

Malcolm MacLeod. *Connections: Newfoundland's Pre-Confederation Links with Canada and the World.*

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The Rule of the Admirals reflects a patient, unassuming test of Prowse and his legacy. Bannister's review of the early fishing admirals system, and the difficult struggles between competing claims to authority in the first decades of the eighteenth century, lays the foundation for his conclusion that the fishing admirals were never the force that Newfoundland legend makes them out to be. In fact, despite their authority being more or less clearly set out in *King William's Act*, their ability to effectively act on those statutory powers was always in doubt, tested time and again by local custom and intransigence, and by the exigencies of outport life. And even in this early period, the emergence of a plural judicial system made for contested jurisdiction, especially between the fishing admirals and the local justices of the peace. These contests opened the door for the establishment of naval government by mid-century, primarily to give some stability to the process of dispute settlement and the enforcement of authority on which, it was assumed, the continuation of the fishery depended.

Quite apart from the scholarly significance of Bannister's book, the story of the development of legal culture in eighteenth-century Newfoundland is a rollicking tale of pirates and murderers, outport intrigue and St. John's politics. We meet some of the most famous faces of Newfoundland history in Bannister's book, from the indefatigable William Carson to the nine notorious murderers of William Keen in 1754. We find a criminal law characterized at times by public hangings, public whippings, and public humiliation, but also a more compassionate system of pardons and reprieves that, Bannister argues, is probably a by-product of the influence of the Georgian navy.

In short, Bannister has given us the important scholarly basis on which to re-assess some of the significant legends of Newfoundland history, wrapped in the warm and often dramatic cloak of real, flesh and blood Newfoundlanders. *The Rule of the Admirals* deserves a place among the very best of Newfoundland scholarly histories, while at the same time providing an accessible and exciting tour through early Newfoundland.

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Malcolm MacLeod. *Connections: Newfoundland's Pre-Confederation Links with Canada and the World*. Creative Publishers, St. John's, 2003, ISBN 1-894294-58-0

THERE IS A PARADOX in the way that island societies perceive their place in the world. At one level, there is a tendency to regard the island as the epicenter of a lived universe defined by what poet Milton Acorn once described as "the wave-lined edge of home." But at another level, islands see themselves as peripheral to the Mainland that lies across those waves, whether near or far. If nothing else, pride often requires islanders to play up the image of the island as micro-uni-

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verse at the expense of an identity that casts the island as continental appendage. In this collection of largely pre-published essays, historian Malcolm MacLeod tries to mediate a middle ground between these two perspectives in the history of Newfoundland. Without denying the essential importance of Newfoundland's splendid particularity or its long-standing cultural, political and economic links with far-away Great Britain, MacLeod argues a long-standing and ever-growing relationship between Newfoundland and the continent at its doorstep in the decades before Confederation in 1949.

There are 17 essays in *Connections*, gathered together under five loose headings: Education, Marine/Naval, Personalities, Newfoundland and Canada, and Observations/Interpretations. That most of the essays in this collection are twice-told tales suggests this historical interlacing of Newfoundland with North America (especially Canada) is not a new argument, but it is particularly MacLeod's argument, pursued across several decades' worth of eclectic research and publication. One might almost say it has been an *idée fixe*. In some ways, then, this collection represents an encapsulation of his life's work as an historian. The many prefatory remarks, which introduce the book and each of its sections, have an avowedly autobiographical and reflective tone, very much that of a man looking back across the transom at his own wake.

Stylistically, the articles are a curious hodgepodge, as one might expect, given the genesis of the anthology's contents. The articles vary in length, tone, and intent, from scholarly articles and reviews to character sketches and exercises in historical whimsy. Some, such as "Students Abroad," his investigation of off-island connections through post-secondary educational choices, lean to the quantitative, showing through laboriously assembled statistics a convincing shift over time in Newfoundlanders' educational orientation, away from British schools and towards Canadian ones. Other pieces, especially his profiles of successful Newfoundlanders abroad, employ a more intimate, conversational tone. And, always, his prose is peppered with a wry, punning wit. Referring to the Newfoundland-Cape Breton steamship service, for example, he writes, "The *Invermore* and the *Glencoe* provided a daily service Monday to Saturday, and on the seventh day they rusted" (71).

Although not always explicitly stated, MacLeod's work plays off two lively and on-going debates: the extent to which an Atlantic Region exists or has existed (are we really only "a region in the making?"), and the explanation for how in the blazes Newfoundland came to choose a future with Canada in 1948. As MacLeod puts it, "There is a notion quite frequently expressed that pre-Confederation political relations between Newfoundland and Canada were characterized chiefly by aloofness punctuated with bouts of hostility" (55). In his interpretation, the Atlantic region steadily evolved in the decades after Newfoundland's rejection of union with British North America in 1869, and it was that growing familiarity, political, economic, military, educational, and navigational, that set the table for Confedera-

tion in the postwar era. The argument looms larger in some articles than others; he occasionally reads like a literary scholar struggling to locate the unifying motif in an eclectic mix of stories. But it is there, most powerfully, in MacLeod's half-regretful indictment of *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation* for its failure to integrate Newfoundland more successfully into the book's portrait of the region. That well-known piece, first published in *Acadiensis*, provides a fitting bookend for the present collection. But it is in an earlier essay, connecting Newfoundland to the Halifax Explosion, that MacLeod best articulates his credo: "I study Atlantic Canada, or more precisely, Newfoundland's adherence and membership in the region. At present, historians and others debate to what extent there was an Atlantic region including Newfoundland prior to the second half of the twentieth century. One approach suggests before that time, Newfoundland's constitutional separateness signals how aloof from the mainland the big island was, how unconnected, in the important spheres of life. A contrary approach expects that the confederation of 1949 was the culmination or product of numerous strong linkages — social, economic, cultural — which already bound Newfoundland to the mainland" (221). MacLeod, clearly, is a contrarian.

It seems that historians of our region have begun to take heed of MacLeod's arguments. One need no longer rely on Joe Smallwood's Prince Edward Island ancestry to posit Newfoundland's inter-connectedness with the mainland. Whether to the extent that MacLeod would prefer, the historical literature of our region increasingly recognizes Newfoundland's North American roots. After a lifetime of persuasion, perhaps Malcolm MacLeod can rest his case.

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Lawrence Mathews. *The Sandblasting Hall of Fame*. Oberon Press, Ottawa, 2003, ISBN 0 7780 1234 4 (cloth), ISBN 0 7780 1235 2 (paper)

AT THE END of "Proof," one of the nine stories in Mathews's impressive debut collection, the narrator crosses a bridge: "it seemed, oddly, despite the gradually increasing brightness in the sky, that I was passing from one kind of darkness to another ..." Most of Mathews's characters are similarly caught in a surreal, Arnoldian universe, merely existing between two equally dead worlds. In "The Fjord," for example, Hanrahan (who appears in three stories), though a graduate student, is working as a night clerk in a cheap Vancouver motel; he's "the right age and class to know that sooner or later the right job will come along, at more or less the right money. Hanrahan's is perhaps the last generation of Canadians to be able to luxuriate in this belief." The belief, however, is unfounded, as Hanrahan in the other stories is no less unfulfilled. At the end of "Fjord" he is "moving deeper into a continent, no doubt toward some archetypal dead end." And at the end of the ironi-