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**Contributions of African American women to post-secondary  
education: A pioneer in the tradition of service and scholarship,  
Eva Beatrice Dykes, 1893-1986**

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**Michigan State University, 1992**

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CONTRIBUTIONS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN  
TO POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION  
A PIONEER IN THE TRADITION OF SERVICE AND SCHOLARSHIP  
EVA BEATRICE DYKES  
1893-1986

By

Catherine Marie Johnson

A THESIS

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CONTRIBUTIONS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN  
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This biographical thesis explores the life and intellectual contributions of Eva Beatrice Dykes, the first African American woman to complete the requirements for a PhD. The first section of this thesis includes a brief discussion of the history of educational opportunities for African Americans in Washington, D.C. The second section reviews Dykes' family history and education, and career as a post-secondary educator. The final section reviews Dykes' published articles and books.

The publication of Paula Giddings' When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America signaled the coming of age of the reclamation and dissemination of historical narratives focusing on the experience of African American women. In the eight years since When and Where I Enter's publication, histories of black women have proliferated. A popular form of historical narrative is the biography or biographies of a famous African American heroine or heroines. One of the most useful examples of these is Dorothy Sterling's Black Foremothers: Three Lives, which explores the lives of 19th and 20th century leaders Ellen Craft, Ida B. Wells, and Mary Church Terrell. The lives of African American novelists, poets and playwrights have been explored in a vast array of biographies, from Gloria T. Hull's biographical/critical study of Harlem Renaissance poets Angelina Weld-Grimke', Alice Dunbar Nelson, and Georgia Douglass Johnson; Color Sex and Poetry to Robert Hemenway's biography of Zora Neale Hurston.

The experience of lesser known, working and professional women has also been explored. The history of African American women in the professions is explored in Dariene Clark Hine's, Black Women in White: Racial Conflict and Cooperation in the Nursing Profession, 1890-1950, and in Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot's Balm in Gilead: Journey of A Healer. The experience of African American women during slavery has been explored in Deborah Gray White's A'mnt I a Woman, and in Gerda Lerner's Black Women in White America: A Documentary History. Leona Gabel's From Slavery to the Sorbonne and Beyond: The Life and Writings of Anna Julia Cooper is an example of a study of an African American woman scholar and intellectual. This study serves as a sketch of the life, career and intellectual contributions of an African American scholar and educator, Eva Beatrice Dykes.

Dr. Dykes is an important figure in the history of American scholarship not only because she was black, female and one of the first black and female persons to obtain a Phd, but because her blackness and her femaleness brought to American scholarship a perspective that was deliberately absent from the record. Not only did she believe that writings by and about African Americans' deserved a place in the academy, she actively participated in the introduction of these writings into academic and scholarly discourse. Her role as a foremother for African American women who would in the future consider entering the field of academia, cannot be overlooked. Although most people outside of Washington D.C. or Huntsville, Alabama have never heard of Dr. Dykes the high standards of excellence and service she achieved remain in the records and will always be a demonstration of the potential of African American Women. Dykes was a product and producer of the enduring legacy of the time in which she lived. Born just thirty short years after the system of slavery was abolished, Dykes came into adulthood during a period of unprecedeted black artistic and intellectual expression, the Harlem Renaissance period.

The most enduring legacy of the "Harlem Renaissance" period was the establishment of a distinctive black urban art form inspired and created especially--though not exclusively by Harlem's black citizenry. During this period African American history and culture penetrated the academy, as well as the streets. The integration of black literature and history into the academy is one of the most uncelebrated yet notable crusades in American intellectual and institutional history. One of the principle participants in the early movement to insert the black experience into college and university curriculum was an African American woman who received the PhD. in 1921, Eva Beatrice Dykes.

Dykes is an important figure in African American history, not only because of her personal accomplishments but because she was a beneficiary of the legacy

of quality education established for African Americans in our nation's capital prior to and immediately following the Civil War. The story of Dykes' life and intellectual work is also a story of the success of African American educational institutions in Washington D.C..

The public school system played an important role in United States history. The belief that everyone is entitled to a basic education was, and remains a revolutionary idea. However, for most of the nation's history, the majority of African Americans were barred from entering these schools by law and by custom. In some communities African American free men and women were able to obtain a private education. Throughout the South it was illegal to teach slaves to read before the Civil War. With the establishment of the first school for African Americans in 1807, Washington D.C. was destined to become a leader in African American education.

According to Winfield S. Montgomery, after 1800, free African Americans who resided in the District of Columbia were encouraged rather than prohibited from obtaining an education. This historical truth is attributed to the belief in the necessity of education for the sake of the nation's future. This philosophy was articulated by President Thomas Jefferson. In 1804 the District of Columbia passed its first public school law, and in 1805 a school was established to "educate the youth of Washington" whose parents were "unable to defray the expenses of their education." Although this law, and another law which followed it in Georgetown in 1815 did not specify that this education in the District of Columbia or in Georgetown was exclusively for white children, the Jim Crow laws of

Maryland and Virginia which also applied to the nation's capital, ensured that these schools were reserved for the use of whites.<sup>1</sup>

The Bell Schoolhouse was founded in 1807 by three ex-slaves who had "just" purchased their freedom, George Bell, Nicholas Franklin, and Moses Liverpool.<sup>2</sup> Remarkably, this school was founded just two short years after the establishment of the first public school for white children. Although little is known about the Bell Schoolhouse, its success can be inferred since similar attempts were soon made. Mr. Bell, Mr Franklin, and Mr. Liverpool showed the potential for success in an endeavor of this sort and inspired others to do the same. The rapid growth in "negro" schools in this period further supports this point..

By 1861, "fifty-two day, three night, and sixteen Sabbath schools" for free African Americans had been established in Washington, D.C.<sup>3</sup> The day schools were private and required a nominal fee to enroll.<sup>4</sup> Most of these schools were sponsored by African Americans although a few were sponsored by wealthy whites who were primarily abolitionists and educators. The teachers were also mostly black though there were a few white teachers.<sup>5</sup> Most of these schools were elementary schools whose function was to teach their students basic literacy reading, writing, and arithmetic. Many of these schools met in private homes and church basements. A few schools, including the Bell Schoolhouse, met in small

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<sup>1</sup> Lillian G. Dabney, The History of Schools for Negroes in the District of Columbia, 1807-1947 (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1949) p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Winfield S. Montgomery, Historical Sketch of Education for the Colored Race in the District of Columbia, 1807-1905 (Washington D.C.: Smith Brothers Printers, 1907), p.4.

<sup>3</sup> Dabney, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.14.

<sup>5</sup> Montgomery, p. 4.

school houses built especially for them.<sup>6</sup> Adults as well as children attended these schools, although the night and Sabbath schools were more likely to be attended by the adults than the day schools.

There were a number of attempts to provide education beyond the elementary level for the District of Columbia's growing free African American community. Between 1860 and 1870, the free African American population of the nation's capital increased by 203%.<sup>7</sup> Most of the high schools and normal schools were established by African Americans since the majority of white sponsors either feared the consequences of; or doubted the potential of blacks to succeed in higher education. One of the earliest attempts to establish a secondary school occurred in December of 1851, when Myrtilla Miner, a young white woman from New York, opened a normal school for free African American women.<sup>8</sup>

In spite of the remarkable growth of African American educational institutions in the District of Columbia, the free African American community in D.C. was not immune to the problems of racism that affected the rest of black America. Nat Turner's slave rebellion in 1831, and the "snow riot" of 1835 slowed the establishment of new schools. In fact many existing schools were closed during this period due to white fear and racial violence. After the Civil War white philanthropy and national government support for black education increased markedly, reaching its apex in the establishment of Howard University in 1867.

Howard University was established through co-operative efforts between the First Congregational Church of Washington, the American Missionary Association, and the Freedman's Bureau.<sup>9</sup> Originally intended to be a theological seminary, the school would become Howard University. It bears the name of

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<sup>6</sup> Dabney, p. 17.

<sup>7</sup> Dabney, pp. 24-25.

<sup>8</sup> Dabney, p. 14.

<sup>9</sup> Dabney, p. 47.

General Oliver O. Howard, who originally suggested that the new institution should be "a real university" rather than a theological seminary.<sup>10</sup>

The founders of the Bell Schoolhouse and Howard University launched a new culture of scholarship and opportunity at the nations capital. Into this culture of scholarship, service, and perseverance through struggle, Eva Beatrice Dykes was born on August 13, 1893. Inspired by a birthright of intellectual excellence and community service, Dykes would become the first African American woman to complete the requirements for a PhD.

In Five Black Scholars: An Analysis of Family Life, Education and Career, Charles V. Willie emphasizes the important role the "family of orientation" plays in the development of a scholar.<sup>11</sup> The influence of the Dykes' maternal grandparents, the Howard's, and her paternal grandparents, the Dykes', on Eva, is clearly evident. Thirty-five years after slavery had ended, the Howard and Dykes families had taken advantage of every opportunity, and established themselves as a part of Washington D.C.'s growing, educated, black elite.

Dykes' maternal grandparents, John and Rebecca Howard, had been slaves on the cotton plantation of Governor Warfield of Howard County, Maryland<sup>12</sup>. After the Emancipation Proclamation took effect they, like many other newly freed blacks, migrated to the District of Columbia in search of government jobs and educational opportunities for their children. In fact, between 1860 and 1870, the black population of Washington D.C. increased from 14,316 to 43,404.<sup>13</sup> These

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>11</sup> Charles V. Willie, Five Black Scholars: An Analysis of Family Life, Education, and Career (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986) pp. 103-105. Willie defines the family of orientation as social unit "in which the offspring receives nurturance, support protection, and unconditional love" p. 103.

<sup>12</sup> H.E. Ford "A Modern Educator" in The Message Magazine, July 1935?, p. ?. (Quote comes from a photocopy of the original text the original has been lost.)

<sup>13</sup> Dabney, pp. 24-25.

emigrants hoped to secure both physical and intellectual freedom for themselves and for their children.

The fact that higher education was very important to the Howard family is evident in the family's unusual educational background. John and Rebecca Howard's four children - Floda, John Jr., James, and Martha Ann attended and graduated from the private Howard University Preparatory School. Eva's oldest uncle Floda Howard graduated with honors in 1888. Another uncle, John Howard, Jr., also graduated from the preparatory school, went on to earn a Bachelor of Arts from the College of Arts and Science at Howard, and eventually became a teacher in Oklahoma.<sup>14</sup>

Dykes' third uncle, James Howard had a profound influence on her education, her religious life, and her chosen profession, James Howard, graduated from the preparatory school in 1876 and went on to receive his Bachelor of Arts from Howard University's College of Liberal Arts in 1879. He then earned an M.D. degree from Howard University's Medical School in 1883, and in 1885 became the fifth student to earn a Master of Arts degree from Howard University's College of Arts and Letters.<sup>15</sup>

Dykes mother, Martha Ann, also attended Howard in the early 1880's. She did not graduate however, presumably due to a recurrent illness. While at Howard, Martha Ann met James Stanley Dykes, who had matriculated at Howard in 1883. While at Howard, James Stanley Dykes was an honor student who tutored other students in Greek and Math. In 1887 James Dykes received his Bachelor of

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<sup>14</sup> DeWitt S. Williams, She Fulfilled The Impossible Dream (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1985), p. 17. DeWitt Williams, ED.D., M.P.H. is a member of the Seventh Day Adventist church and was an associate of Dykes, he is not an historian.

<sup>15</sup> Williams, p. 11.

Arts Degree. James Stanley Dykes and Martha Ann Howard married and had three children, Florence, Eva, and Anita.

When Dykes was very young, James Stanley Dykes deserted the family. Martha Ann, Eva, and her two sisters went to live with their uncle James Howard until Martha Ann married Mr. Pumphrey a "contractor" a few years later. James Dykes eventually remarried and moved to Hagerstown, Maryland where he was employed as a principle of a public school. His infrequent visits were important to Dykes, who admired his intelligence and his will to work hard.<sup>16</sup>

The second born in a family of three daughters, Dykes was raised in an environment which nourished and encouraged academic excellence. As Williams' notes, "...(h)eredity and environment were preparing Eva for a love of academia."<sup>17</sup> Not only were her parents and uncles educators, many of her cousins were also college trained teachers in Maryland and Washington D.C.. At a time when many white Americans and most African Americans were illiterate, Dykes was exposed to Greek, Latin, French, music, and the "classics" of Western literature. At a time when so few African American's had access to even a high school education, Dykes was a second generation college graduate.

Even as a child, Dykes had a great love of reading and was particularly fond of Phillis Wheatley. Wheatley inspired in Dykes a deep respect for English, Latin, and literature as well as a desire to help others.<sup>18</sup> Dykes was similar to Phillis in that she too became known for her talents at an early age. She had established a

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<sup>16</sup> Williams p. 20.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

reputation for herself as a pianist, and by age seven she was sought after by a number of Baptist and Methodist churches in Washington D.C.<sup>19</sup>

Dykes began to study French at a very young age. She and her sister Florence were enrolled in the Berlitz French School by their uncle James. The Berlitz French School did not allow African Americans to enroll at that time, but Eva and Florence were given private lessons at the school, due to James Howard's connections with the State Department.<sup>20</sup>

From the first through the fourth grades, Dykes attended the Howard University Teacher's Training School. She was inspired by the diligence and motivation of the young student teachers who so patiently taught the young students Latin, Greek, English and Literature. Her excellent education continued at the Lucretia Mott School For Girls (established 1909), which she attended from the fifth through the eighth grades.<sup>21</sup> Dykes was inspired by the example of Lucretia Mott, suffragette and abolitionist and decided that she would like some day to help others like herself.<sup>22</sup>

Dykes attended the M Street School from 1907-1910. The M Street School was erected on M Street in September of 1891. M Street has the distinction of being the first Public High School for African Americans in the United States. It is also the oldest public high school in the nation.<sup>23</sup> The school has a illustrious

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<sup>19</sup> Dana Brewer Bathurst, Eva Dykes: A Star to Show the Way. In Recollections of Valor: Alabama, Vol. 7 ((Huntsville, Ala: Writers Consortium Books, 1989) pp. 29-31.

<sup>20</sup> Williams, p. 21.

Dr Howard served as a clerk with the US War Department, in Washington D.C..

<sup>21</sup> Dabney, p. 131.

According to Lillian G. Dabney, the Lucretia Mott School was a public school which was established in 1909. If Mr. Williams data is correct Eva would have attended the school from 1903-1906. If Dr. Dykes attended Lucretia Mott in this period it is likely that it was still a private school or was not yet registered with the school district.

<sup>22</sup> Williams, p. 24.

<sup>23</sup> Dabney, p. 139.

record of students and staff like no other black public high school in history. The goal of the M Street school was to prepare its students for college. Most of the African American intelligentsia of the late 19th century and the early to mid 20th century were affiliated with the school either as staff or students or both. In 1916, M Street was moved to a newer building, where it resides today and was renamed the Dunbar School, in honor of the poet Paul Lawrence Dunbar.<sup>24</sup> Among the most notable of M Street School Alumni was Howard University Dean of the School of Law and famous civil rights era attorney Charles Hamilton Houston.<sup>25</sup>

Although she entered the M Street School one year after Anna Julia Cooper was excused from her position as principal, it is apparent that Cooper's legacy to the M Street school (instituting educational reforms, insisting on (a rigorous) academic curriculum, and "channelling Black students into the most prestigious universities in the country"<sup>26</sup>) affected Dykes as well. As a testament to the institutions commitment to academics, it is interesting to note that one of the first student organizations at M Street or Dunbar High was a High School Literary Club which began in 1899.<sup>27</sup> It is likely that due to her love of literature, Dykes belonged to this club.

In the interview with historian Merze Tate in 1977, Dykes remembers that she studied Latin, English, and Mathematics throughout high school.<sup>28</sup> She took

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>25</sup> See 3Genna Rae McNeil, Groundwork, Charles Hamilton Houston and the Struggle for Civil Rights (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983) pp.28-30.

<sup>26</sup>Paula Giddings, When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America (New York: Bantam Books) 1985, p. 105. Giddings attributes Cooper's not being "rehired" from her position as principal of the M Street School to her "insistence on an academic curriculum" which "drew charges of subordination from the (school) board."

<sup>27</sup> Dabney, The History of Schools for Negroes... p. 237.

<sup>28</sup> Merze Tate, "Interview with Eva B. Dykes, November 30 - December 1, 1977," Black Women Oral History Project: Vol. 23 ( Cambridge, MA: Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, 1980) p. 14.

the college prep courses and was remembered by a fellow student as being one who "grasped the material quickly, enjoyed her classes and enthusiastically completed her required work."<sup>29</sup> Eva graduated from M Street High School at the top of her class in 1910.

In the fall of 1910, Eva matriculated at Howard University, ostensibly due to her strong familial ties to the school, but more than likely because of its strong reputation and its close proximity to her mother, uncle and sisters. Around this time the role higher education for African Americans would play in their lives and in the life of the community was being enthusiastically debated throughout the country. Some people, following the lead of Booker T. Washington, held that the most important form of education for African Americans was industrial education. Others followed the lead of W.E.B. DuBois, who argued that the "development of the mind" must supersede the development of a manual trade. Eva's future career choice as a scholar of literature and languages certainly supports the notion that she was more in favor of the "DuBoisian" perspective.

While enrolled at Howard, Eva continued to study Latin and English. She also began to study German. She was especially fond of her literature and language courses. The education she received at Howard was arguably the best of liberal arts educations available to African Americans at this time. Like DuBois, Eva recognized the value of studying the humanities. In a 1968, article in the Huntsville Times Eva explained to staff columnist Virgil Christianson what she considered to be the value of literature and literary study;

When looked at quickly, literature doesn't seem to stand up as a very practical subject, . . . certainly one doesn't construct a building with

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<sup>29</sup> Williams, She Fulfilled the Impossible Dream . . . p. 24.

a degree in English, but literature has a value in its message. Literature helps a peoples spirit and helps preserve the language.<sup>30</sup>

Eva received her Bachelor of Arts degree in English, summa cum laude in May of 1914. Throughout her undergraduate career, Eva maintained the highest grade point average in the history of the University. In addition to giving the valedictorian address at her graduation, she was awarded a \$10 scholarship for academic excellence from Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority.

Beginning in the fall 1914, Eva began her career in academia. She taught English and Latin at the Walden University in Nashville Tennessee for one year. Walden University would eventually become Meharry Medical College. In the interview with Merze Tate she recalls that she was paid \$25.00 a month plus room, board and expenses.<sup>31</sup> This initial experience as a college educator obviously impressed her and magnified her love of language and literature and her desire to encourage others to do the same. In an article for Message Magazine written by Dykes in February 1947, she articulates the role the useful citizen must play in society. This passage reveals a great deal of Dykes own feelings about the choice and practice of a profession.

The useful citizen primarily is one who has developed in such a way as that he may be successful in his vocation. He finds his place in society and makes a definite contribution to the welfare of others. . . he helps point men and women to higher standards, to a life free from the undermining influences of crime, ignorance and hate.<sup>32</sup>

It was likely that the desire to be successful in her chosen vocation is what made Dykes consider Radcliffe. Matriculating at Radcliffe was a good idea for a number of reasons. Not only was Radcliffe the "women's Harvard" and the "best"

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<sup>30</sup>Virgil Christianson, "Much Yet to Learn: Pioneering Teacher Says 45 Years on Job Not Enough," Huntsville Times August 1968: p.?

<sup>31</sup>Merze Tate " Interview with Eva B. Dykes," p.6.

<sup>32</sup> Eva B. Dykes, "Whither Modern Education," Message Magazine 13 (February 1947) p. 6.

education a woman could obtain, single sex colleges, like Radcliffe, were resumed to be more concerned with the intellectual development of their female students. They were also more likely to have female faculty and staff who could function as mentors for their students.<sup>33</sup>

In the Fall of 1915, with the encouragement and financial support of her uncle, Dr. James Howard, Eva entered Radcliffe as an unclassified student. In spite of the fact that she had graduated at the top of her class at Howard University, the admissions committee at Radcliffe did not feel that she was qualified to enter their graduate program. They assumed that the education she received at Howard was of an inferior standard. Eva, no doubt surprised the Radcliffe College community by achieving superior grades in honors English, Latin, French, Philosophy, and Music courses. By her second year she had secured a \$200.00 per year tuition scholarship from Radcliffe College.

In 1917 she graduated from Radcliffe College with a Bachelor's or Arts degree in English. Again Eva excelled and graduated magna cum laude and in the top 13% of her class. She had proved that the "brightest and the best" students from historically black colleges could compete with, and supersede the achievements of New England's most "pampered daughters". Her diploma read; "(O)ur student EVA BEATRICE DYKES has fulfilled Magna cum Laude the requirements usually demanded by our Institution for the obtention of the degree of BACHELOR OF THE ARTS - and besides, has deserved the honors in the English language-we have granted her the degree. . ."<sup>34</sup> In 1940, she was further

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<sup>33</sup> Lynn G. Gordon, Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990) p.44.

<sup>34</sup> L.B.R. Briggs, President of Radcliffe College. Radcliffe College degree certificate 1921. Eva B. Dykes Library Archives, Oakwood College, Huntsville Alabama.

honored for her academic achievements as an undergraduate at Radcliffe by being elected to the Iota chapter of Phi Beta Kappa.<sup>35</sup>

In 1918 she received her Master's of Arts degree in English from Radcliffe, and prepared to enter the Ph.D program. During this period, Eva indulged her interest in history and visited historical societies in Pennsylvania and Boston. On March 21, 1921, five years after receiving her Bachelor's of Arts Degree from Radcliffe, Eva completed the requirements for her PhD. in English Philology. As former student, close friend, and associate Mervyn A. Warren put it, "(s)he (had) weathered the pressure of achievement and wore the distinction of pioneering black women's liberation in graduate education, advancing the cause of all women, white or black, at the same time."<sup>36</sup> Her doctoral dissertation focused on Pope's influence in America, 1710-1850. When completed, it was over 600 pages long.

Of her years at Radcliffe and her course of study which demonstrate the high level of classical training Dykes received she recalls;

... I took a number of courses. At that time we had to take courses foreign to English. I took Gothic, which is a dead language. Although I had German at Howard, I also passed a course in German – an examination rather... I decided to take my oral exam in French, because that was akin to Latin. And though I had only one year of French, in school, it being one of the romance languages I passed it because of my knowledge of Latin.<sup>37</sup>

Unfortunately Dykes' social experience at Radcliffe is not discussed in either the DeWitt S. Williams biography or in the articles or in the interviews. The feeling of isolation she no doubt experienced while at Radcliffe College therefore is not recorded. We can get some sense of her experience however by reviewing

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<sup>35</sup> Jane Knowles, Radcliffe College Archives, "Dykes, Eva Beatrice '17 A.M. '18 PhD. '21, 1893- "

<sup>36</sup> Mervyn A. Warren, "I Am So Ordinary," Vibrant Life, 1986, p.13.

<sup>37</sup> Merze Tate. Interview with Eva B. Dykes. November 30-December 1, 1977, p.16.

studies which explore the experience of female students at women's colleges in this period. In, In the Company of Educated Women, Barbara Solomon points out that during this period, the life of the co-ed was the life of a "joiner." Literary Societies, Suffragette Clubs, and Leagues and sororities sprung up and served as an outlet for these "serious-minded" young women. As Radcliffe's first African American PhD. candidate, Eva was no doubt given the "outsider" status experienced by African Americans, other racial minorities, catholics, and ethnic minorities.<sup>38</sup> As an "outsider" Dykes was excluded from participation in most if not all of the social activities of the college. Solomon also discusses the more blatant types of social ostracism experienced by African Americans in particular. On a number of occasions at Radcliffe, Oberlin and Vassar white students refused to sit next to, or even be in sight of, their African American classmates in cafeterias and libraries. Another example of the problems faced by African American students who attended non-historically black colleges in this era was housing difficulties. Dykes was not allowed to live in the college dormitories so she boarded with a local family about a mile from campus.

The year 1921 was a very significant year in the history of African American women's scholarship. In a two month period three African American women were awarded PhD.'s. The question as to which woman received her PhD first remains open. Eva modestly admitted that although she finished the requirements for the degree first, she received her PhD. last of the three. Sadie Tanner Mosell Alexander of the University of Pennsylvania received her PhD. degree in Law first and Georgianna Simpson of the University of Chicago received her PhD in German second.

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<sup>38</sup> Barbara Solomon, In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1985) pp. 106-109.

After graduating from Radcliffe Dykes returned to Washington to teach at her Alma Mater, the M Street school, which by then had been renamed Dunbar High School. Dr. Simpson also came to Dunbar High School to teach. While at Dunbar, Dykes taught English and Latin and supervised oratory contests and directed plays. As to her effectiveness as a teacher, she was consistently rated "very good" and "eminently superior" by her fellow faculty in the yearly teacher rating sheets.<sup>39</sup>

Most of her students "felt that she worked beyond the call of duty, and looked up to her as a perfectionist in all she did."<sup>40</sup> Many of her students followed her example and pursued graduate studies and careers in the professions. A number of her former students eventually became doctors lawyers and college professors. Two of these students were Charles Drew, pioneer blood plasma researcher, and William Hastie, who would serve as Dean of Howard Law School and then in 1946 be appointed governor of the Virgin Islands.<sup>41</sup> During this period she also served as the associate editor of the Howard Alumnus and was a member of Delta Sigma Theta sorority.<sup>42</sup>

In 1929, Dykes accepted a position as an Associate Professor of English in the College of Liberal Arts at Howard University. Before accepting the position, she informed the dean of the Department of English, G. David Houston that she would be unable to work during the period reserved for the recognition of the Sabbath, "from sundown Friday until sundown Saturday."<sup>43</sup> This was the era of the "New Negro" and as such, Howard University's students and certain "radical"

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<sup>39</sup> Williams, p. 34-35.

<sup>40</sup> Williams, p. 35-36.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 37-38.

<sup>42</sup> Who's Who in Colored America: 1930-1931-1932 (THIRD EDITION), "Dykes, Eva Beatrice" (Brooklyn, New York: Thomas Yenser, Ed and Pub., 1933) pp. 139-140.

<sup>43</sup> Williams, p. 52.

members of the faculty (i.e., E. Franklin Frazier, Kelly Miller and Alain Locke) were virulently anti-religious. They regarded religion and religious instruction as a "means of limiting the race."<sup>44</sup> Professor G. David Houston, of the English Department, called for "less preaching and more teaching," arguing that there had been until this point "too much inspiration and too little information."<sup>45</sup> This statement suggests that Houston's prejudice against religion and his fear of potential evangelicalism among the faculty could have prompted him to recommend to President Mordecai Johnson, that Dykes was "trag(ically) unemployable" that she had "reservations about service."<sup>46</sup> Fortunately, Dr. Johnson perceived the glass as being half full rather than half empty and predicted that Dykes "service" to the University during the other six days of the week would be better than what most would give in a full week.<sup>47</sup>

While serving as a faculty member at Howard Dykes participated in the social, and cultural events the District of Columbia had to offer. Dykes was a member of the Round Table Club, one of the finest literary clubs in Washington D.C., which according to the program kept in her papers met the third Saturday in every month. She also refined her teaching and communication skills by attending summer workshops. Dykes also did post-graduate work at the University of Indiana's Summer Linguistic Institute and attended N.Y.U. as an auditor. She was active in many college committees and she sponsored and advised a variety of campus groups.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Raymond Wolters, The New Negro on Campus: Black College Rebellions of the 1920's (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1975) p.83.

<sup>45</sup> Wolters, p. 83.

<sup>46</sup> Williams, p. 52.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 52-53.

In 1931 she co-authored a critical anthology of African American literature, Readings from Negro Authors for Schools and Colleges, with fellow Howard professors, Lorenzo Dow Turner and Otelia Cromwell. In 1942 she published her first and only solo project, an extensive critical investigation into eighteenth-century English Romantic thought, The Negro in English Romantic Thought: Or a Study of Sympathy for the Oppressed. In a 1976 interview for ACHE Television, a local Huntsville Alabama cable company, Dr Dykes remembered the inspiration for The Negro in English Romantic Thought:

When I was teaching a survey course in English at Howard University, I noticed that Freedom was the watchword of such Romantic writers like Southey, Coleridge, Wordsworth and others. I was interested in freedom, and especially the freedom of the Negro; this fact inspired me to write the book.<sup>49</sup>

As a testament to her teaching ability, community involvement, and superior scholarship, Eva was voted the all around best teacher in the University by the faculty of the College of Liberal Arts. In 1945, she was awarded the Howard University Award for Post-Graduate Achievement. At the ceremony Jason C. Grant, Jr., voiced the love and respect everyone in the Howard University community had for Dr. Dykes when, as Dewitt William's indicates he declared:

Few graduates of Howard University have led such a rich and varied a life or one as signalized by so many achievements as has Dr. Eva Beatrice Dykes. . . Here, then, is a Howard graduate who has lived and is living a life not narrowed to the confines of a single category, but a full life characterized by a wide range of important activities and distinguished achievements. Such a life is in keeping with the highest humanistic and Christian Ideals of the College of Liberal Arts of Howard University and thus merits richly such recognition as the Alumni Award can give.<sup>50</sup>

As early as 1934, President J.L. Moran of Oakwood College attempted to lure Dykes away from Howard University to Oakwood in Huntsville Tennessee.

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<sup>49</sup> ACHE Television Interview Program with Eva B. Dykes, 1986.

<sup>50</sup> Williams, p. 59.

Oakwood was established as a Seventh Day Adventist College and it was primarily through the church that President Moran became familiar with Dykes' work. In May of 1940, Dykes traveled to Oakwood College in Huntsville Alabama for the first time where she gave the commencement address in the college's new auditorium and administration building. She returned to give a second commencement address in May of 1944, and by June of 1944 she had decided to leave Howard University and to teach at Oakwood.<sup>51</sup>

We may never know definitely, although we may surely speculate, why Dykes resigned her honored post at the most prestigious black educational institution in the country to teach at a small, nominally funded, school in rural Alabama. Howard University offered all that a black academic could hope to gain and more, substantial government and private funding; a location in one of the nation's most affluent African American communities; a sympathetic, talented, and well educated faculty and staff; and superior students willing to work hard to maintain the school's reputation. Leaving Howard University and her family and friends in the District of Columbia was a momentous step. We may speculate as to the factors contributing to the personal, religious and professional growth of this pioneer African American woman academic.

In 1943, Dykes reached a personal milestone when she turned 50, perhaps leaving Howard and the District of Columbia--the mecca of African American intellectual life was an attempt to radically change the course of her life. She had spent the first half century of her life as a member of a privileged elite, now she would dedicate her skills to those of her people who were less fortunate.

Perhaps she tired of the political infighting of Howard's faculty. As was noted earlier, Howard had become a "hotbed" of social and educational rhetoric

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 72-74.

and radicalism. Massive growth of the university in this period, specifically the establishment of well respected professional schools and colleges, and a growth in the student population after WWII could have led Dykes to consider a more intimate college community.<sup>52</sup> The fact that she was a highly respected member of Howard's male dominated staff who may have realized that because of her gender she stood little chance of securing advancement to an administrative position may have affected her decision. President Moran had requested that she come to Oakwood and chair the Department of English, a rare opportunity for a woman in this period. It was likely that she felt she should not pass up this unique.

Finally, perhaps she yearned to be in an atmosphere where religious instruction stood above secular education. In the August 1947 article, "Whither Modern Education?" published in the Message Magazine, Dykes strongly articulates her increasing dissatisfaction with the educational trends of secular schools. Dykes main point of contention centers on the issue of evolution, and how the proliferation of this scientific theory in schools and colleges was indicative of the eroding social and moral fiber of young people. She writes;

(A)n insidious foe has stealthily worked his way into our curricula and attacked the foundations of the whole educational fabric. . . This foe is false teaching in the form of theories of evolution, of the freedom of the individual from moral restraint, of relative moral standards and the like. . . Evolution has bred skepticism, unbelief and indifference to God and spiritual things. Evolution destroys faith in God. The education is faulty that teaches it. . .<sup>53</sup>

Dykes increasing commitment to and personal investment in the growth of the Seventh Day Adventist church was undoubtedly a strong motivational factor. She decided to use her talents, and the prestige attached to her advanced

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<sup>52</sup> For more information on the problems facing Howard University faculty in this period, see; Kenneth R. Manning, Black Apollo of Science: The Life of Ernest Everett Just (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.)

<sup>53</sup>Dykes, "Whither Modern Education?" p. 6, 18.

degree and excellent reputation, for the benefit of her church and her people. Oakwood, a predominantly black Seventh-Day Adventist institution in Huntsville Alabama offered the best of both worlds. Dykes realized that it was part of her mission to assist Oakwood in its progression toward higher academic standards of achievement.

Dykes was Oakwood College's first professor with a doctorate. Williams states that her arrival in Huntsville was eagerly anticipated, but the students may have been somewhat disappointed to see that she was simply a plainly dressed, diminutive middle-aged woman.<sup>54</sup> She is remembered as one who was very modest and unassuming. She would tell her students to call her Miss Dykes, that doctor was only an academic title and did not need to be used in the classroom.<sup>55</sup> In spite of her graciousness and humility, her students soon learned why she had such a formidable reputation. She is remembered as one who stressed what she termed "the two A's, 'Audibility' and 'Academics.'"<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, Dykes asserted that grades should not be based on effort but that they should be based only on performance. Dykes also encouraged her students to do their best by reminding them of their infinite potential for success. In the following excerpt from a chapel talk given by Dykes, entitled, "The Paradox of the Impossible" Dykes, faith in herself and in her students potential and her desire to see them succeed comes through. In this excerpt Dykes quotes Seventh Day Adventist founder, Ellen G. White.

If you are defective in manner, in voice, in education, you need not always remain in that condition. You must continually strive that you may reach a higher standard, both in education and in religious experience, that you may become teachers in good things . . . The

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<sup>54</sup> Williams, p. 84.

<sup>55</sup> Louis B. Reynolds, "She Fulfilled the Impossible Dream" in the Review and Herald (January 4, 1973) p. 15-17.

<sup>56</sup> Williams, p.85.

impossibility lies in your own will. If you will not than you cannot overcome.<sup>57</sup>

While at Oakwood, Dykes was even more active than she had been at Howard. Besides teaching a full load of classes, she chaired the accreditation committee, served as chairman of the division of humanities, and headed the department of English. Dykes saw to it that her faculty had opportunities for improvement and often requested on their behalf that the college's president work out financial arrangements for certain teachers who wanted to attend professional meetings or take study leave.<sup>58</sup> She was an effective administrator who used her influence to positively affect the quality of the students and staff at Oakwood. According to Louis B. Reynolds, when she chaired the division of Humanities she would call an annual breakfast meeting where "she lectured to us from prepared notes on the need for immediate action and she outlined in one-two-three order what she felt we ought to do.<sup>59</sup>

Dykes took her position as Chairman of the Division of Humanities very seriously. In 1955 she circulated a document entitled PLANS FOR THE FIRST SEMESTER OF 1955-1956 for the DIVISION OF HUMANITIES. Included in this document is a list of objectives for the English Department. Dykes' impact on the entire college, is evident in the second and third objectives which stated the departments intentions to "visit industrial and auxiliary services on campus and correlate information obtained with oral and written expression in the classroom," Dykes program of English Cooperation was to be used throughout the college. Correct grammar usage was to be stressed not only in class rooms but

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<sup>57</sup>Eva Dykes, The Paradox of The Impossible: Chapel Talk, (ca. 1959) p. 8.

<sup>58</sup> Williams, pp. 90-91.

<sup>59</sup>Reynolds, p. 17.

instead in a variety of "gentle reminders" on posters, billboards, quotations and films.<sup>60</sup>

The "Program in English Cooperation at Oakwood College" was established in 1958. Dykes served as the sponsor and chairman. The companion pamphlet to the program, Oakwood, English, and You was printed in September of 1958 and distributed to all of the freshman students, faculty and staff. The program required that the faculty make sure that each student be made aware of the correct use of the written as well as the spoken word. Among other issues the pamphlet addresses the reasons why poor language skills were so common among college students, and why it was so difficult to remedy. A passage attributed to a "leading member of our staff," blames the problems of modern students on, modern educational practices, the teaching staff, the communities from whence the students came, and finally the student.

"(R)oadblocks to the "master(ing) of the English language."

1. The modern emphasis on mass education.
2. Today's concentration on the so-called "progressive education" now dominating the American scene.
3. The theory (held by the students themselves) that every student should pass the course, not on the basis of attainments, but merely on the basis that he or she has "worked hard and has come to class every day."
4. The use of the "curve" in testing and promoting.
5. The students knowledge of the insistence by educators that a certain number of students must pass at the end of the term and the carelessness and indifference resulting therefrom.<sup>61</sup>

Although the author of this list of "roadblocks" is not mentioned, it can be assumed that the author is Dykes. To prove this, we need only look at two articles

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<sup>60</sup> Eva Dykes, Plans for the First Semester of 1955-1956 for the Division of Humanities, (c.1955) EBD Personal Papers, Eva B Dykes Library Archives.

<sup>61</sup> Eva Dykes, et. al., Oakwood, English, and You by the Committee on the Program In English Cooperation (September, 1958) p. 2-3.

written by Dykes in which these themes are discussed, "Whither Modern Education," and "I am For the Christian School."<sup>62</sup>

Dykes commitment to the basic English skills of Oakwood's students led her to undertake another project on grammar and communication. In the late 1950's, Dykes co-authored a book with Florence M. Winslow, The Manual of English, which stresses why every student should be taught to write well, and to read well. Quoting Francis Bacon, the authors of the manual state; "Writing maketh an exact man," and "Reading maketh a full man."<sup>63</sup> This unpublished manuscript assists in the acquisition of basic technical grammar skills. It is presented in a Problem/Solution format and peppered with biblical phrases and Christian instruction.<sup>64</sup>

Dykes also continued to publish articles in a variety of magazines and journals. She published essays in The Negro History Bulletin, and began to publish articles in The Journal of Negro History. The Journal of Negro History first published in 1916 and The Negro History Bulletin first published in 1937 were published by the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History launched by Carter G. Woodson in the fall of 1915 whose purpose was described by Woodson to be "the 'scientific' study of the 'neglected aspects of Negro life and history.'<sup>65</sup> Most of Dykes articles published in this period of her life were published in Seventh Day Adventists magazines such as The Youth's Instructor, and The Message Magazine. The articles in these journals dealt primarily with religious subjects, especially the correct social behavior for young Christian women and

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<sup>62</sup> Eva Dykes, "I am for the Christian school," in Message Magazine (October 1951) p. 10-11, 14.

<sup>63</sup> Williams, p. 87.

<sup>64</sup> Eva Dykes and Florence Winslow, The Manual of English (c. 1958) Personal Papers of Eva B. Dykes, Eva B. Dykes Library.

<sup>65</sup> Darlene Clark Hine, "Carter G. Woodson, White Philanthropy and Negro Historiography" in The History Teacher (Volume 19. Number 3) pp. 406-407.

men. After spending a summer studying under Owen Thomas at Indiana University, Dykes helped prepare A Manual for A Beginning Teacher in Linguistics in a Secondary School.

Eva B. Dykes made a contribution to African American intellectual history which was unique and necessary. Her no-nonsense approach to education improved the ability of hundreds of students to communicate effectively, via the written or the spoken word. She blasted the notion that peoples of African descent were nonexistent in classical letters and she helped to introduce African American prose and poetry into the academy. By placing African American writing next to critically appreciated works, she demonstrated that the literature of the African American could be used in academic discourse in a manner which demonstrated how these works could be best used. Her published essays and articles focused on a variety of topics, from Civil War poetry to scholarly book reviews of popular African American literature, to social history, and critical reevaluations and revisions of the role of lesser known historic figures in American History. The following analyses reviews a selection of the published articles, essays and books.

As was noted earlier, Dr. Dykes specialized in the literature of the Romantic period. Her 1942 study, The Negro in English Romantic Thought demonstrates her knowledge of this period literature. Within this limited realm, Dr. Dykes successfully uncovers works pertaining to the African American experience. In the introduction to The Negro in English Romantic Thought, Dr. Dykes announces her intention to prove that the experience of peoples of African descent has not been left out of English Romantic literature.

One of the most salient features of the 'Romantic Movement' of the latter eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was the love of freedom. Whether this love was colored by an increasing conservatism and limited more or less by an adherence to

traditional forms and conventions, as was the case with Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge, or whether it was heightened by an intense hostility toward existing conventions of church, society, and state, as was the case with Byron and Shelley, it is not surprising to find among these men and their forerunners a deep sympathy for the oppressed of any race and especially for the Negro.<sup>66</sup>

The assertion that the experience of oppressed people is typical of literature of the Romantic period, African Americans included, is a common theme expressed by Dr. Dykes in many of her writings. In a 1942 review of The Negro in English Romantic Thought, Gertrude Rivers notes the importance of Dr. Dykes study. "The story of the Negro in English romantic thought had never been told until the publication of the present volume. As unfolded by Dr. Dykes it becomes not only a significant contribution to the history of the Negro's struggle for freedom, but a storehouse of information of individuals seeking a solution to the problem of human equality."<sup>67</sup>

In The Negro in English Romantic Thought Dr. Eva B. Dykes, a scholar of philology and English literature, used her extensive knowledge of English letters to authenticate the existence of the record of the enslaved African's experience in English literature. The range of scholarship in the study is broad and diverse. It covers the writings of famous poets, statesmen, religious figures, and philosophers such as Cowper, Wesley, and Defoe. It also includes an examination of works by lesser known artists, for example women "abolitionists" such as Aphra Behn whose 1688 Oroonoko, or the African Slave, a "narrative of a noble chieftain subjected to cruel treatment by the white race... made a great appeal to eighteenth century abolitionists."<sup>68</sup> As Gertrude Rivers pointed out, there had not been up to this point a serious scholarly attempt to explore the attitude of

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<sup>66</sup>Dykes, Eva B. The Negro in English Romantic Thought, or A Study of Sympathy for the Oppressed. (Washington, D.C.: Associated Publishers, Inc, 1942) p. 1.

<sup>67</sup>Gertrude B. Rivers. "Review of The Negro in English Romantic Thought by Dr. Eva B. Dykes" Journal of Negro History, (Vol. 27:No. 2) July 1942 p.355.

<sup>68</sup>Dykes, The Negro in English Romantic Thought, ... p. 127.

English writers toward the slave trade in English Romantic letters. Dr. Dykes became aware of the need for such a study while at Radcliffe College, when a fellow student remarked that Africans and African Americans were non-existent in English Romantic letters.

The history of the slave trade, and the role of the literary world in eradicating it, is a popular theme in Dr. Dykes work. In her 1944 essay "The Poetry of the Civil War" Dr. Dykes, proposing that "literature is life itself" contends that as war plays an important role in human life, it plays an important role in literature as well. In this essay she analyzes the role of poetry written during the Civil War. The essay begins with an inquiry into the historic role war plays in literature. She discusses the particular virtues common to literature and war. These virtues: loyalty, patriotism, unselfishness, and self sacrifice are usually attributed to heroic characters in literature and war.

During the civil war, the most popular poems were those which were set to music. These poems dealt with land and sea battles, flag poems, and songs about individuals such as John Brown. The most popular song/poem of this era, she tells us was Julia Ward Howe's "Battle Hymn of the Republic". As was the case in The Negro in English Romantic Thought, Dykes makes reference to poems written by whites which focused on heroes, both black and white who were especially revered by the African American community. The three poems which focused on the life and death of John Brown are examples of this.

As in most of her essays, Dr. Dykes discusses the contribution of blacks and women to patriotic literature. In the following excerpt Dr. Dykes reminds her reader of the historic role African American writers have played in the creation of patriotic poetry. "Colored poets were not negligent in writing of the war, being animated by the same patriotic spirit which inspired Phillis Wheatley to write her

tributes to Washington and Lee at the close of the revolutionary war.<sup>69</sup> She then notes various poems by black women and men like Francis Ellen Watkins Harper's "President Lincoln's Proclamation" and Thomas W. Talley's "Negro Folk Rhymes," a poem written in "Negro" dialect. What is most interesting about this essay however, is Dr. Dykes acknowledgement of Black America's most popular and expressive art form, the spiritual. Dr. Dykes notes that spirituals such as "Year of Jubilee", "Slavery Chain", "Who'll Jine' de Union", and "The Negro Battle Hymn", inspired the troops going into battle and celebrated the Northern victory and their emancipation. She also wrote about individuals who helped the enslaved African Americans gain freedom. One historic individual, William C. Bryant a white abolitionist and journalist, figures in two of Dykes' essays dealing with this subject.

In her November 1942 essay, "William Cullen Bryant" Dykes explored the contributions of an important historic figure. The essay on William Cullen Bryant is interesting primarily because of its emphasis on Bryant as a journalist and an abolitionist, not as a poet. It is also interesting because it reveals a great deal about Dykes' racial attitude.

Eva B. Dykes was a firm believer in the possibilities of inter-racial co-operation. In the interview with Merze Tate, Eva recalled that her uncle, Dr. James Howard, taught her that "the people who were prejudiced were victims, not oppressors."<sup>70</sup> In this essay she stresses the crucial role played by whites like Bryant who helped establish black schools for freedmen before the war, and who agitated for the abolition of slavery. After the civil war these same white citizens agitated for citizens rights for free blacks.

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<sup>69</sup>Eva B. Dykes, "The Poetry of the Civil War," in The Negro History Bulletin, Vol 7, Feb. 1944:p. 115.

<sup>70</sup>Merze Tate, p.10.

Bryant, Dykes tells us, was the editor of the New York Evening Post from 1829 until 1878. Dr. Dykes considers this period to have been the most critical period of our history. This same historical period is explored in two other essays by Dykes

published in The Negro History Bulletin, "Three Negro Publishers" (January, 1943) and "Walt Whitman and Democracy"(May, 1943).

In the January 1943 essay, "Three Negro Publishers" Dr. Dykes studies the history of the black press by examining the lives of three black publishers: Stephen Meyers, Charles B. Ray, and Thomas Hamilton. She contends that the "essential qualities" needed by an editor: "moral conviction and intellectual integrity, animated only by a desire to aid their people and make democracy a living principle for all mankind,"<sup>71</sup> characterizes the work of these individuals.

At the beginning of this essay, Dykes quotes Carlyle who said, in effect, that publishing is an extension of printing which is an extension of writing, which is "the true reign of miracles for mankind commenced,"<sup>72</sup> In spite of financial and educational handicaps, black publishers "did a splendid job in calling the attention of the public to the injustices endured by the Negro..."<sup>73</sup>

Dr. Dykes explores the "Pan Africanist" perspective of Charles B. Ray, who in 1839 became the editor of The Colored American. In advancing the aims of The Colored American , Dykes notes that Ray stated:

"It's objects are more directly the moral, social, political elevation, and improvement of the free colored people; and the peaceful emancipation of the enslaved...The paper therefore will not be regardless of the welfare of colored people of other countries."<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>Eva B. Dykes, "Three Negro Publishers," in The Negro History Bulletin, vol. 6, January 1943, p. 82.

<sup>72</sup>Dykes, "Three Negro Publishers" p. 82.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p.82-83.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p.83.

This position, Dr. Dykes recognizes, anticipates the call of leaders during the early 20th century for blacks in the U.S. to take interest in the condition of other people of color throughout the world.

The early black press was not completely controlled by the black intelligentsia. Stephen Meyers, the founder and editor of The Elevator, was poorly educated but possessed a natural gift for writing. A former slave who was emancipated at the age of 18, Meyers "thereafter by pen and mouth devoted himself to securing the democratic way of life for his own people."<sup>75</sup> That Meyers was still alive at the time of the Emancipation proclamation and lived to see his dream of abolition of slavery realized is noted by Dykes as significant.

The third publisher considered in "Three Negro Publishers", Thomas Hamilton, was the founder and editor of the Anglo-African Magazine. Dykes contends that Hamilton's aim was to make the Anglo-African Magazine one of the "institutions of the country."<sup>76</sup> The Anglo-African Magazine (1859) contained articles pertaining to slavery, the slave trade, black education, and other subjects important to the African American Community. Hamilton, Meyers, and Ray "maintain their rank as men among men, and "speak for themselves."<sup>77</sup>

In "Democracy and Walt Whitman", Eva Dykes combines two of her favorite themes, poets of the romantic movement and democracy. In this essay, Dr. Dykes concentrates on the poems included in Whitman's collection, Leaves of Grass (1856). Dr. Dykes attributes Whitman's heritage (a Quaker grandmother and parents of "good, solid stock interested in the principles of freedom and democracy") for the objectivity and vision which made him "the great poet of the

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p.83.

<sup>76</sup>Dykes, "Three Negro Publishers," p.83.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p.83.

American democracy.<sup>78</sup> Because Whitman was a romanticist and espoused the romantic traits of individualism and transcendentalism, he embodied the experience of every individual, the slave as well as the slave master, in his rhetoric.

Whitman, Dykes notes, said of himself "I am the poet of equality".<sup>79</sup> It is not surprising therefore she states, that he would spend much of his time identifying himself with all of humanity and asserting the rights of free speech and freedom in all of its forms. Whitman's attitude toward slavery, Dykes tells us, is inconsistent and difficult to discern. "One attitude toward the Negro is apathy and indifference."<sup>80</sup> At another point Whitman refers to Negroes as "cruel, bestial and lacking in education"<sup>81</sup> By 1846, Whitman's attitude toward slavery appears to have changed. Dr. Dykes points out that Whitman was fired from the New York Daily Eagle for speaking out boldly against the expansion of slavery into the new territory. The following March, in an article in the Brooklyn Daily Freeman, Whitman referred to slavery as a "disgrace and a blot on America and humanity."<sup>82</sup> In spite of his ambiguity concerning racial issues, which Dykes contends widened through the years, Walt Whitman, stood, in Dykes opinion at least as a "real bard of Democracy"<sup>83</sup>

One of the most consistent techniques used by Dr. Dykes in her writing is the comparison of the individual or object she is studying with established classics or works by some established eminence. In the essay on Whitman, she compares Whitman's romanticism with English romanticists. This type of analysis is carried over into the work which most blatantly proposes to introduce

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<sup>78</sup>Eva Dykes, "Democracy and Walt Whitman", The Negro History Bulletin, Vol.6, May, 1943: p. 175.

<sup>79</sup>Dykes, "Democracy and Walt Whitman," p. 176.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., p.177.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p.177.

the African American experience into the academy, Readings from Negro Authors for Schools and Colleges.

In Readings from Negro Authors for Schools and Colleges, Dr. Dykes along with Otelia Cromwell and Lorenzo Dow Turner undertake to introduce African American literature into the academy. The purpose of this collection as expressed in the introduction is "to offer for classroom study or supplementary reading a selection of types of writings by Negro authors."<sup>84</sup> This textbook could be considered significant even if it was not the first textbook which featured the literature of African Americans. The stated purpose of the project is also significant. The editors of the book believed that an intelligent appreciation of these writings would be stimulated by this collection. In a review of the book published in the Journal of Negro History in July of 1932, Mary Louise Strong notes the importance of this text.

"Few textbooks have been so greatly needed as this pioneer which is praiseworthy on many grounds...These editors bring penetrating viewpoints, scholarly minds, and keen perspicacity. Their initial combined effort is at once a challenge and a reply...Here is an uncommonly opportune guide that shows how the task should be undertaken."<sup>85</sup>

If we accept the idea that this volume is indeed important to African American scholarship we must ask particular questions of the work and judge its' relative success or failure at achieving the goals its editors desire for it.<sup>86</sup> The most important question or concern for this collection is whether or not it is truly

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<sup>84</sup>Eva B. Dykes, ed. with Otelia Cromwell and Lorenzo D. Turner. Readings From Negro Authors for School and Colleges. New York: Harcourt and Brace Co, 1942, p. iii.

<sup>85</sup>Mary Louise Strong, Readings from Negro Authors, A Review Of." Journal of Negro History, Vol 17, no.3. July 1932: pp.383-384.

<sup>86</sup> See also: John Lovell Jr. "What Price Negro Literature?" The Journal of Negro Education, Vol 1, Fall 1932, pp.427-430.

representative of the types of writings blacks have done up to this period. The first section of the book is dedicated to an exploration of poets and poetry.

Dr Dykes, Ostellia Cromwell and Lorenzo Dow Turner have included a broad range of poetry in this section. There is however a tendency to focus on poems referring to nature and love. If our objective is to find examples of poems that seem to be more openly Afro-centric we are sorely limited by this collection. The only poems in this collection that blatantly address this issue are "O Black and Unknown Bards", by James Weldon Johnson and "From the Dark Tower," by Countee Cullen.

There are many examples in this collection of poems which fulfill the requirements of the New Negro. For example, Waring Cuney's "No Images," Otto Leland Bohanan's "The Negro Washer Woman" and Langston Hughes, "Mother to Son" which celebrate the beauty, strength and tenacity of the black woman are included in this collection. Conspicuously absent from this section however is "Karintha" or any of the poems from Jean Toomer's Cane.

In this essay we have looked at a select few of the published works written by Dr. Eva Dykes in an attempt to establish her as an important foremother in the quest to bring African American literature to the academy. As a result of the volume of materials discussed, there has been little time for much more than a brief analysis of the most appropriate points of each. There remains as a result a considerable amount of room for further study. Even a study as brief as this however suggests that there is most definitely a case to be made for the theory that Eva B. Dykes played a crucial role, in what we can only assumed to be one of her objectives. There is also a great body of work by Dr. Dykes focusing on her religion and instructing young people.

Too often we tend to record only the histories of the radial, the violent, and the outspoken. As a result most African American "heroes" have been men. It is

easy to ignore the contributions of those who quietly and slowly, but nonetheless effectively changed our society. This is not to say that Dykes was passive or non-revolutionary, she was, as Dr. Lela Gooding effectively phrased it "(a) professed non-violence adherent. . . She was nevertheless an intellectual militant in the tradition of her literary ancestors,. . . perceiving and calling attention to problems."<sup>87</sup> When she died at 93 in 1986, Dykes left behind a glowing example of the potential for excellence for African American women in academia. In an unpublished article for Spectrum Magazine, Dykes told Irene Wakeham what she believed to be her role in the struggle for black civil rights, it read:

My contribution toward achieving in the area of civil rights may be stated in this way. I have tried to do my best in whatever field I found myself, to make the wonderful mind God has given man a kingdom in itself. As Milton says, "The Mind can of its own self make a heaven or a hell." If the mind can be filled with the best thoughts and with the desire to do one's best in whatever direction it may move, the Black experience can be one of love to all mankind, and the living exemplification of the love of Christ, who said we must let our lives be governed by two principles - a deep love for God and a deep love for our neighbor, which must be equal in scope and intensity to our love for ourselves.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>Lela M. Gooding, The Achievement of Eva Beatrice Dykes, unpublished paper (Huntsville Alabama: Oakwood College) 1980. p.26.

<sup>88</sup>Irene Wakeham, "Dr. Eva Beatrice Dykes," for Spectrum (unpublished - May 12, 1975)p. 10.

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