In The Religion of Chiropractic and other projects, Holly Folk has explored the intersection of alternative medicine and American populism. Folk argues the ideological dimensions of alternative medicine foster an elective affinity with populist social movements that has affected not only public health, but also American politics and culture. In this presentation, Folk considers how the anti-establishment sentiments of the chiropractic profession were embodied in the persona of Joshua Bartlett Palmer, one of the most powerful creators of the chiropractic subculture and leader of Palmer School of Chiropractic in Davenport, Iowa for more than 50 years. A successful entrepreneur in radio and television, B. J. cultivated a public image that challenged conventional aesthetics and morals with the promotion of an alternative model of success that resisted and superseded social norms. B. J.'s challenge to middle-class values of “respectability” makes him a useful comparison to other populist icons, such as Donald Trump, a contemporary master of the “politics of radical rudeness.”

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