

# ARTS & CULTURE

## The Civil War sheds light on Quebec separation

The issue of Quebec nationalism is one that is pervasive in Canada. For some reasons, however, Canadians don't have a strong grasp of the history of English-French relations in Canada. And we don't seem to have the foresight to compare our current situation with other historical events that could bring a new interpretation or understanding.

### Is Blood Thicker Than Water?

James M. McPherson  
Vintage Canada

Enter James M. McPherson. In *Is Blood Thicker Than Water?*, McPherson compares the issue of

Quebec secession to a brand of nationalism that preceded the break-up of the United States before the Civil War, and the parallels are striking.

The USA was founded in 1776 out of a fear of an outside presence — Britain. Before 1860 the economy in the northern USA was built largely on urban industry whereas the south had an agrarian-based economy. Most urban industry found in the south was owned by northerners. The best universities were found in the north, and the brightest students of the south studied there. And yes, northerners looked upon southerners as backward fools.

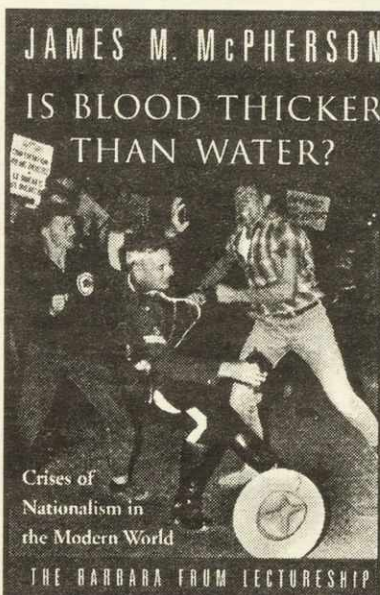
By the 1850s, southerners became bitter. Many newspaper editorials and magazine articles were trumpeting a southern confederation, strengthening and laying claim to southern resources by buying out northern interests. Some people in the south were saying that they would be better off on their own. Does anything sound familiar?

The balance of power was offset by political concessions made to the relatively weak south — especially in the allowance of slavery, which northerners abhorred.

With this information digested, the obvious question which floats into the mind of the reader is, "Can civil war erupt in Canada?" It isn't entirely implausible. Consider that the issue of whether Quebec can legally separate from the rest of Canada is being decided by the Supreme Court, something which Quebecers view with disdain.

Where I think McPherson's argument falls short is in the institution of slavery. When the

south seceded from the north, slavery gave the north a very strong reason to wage war against



the south. If a Quebec government were to unilaterally declare itself sovereign, I cannot see Canadians agreeing to a military attack against Quebec; there are extremists on both sides, but cooler heads would most

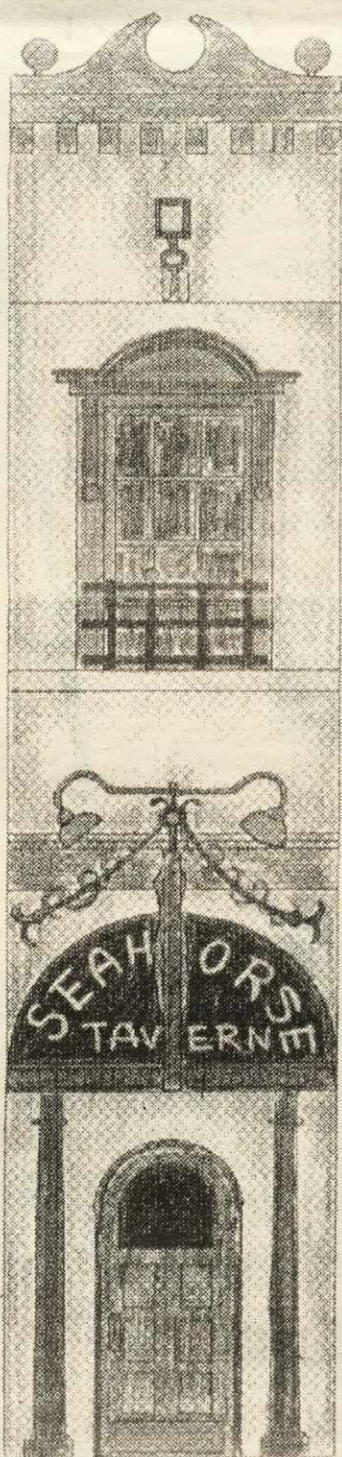
likely prevail. I can see Canada trying to claim as much land as possible from Quebec, including Montréal, aboriginal lands and some northern territory, but I don't foresee war. I believe that all of this would be hashed out peacefully. Yet McPherson's argument merely states that we should not entirely discount the possibility, and he is right in that respect.

It should be noted that this is not a "book" in the strictest sense of the word, but rather a lecture. McPherson, a history professor at Princeton University, was awarded the annual Barbara Frum lecture "on a subject of contemporary interest in a historical perspective." However it is not a cheesy academic lecture with over-sized words that most listeners only understand 20 per cent of, nor is it dumbed down. Rather, it is an accessible study in to one of the most pressing matters on the Canadian political agenda.

GREG MCFARLANE

## THE SEAHORSE TAVERN

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## Fun and creativity expressed by King's dancers

BY PATRICK SHAUNESSY

From March 27-29 the King's College Dance Collective wowed audiences with their spring performance of ten original works.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with the collective, it is a company of amateur dancers and choreographers who put together a show of original pieces twice a year. The spirit involved in the production of these pieces is one of fun and creativity. For the aims of the collective are to inspire and encourage those who are amateur dancers in a relaxed, non-competitive environment and provide enjoyment for those observing the show. The collective gathers dancers from everywhere in Halifax; it is not a society exclusive to King's College, though it is comprised mostly of university students.

The performance encompassed a wide variety of music and dance styles. The pieces ranged from traditional ballet-style dancing to an interpretive recreation of Robert Munsch's "The Paper Bag Princess". The music provided for the pieces was an interesting balance of recordings from popular artists and live performances. Particular mention goes to Nick Thorne, who performed an exquisite guitar medley of traditional flamenco songs for the piece "La Vida".

All of the performances were well executed, a reflection of the hard work and dedication of the performers and choreographers. Each piece was unique and demonstrated a wealth of talent. The pieces which really stood out for their skill and creativity were "We Are", choreographed by Tessa Logan-Wright, "Hip-Hop Dance" by Shauntay Grant, "La

Vida" by Molly Bennett, "She Spreads Her Wings" by Eden Kaill-Walker and "Paper Bag Princess", which was choreographed by all the dancers in the piece.

Having the advantage of being a performer in the collective, I was able to have a full perspective of the show as a whole. Over the course of the three night run, the size of the audience varied dramatically. The first night there were about 12 audience members, but by closing night, almost 90 people showed up for the entertainment. It was definitely encouraging to see so many people interested in the show.

Everyone involved should be congratulated on a job well done. I heard from some long standing fans of the Dance Collective that this was by far the best performance.

## ALEXANDRA'S PIZZA

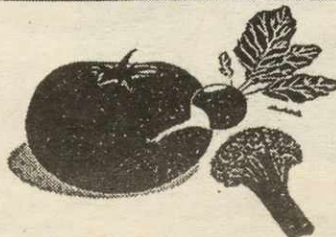
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