

Lloyd W. Brown

## BENEATH THE NORTH STAR:

### THE CANADIAN IMAGE IN BLACK LITERATURE

IN HIS RECENT BIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM KING, the Anglo-Canadian abolitionist, Victor Ullman, issues a stirring invitation to oppressed Blacks south of the border. The contrast between Canada and the United States "still exists" as it did in the nineteenth century when King established Buxton Settlement in Ontario as a refuge for runaway slaves: "Perhaps it might not if somewhere south of the 'Line' there had been a Buxton Settlement to show the way. What then would William King advise today? *Look to the North Star.*"<sup>1</sup> The chauvinism which colours the Canadian view of American race relations is not limited to King's biographer. Ronald Sutherland, for example, also lends credence to a popular Canadian notion: the "Negro problem" has, historically, been little more than "a comfortable spectator sport" to Canadians, a peculiarly American crisis that has been engendered and intensified by the characteristically "hardcore ignorance and prejudice" south of the border. "In Canada, on the other hand, all has gone relatively well. There are not enough Negroes to create a real disturbance."<sup>2</sup>

But in spite of the familiar self-congratulations, this Canadian judgment implies a dubious criterion. For the racial idyll is posited in quantitative rather than qualitative terms. It appears that explanations for Black-White harmony in Canada must be sought in the size of the Black population rather than in the racial values of Canadian Whites as a whole. Hence, it turns out, things have gone "relatively well", not because there has been a proved absence of American-style "ignorance and prejudice", but because of a pacifying insufficiency of Blacks. All of this is not likely to reassure those American Blacks who once believed in the existence of a racial haven in the Northern States—before the

eye-opening consequences of Black migration from the Deep South—or those Africans and West Indians whose post-war influx into Great Britain shattered the “Mother Country’s” image of racial tolerance. And when a contemporary Afro-American writer such as Clarence Farmer refers to the mathematics of Canada’s reputation for racial harmony, his tone is far from optimistic or congratulatory: “there were no niggers in Canada, therefore no nigger problem.”<sup>3</sup>

Indeed the Canadian’s self-portraiture in the area of Black-White relationships does not coincide with his traditional image in the Black communities of North America and the West Indies. At best, that image has always been ambiguous. Since the nineteenth century, Black immigrants and writers have consistently distinguished between looking to the “North Star” and living beneath it. The runaway slave’s optimistic expectations were frequently tempered by unflattering insights into the racial realities of northern society—including Canada: “In breaking the bonds of formal oppression, fugitive slaves often found—as much recent scholarship has illustrated—that their presumed havens in the free soil states, or ‘under the lion’s paw’ in the Canadian provinces, held for them informal but no less real bonds of social and economic disability.”<sup>4</sup> On the one hand, the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* (March 8, 1843) accurately reflects the hopes, and experiences, of many American ex-slaves when it describes the findings of the Canadian Mission on Fugitive Slaves: Canada provided “security” for thousands “under British law”. But on the other hand, a Halifax monthly, *The Provincial*, is frankly expressive of another side of Canadian society. The January, 1853, issue supports the traditional view that the “colonial negro” is inferior to “the very lowest among the white population”: “We are unwilling even to occupy the same conveyance, and disdain to sit at the same table.”

Moreover, there were Blacks whose Canadian experiences fully document the *Provincial’s* prejudices. According to the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* (September 7, 1842), Peter Gallego, a Jamaican visitor to Ontario, was refused a table during a steamboat trip from Toronto to Hamilton, and on finally arriving at Hamilton he was denied a stage-coach seat to Brantford. Altogether, the personal experiences of Blacks in nineteenth-century Canada emphasize the ambiguity of the Canadian image among ex-slaves of the period. And in his study of Canadian attitudes towards Blacks in the mid-nineteenth century Lara Gara notes: “The Canadian government did not officially sanction discrimination against the newcomers, but Negroes on occasion were treated differently from the whites in churches, in steamboats, and in hotels.” With the Black population rising from eight thousand in 1850 to eleven thousand in 1860,

Canadians were beginning to face up to the arithmetical realities of their racial "harmony"; they now began to demand restrictive immigration measures "to check the influx of Negroes into the country". On the whole, the Canadian abhorrence of slavery was counterbalanced by a "patriotic revulsion" at having the country overrun by Blacks.<sup>5</sup>

The ambiguity of Canada's racial role in the nineteenth century is also confirmed by the writings of Blacks in general and ex-slaves in particular. In 1847, William W. Brown spoke for many fugitive slaves in his enthusiastic description of Canada as a symbol of universal freedom:

I thank God there is one spot in America upon which the slave can stand and be a man. No matter whether the claimant be a United States president or a doctor of divinity; no matter with what solemnities some American court may have pronounced him a slave; the moment he makes his escape from under the "stars and stripes," and sets foot upon the soil of CANADA, the altar and the god sink together in the dust; his soul walks abroad in his own majesty; his body swells beyond the measure of his chains, that burst from around him; and he stands redeemed, regenerated, and disinthralled, by the irresistible genius of universal emancipation.<sup>6</sup>

Brown's contemporary, Austin Steward, offers a similar endorsement, together with a pointed contrast between the British colony and the United States:

But should monarchical government of England call for the services of the colored man, freely would his heart's blood be poured out in her defence,—not because he has a particular preference for that form of government; not because he has ceased to love his native country,—but because she has acknowledged his manhood, and given him a home to defend. Beneath the floating banner of the British Lion, he finds inducements to lay down his life, if need be, in defence of his own broad acres, his family and fireside,—all of which were denied him under the Stars and Stripes of his fatherland. But a short time ago, the colored men of Cincinnati, Ohio, were promptly denied the privilege they had solicited, to join with other citizens, in celebrating the anniversary of WASHINGTON'S Birth Day!

This enthusiasm, however, does not blind Steward to the bigotry which the ex-slaves could and did encounter in their adopted country. He is distressed to learn, for example, that Whites had refused to sell lands to Blacks at the Wilberforce Settlement in Ontario.<sup>7</sup> And the contradictions which Steward exposes in Canada's racial relationships are documented in greater detail by Benjamin Drew's painstaking survey of Afro-Canadian communities, *The Refugee: A North-side View of Slavery* (1855). By interviewing hundreds

of refugees and Canadian-born Blacks, Drew presents a cross-section of Canadian reactions to the Negro presence, especially with regard to socio-economic opportunities and school or church integration. Drew finds that racial attitudes in Ontario communities, in which the survey was conducted, varied from one geographic location to another. Hence, despite the constitutional and legal safeguards for school integration, the prevailing prejudice of Whites in Hamilton deterred the town's two hundred and seventy-four Blacks from taking advantage of "the perfect equality of the English laws". Toronto, on the other hand, provided school privileges without racial distinctions. And on the negative side, once again, Chatham Whites made their fears and hostility fairly obvious to what was then one of the largest Black communities in the province.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, the Reverend Josiah Henson (Harriet Beecher Stowe's reputed model for the hero of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*) expresses those mingled reactions to Canada which are so typical of fugitive narrators in the nineteenth century. His initial response to his new home is reminiscent of William Brown's enthusiasm: "It was the 28th of October, 1830, in the morning, when my feet first touched the Canadian shore. I threw myself on the ground, rolled in the sand, seized handfuls of it and kissed them, and danced around." But life in Canada was also marred by the exploitation of naïve and ignorant refugees by unscrupulous landlords:

The mere delight the slaves took in their freedom, rendered them, at first, contented with a lot far inferior to that which they might have attained. Their ignorance often led them to make unprofitable bargains, and they would often hire wild land on short terms, and bind themselves to clear a certain number of acres. But by the time they were cleared and fitted for cultivation, and the lease was out, the landlords would take possession of the cleared land and raise a splendid crop on it.<sup>9</sup>

On the whole, then, such modern historians as Lara Gara and Robin Winks, and such nineteenth-century fugitives as William Brown and Austin Steward, agree that constitutional and legal guarantees of freedom are the real source of Canada's popularity among refugees from slavery. The runaway slave was attracted by, and very often did enjoy, the safeguards enshrined in British law and protected by "the lion's paw" of the British Empire. But, significantly, they distinguish between the *de jure* guarantees originating from the judicial traditions of the metropolitan power and the racial dynamics of the colonial society itself. Steward attributes the Black man's advantages in Canada to the colonial power, to the "British Lion;" but, as we have already noted, he is less than enthusiastic about the *de facto* relationships in Canadian

society. And Drew's narrative is just as pointed in suggesting contrasts between the uneven racial values of *Canadian* communities and the "perfect equality" of *English* law.

Conversely, whenever Blacks encountered racial intolerance in Canada, they sometimes ascribed it to the infectious example of the United States. The Jamaican visitor, Peter Gallego, emphatically declares that Canadian racism originates from south of the border:

American prejudice has arrived at such a pitch in this country that we cannot but avail ourselves of every possible means for its suppression. Public sentiment in Great Britain, so jealous of the rights of the coloured people in the West Indies, will not tolerate their oppression in this country by the Americans. . . . Will nothing convince this infatuated country that, when the liberties of the coloured population shall have fallen a victim to American barbarity, a similar fate will overtake them? (*Anti-Slavery Reporter*, September 7, 1842).

In short, Canada's role as a racial haven is rooted in the traditions and power of British law, while Canadian racism reflects the extent to which life under the "North Star" has been integrated with the social practices and cultural dynamics of the United States.

It is noteworthy, in fact, that the nineteenth-century Jamaican has anticipated one of the more familiar themes of the contemporary Canadian nationalist: that the autonomy of Canada's nationhood and the integrity of her life-styles have been endangered by cultural and socio-economic ties with the United States; that Canada has become, or is becoming, the "fifty-first state". Gallego has also anticipated modern Black writers who have in general been reluctant to accept the kind of Canada-United States antithesis postulated by Victor Ullman and Ronald Sutherland. For on the rare occasions on which Canada has been a topic of Black literature, the tendency among these writers has been to view her as an extension of the United States, not only in a racial context, but in the social experience as a whole.

Charles Wright, for example, represents Canada simply as one of middle-class America's symbolic aspirations. In *The Messenger* the northern neighbour is really little more than an oversized bit of United States countryside. And in this regard it is interchangeable with the suburbia to which "mummified Americans" retreat after the business of "making it toward Mr. Greenbacks and what it takes to be a 'smaht' New Yorker."<sup>10</sup> Hence Maxine, the self-assured middle-class girl who shares the opulent nightmare of "mummified Americans", breezily announces a vacation trip to the "country" as a tour of Virginia *and* Canada: "I'm goin' to the country", Maxine said. "Not with

those fresh air kids. I'm goin' to Virginia with my *grandmother*, and then we're goin' to Canada. You've never been to Canada, have you Charles?" He has not: "lots of places, but never to Canada" (p. 92). In effect, when Maxine looks to the "North Star" she sees, not the ideal antithesis but the extension of American society, the northern suburb of metropolitan America. And the novelist's alienation from this Canadian paradigm of the American experience is emphasized by Charles Stevenson's laconic reaction to Maxine's gushing announcement. For Maxine's Canadian expectations are part and parcel of the America that repels him: "I'm one of the boys, I'm as American as apple pie. But no. I cannot, simply cannot, don a mask and suck . . . that sweet, secure bitch, middle-class American life" (p. 55).

This identification of Canada with the United States also appears from a Caribbean perspective. Paule Marshall, an Afro-American novelist of Barbadian parentage, sees Canada as an integral part of the neo-imperial process which has reduced national independence in the Third World to a hollow mockery. Thus in her latest novel, *The Chosen Place the Timeless People*, she presents the island politician who has resigned himself to the role of granting lucrative concessions to both United States and Canadian interests, in the imaginary state of Bourne Island. But even Lyle Hutson, who has become a "realistic" politician after being an idealistic student radical, is sceptical about a campaign in North America to promote the island's tourist industry: "We shall be selling the island as the newest vacation-paradise in the Caribbean", he said in a voice from which some small measure of sarcasm and even rage was never missing, "emphasizing our blue, warm waters, white beaches, palm trees and happy natives, the usual sort of thing."<sup>11</sup> And he is even more explicit when he expounds, to a White American, on the racial, as well as the socio-economic, relationships inherent in the tourist industry:

"Bourne Island also offers its visitors the chance to—how do you say it up your way?—let their hair down. People feel somehow freer here, liberated from their inhibitions, especially those like yourself from North America. I've actually heard them say as much, these Americans and Canadians who flock to our shores on holiday. They love the place, mainly, I suspect, because it provides them with the opportunity, usually denied them at home, to test certain notions they hold about people of a different color, to satisfy certain curiosities about them in an atmosphere that is both tolerant and permissive. . . .

"They are, of course, these notions they hold about people other than themselves, only notions," he said. "Fantasies, myths, old wives' tales. But they've been with them so long, my dear Mrs. Amron; they've achieved such a hold on the imagination, they've become almost real" (p. 421).

Altogether then, the Black writer's identification of Canadian society with American values provides the basis for the negative aspects of Canada's racial image. In the eyes of Paule Marshall's Lyle Hutson, the Canadian is the American's cultural ego, imitating his economic role in the non-White world, and sharing equally in all the psycho-sexual fantasies of White racism. And, conversely, the British heritage which once guaranteed Canada the reputation of being a haven for the oppressed is now being viewed as a sign of guilt. Hence in Clarence Farmer's *Soul on Fire* a Canadian is reminded of the British past before he is murdered in a Harlem alley: "You're a Canadian, Bill, so that means you're sort of British. Where's that famous British spirit, Bill? The spirit that built the Empire, Bill. The British Empire, Bill. You know—all those little brown and black bastards in Africa and India" (p. 22).

To Farmer's Black hero, the murdered Canadian (his real name is Raymond Sears from Rumford, Ontario) is as much an accomplice to the traditions of Western racism as are American society and British imperialism. And those psycho-sexual fantasies which link the white American and the Canadian in Paule Marshall's fiction are inescapable in *Soul On Fire*. For Sears meets his death in Harlem in the pursuit of that mythic black sexuality which he seeks in the prostitutes of the Black ghetto: he is castrated by a self-acknowledged lunatic who attributes his own insanity to the depraved sexuality of White racism: "They castrated and burned your father and treated you . . . as less than an animal, and then they were surprised when you went insane. There was no doubt in my mind that I was insane. There was no doubt, simply a sense of *rightness*, as if my insanity were logical and natural" (p. 27). In effect Farmer's persona embodies an intensely ironic kind of poetic justice that is meted out to Americans and Canadians alike.

But, as in the nineteenth century, Canada's image in modern Black writing is not entirely negative. The "North Star" has still retained the positive connotations of a haven, and this is particularly true of West Indian literature, which has replaced the American runaway slave of the nineteenth century with Black refugees from the poverty of the twentieth-century Caribbean. Canada's economic opportunities, rather than its heritage of "English law", is the real magnet for a new, post-war breed of Black immigrants described in West Indian literature—in Eric Roach's Trinidadian play, *Belle Fanto* (1967), in Garth St. Omer's *A Room on the Hill* (St. Lucia, 1968), or, best known to Canadian readers, in the novels of Austin Clarke (Barbados).

Clarke, who immigrated to Canada in the mid-1950s, projects in his fiction a typically ambiguous image of his adopted country. In his first novel,

*The Survivors of the Crossing* (1964), Canada symbolizes qualities of individual accomplishment and excellence which are so inaccessible to the poverty-ridden peasantry of the Caribbean. When Jackson emigrates from Barbados to Toronto his letters to the island paint an idyll of material progress and human dignity: "You don't have to tip your hat to the boss. You and the boss calls one another by their first names. Canada is a real first-class place! . . . I sure, sure that the word Canada means something like progressiveness!"<sup>12</sup> Jackson's letter opens up hopes and expectations among his former friends on the Barbadian sugar-plantations. It issues a call for the manhood and "progress" symbolized by Canada: "You boys down there on the plantation should be treated in that manner. As men. Progressive" (p. 13). And this challenge becomes the rallying-cry for Rufus, the ineffective revolutionary who leads an abortive rebellion against the plantations and the island's White rulers.

This first novel therefore projects Canada as the symbol of freedom to the disadvantaged of twentieth-century Barbados, no less than did the "North Star" to the slaves on America's nineteenth-century plantations. But in Clarke's third novel, *The Meeting Point* (1967), Barbadian immigrants in Canada react more ambivalently towards their new country. In the first place, Canada is the promised land which holds out salvation from the kind of deprivation that Bernice Leach, the heroine, remembers in Barbados:

She remembered the small, one-room leaking house; and the flattened skillets that once contained butter from Australia (which butter neither she nor Mammy could afford to eat) which Mammy nailed on the roof as shingles to keep out the sun and the rain and the wind; this house—like many others of the fifty in the village, lodged on loose coral stones—was their mansion, their castle which hid their penury from the eyes of the other poor villagers. The worst thing she remembered about Barbados, and home and the village, was the closet which always had cockroaches infesting and infecting it; with its oval hole in the middle of the seat like the hole in a coffin."<sup>13</sup>

And this scatological vision of West Indian poverty is offset by Canadian affluence. The "British lion", formerly the runaway slaves' symbol for Canadian justice, is cherished by Bernice as an emblem of the security provided by a chequing account in the Royal Bank of Canada: "Something about the name, and the impressively printed *lion*, yeah, the British lion! and her name—her own name!—on her own cheques (a prestige she could never have hoped to attain in Barbados, in her class) drew her, like a magnet, to put her money into the safe-keeping of this bank" (p. 96).

But, simultaneously, Canada is an alien land with a frigid aspect which



non-Whites like Bernice associate with racial hostility. This general coldness, and the insensitivity of Bernice's employers, are symbolized by the legendary rigours of the Canadian winter: "Silently, she grew to hate Mrs. Burrmann even more than she hated winter and the snow. To her, Mrs. Burrmann not only symbolized the snow; she symbolized also, the uneasiness and inconvenience of the snow. Her loneliness grew, too; and so did her hatred of Mrs. Burrmann: deeper and deeper, the same way as December, January and February piled snow on the ground" (p. 7). Satisfaction with Canada co-exists with revulsion: "I happy as hell in Canada", she once told Dots; and Dots had to wonder whether it was the same person who had said, the week before, "Canada, Mississippi, Alabama, South Africa, God they is the same thing!" (p. 95).

This deep-seated ambivalence accounts for the apparent contradictions in the attitude that Canada arouses among Bernice and her fellows. For in Bernice's view Canada is an ambiguous entity—represented by the affluence of the Royal Bank and by the racist traditions of "closed" housing practices: "That [a large bank account] is what Canada have done for me. This is my testimony to this place, called Canada. And Lord, I am glad as hell that I come here, that I is a Canadian.' But this did not prevent Bernice and Dots from lambasting Canada that very week, when they saw a story in the newspapers that a certain West Indian nurse couldn't get an apartment on Bathurst Street, to rent, because she wasn't white' " (p. 97).

Bernice's short-lived assumption of a Canadian identity is crucial to an understanding of the psychological functions of Canada as a symbol in Clarke's novel. For this image is not only being projected in the external conflicts of socio-economic opportunity versus deprivation, or justice versus prejudice. It also dramatizes the internal clashes which are inherent in the identity crises of the current Black Revolution. In effect, the ambivalence which Canada's ambiguous image inspires among Blacks not only emphasizes the contradictions of the Canadian's racial values, but also reveals the emotional complexities of the Black man's nascent self-awareness—the intensifying struggle between the old self-hatred and the new Black pride. For, given the racist traditions which Clarke (like his nineteenth-century predecessors) attributes to Canadian society, then it follows that a total or uncritical identification with that society implies some degree of racial or cultural self-denial. And an intense revulsion at the white exclusiveness of his adopted country is linked to the ethos and dynamism of the Black Revolution.

To be more precise, the snow-white landscape which Bernice sometimes

sees as the symbol of Canadian negrophobia becomes, on other occasions, the reflection of her own white, anti-black impulses. When she abandons the Toronto Negro Baptist Church in favour of a predominantly white Unitarian Congregation, "She chopped an inch off the hemline of her dresses; stopped wearing nylon stockings with seams and began stepping out into the pearly-white, white virginity of winter and broad-minded liberal Christianity, clickitty-clacketty, in a pair of Italian quarter-heels" (p. 22). On the other hand, Bernice's moments of anti-Canadian resentment take the form of readings from the Black Muslim newspaper, *Muhammad Speaks*. Or her "black" sensibilities may be repelled by the drunken mouthings of "We Shall Overcome" and other Negro Spirituals at Mrs. Burrmann's parties (p. 9).

Similarly, Henry White, another Barbadian in Toronto, is caught between black awareness and white aspirations, and the struggle is projected through his reactions to the ambiguous Canadian environment. On some occasions he is the optimistic immigrant to a land of promise. And his socio-economic failures intensify a desire to "make it"—a desire which gives rise to his fantasies about breaking into the exclusive environs of white upper-class Toronto, complete with the imaginary status symbols of a large bank balance and real-estate holdings in the Rosedale district. But at other times, Henry is the Black militant whose alienation from Canadian society expresses itself in terms of sexual "revenge" against white women:

"I'm thinking of all those black people lynched and killed, all those black cats murdered and slain, all those black chicks raped and dehumanized, demoralized, de-whatever-the-hell-you-want-to-call-it, and dig! man, I'm *driving* and *driving*, baby. It was driving, driving, driving. Hell broke loose, baby. I'm thinking of going down to the Civil Service Commission on St. Clair, and the Man there telling me, No jobs, buddy; so you dig? Down at the Unemployment Insurance Commission and the Man there telling me there ain't no jobs. Down at Eatons during one Christmas rush period, and the Man there telling me, there ain't no jobs. I'm thinking of the Man, you dig? The Man. The Man. The Man. No jobs. No jobs. No jobs. . . . You think that chick was hip to what I was thinking of the Man? Goddamn, baby, she was thinking I *was loving her*. But, man, I was *re-paying*! I was re-paying *her* for what her brothers do to *my* sister, you dig?" (p. 199).

Of course, despite the sincerity of the moment, Henry's militant stance is no more stable than his pro-White leanings. But it is significant that, whenever they do rebel, both Bernice and himself espouse the cause of black pride and self-determination by associating themselves with the Black American:

Bernice's dog-eared copies of *Muhammad Speaks* are complemented by Henry's imitation of "hip" phrases from the Afro-American life-style, and by his identification with the victims of racial violence in America. And at the same time they view Canada as a guilty accomplice: Bernice, as we have already seen, equates Canada with Mississippi and Alabama—albeit momentarily—and Henry's psycho-sexual rages recognize no distinction between the Canadian Civil Service Commission and the violence of an American lynch-mob. Altogether, Austin Clarke has extended the time-honoured equation of American and Canadian racism: Canada's Afro-West Indians and America's Blacks are linked by a community of interests and racial injustices. Hence when Bernice tries, typically, to reverse her earlier comparison of Canada and the Deep South, and to distinguish between "West Indians" and "American Negroes", she is brusquely rebutted by her sister Estelle, a Black Muslim sympathizer (pp. 220-221). In effect, Clarke's image of Canada does postulate an antithesis. However, unlike the cultural distinctions which some Canadians have tried to draw, the contrast here is not one between Canada and America as such, but between the thrusting turbulence of the new Black awareness on the one hand, and, on the other hand, a racist tradition attributed equally to Canada and America.

On the whole, therefore, both America's Clarence Farmer and Barbados' Austin Clarke demonstrate the impact of the new militant consciousness on the Canadian image in Black literature. It is increasingly clear, for example, that the contemporary Black writer is reluctant to project that image in the traditional context of a moral ambiguity. Hence while the positive values of Canadian society are presented as *moral* qualities in Clarke's first novel, they are seen in *Meeting Point* simply as *material* advantages which are more than offset by the racial and moral inequities encountered by the West Indian immigrant. And in Clarence Farmer's corrosive satire, Raymond Sears, the "ofay Canadian" who goes slumming in Harlem's brothels, projects an unequivocal image of Canada as the extension of White America. So that when they are looked at more closely, the ambiguities of the modern Canadian image turn out to be more apparent than real.

Accordingly, when he looks to the "North Star", the contemporary Black writer no longer sees the freedom and human dignity which attracted century Canada. On the contrary, the old ambivalence has increasingly been runaway slaves and compensated for the racial shortcomings of nineteenth-century Canada replaced by unrelieved hostility—a transition that is very well illustrated by the progression of viewpoint from Clarke's *Survivors of the Crossing* to *Meeting Point*. The new mood is marked by the conviction that Canada's value

systems and culture as a whole—and not merely localized practices—are geared to promote political injustice and racial intolerance. And the reversal of perspectives which this modern image implies is emphasized by a new and rather striking development in Black letters: the Afro-American now inspects Canadian society in order to discover an example of oppression which he can represent as the paradigm of his own experience. The Black Muslim, for example, easily identifies with the Canadian Indian whom he regards as the victim of a process which is indistinguishable from American prejudice. Thus *Muhammad Speaks* (March 27, 1970) compares the Indian student in Canada with his Afro-American counterpart: "As in the minority nationality movements in the United States, in Canada the students, right now, are the segment of the community most frequently heard from." And the newspaper is very much interested in such groups as the Native Alliance for Red Power, or Wodjitiwin in Kenora, Ontario, which emphasize Muslim-style self-help and cultural autonomy in preference to integration: "Armed with racial pride and cherished values, Canadian Indians don't want to go to white men's schools and come out equipped to handle neither one world nor the other. They want to maintain their own identity and develop their own community."

Neither is it very easy to dismiss this kind of report as merely another example of Black Muslim "extremism". For, first, the Black artist is beginning to identify *his* characters with "oppressed" Canadians as a whole, and not only with non-White Canadians. Thus in his recent novel on a future Black rebellion in the United States, the Black Puerto Rican, Hank Lopez, strongly implies parallels between the Afro-American Revolution and French-Canadian separatism. The plot to "capture" and isolate Manhattan island therefore receives a boost when an anonymous donor in Montreal sends the revolutionaries supplies with money and weapons through their Quebec agent, Laroux.<sup>14</sup> This is the extent of Lopez's Canadian references, but for an American readership it is enough: taken together, the French surname of the agent and the ethnic implications of Montreal as a "French" city conjure up a French-Canadian presence which is being presented as a northern counterpart of Black Separatism in the United States.

This parallel between the Black American and Canadian minorities has also been drawn by a writer who is neither Black nor North American. When Albert Memmi, a Tunisian Jew, published his study of colonization ten years ago, he discovered that the work appealed to a mixed, but enlightening, bag of ethnic groups: "It was clear that the book would be utilized by well-defined colonized people—Algerians, Moroccans, African Negroes. But other peoples,

subjugated in other ways—certain South Americans, Japanese and American Negroes—interpreted and used the book. The most recent to find a similarity to their own form of alienation have been the French Canadians."<sup>15</sup> The contemporary opponents of oppression, and their sympathizers, do continue to look to the "North Star", indeed; but, unlike their nineteenth-century forerunners, they look, not in hope, but in anger.

## NOTES

1. Victor Ullman, *Look to the North Star: A Life of William King* (Boston, 1969), p. 327.
2. Ronald Sutherland, "The Body-Odour of Race", *Canadian Literature*, No. 37 (September 1968), p. 46.
3. Clarence Farmer, *Soul on Fire* (New York, 1969), p. 27.
4. Robin W. Winks, *Four Fugitive Slave Narratives* (Reading, Mass., 1969), p. v.
5. Lara Gara, *The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad* (Lexington, Ky., 1961), pp. 65-66.
6. *The Narrative of William W. Brown a Fugitive Slave*, introd. Lara Gara (Reading, Mass., 1969), p. 57.
7. Austin Steward, *Twenty-two Years a Slave and Forty Years a Freeman*, introd. Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease (Reading, Mass., 1969), pp. 194-195. Originally published in 1857.
8. Benjamin Drew, *The Refugee: A North-side View of Slavery*, introd. Tilden Edelstein (Reading, Mass., 1969), pp. 82, 65, 164.
9. *An Autobiography of the Reverend Josiah Henson*, introd. Robin W. Winks (Reading, Mass., 1969), pp. 69-70, 89.
10. Charles Wright, *The Messenger* (New York, 1963), pp. 41, 16.
11. Paule Marshall, *The Chosen Place The Timeless People* (New York, 1969), p. 208.
12. Austin C. Clarke, *The Survivors of the Crossing* (Toronto, 1964), p. 10.
13. *The Meeting Point* (Toronto, 1967), pp. 31-32.
14. Hank Lopez, *Afro-6* (New York, 1969), p. 70.
15. Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, trans. Howard Greenfeld (Boston, 1967), p. xi. Originally published as *Portrait du Colonisé précédé du Portrait du Colonisateur* (1957).