

Editorial

THIS SPECIAL ISSUE OF *The Dalhousie Review* focusses on the literature, culture, and history of a fragment of African America which exists only as a vague impression, a phantasmal if beautiful hallucination, in the collective memory and imagination of the whole. For the 3,500 African Americans who rejected the slavery-tolerating American Revolution and voyaged, as Black Loyalists, on British ships to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick in 1783, it was as if they had sailed into oblivion. They vanished from African-American historiography, while seldom entering that of Canada. They fell into a state of limbo: they lived in Canada but were hardly considered Canadian; they remembered their ancestral homes in South Carolina, Georgia, Maryland, and Virginia, but were forgotten in these very places. This fate befell yet another 2,000 African Americans who arrived in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia between 1813 and 1815 as Black Refugees, the flotsam and jetsam of the War of 1812, and still another, smaller number who fled the Southern slavocracy by ship to landfall in the Maritime provinces of British North America. These emigrés and refugees became the marginal of the marginal.

Certainly, these exiles and their descendants hover—like exotic ghosts—on the periphery of both African-American and Canadian consciousness, intruding therein only in anecdotes, or in theoretical works, or in images of Arcadian prophecy. An example of the former manifestation occurs in David Levering Lewis's eminent work of research, *W.E.B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race, 1868–1919*, which establishes that Du Bois, at the commencement of his Harvard University years, rented quarters in Cambridge, Massachusetts, from “John and Mary Taylor, solid working-class people,” who were “African-Americans originally from Nova Scotia.” (That is, the Taylors were, more precisely, African Canadians). Black Nova Scotians served as research subjects for Arthur Huff Fauset, the pioneer African-American anthropologist (and brother of the Harlem

Renaissance-era novelist, Jesse Redmond Fauset), who toured Nova Scotia in 1925 to determine if its blacks shared the folklore of African Americans. His resultant text, *Folklore from Nova Scotia* (1931), declared that the “Negroes” of Preston, a black community located near the capital city, Halifax, “lived for all the world like plantation folk, in their rickety cabins (not log cabins), off to themselves, with religious customs and even habits of living distinctly their own” A romanticized vision of Nova Scotia appears in Julie Dash’s pastoral film, *Daughters of the Dust* (1991), in which Yellow Mary dreams of going to “Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia,” because of its lilting name. This Edenic site haunts the African-American psyche.

Yet, despite scattered apparitions, sightings, of Black Nova Scotia in African America, few constituents of this putative state realize their kinship with their smaller, Canadian other. The two cultures share, though, the same literary and theological roots. For instance, John Marrant, a minister for a Methodist sect, the Countess of Huntingdon Connexion, published, in 1785, one of the earliest African-American texts—and the first Black Nova Scotian text: *A narrative of the Lord’s wonderful dealings with John Marrant, a black, (Now going to preach the Gospel in Nova-Scotia)* Moreover, David George, a Baptist minister, established at Silver Bluff, Georgia, in 1773, the first black church in North America. In 1783, he removed to Nova Scotia, where he constructed a new church and continued to preach. Ultimately, accompanying 1,200 other disenchanting Black Loyalist settlers, George abandoned Nova Scotia in 1792 for Sierra Leone, thus extending his Baptist ministry to African soil. Another ex-African-American, John William Robertson, escaped from slavery in Virginia by stowing aboard a vessel and landing, eventually, in Nova Scotia. There, after achieving literacy, he published *The Book of the Bible Against Slavery* (1854), a text seething with apocalyptic imagery and violent denunciations of the terrors of slavery. The Black Nova Scotian connection to African America has endured well into the twentieth century. In the late 1960s, US Black Panther Party members visited the province, and African-American pastors continue to enjoy fellowship with the African United Baptist Association.

This Special Issue should serve to introduce the readers of *The Dalhousie Review* to the cultural-historical context and products of the recent cultural renaissance of this two-century-old, ex-

iled, mainly African-American-in-origin community, this still-religiously-based collectivity, in which spirituals remain the spontaneously utilized and honoured folk heritage. While most Canadians refer to this petite state as Black Nova Scotia or African Nova Scotia, I prefer the term *Africadia*, a neologism combining both Africa and Acadia (the historic name of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick). Hence, some papers speak of Africadians, while others use the terms African-Nova Scotian, Afro-Nova Scotian, or Black Nova Scotian, all denoting the same population.

The Special Issue ranges, happily, across a variety of disciplines, including history, literature, sociology, and creative non-fiction. The best-known interpreter of Africadian history is, assuredly, James W. St.G. Walker, whose book, *The Black Loyalists* (1976), offers an authoritative, unparalleled study of the formation of two distinct societies: that of US-born Black Loyalists in both Nova Scotia and in the West African nation of Sierra Leone. His essay, "Allegories and Orientations in African Canadian Historiography: The Spirit of Africville," takes up the matter of how Africadians are reconstructing their own recent history, especially that regarding the destruction of a key Africadian community (village, really), namely the Halifax-located Africville, in the late 1960s. One of the major interpreters of the Africville Relocation is Maxine Tynes, an Africadian performance-oriented poet, whose work receives, in this issue, a splendidly thorough and politically provocative analysis by Marjorie Stone. Her essay, "The Poet as Whole-Body Camera: Maxine Tynes and the Pluralities of Otherness," stresses Tynes' vital role as a tribune of alterity. Bernice Moreau's paper, "Black Nova Scotian Women's Experience of Educational Violence in the Early 1900s: A Case of Colour Contusion," reminds us of the existence of that sociopolitical evil—racism—that ghettoized Nova Scotia's Africvilles and marginalized black women. Valuably too, Moreau takes the trouble to give us black women's scarring experiences in their own, indomitable words. But Africadian culture has never been only about tribulation; it has also been about triumph. Here, one must reference Jim Freedman's fictionalized history, "Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel, and Why Not Every Man?" The imaginative chronicle of the failed "miracle" of an African Baptist minister at the end of the last century, it is also a passionate affirmation of the warmth of community and the wonder of faith.

The scholarly contributions to this Special Issue are complemented nicely by Africadian creative work. First, there is the cover by Kim Cain, an artist who participated in the historic *In This Place* ... exhibit of Africadian visual art, organized in early 1998 by David Woods, an artist himself of no mean consequence. However, Woods appears here as a poet, that is to say, as a powerful interpreter of the lost Eden of Africville. The too-little-known Frederick Ward is a consummate writer, whose first novel, *Riverlisp* (1974), recalls the narratives of displaced, ex-Africville residents. Here, this brilliant bard poeticizes prose in two succulent stories, "Crystal" and "Mid-oasis Moon." Walter Borden has wowed Canadian audiences with his performances in roughly sixty plays over roughly forty years. Yet, he is also a fine poet, whose script for his internationally-lauded one-man show, *Tightrope Time* (1986), deserves book publication. Sylvia Hamilton has won acclaim as one of the few African-Canadian women documentary filmmakers. See, especially, *Black Mother; Black Daughter* (1989). Moreover, like Borden and Woods, Hamilton has been a major catalyst of what I call the Africadian Cultural Renaissance, a movement for cultural and political expression that originated in the mid-1970s, obtained self-consciousness in 1983, and continues to animate Africadian intellectuals to this day. As a poet (and historian), Hamilton chronicles diurnal realities in the verbal equivalent of *cinéma-vérité*.

The Special Issue concludes with reviews by Jim Hornby, a specialist in the history of Prince Edward Island's black community; David Sealy, an emerging critic of African-Canadian culture; and Anthony Stewart, a scholar of Anglo-American modernism, particularly the writings of George Orwell. We are fortunate to have their incisive contributions.

This Special Issue should engage readers interested in New World African history, the trans-Atlantic and international odysseys of African Americans during the slavery era—and the fates of their settlements in Canada and West Africa, and the deliberate construction of African culture in the various wildernesses of North America. Perhaps, too, it will stimulate further (re-)discoveries and reclamations of this culturally and historically significant African Diasporic population.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff of *The Dalhousie Review* for their generous assistance: Stephen

Brooke, Sarah Emsley, and Jennifer Lambert have contributed in various ways, both editorial and technical. Ronald Huebert has shared with me the task of shepherding of this project through its final phases. A proficient editor and a sensitive close-reader of texts, he saw in this project an occasion not only for the expansion of knowledge, but for instigating intellectual and social delight.

George Elliott Clarke



Unidentified woman in an Africville grocery store. Photographer: Ted Grant (1965). National Archives of Canada. Neg. no. PA170254.