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Contributions in
BLACK STUDIES

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INTRODUCTION

3

Consciousness and Double Consciousness

CROSS-CULTURAL EXPLORATIONS OF Du BOISIAN DOUBLE-CONSCIOUSNESS: JEAN RHYS AND JEAN TOOMER

Onita Estes-Hicks

6

RACIAL IDENTITY AND POLITICAL VISION IN THE BLACK PRESS OF SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL, 1930-1947

Michael Mitchell

17

LIFTING "THE VEIL": HENRY O. TANNER'S *THE BANJO LESSON* AND *THE THANKFUL POOR*

Judith Wilson

31

EVER FEELING ONE'S TWONESS: "DOUBLE IDEALS" AND "DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS" IN *THE SOULS OF BLACK FOLK*

Ernest Allen, Jr.

55

CONCEPTIONS AND IDEOLOGIES OF THE NEGRO PROBLEM

Ralph J. Bunche

70

The Novels of Aminata Sow Fall: Critical Appraisals

(Guest Editors: Samba Gadjigo & Heather Henderson)

CRITICAL APPROACHES TO AMINATA SOW FALL'S NOVELS

Samba Gadjigo

116

SEMANTIC MEDIATIONS BETWEEN WOLOF AND FRENCH IN TWO NOVELS OF AMINATA SOW FALL

Sada Niang

120

**AMINATA SOW FALL'S "DEMON" WOMEN:
AN ANTI-FEMINIST SOCIAL VISION**

Athleen Ellington
132

**HARD TIMES IN AN AFRICAN EDEN:
AMINATA SOW FALL'S *L'APPEL DES ARÈNES***

Heather Henderson
147

**EPISTEMIC AND DEONTIC MODALITIES IN
AMINATA SOW FALL'S *L'EX-PÈRE DE LA NATION***

Gloria Nne Onyeoriri
154

**A SOCIOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF
AMINATA SOW FALL'S *THE BEGGARS' STRIKE***

Mark Beeman
163

Features

LANGUAGE AND GEOGRAPHY: THE POSTCOLONIAL CRITIC

Ketu H. Katrak
180

LUCY TERRY PRINCE: "SINGER OF HISTORY"

David R. Proper
187

WALTER WHITE AND THE BRITISH: A LOST OPPORTUNITY

Marika Sherwood
215

**THE HIDDEN COST OF INDUSTRIALIZATION: REFLECTIONS ON THE
EMERGENCE AND REPRODUCTION OF THE AFRICAN INDUSTRIAL
WORKING CLASS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA**

John Higginson
227

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

246

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Introduction

After several years' absence, *Contributions in Black Studies* returns to a hopefully more consistent regimen of publishing. Our last issue was number 8, issued for the years 1986-1987. Rather than attempt the impossible task of filling in the intervening publishing gaps, we issue the present, double number for 1990-1992 as *Contributions 9/10*—from our standpoint the most reasonable choice for maintaining our collective sanity. Erratic, no doubt, but should a small, academic journal such as ours be held to a higher standard than that applied to contemporary life in general?

Without attempting to resolve such weighty issues here, the most casual reader will note that *Contributions 9/10* is divided into three sections: "Consciousness and Double Consciousness," many of the essays of which take as their point of reference W. E. B. Du Bois' celebrated observance of "two souls dwelling in one"; "The Novels of Aminata Sow Fall: Critical Appraisals," guest-edited by Professors Samba Gadjigo and Heather Henderson of Mount Holyoke College, and devoted to the analysis of works of a major Senegalese novelist much better known to the French-speaking world—at least for now; and, finally, a "Features" section containing a number of provocative essays, which together take on the appearance of the multi-topic single issues that we have customarily produced in the past.

In section one, both Onita Estes-Hicks and Ernest Allen, Jr. agree that, in the words of Estes-Hicks, Du Bois' remarks on "double consciousness" in *The Souls of Black Folk* are "often quoted, but rarely mediated." Utilizing the literary works of Jean Rhys and Jean Toomer, Estes-Hicks brings into relief the transcending of the "two warring ideals" postulated by Du Bois, reminding the reader that the attainment of genuine self-consciousness always involves a process of arduous struggle. Allen, on the other hand, concerns himself not so much with the question of transcendence as with its sidetracking: a "blocked" African American consciousness attending those "warring ideals," and the political and psychic consequences thereof. In her own essay, Judith Wilson focuses on the self-consciousness of a specific, late-19th century black painter, Henry O. Tanner, challenging Du Bois' generalizations concerning the supposed "double consciousness" of African American artists in this historical period. For his part, Michael Mitchell raises the issue of "double consciousness," but in a thoroughly Brazilian context: Afro-Brazilians as people of African descent and as Brazilians. Here, utilizing Afro-Brazilian newspapers of the 1930s and '40s, Mitchell relates how the ideals of that press evolved from expressions of social diversion to those of social commentary, reflecting all the while an ongoing tension between Brazilian and Afro-Brazilian political consciousness. And, finally, the reproduction of an ample section of Ralph Bunche's long-buried 1940 memorandum on African American ideologies reveals the

existence of yet another expression of duality within black thought, that residing between the conservation and transformation of existing social relations. Unlike a growing number of African Americans on the political right who would like to pretend that their own, retrograde opinions represent the first appearance ever of “diversity” within black thought, Bunche reminds us that in no historical period is it possible to find a totalizing uniformity within African American views of the world: “There is no ‘the Negro’,” nor has there ever been.

An overview of the section devoted to the writings of Aminata Sow Fall is offered by Samba Gadjigo in his “Critical Approaches to Aminata Sow Fall’s Novels,” obviating the need to present any but cursory comments here. Fall’s work is appraised from highly diverse as well as creative viewpoints: the semantic approach of Sada Niang; the feminist-oriented social and literary analysis of Athleen Ellington; a literary critique by Heather Henderson; a linguistic analysis by Gloria Nne Onyeoriri; and, finally, a sociological perspective offered by Mark Beeman.

The third and final section begins with an essay by Ketu Katrak, who reminds us that the choice of language assumed by the postcolonial critic, as well as the geographical location from which s/he writes, always carries political implications. To what extent, for example, are oppositional voices complicit with institutional power? To what extent does the theory that one practices marginalize the people about whom it may be addressing? In his own work, David Proper presents us with a seminal study of the first documented black American poet, Lucy Terry Prince. If her distinctive work lacks literary merit, affirms Proper, it more than makes up for this shortcoming through its colorful, detailed, and accurate depiction of the final Indian raid on Deerfield, Massachusetts in 1746. Marika Sherwood, on the other hand, discusses the missed opportunity of NAACP Executive Secretary Walter White in his inquiry into British racism in the Early 1940s. Britain’s wartime appeal for aid and volunteers in 1940 was qualified by discriminatory practices against people of color. White’s ensuing protest and subsequent visit to Britain, according to Sherwood, was not backed up by any inquiry into either British colonial issues or struggles on the part of blacks for improved social conditions in England itself—hence the “lost opportunity.” And, finally, John Higginson reflects on the creation and reproduction of the industrial working class in South Africa from the late 19th century through World War II. Examining the relationship between the labor process and the social reproduction of workers in South Africa in this period, Higginson concludes that employers and colonial governments attempted unsuccessfully to proletarianize African workers while sidestepping the development of a working class.

Our largest number to date, *Contributions* 9/10 is filled with stimulating essays that we hope our readers will enjoy. As a parting gesture we note that our forthcoming issue 11, dedicated to the work of Senegalese cineaste Ousman Sembene, is in the final stages of preparation and should be in print before next spring. We thank our subscribers for their continued patience and support.

CONSCIOUSNESS AND DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS