

Typescript copy of handwritten note to Susan

11/29/85

Dear Susan,

I am sending you Season's Greetings on Hanakkah instead of New Year's it has nothing to do with any holiday greeting which I am not sending out this "hefty" year, but because you are special and "thanks" is not expressive enough of the Black poetry Jan Pallister edited, The Bruised Reed and your gifting me with it.

At the sametime however your comments as dates, tho important as to one's (JSP) developments does not warrent your conclusiong that L'Etire et le Neant is not mentioned by me in Section A of ch. 6 disregards both fact and, most important of all, DIALECTICS, Methodology. Not only do pp. 193-6 fully devoted to Being & Nothingness (I make always a principle of citing English only & then insert native editions in the publications for those countries) but the essence of the whole ch. is that the whole of Existentialism in its Sartrean from which means History, (not to mention History in the Making by live human beings, the masses) is totally disregarded, his claim that that's what he learned from Marxism (he actually means "today's Marxists", i.e. Stalinists he always trailed). The result was that whether, despite his "love" of Africa he considered them "ahistorical." That is why Dialectics really meant, not Revolution out of which Negativity emerged as Absolute Method. That is ~~ex~~ why his "return" to Existential actually proved he never left it and that, precisely, means "LEtire et le Neant" bot as "other" is enemy, and women existentialists -- I don't mean only Simone de Bouvoir -- but the very momen philosopher-theoreticians who exposed his sexism could end with saying they thought he should have given it to here to take out those sexist terms. And what the whole WL, is not ~~is~~ practiced in the exclusion of women ffom History.

Sorry to be so made but the finding in NY a so-called national Women's Netword who direct all their venom to Marx and Revolution.

No. Susan, we must all learn to be practicing dialecticians or in one way or another get roped into language intellectualism.

Yours,

Raya

16810

Detroit
11-11-85

Dear Raya,

Even though I know you have time for little else besides work I'm sending you this book The Bruised Reed: Black Songs from the Latin Tongues, which I bought at the Black Women's Writers' Conference. I hope you and John find it enjoyable. I had picked it up originally because of the poems by Reme Depestre.

It is such a strange book--not one word about the poets; no dates for the poems. It's hard to tell if the selections represent anything--and only one is for sure by a woman ("Call" by Noemia de Souza). Yet it did appear almost a road map of where revolutions have occurred, and hopefully somewhat indicative of their character.

The introductory essay appeared stranger still until I re-read Chapter 6 of P & R, p. 29 in FFSABT, and "the new African Socialism" (appendix to AAR). Pallister's concept of revolution is almost laughable (p. 26) "To stand up to one's oppressor, to ~~reject~~ reject his false values...to reaffirm one's own values and culture, to demand one's legitimate freedom, all of this is not, by my definition, revolt, which ~~connotes~~ connotes insurrection and refusal to submit to authority." It is rather to behave with a maximum of dignity, of radical conservatism and health." Evidently she doesn't read newspapers--it is definitely hazardous to your health to do any of the above in many parts of Africa, not to mention US and Canada. However, it explains her choice of quote from Isaiah and title of the book.

She separates "intellectual content"--which she grants only to Senghor--from "emotion, fecundity, animism" and winds up with embarrassingly racist stereotypes. Like Sartre, she reduces Negritude to a minor--and static--term (quoting Sartre "Negritude, like liberty, is both a point of departure and ultimate end." (p.21) It sounds like the "stasis of communism" you say Sartre grounded "Question de methode" in. (Though I must confess I had trouble following Sartre's actual development of his ideas in Section A of Chapter 6. Bibliography dates are those of translations, not the dates Sartre wrote them, and l'Etre et le Néant isn't cited at all.)

I will be trying to work out the relationship between Sartre (particularly on Negritude) and the new critique of CLR James you began at the plenum, in the context of Marxist-Humanism in this period, concretely with the new FFSABT (Can a forthcoming DF cite a reference to "that fork-tongued article?" I would like it to study with your remarks at Plenum.)

The poetry...my favorites are Senghor's "In New York" and "Black Woman" (though I usually don't like men's poems to women's beauty, and I heard Aminata Sow Fall say 'it is the time of the Black woman not to be sung to but to take the word herself... the time to refuse adulation...to refuse the lies of centuries.') Of course "Cahier d'un retour au pays natal"!! and the Portuguese, especially "Black Cry"--it's S. Africa! the Miners' General Strike! (as you turn to it in AAR) Maybe the biweekly will give us space to reprint it. Take care of yourselves! M-H are precious.

* I copied "Black Cry" + "Where Am I!"

Susan

16811