

***Another Night: Cape Breton Stories True & Short & Tall.* By Ronald Caplan, editor. (Wreck Cove: Breton Books, 1995. Pp. x + 210. ISBN 1-895415-01-2.)**

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interpretation of these subjects/objects to audiences with their own culturally embedded attitudes.

The wide scope of this collection makes for challenging reading, but the persistent reader will be rewarded with enough new ideas to fuel numerous discussions, both theoretical and practical. Designed to open up a dialogue and to lay a foundation for further multi-disciplinary study and projects, both the symposium and this resulting publication have surely made progress toward that goal.

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***Another Night: Cape Breton Stories True & Short & Tall.*** By Ronald Caplan, editor. (Wreck Cove: Breton Books, 1995. Pp. x + 210. ISBN 1-895415-01-2.)

In 1971 Ronald Caplan first ventured onto the Island of Cape Breton. It seemed to be an island tailor made for the Pennsylvania native who was seeking change in his life. His first winter in Cape Breton was an unforgettable one not only for Caplan but also for his neighbors in the small community of Wreck Cove where he still lives today. A 1990 Canadian Geographic article on Caplan describes Evelyn and Alexander Smith's initial thoughts of Caplan and his family.

The way he looked, the odd clothes, the wife and baby, the naivety. More hippies, they thought, though to this day Evelyn is not sure what a hippie is. The difference Caplan says himself, is that hippies were running away from something, and I was running towards something (Howe, 1990: 63).

What Caplan ran into was an Island he knew little about yet which fascinated him. The problem he faced involved parlaying this love into a future for himself and his family. In 1972 he saw a publication by American school children, which evolved into the Foxfire books, consisting of oral histories of Appalachian life. He thought that a unique opportunity existed to do something similar to the Foxfire series in a Cape Breton context. To make a long story short Caplan began publishing "Cape Breton's Magazine" and has been doing so for nearly 25 years.

Caplan has also branched out into music and book publishing through his company Breton Books and Music. The latest from Breton Books, *Another Night: Cape Breton Stories True & Short & Tall*, is a collection of stories culled from the pages of "Cape Breton's Magazine". It marks the second book published by Breton Books consisting of stories from the Magazine. The first, *Cape Breton Book of the Night*, was composed of stories which touched mainly on supernatural occurrences. In Caplan's introduction to *Another Night* he writes that:

Another Night contains a few of that kind [supernatural] of story, but interest here was to bring together more of a range of Cape Breton storytelling. Actually, Another Night is not quite accurate. This book might have been called Other Nights, and Afternoons, and even the Occasional Morning — anytime people will sit with me and pass time (p. vii).

Passing the time with Caplan is something many Cape Bretoners have done over the years and the vast array of stories that grace *Another Night* illustrate that Caplan's time has been well spent.

In Ian MacKay's recent publication, *The Quest of the Folk*, he has theorized about the process of cultural selection in reference to Helen Creighton's role as a folklorist in the Maritimes. What sets Caplan's work apart and has allowed him to make many important contributions to Cape Breton culture is the holistic view towards Cape Breton that he has cultivated. As Caplan readily admits, one of the main reasons that he has been so successful at finding the heart of Cape Breton and its people is that he had very few preconceived notions of the Island and its people.

In the beginning, he says, he had one great, if ironic, advantage: he knew so little about Island life that everything was new and fresh. He could ask ridiculous questions or expose his ignorance, and nobody minded. "People treated me like a stranger in a new land. I didn't have any preconceived notions, and when I did, Cape Bretoners were pretty quick to correct them" (Howe 1990: 66).

The deep respect that Caplan has for those who share their time with him is evident throughout *Another Night* as he lets the storytellers and their stories take centre stage. Acadian-French stories, Gaelic stories, MicMac stories can be found side by side helping illuminate the cultural diaspora that is Cape Breton.

In his more than 25 years of dedication to the people of Cape Breton, Caplan has helped capture the true essence of the folk. *Another Night* continues his devotion to his adopted Island, a devotion that will continue to yield treasures and be an influence for years to come.

## Reference

Howe, Douglas. 1990. The Voice of Cape Breton. *Canadian Geographic*, April/May: 61-68

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***The Shocking Ballad Picture Show: German Popular Literature and Cultural History.*** By Tom Cheesman. (Oxford, U.K. and Providence, R.I.: Berg Publishers, 1994. Pp. xxxv + 240, illustrations, bibliography, indices of names, song titles, and first lines US \$54.95, ISBN 0-85496-893-8 cloth).

Recent trends in literary and cultural criticism have been highly favourable for ballad studies, and street ballads in particular have become a subject of increasing academic interest. Though folkloristics itself has contributed to this development through the success of such works as Buchan's *The Ballad and the Folk* and Renwick's *English Folk Poetry*, other disciplines and analytical schools have also been factors: social history, cultural studies, and discourse analysis are the dominant influences. The common ground among these fields, at least insofar as they deal with aesthetic subjects, is a desire to understand artistic works in relation to a broad range of social discourses and activities, not solely as freestanding and self-justifying creations. Balladry has been attractive to this line of research for several reasons. It has a longstanding and (relatively) well-documented history that spans the entire modern era and even earlier periods. As the author of the present work points out, in Germany it exhibits continuities that link Martin Luther and Hans Sachs with Adolph Hitler and Bertold Brecht (p. 2). Balladry also holds interest because it has enjoyed a broad based popularity, and as such it is regarded a credible resource for investigations of vernacular life, beliefs, fashions, practices, and values. Lastly, as a cultural phenomenon in its own right, and as an object of study and