

BOOK REVIEW

The Theatre Scene

What do Helen Creighton, Al Capone, Judy Garland and Little Lord Fauntleroy have in common? There are no prizes for the first correct answer, as I hope readers of this column will know enough about Maritime theatre to recognize straight away the subjects of new musical plays.

Three of them are Maritime originals. The odd man out is *Big Al*, though Jack Sheriff thinks that the Kipawo Showboat Company's Christmas presentation of a British musical about the Chicago gangster was a North American premiere. Mount Saint Vincent University is hoping to tour Nova Scotia this summer with its biographical study of Dr. Creighton, *The Collector*. This entertainment incorporates much of the province's traditional music and folklore, to which she has devoted a lifetime's research. The Fauntleroy story is to be adapted as a musical for this year's Charlottetown Festival by Mavor Moore and Johnny Burke, following similar treatments of unlikely subjects in past years; but after *Oliver*, *Bar Mitzvah Boy* and the forthcoming *Barnardo* in London there seems to be a growing tradition for centering musicals around small boys.

Sharon Timmins' personal success as *Judy* ushered in a new enterprise for Halifax, a supper theatre at the Holiday Inn called "Stages". Initiated by Pop Productions, the brain child of Paul Ledoux and Ferne Downey, this first show has been followed by Sandy Moore's *Back to Berlin*, and Chris Heide's *Pogie* with music by Al MacDonald and again starring Sharon Timmins.

Chris Heide is making quite a name for himself now with his work for the Playwright's Co-op and a number of radio plays to his credit. Though he has produced better scripts than *Dockside*, a short play seen recently on C.B.C. television, I was sorry that the director could not do more justice to it than to turn it into a lifeless lump; he somehow contrived to make seasoned Neptune players look like raw amateurs. Another radio dramatist, Michael Hartley-Robinson, has had a play, *Death at Pier 20*, presented on a German radio network.

Other local performers are also winning success outside the Maritimes. Offers to present *Judy* have come from various parts of Canada and the States, including the Burt Reynolds Dinner Theatre in Jupiter, Florida. Truro's John Gray has met similar interest with *Billy Bishop Goes to War* and *18 Wheels*. Another Truro native, Lenore Zann, had a personal triumph in *Hey Marilyn* at the Citadel Theatre, Edmonton. Joan Orenstein will be playing *Mother Courage* at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. David Renton, apparently passed over at Neptune, will be at the Shaw Festival, Niagara-on-the-Lake, this summer. And the success which gives me most personal pleasure is Sten Hornborg's nine-month contract at the Stratford Festival Theatre. Sten gave two stunning performances in plays I directed for Halifax Independent Theatre—Alfred Allmers in Ibsen's *Little Eyolf* and Walter in Peter Shaffer's *Five Finger Exercise*. Much as we shall miss him locally I am sure that all who know the quality of Sten's acting will be delighted at the well earned opportunity to work with players of the calibre of Peter Ustinov, Maggie Smith and Brian Bedford.

Before going to Neptune, Sten learned much of his craft from Evelyn Garbary at Wolfville's Mermaid Theatre. Last year Evelyn received the Phi Beta Fraternity award, given annually to a distinguished foreign visitor at the Children's Theatre Association of America Convention. Mermaid performed *The Wabenaki* in New York, then toured N.S. in the fall with *The Navigator*, a production using puppets and miming which

depicted the 6th century voyages to the Atlantic coast by Brendan of Ireland. The much-toured dramatic Micmac legend *The Trickster* played in Syracuse, New York, in March and has been chosen as a Canadian entry to the World Puppetry Festival in Washington, D.C. in June.

Community theatre continues to thrive in Nova Scotia and some of its best work will be seen at Neptune Theatre in June at the N.S. Drama League's Theatre Festival. The League has now appointed Ted Bairstow as Resource Co-ordinator to travel the province conducting workshops and giving advice to community groups. One of the most vigorous and enterprising companies is the Winds of Change at Liverpool, whose new production of *Jesus Christ Superstar* is their sixth within a few months. Other active groups include the Bridgetown Players, one of whose leading performers, John Stevens, is in H.I.T.'s thriller *Something to Hide* in April; the Yarmouth Performing Arts Group, which mounted *Guys and Dolls* in the recently opened Yarmouth Arts Regional Centre; and the Park View Players of Bridgewater, who bring their production of *The Miracle Worker* to the Dunn Theatre at Dalhousie Arts Centre in April.

Some Halifax groups have run into harder times. Little has been heard of Seaweed Theatre of Theatre Arts Guild since they staged children's plays at Christmas. The Pond Theatre did not mount Flo Trillo's own production of her new play *Among his Peers*, and it is housing a charity performance of *Under Milk Wood*, featuring Jeremy Akerman and some S.M.U. Dramatic Society Players. The Bit Players at Theatre 1707 have been struggling against debt to keep open, but have managed a few small-scale productions.

John Neville continues to decimate Neptune's debt with some astute management and considerable concession to popular appeal. Both *18 Wheels* and *Butterflies Are Free* are something of a comedown for touring plays after *Othello*, though somewhat easier to transport. In the Fall '78 edition of *Performing Arts in Canada* Keith Garebian calls Gray's musical "shallow, crass and vulgar"; I must

confess I concur, though I don't mind it being vulgar if it's genuine theatre; to me it belongs either at the Metro Centre with more amplification or at Stages with less, but not at Neptune. Denise Coffey's freewheeling version of *The Taming of the Shrew* was vulgar too, but fortunately Shakespeare won through; it was at its best when the director managed to stop tampering with the text, as in the wooing of Katherine by Petruchio. But I ended in agreement with a member of the audience who quipped that it was "the shaming of the true Shakespeare".

The highlights of the season for me were the ingenious, though ultimately shallow farcical manoeuvring of Alan Ayckbourn, *How the Other Half Loves*, and especially the power and subtlety of Ibsen in *The Master Builder*, despite Tony Randall's unnecessary underlining of scarcely intended sexual innuendo for comic effect. I thought the season succeeded best in several notable performances, especially of Ann Casson (looking incredibly like her mother, Sybil Thorndike) as Ibsen's Aline Solness; and of Eric House (a welcome return) and Miriam Newhouse in splendid comic form in the Ayckbourn. It was good too, to see some dependable local performers—Joan Gregson, Nicola Lipman, Joseph Rutten, Bob Walsh, etc.—given good opportunities and younger players such as Barrie Dunn and Ian Deakin, though not always well cast, a chance to develop their techniques. The lunch-time theatre, devoted to comic-folksy-Irish (O'Casey, Lady Gregory) or English-absurdist-sinister (Orton, Pinter), continued its success of last year.

The new season promises well, and let us hope that the projected new combined theatre and art gallery on the waterfront will be more than a pipe-dream; it could help to put Halifax aside other cities in artistic achievement, if governments can be persuaded. Branco Miserit's enterprise in launching an International Festival this summer is a step in the right direction.

Richard Perkyns
Halifax

An Elitist Affair

Kenneth G. Pryke, *Nova Scotia and Confederation, 1864-1874*, Canadian studies in history and government; 15, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1979, 240 pages, cloth, \$17.50.

In his classic study, *The Government of Nova Scotia*, J. Murray Beck argues that the political history of the province divides into three "distinct phases", shaped by: the granting of representative government in 1758; the achievement of responsible government in 1848; and the coming of Confederation in 1867. The last and possibly most controversial of these events, is examined by Ken Pryke in this book-length version of a study originally prepared as a doctoral dissertation for Duke University in 1963. The portrait of Nova Scotians which emerges from Pryke's work is one that is less than flattering. Consider, for example, the following extract from the diary of a campaign worker, charged with soliciting votes in Yarmouth County during the federal election of 1874. The electorate, he complained, were:

Puritanical, hypocritical, factious democrats who have no God but the Dollar, no religion but self, no politics but personal aggrandizement. I filled my sleigh

with small handy bottles of whiskey—conveniently flat flasks, and surrounded myself with twenty old men of the W.A.R. [Windsor Annapolis Railway]. I do not condescend to talk to the people about any question of morality or politics. I went sharply for the dollars and gave the whiskey. There was two million dollars to spend on this railway, and through this country if Frank [Killam] was elected. Nothing if he was not . . . The low hypocritical humbugs, how I hated them all.

Such evidence tends to confirm one Ontario politician's complaint that Nova Scotia was a "boodle colony", where anything could be accomplished, provided one had a pork barrel of a size sufficient for local appetites.

In fairness to Pryke, it must be said that his goal is not the accumulation of crass detail but rather, presentation of an overview of the "momentous" decade, during which Nova Scotia's "political fabric" was "torn apart" and its political institutions "reshaped". The initial chapters, which deal with events up to 1867,

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Crisis Without Craft

Novena to St. Jude Thaddeus by M. Lakshmi Gill, Fredericton: Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1979, 102 pages, paper, \$5.00.

M. Lakshmi Gill's volume is her fifth book and it reads more like a diary of misery than a coherent collection of poems. Her theme, an obsessive one, is the horror and the boredom of life as lived by a sensitive intellectual in the profoundly unpoetic Province of New Brunswick. We quickly gather that she has come from somewhere else (San Francisco, according to "Points of Reference") and that she hates most things here. Everything she looks at fills her with dread, from the salt marshes to an unusually dead and smelly skunk that she drives over with her car: "but the smell followed/me all the way home". Her contempt for her locus expands outward to include all of Canada and finally, I think, the planet itself. The book's title hints at its structure: the nearly eighty poems are packaged as a nine-day novena from purgatory, a tortured plea to the saint of desperate causes, seeking relief in the midst of her mental crisis, her culture shock.

Formally, the poems are unexciting. Columns of prose are passed off as free verse. Lazy grammar is disguised as complex syntax, and there are just enough concrete poems cleverly typed up to indicate that the poet knows what's in and what's out. These gimmicks are given a further air of sophistication by the inclusion of just enough learned allusions to keep the reader at bay, contemplating his dumbness with dismay. The craft of these poems, in other words, is characteristic of the work of many second-rate contemporary poets. It is cryptic-allusive and lazy; most of the poet's energy is spent on theme.

The sensibility of the poet is Confessional. Throughout, we hear fashionable echoes of Plath, Sexton, Lowell, and Berryman. The tones are strident, melodramatic. Imagery—when present at all—is ugly and often nauseous, and the themes are usually variations on what it's like to feel bad. Predictably, there are many poems about the madness that shudders just on the edge of domestic life. In "Night Watch", for example, the speaker says:

I suspend my dreams
for the vision of Evelyn
standing by my bed
in the dark awakened
by her nightmare . . .
I listen to the footfalls
in the hallway of Karam
running from horror . . .
and on nights when all is well
I sleep with one eye open.

This sense of an edgy mind trapped in bad grammar and cliché images goes on and on in the volume until it finally begins to have a cumulative comic effect, one that I'm sure wasn't intended. In "Honour Roll" she says that she is "daily/grateful" for her children. They are all she has in "the hole/of our life here/in Sackville". There are hundreds of lines like this, lines which mistake theatrical complaining for poetic inspiration.

There are many poems on the awfulness of the universe, the way it seems to fail us in a big way. But so much of the hatred in this collection is directed at New Brunswick and at Canada that it is hard to get the logic of that feeling figured out. In "Poet" we are told that "all things roll into/the black hole of the universe" but we struggle to find out whether that's because New Brunswick stinks or because the universe does. Maybe things cosmic look better from San Francisco. I don't know. On the same point, while "Earth, Water, Air, Fire", has a somewhat global title, it sounds again like many of the poems about New Brunswick:

You will want
to burn your body
in this excruciating
madness of violent
confinement.

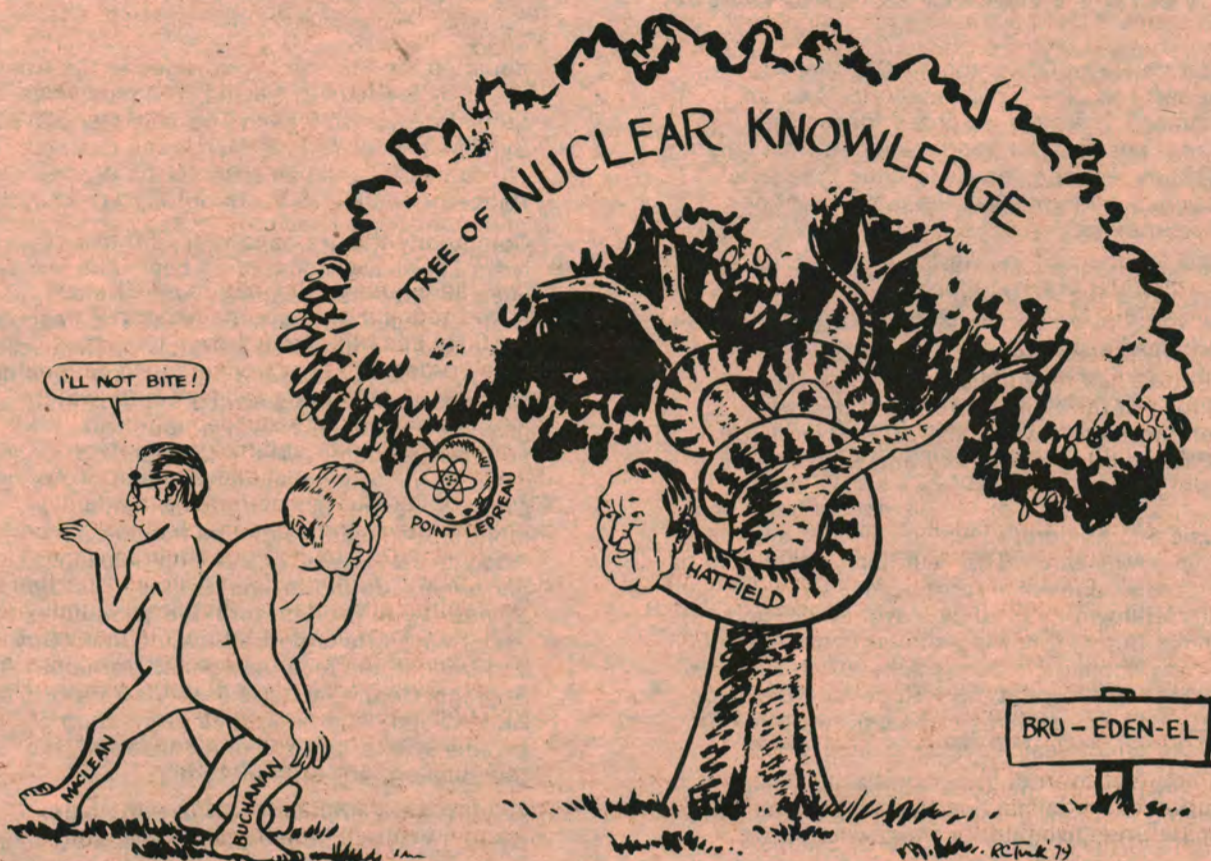
Analogously, we are told in "Cellmates" that "We wait for the end/with passionless agony". The language is bloodless too. Robert Lowell

Prince Edward Island Cartoons By Tuck

When the Maritime Premiers met at Brudenell, P.E.I. in 1979, Premier Hatfield of New Brunswick had to face a P.E.I. premier recently elected on an anti-nuclear platform. Cartoonist Robert C. Tuck observed the occasion by recording his response to Hatfield's Lepreau sales pitch.

The cartoon reproduced here and 115 others are

from a book distributed from Charlottetown—177 Euston Street, C1A 1W7—at \$5.95. This paper-bound item—which includes an anti-metric cartoon—measures 21.5 by 28.0 cm. The contents are a selection of Tuck cartoons which appeared in Island newspapers from 1976 through 1979.



said all of this much better with; "We are a lot of wild/spiders crying together,/but without tears" (he was also much better with skunks). Gill is writing in that fashionable tradition of the worst that's been thought and said, but there is no sense of logic to her misery and no real poetry in her pain.

In the last seventeen pages, the poetry takes off on an obscurely mystical flight through time and space. "Travel the speed of light/You vanish at eyeblink", she says with Einsteinian cleverness. But the meaning of the journey is kept private; there is wax paper over the pages. It is hard for the reader to know what the journey accomplishes. It all looks like an imaginative shot through one of those scientific-allusive black holes, perhaps into that region where all things happen at once. We seem to travel through one of them and end up outside—somewhere else on the outside of ourselves. "Beginning is gone, end is done", she says. And then we are offered this chilling thought:

So the seer has said:
The world is an illusion
Extend the logic:
We are dead.

In spite of that somewhat manic epiphany, the poet seems to have found a reconciling meaning in her flight—a sense of freedom maybe, a realization that if she doesn't like it here she can always travel in her mind the way Vonnegut's Billy Pilgrim so often did (he felt bad too, but for more obvious reasons). Whatever the secret beneath the waxpaper, Gill is satisfied with it, because in her final poem she can say to her daughter that "now can we discuss it". The poet's crisis is over.

On the other hand, the reader is left wondering what to do with all of these poorly crafted bad thoughts about Canada and the Canadians, especially the New Brunswick of the species. It depends, I suppose, on who you are and why you are here. But for those who agree with the vision of contempt that these poems embody, there is always the clearer way out that is suggested in a poem which lies near the actual and emotional center of this volume. Its title is "Out of Canada" and it is worth quoting in full:

It assaults me at every turn:
my eyes are offended
by what they see—the bright
sunlight on the snow
icy shafts that pierce straight
to my head . . .

I cannot die here, on the streets
of Moncton, I tell myself over and over—
people wouldn't know where
to send my body.

I cannot die here in this country
where would I be buried? Not like poet
John who drank himself to death, lying
there
in Sackville, all the way from Manchester.
Where else could they send him? I can still
see his bright eyes piercing me, how happy
he was for discovering ghazal—it didn't
save him.

There are no shields against this land
for poets like us.
But I will not go under.
I will sit at the foothills of the Himalayas
and leave hard Canada for the hardy
Canadians.

Here is both the malady and the most obvious solution to it, though I doubt that this kind of weary sophistication can survive anywhere for long. In the meantime, the rest of us will have to be content with staying here—chewing on our fiddleheads and moose bones—and wondering what we've done wrong.

It's a sad comment on the poet that the self-regard and the self-pity is so immense, the craft of the art so slight. Some kind of wound is definitely there, but the bow is as fragile as the ego. Sadder still, is the fact that this book of artless madness is published with the assistance of the New Brunswick Department of Youth, Recreation, and Cultural Resources—a fact that circles back into the poet's evidence for a case against us. It shows in the end how servile and troglodytic we really are. Not only does Canada attract failure and provide for it (to borrow a locution of Atwood's), but sometimes we mistake it for genius and subsidize it with grants. If Gill's volume is at all valuable, it is because of the painful way it brings that truth home to yell at us.

Terry Whalen
Halifax

Tony and the Irish

The Irish in Cape Breton, by A.A. MacKenzie, Formac Publishing Company Ltd., Antigonish, N.S., 1979, 129 pages, paper, \$5.95.

Most ethnic groups settling in Cape Breton have come *en masse*. In some cases, like the Polish and Ukrainians, they arrived over a relatively brief period of time; for others, particularly the Scots, a large immigration lasted for decades. The Irish are an exception. They have straggled onto the Island in small numbers for over two centuries. This has made Tony MacKenzie's history, *The Irish in Cape Breton*, all the more difficult to compile. First, traditions do not endure well among a relatively scattered population, particularly in Cape Breton where the feeling of "national consciousness", as Professor MacKenzie puts it, is so very strong. To this problem we must add a distressing lack of documentation, since most Cape Breton Irish were illiterate or close to it when they arrived.

Faced with these problems, Professor MacKenzie had relied heavily on the oral traditions of the Cape Breton Irish. He has woven these stories into the general fabric of the book to bring immediacy and to underline the struggles of these people.

And there were difficulties. Professor MacKenzie paints a dark picture of nineteenth century Cape Breton as "poor, underdeveloped, primitive and isolated" (p. 15). This makes us wonder why the Irish came to the Island at all. A large number of Irish immigrants came to the Island as a relatively close stopping-off place on their way to the "Boston States". Relatively few came during the potato famine of the 1840s.

With no great overriding reason for the Irish migration to the Island, MacKenzie looks at the groups of Irish living in the areas where they

are concentrated; those in the industrial area who came to work in the coal mines, those in North Victoria County, many of whom came to Cape Breton directly from Newfoundland and many of whom are fishermen, the Irish in Richmond County like the Kavanaghs who can trace their roots back to the fall of Louisbourg, or the Irish of Inverness County who gave rise to the illustrious Coady, Tompkins, Miller and McKeen families.

The varied settlements of the Irish gave them an interesting cultural diversity as they adapted to living among the Scots or French and practised varied occupations. Mr. MacKenzie brings out these differences with great clarity, pointing out where the culture has survived or sadly, in the case of traditional beliefs, has died.

In writing a book of this nature, MacKenzie has had to trace much of the history of the island. He does this in just over 100 pages. This is a tall order, and errors occur, such as locating the Island 5° of latitude too far south (which some would welcome), misnaming one Lieutenant-Governor and making another (Macarmick) an Irishman (MacArmick). More serious perhaps is the statement that land grants on the Island, suspended in 1790, were allowed in 1807. This did not occur in Cape Breton, and this indeed helps account for the Island's difficulties before they were actually re-established in 1871. Less serious is blaming the famous slaughter of the moose at Meat Cove on the Newfoundlanders when it was Yankees who were responsible, and spelling and bibliographical errors which could have been eliminated by more careful editing.

In his Preface, Mr. MacKenzie says he fears academic wrath in grouping all explanatory

notes at the end of the work, where they are identified by page and line rather than by footnote numbers. He feared rightly. With very little extra work readers would be saved flipping back and forth for explanatory notes, sometimes in vain. It seems to me that a book like this which will hopefully attract many academic readers, should follow the accepted and helpful standards of scholarship.

The vast period covered by the book in a short space hardly allows the author to give a comprehensive view of the background of Cape Breton life over the centuries. On the other hand, Mr. MacKenzie shines in his descriptions of the social patterns and lifestyles of the Island's Irish. His well-known ability to sum up a situation with a salty story is perfectly displayed in these chapters. Many of the stories sum up situations that other writers would labour for pages to expound.

Genealogists will find the book helpful. Though MacKenzie does not resort to listing family histories after the fashion of J.L. MacDougall in his *History of Inverness County*, he does give the names of many Irish families who first settled in several areas of the Island. More importantly, he traces the surprising contributions of this relatively small group of families to the political, economic and social life not only of Cape Breton, but to that of Canada.

Tony MacKenzie's book is a great step forward in the increasing study of the history of Cape Breton. He uses sources, in many cases, only recently printed and weaves this into a fascinating story which is, to date, the best account of any Cape Breton ethnic group.

Robert Morgan
Sydney

"Take One", Carl!

Everywhere I've Been by Carl Sentner, Square Deal Publications, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, 150 pages, paper, \$4.95.

Everywhere I've Been is a collection of short stories which appear to be vignettes from the life of the author Carl Sentner.

Some of the stories are very personal renderings of the soul possibly written some dark night when memories were agitated. They're the sort of stories that some people write and never let anyone see. In this respect the author is courageous, especially since it's his first book.

Most of his stories "work" and some of them haunt, and the ones that work the best are the ones that expose the most.

But what is the most interesting thing about this book is that it dispels a lot of beliefs about Prince Edward Island that may have originated with Lucy Maud Montgomery. The "Pastoral Paradise" has been disseminated through the media ever since. A television program about the Island shown recently was described like this:

"... We're introduced to kitchen parties, model shipbuilding, a Cavendish sunset, an intimate moment with Lucy Maud Montgomery's Anne and all the quiet country roads and whispering streams our hearts could ever desire..."

This kind of romanticism is as remote to Carl Sentner as a disco at Kelly's Cross. He writes about a bum called Gus; a bootlegger called Freddie; a whore called Christine; and a Reverend Webster who defiles young boys. Not the stuff that "Anne" is made of but a very interesting view of life on Prince Edward Island.

Most of these stories must emanate from the Island because the author hasn't lived anywhere else. He was born there in 1940 and went to school, possibly as far as junior high. He has worked as a labourer, steel worker, oiler, deckhand, clerk, bartender, radio and television



Carl Sentner

technician, and is at present on leave of absence from his producer/director post at the C.B.C. in Charlottetown.

Because *Everywhere I've Been* is a personal account from the author's life, you may be interested in knowing something about the author that probably won't appear on a fly leaf.

I first met him at the C.B.C. station in Charlottetown in 1973, where I was transferred by the C.B.C. to work as a script assistant and train as a producer. Carl was the switcher who "allowed" me to learn whatever I know about television production. He also allowed me to learn to swear more creatively than the

quintessential dockworker. The switcher is the technician who, when a director says "take one", takes it.

We passed many days in the control room when Carl hardly ever said a word. I suspected he hated me and the best I could ever hope for in the way of acknowledgement from him was a faint muttering about only one mistake. For all his taciturn belligerence I did learn my craft because he treated me as an equal who didn't know anything about television and the only way to learn was to do it.

After my year, three months, two weeks and a day on the Island and I returned to Halifax, I felt I left behind one of the best friends I ever had. It was one of those grudging unacknowledged friendships. At that time I was only impressed by his knowledge of television technology; if I had known that he had books in his head, I would have been blown away.

Some of those times are even funnier now when I think of particular instances like sitting in the control room taping an interview for a particularly inane announcer who was talking to a farmer who had a "propensity" for "truncating" rows of potatoes. Carl sent me to the news-room to look the words up in a dictionary. That announcer's unskillful use of words is in direct contrast to the author's.

Carl Sentner writes a little like Steinbeck, and uses the vernacular and idioms of the Island expertly. There is no doubt about where this author or the stories come from. His stories suffer sometimes from unevenness; he concentrates on telling the story rather than on how he's telling it. He uses figurative language very effectively. When he learns to exercise more control on his chosen medium he may become a major voice in Canadian literature.

"Take One", Carl, and maybe if we're lucky you'll take a few more.

Liz Stevens
Halifax

An Elitist Affair

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offer little beyond what has been said, and said with greater literary flair, by such authors as Donald Creighton (*The Road to Confederation*) and Peter Waite (*The Life and Times of Confederation*). Pryke does break new ground, however, in the latter two thirds of his study, which explores political developments in the immediate aftermath of Confederation. Here he comes to grips with the central question of why the AntiConfederate victories in the elections of 1867 failed to secure either "repeal" or, at least, a significant renegotiation of the B.N.A. Act. Pryke argues that the answer is to be found in three factors. First, the implementation and preservation of Confederation had become a central component of British strategy in North America and colonial grievances would be allowed to compromise imperial design. Second, John A. Macdonald had no intention of making concessions that might jeopardize his vision of creating a highly centralized federation, where provincial governments would exist as mere municipalities, strictly subordinate to Ottawa authority. Third, Nova Scotian politics were characterized by a morass of factionalism, so severe that it "not only precluded a clear and consistent Nova Scotian role in dominion politics but [also] prevented the strong pursuit of repeal with anything like a consensus of opinion. By default, then, Nova Scotia entered into and remained in Confederation".

While the first two points of this analysis restate conventional wisdom, the third raises a theme that has, as yet, received little attention. Pryke's examination of the dynamics of post-Confederation Nova Scotian politics is objective and persuasive, though disillusioning to those seeking an idealized past. The men who dominated the politics of the mid-19th century emerge, in Pryke's account, as a collection of opportunists, has-beens and second raters, whose efforts at statesmanship chronically deteriorated into "bravado" and "bathos". For them, self preservation and partisan advantage took precedent over such abstractions as the public good. The argument is perhaps best illustrated by the dismal fate of the AntiConfederate movement. By the summer of 1868, the agitation to escape from union with Canada had reached a critical juncture. Confronted by overwhelming rejection of their case for repeal in London, the "Antis" had to make some hard decisions. One choice would be to escalate the struggle, turning to civil disobedience and other forms of extra-parliamentary opposition. Alternately, they could accept the inevitability of the union and shift to a strategy of bargaining for "better terms". Discussion generated nothing more than disagreement, however, and the movement quickly disintegrated into fiercely quarrelling factions. The moderates, headed by Joseph Howe and the bulk of Nova Scotia's federal M.P.'s, opened negotiations for better terms, while the more extreme elements, headed by Premier William Annand and most provincial legislators, chose to persist with the repeal campaign, with some hinting that their opposition was moving toward endorsement of annexation to the United States.

The two factions immediately embarked on a struggle to secure domination of provincial affairs. Their campaign of mutual destruction climaxed with the infamous Hants County by-election of 1869, held to confirm Howe as a member of the Macdonald government. Together, the two factions spent some \$50,000 to capture the votes of the constituency's 3,000 electors. Howe won but the attacks and recriminations persisted to the point that when the dying Howe came to Halifax in 1873, as newly appointed Lieutenant Governor, Annand tried to deny him access to Government House. Having thus "neutralized their essential political strength by indulging in internal conflicts", the Antis rendered themselves "perfect victims for the machinations of the devious [John A. Macdonald]". Howe's better terms altered none of the essentials of union and Annand was left in isolation to shout defiance at an entrenched Ottawa regime.

Pryke stresses, however, that Annand and his colleagues did not play the role of truly die-hard opponents of Union. Their demands for repeal quickly gave way to arguments for revisions to the B.N.A. Act and that position, in turn, was moderated to a plea for financial assistance. By

early 1870, Annand was privately saying that Confederation could be endured if Ottawa would just ante up compensation for the Halifax Post Office and the new pier at Digby. Moreover, leading members of the Anti administration were scrambling for a federal patronage appointment that would allow them to retire from the fray. Meanwhile, nothing was done by the Annand government to formulate "a coherent theory of federal-provincial relations". By the mid 1870's, secessionist agitation in Nova Scotia had deteriorated to the level of directing accusations, not against Confederation but rather against the "bad, dishonest, corrupt" administration of John A., a position which provided the last of the Antis with "a rationalization for a political alliance with the Ontario Liberals". Thus the period ended with the fragments of the protest movement against Confederation all securely integrated into a national two party political system, one dominated by interests based in Ontario and Quebec.

Pryke does not attribute the triumph of Confederation in Nova Scotia to Macdonald. In this account, the Prime Minister emerges as a heavy-handed figure whose dogmatism did more to polarize than conciliate. Nova Scotian resistance collapsed, Pryke suggests, largely because prosperity persisted into the mid 1870s, despite initial fears that Union would be the province's ruin. The other decisive factor was the elitist nature of provincial politics. A highly restrictive franchise, a system of open voting and a tradition of intimidation by employers and creditors, meant that effective political decision making remained the monopoly of a small propertied establishment. The agitation over Confederation did nothing to alter this situation. Indeed, the leaders of the Anti campaign made a conscious effort to prevent the crisis from leading to an democratization of public affairs. The prevailing orthodoxy was espoused by a newspaper editorial prompted by the appearance of a "workingman's candidate" in the election of 1874. With considerable indignation, the *Halifax Evening Express* declared: "there must always be working men,

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men to work with their hands, to be poor, to be industrious, to be unfortunate, to suffer; it is the will of God and the destiny of the race. That will and that destiny are not to be counteracted by public meetings, by agitations, by the speeches of demagogues, by public orations, or other foolish means". Given this mentality, it can be appreciated why secessionist agitation in Nova Scotia never became a true mass movement. As an elitist affair, it had no capacity for continuation, once the leadership had accommodated itself to the Canadianization of Nova Scotia politics.

In summary, it can be said that Ken Pryke offers an important, albeit bleak insight into Nova Scotian history. It should be noted that this is not a definitive account of the province at mid-19th century. The book has a narrow political perspective and makes no attempt to examine economic and social development during the 1860s and 1870s. Nova Scotians collectively remain faceless beings and even the politicians who occupied centre stage have a certain anonymity. Circumstance takes priority over character. Pryke remains content with Beck's assessment of Howe's complex motivation and he allows Tupper, the "ram of Cumberland", to remain an enigma. Moreover, little has been done to assimilate the thesis and article literature dealing with the period that has emerged since the mid-1960s. Despite these flaws the book makes a contribution to the rapidly expanding body of Nova Scotian historiography.

D.A. Sutherland
Halifax

Ronald Caplan's Cape Breton

Down North, edited by Ronald Caplan, Doubleday, Toronto, 1980, 241 pages, paper, \$12.95.

I have never been an avid reader of *Cape Breton's Magazine*. Its odd size and newsprint paper have suggested to me a naive "counter culture" view of life on my native land. The whole effort seemed tentative. Ephemeral. The material hardly worth publishing.

But I've come away from reading *Down North: The Book of Cape Breton's Magazine* with a chastened view, and with a sincere regard for the integrity (artistic and otherwise) of editor Ronald Caplan.

The medium is indeed the message in this case. One important advantage of the slicker book format over that of the magazine is that we get the full impact of some outstanding black and white photographs. They supplement the "how to" articles, introduce a whole gallery of Cape Breton personalities, and, more than once, rise in themselves to the level of genuine photographic art.

A third of the material deals with Scottish, Acadian, and Micmac folklore, another third with oral history, and most of the remainder with the know-how of some very interesting folk crafts. Fortunately, the crafts involved are traditional ones, and not those modern imitations geared to the production of tourist trinkets. For instance, "Red Dan Smith Makes Rope from Wood", and "Dan Murdock Morrison Makes an Axe Handle", while Mrs. Lillian Williams gives all-important advice on "How to Make Spruce Beer". These are the lingering evidences of self-sufficiency that looks more relevant to us every time OPEC raises the price of oil.

Here and there in *Down North* are little gems, insights that are worth the purchase price in

themselves. What more need be said about the situation in the coal mining towns in the early years, for example, than we hear from miner-Peter MacGregor:

many of them went to work as young as nine years old. My cousin Peter had to go to work. He was so young that when he'd start early in the morning in the winter, between their house and mine there was a cemetery. And he was so young and so many ghost stories told in those days, he was scared to walk by the graveyard in the dark. And his mother used to have to take him by the hand to get past the graveyard, to go to work. He was that young.

Individual photographs stand out as well: a fishing boat heading into Ingonish Harbour after a day's fishing; the beautifully balanced gravestones illustrating "How We Buried Our Dead"; Maisie Morrison with her completed rug proudly draped out in front of her.

The editor admits that he was first inclined to view Cape Breton life, especially of a generation ago, as idyllic, but soon lost that romantic notion—Cape Bretoners were not strangers to hardship. Yet the essential vision of life presented is a positive one. Creative participation in an oral tradition, pride of workmanship, generous hospitality: these are not signs of a people steeped in quiet despair, they are hallmarks of a people prevailing. Although most of us would perhaps have felt that this hopeful image of Cape Breton life was the correct one, it is reassuring to have our feelings confirmed by the tangible evidence of *Down North*. We owe a debt of gratitude to Ronald Caplan.

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