vaudeville shows with African American actors.

In addition, the colors of Harlem are essential in its freedom of expression. An example of this is provided in the scene where Helga chooses to wear a dress which is a “cobwebby black net touched with orange” (87). Helga’s new dress becomes a symbol of
freedom, as she expresses that “she smiled as she decided that she would certainly wear the black net. For her it would be a symbol. She was about to fly” (87). This shows a new level of freedom, as it is linked to the time at Naxos when the black girl’s bright orange dress was changed into a dull color by one of the matrons.

To “fly” evokes different visions of freedom, which all relate to nature and colors. To human beings, flying may also commonly be regarded as a “miraculous” occurrence of extraordinary qualities. Thus, freedom in the sense of flying is linked to the “joyousness of Harlem”.

One view is that Helga symbolizes a bird that has been set free from a “cage” (59) in which it began losing its colors, as it sometimes happens that birds in captivity might start to pluck their colorful feathers due to boredom. Helga may be a representative of this due to the restraint of bright colors during her time at Naxos, and her dislike of its close to zero tolerance of “innovations” and “individualism” (39).

Another perspective of this may be that Harlem’s colors realizes Helga’s request for colors which makes her into a symbol of a butterfly that has finally grown the wings necessary in order to “fly” and freely show off its beautiful colors.

In comparison, another way in which freedom of colors exists during the Harlem Renaissance is in terms of sexuality. This is expressed by A. B. Christa Schwartz, who shows how people in Harlem were passing beyond the rules and limits of the white American society allowing challenging clothes; public display of women who loves women; and a mixture of people who freely express their sexuality:

Elaborately costumed crossdressers at Harlem drag balls, public wedding ceremonies for black lesbian couples, speakeasies entertaining racially and sexually mixed crowds with illicit drinks and sexually explicit performances – transgressive sexuality clearly represented a visible facet of life during the Harlem Renaissance. (Schwarz 141)

This is a reflection of Harlem’s freedom of expression during this period of time, and how it elaborates sexuality into “public” events. Furthermore, this passage proves that Helga is not the only one that uses Harlem for expressing things that challenges the worldview of other societies. The worldview of Harlem, in which she finds the confidence to wear clothes that are “too décolleté, and too outré” (87), the commonly accepted roles of gender and sexuality are challenged through transvestites and lesbians. These people help to enhance
freedom by their confidence to be “crossdressers” and to go public with their same-sex desires. That this is a challenge to other perspectives is represented by the atmosphere of illegal barrooms, “speakeasies”, in which these “sexually mixed crowds” indulge.

One character who may be a symbol of this challenging atmosphere in Harlem is Audrey Denney, who dances in a “lovely” (91) apricot dress to “wild music from the heart of the jungle” (92). Her dance in the wildness of these “speakeasies” makes her into a representative of the same confidence that belongs to the people who cross sexual borders.

As opposed to Audrey, Helga’s lack of self-confidence leads her into thinking that she is not able to develop a sensuality like Audrey’s, which is shown through her statement that “[s]he wasn’t, she told herself, a jungle creature” (90). This is what Helga “told herself” is the truth, but it might be that she, due to double-consciousness, has not yet found her rightful place in the “jungle”, which provides Audrey and the rest of the “mixed crowds” with freedom. Helga observes Audrey’s sensuality with curiosity, and she wants to learn more about her. She sees the way Audrey dances with “obvious pleasure” (92), acknowledges that [s]he’s lovely” and then poses the question of “[w]ho is she?” (91).

Charles Scruggs says that “[w]hat she doesn’t see is what she desperately needs: the graceful movement of [Audrey’s] dance” (Scruggs 158). Another way to interpret this is to say that Helga does see what she needs to see, but doubts that it can be accomplished. This is supported by the fact that Helga admires Audrey’s presence and places her above her own abilities, when she thinks that she is not “a jungle creature” like Audrey. By admiring and being envious of Audrey, Helga does realize that she would need to develop some of her sensuality, but her lack of confidence makes her believe that it is not part of her identity. This refers to the fact that Helga due to her double-consciousness is not certain about her true self; she has a conflicting identity of being both white and black, and a personality of both weakness and strength.

For a similar reason, the double-consciousness might be why Helga is not satisfied with the beauty of Harlem; the place with bright colors, individualism, and a “miraculous” atmosphere where “insecurities of existence” are lacking. Still, insecurities are shown by Helga when she is unable to deal with refusal of her offering of love. When her opportunity to find love with Robert Anderson disappears as if in quicksand, Helga develops a sense of desperation and she begins to see Harlem as “too cramped, too uncertain, too cruel; something demanding a courage greater than was in her” (125). Through this it becomes evident that having a double-consciousness is a struggle.
On the other hand, this new view of Harlem is not Helga’s true belief as it is highly affected by her crushed desire, and since love is a very strong force it tends to cause blindness in one’s perception. As a person who is in between racial colors, with problems of finding “spiritual beauty”, all which is linked to a double-conscious identity, it would have been more fruitful for Helga to have chosen the colors of Harlem as a path to freedom. This is due to the fact that she “‘found herself’” in Harlem and feels “at last to belong somewhere” (75). This indicates that Harlem is the “somewhere” of peace she has been searching for. Unfortunately “[i]t was her self-assurance that had gone down in the crash” of desire (137).

3.4 A “pore los’ Jezebel!”

The tragic ‘sinking’ of Helga starts when she seeks comfort for her heartache at a church in Harlem. A woman in this church shrieks: “‘A scarlet ‘oman. Come to Jesus, you pore los’ Jezebel!’” (141), saying that she has taken the wrong path in life, as a “‘jezebel’ is a scheming and shamelessly evil woman” (American Heritage New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy). This reference shows how the scarlet color’s vivid redness symbolizes that one has gone astray. This idea is shared by the dean of women in the school at Naxos who says that African Americans “shouldn’t wear […] red” (51). A possible definition of scarlet, where its blood-red shade is described in a sinful way, is as follows: “flagrantly offensive: Their sins were scarlet” (Dictionary.com Unabridged).

Moreover this illustrates Quicksand’s theme of double-consciousness, as perspectives of different shades of red are contrasted against each other. The color code of Naxos sees red as a symbol of scarlet with references to blood, danger, and sins; whereas Helga’s viewpoint illustrates that the use of red, among other colors, is a symbol of the African American’s “most delightful manifestation” (51). Thus, Helga represents the novel’s view that red is not a dangerous “scarlet” omen, as the woman in the church expresses it.

In this church Helga first meets Mr. Pleasant Green, whom she marries shortly afterwards; but first she has a crucial moment when she in her mind reflects upon the risk of losing her colors through this marriage. When she considers marriage to this man she asks herself: “Was it worth the risk? Could she take it? Was she able?” (144). Helga decides that risks are worth taking and based on this she decides that “[i]t was a chance at stability, at permanent happiness, that she meant to take”. Moreover, she thinks about the fact that “[s]he had let so many other things, other chances, escape her” (144), which is partly why she decides to take this risk, while knowing that it might involve pain: “For the thought came to her that she might fail” (145).
The result of this marriage turns out to be a negative change, the failure Helga fears might come. In addition, the promise of a good future of brightness, signaled through her husband’s name Pleasant Green, also turns out to be false as it becomes a life of dullness. Helga sinks further and further down as if in quicksand, and representatives of pleasantness seem to be lacking in her new life. She describes their house as “ugly” with “stark bareness”, “nakedness”, “choppy lines”, and with religious pictures of “awesome horribleness” (148).

Still, Helga shows that a plea for color, individuality, and beauty is still part of her identity, when she says that she “meant to subdue the cleanly scrubbed ugliness of her surroundings to soft inoffensive beauty” (146). What is more, she thinks of “ways of improving their homes according to her ideas of beauty” (147).

Unfortunately, these plans to create a society of brighter colors sink due to the heavy weight of family life:

After the first exciting months Helga was too driven, too, too occupied, and too sick to carry out any of the things for which she had made such enthusiastic plans, or even to care that she had made only slight progress toward their accomplishment. For she, who had never thought of her body save as something on which to hang lovely fabrics, had now constantly to think of it. [...] The light, carefree days of the past, when she had not felt heavy and reluctant or weak and spent, receded more and more with increasing vagueness, like a dream passing from a faulty memory. (150)

Through this section it becomes evident that the world outside Harlem breathes “anxiety” and “insecurities of existence” (126), as the “carefree days of [Helga’s] past” disappears. It further shows how Helga’s plea for color fails and sinks further and further down as if in quicksand, as she becomes weaker and weaker. Helga sinks due to a lack of color which causes a loss of identity, where she no longer has the opportunity to express her individuality. Through this entrapped individualism, this small town of Alabama resembles Helga’s feeling of being trapped in a “cage” at Naxos.

Another example of a situation that contrasts the “miraculous joyousness of Harlem” (125) to the unpleasant life of the small town in Alabama is the following passage’s comparison between “miracle and wonder” and “great disappointment”. Helga describes the Alabama town as a place where her own faith and belief in life disappear into what one might
refer to as a great abyss, where joy sinks so deep that it becomes a symbol of “unspeakable brutality”:

Into that yawning gap of unspeakable brutality had gone, too, her belief in the miracle and wonder of life. Only scorn, resentment, and hate remained – and ridicule. Life wasn’t a miracle, a wonder. It was, for Negroes at least, only a great disappointment. (157)

Helga further expresses how her life in Alabama transcends her own personal desires into ruinous failures, as she concludes that:

She had ruined her life. Made it impossible ever again to do the things that she wanted, have the things that she loved, mingle with the people she liked. She had, to put it as brutally as anyone could, been a fool. The damnedest kind of a fool. And she had paid for it. (159)

Helga’s plea for color represents the “dream” that disappears as a “faulty memory” (150) into a “gap of unspeakable brutality” (157). The brutality stands for “the oppression, the degradation, that her life had become” (161). The disappearance of her “belief in the miracle and wonder of life” was the price “she had paid” as the result of a wrong life choice.

The end of a poem entitled “Magalu” by Helene Johnson mirrors the way Helga, through her marriage, loses not only her colors but also the freedom which she finds in Harlem.

Would you sell the colors of your sunset and the fragrance
Of your flowers, and the passionate wonder of your forest
For a creed that will not let you dance? (qtd. in Crawford 135)

Helga’s marriage is an imprisonment similar to Naxos since it will not let her “dance” in freedom. Borrowing the vocabulary from Johnson, one might describe this marriage as a path where she loses her “passionate wonder” and her “forest” of hopes. This poem shows the connection between one’s freedom in life and the colors of nature, and that loss of nature’s colors has a negative effect on freedom.
Crawford, who quotes these three lines of “Magalu”, refers to this negative effect when she describes the “creed that will not let you dance” as a representation of “the crisis of black womanhood” (Crawford 135). Helga’s difficulty in choosing the right path towards freedom is a representation of this “crisis”, which has a negative effect on her life. This negative effect is caused by her risky colorless marriage with someone she does not know nor loves.

Whereas Helga sinks, the bright colors of Harlem do not. Colorful Harlem still represents a new sense of freedom that affects the people that go there. Helga first noticed Harlem’s life-changing freedom when she arrives there for the first time: “She felt reborn. She began happily to paint the future in vivid colors. The world had changed to silver, and life ceased to be a struggle and became a gay adventure” (68).

Helga becomes a lost Jezebel because she decides to leave Harlem where she has the opportunity to be freed of identity-struggle and find harmony, as “she was certain” that Harlem could give her “peace and contentment” (75). It is the wrong choice for Helga to look for help in her identity-search through a loveless marriage, when she has already concluded before that “the joyousness of Harlem” will provide her with harmonious feelings. Her married life “wasn’t a miracle”, which makes it the opposite of the “miraculous” life she shared with other African Americans in Harlem.

Moreover, this shows the double nature of being a symbol of a Jezebel. Helga becomes a lost Jezebel by marrying, which according to Christianity would more likely save her from being a Jezebel with sinful traits. Instead, marriage leads her into damnation as the “damnedest kind of fool”, and she feels ashamed by the way sacredness sometimes turns into immorality, and that she went down this path by her own choice.

Shame, too, swept over her at every thought of her marriage. Marriage. This sacred thing of which […] Christian folk ranted so sanctimoniously, how immoral […] it could be! […] She meant to leave him. And it was, she had to concede, all of her own doing, this marriage. Nevertheless, she hated him. (161)

Furthermore, a Jezebel is linked to the color of red through its connection to the image of a scarlet-colored woman. Still, Helga loses the color of red, and the joyous brightness which she identifies with it, when she through marriage becomes a lost Jezebel woman as a symbol of her sinking.
Does this tragic ‘sinking’ of Helga suggest that bright colors as a path to freedom is the wrong way to go, as if she is a lost Jezebel? Helga fails, not because bright colors were the wrong thing to wish for, but because she chooses an unfortunate marriage that causes a lack of colors, and thus a loss in individuality and freedom. She committed to this loveless marriage because she saw it as an opportunity of “permanent happiness”, based on hopes of finding “stability” (144), not love since that had been crushed by Anderson’s refusal. To abandon a “miraculous” world of joy due to one failure points towards weakness.

This sense of weakness originates in Helga’s double-consciousness, as her uncertainty of where home and happiness is makes her vulnerable. A double-conscious person questions life in order to find a way to become one identity. This creates doubts, and it is a moment of doubt in the power of Harlem’s colors to bring her “stability”, of both happiness and love, that causes Helga to search for it elsewhere. As the results show, this new place has no stability, through neither happiness nor love, and to add to this “great disappointment” her home as well as the people around her do not support bright colors.

Still, she keeps her plea for brighter colors as long as possible, as she “meant to leave” her husband in order to bring back colors into her life. She believes that there will be a way to escape from this place, like she had escaped from Naxos and Copenhagen. Even when she knows that she has been a “fool”, she believes that there might be a way “of retrieving all these agreeable, desired things” (161-162) which she has left behind.

All that is needed to leave is time and rest after giving birth to her fourth child, and then “she could work out some arrangement” (162) of how to probably go back to the “miraculous” life of Harlem. Unfortunately, with “unspeakable brutality”, there is a definite delay of this dream “when she began to have her fifth child” (162) before she has regained her strength. Through making it difficult and almost impossible to leave now, Helga is bound to the promise she has made to herself to not let this chance “escape her” (144).

Helga is aware of her wrong life choice. Therefore, it does not prove that bright colors as a path to freedom is wrong, but that lost love and desire create dangerous and crucial moments in which doubts in one’s own strength might cause occasional misguidance.
4. Summary and Conclusion

As stated in the introduction, my thesis is that problems of belonging for African Americans in Nella Larsen’s novel *Quicksand*, invoked by the double-consciousness, may if not be solved then negotiated through an ability to benefit from colors, and that the characters’ choice of colors will determine the quality and level of freedom in life.

The problems of belonging are linked to the double-consciousness due to the mixed heritage of African Americans. The struggle of belonging comes from trying to merge a white and a black part of one’s identity together so that they form one united unique self. This is similar to the united world of Harlem where these sides have been fused together successfully, creating opportunities of freedom.

A narrow path of colors could be the course towards a tragic ending, which is exemplified by Helga’s sinking due to an absence of color. Firstly, at Naxos where there is a lack of bright colors, which makes it into a world where individualism is suppressed as if put behind bars. Secondly, as the story continues, a lack of colors is shown in Copenhagen where bright colors are mere decorations and not part of reality, and thus breaks essential spiritual ties of belonging. Lastly, the final path of colors that leads to a tragic life is the town in Alabama where a loss of colors happens as a contrast to dreams of green pleasantness.

A broader path of colors leads to freedom, as is made evident through Harlem’s freedom of expression. Furthermore, it is a question of being able to discover this broader path and then benefit from its colors as a path to a harmoniously better and more radiant life. Being able to benefit from colors refers to places where beautiful colors exist in other ways than in the spirit of people.

At Naxos the radiance of the colors of nature are prevented from entering the spirit of its people, making it into a symbol of a cage where brightness is held prisoner by those in favor of dullness. A similar limitation of colors exists in Copenhagen, where the Danes decorate their lives with colors that are part of the African American heritage, but only to a certain limit. In Helga, who is a representative of this city’s minority of African Americans, these colors enhanced by Danes exist in the spirit.

Although Copenhagen provides bright colors in terms of both surroundings and physical attributes, the loneliness invoked by having a stronger connection to this brightness than the other inhabitants prevents Helga from using these colors as a path to freedom.
Contrastively, in Harlem’s celebration of blackness, bright colors are alive and some African Americans, more than others, benefit from these colors as a path to freedom and belonging. Some characters, like Audrey, use the colors to dance in freedom. Another character, Anne, finds a true sense of belonging through the bright colors that unite African Americans, and chooses to stay in Harlem to develop her plea for equality. In a “plea for color” Helga also benefits, both physically and spiritually, from the brightness of Harlem’s mosaic of colors, as she wears bright colors that were forbidden at Naxos and that lacked ties of the spirit in Copenhagen.

Anyone that sees the opportunities of freedom through Harlem’s path of bright color will be given a chance to, in some way, possibly make positive changes in life. Still, paths of dull colors, that are less likely to lead to freedom, are available and made attractive if one, for some reason, chooses to look that way. As mentioned before, a central message of the novel is that these paths of limited choices of colors might reduce opportunities of freedom in life.
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