

Edging into North America: Lives and Foreign Linkages in Pre-Confederation Newfoundland

Malcolm MacLeod

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Review Essays/Notes critiques

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IN PLATO'S WRITINGS there is a myth in which souls destined for reincarnation have the opportunity to search through an assortment of sample lives to find models for their next existence.¹ The following selection of Newfoundland books under review remind one of that myth. Most of these books focus on individual lives, or the lifestyles of particular groups in the population. Rummaging through them gives us a chance to sample the variety of Newfoundlanders' experiences during the first half of the 20th century.

Given that Newfoundland at mid-century entered into a constitutional, administrative and commercial union with Canada, these works can be used to test a certain hypothesis: namely, that the pro-Confederation outcome to the 1940s debate about the future of the island suggests that it had already long been exposed to strong Canadian influences. In the decades before 1949, were Newfoundlanders already accustomed to receiving Canadian information, did they have reason to consider themselves somewhat familiar with that foreign country, its people and attitudes? Was there anything like a Newfoundland/Canada commonality of interests? These works should help us discover not only something of the different types of lives lived in Newfoundland at that time, but also to what extent Newfoundland before Confederation already experienced significant interchange with the mainland, preparatory to a closer embrace.

An uncommon way of life — based on hunting and trapping, using the rivers as roads — is fondly described and made attractive to the adventuresome in two of the books. The first of these is Gary Saunders' *Rattles and Steadies: Memoirs of a Gander River Man* (St. John's, Breakwater Books, 1986). The subject of this biography is Brett Saunders, the author's father. Born in 1904, he spent most of his years pursuing the outdoors life along the full length of the Gander River valley. He was variously a lumberman and a prospector, ran an all-purpose transport service and was a notable salvor of crashed airplanes. Until age 45 he supported his family chiefly by trapping furs, shooting meat and canning rabbits, then prospered for another two decades as a proprietor of fishing-hunting camps that catered to wealthy outside visitors.

The authorship and approach in this book are highly unusual. The first-person narration gives the impression of autobiography, although Brett Saunders' life is communicated through his son's writings. Gary Saunders explains how he often heard his father tell marvellous tales of adventures up-country. He gathered

1 Plato, *The Republic*, translated by A.D. Lindsay (London, 1976), Book X, pp. 318-325.

additional material from his father after the old man retired, first put it in a 1970s television film, and now has performed an outstanding work of filial piety by presenting the written account of a life full of unusual work, risk and beauty.

Brett Saunders himself comes across as a master story-teller. Several times in the 1950s he guided Lee Wulff, a noted American angler, but was not intimidated. "When the magazine reporters and newspapermen make him out to be an expert salmon fisherman, I for one have to disagree. His habit of wading through all the pools disturbed the fish and moved them out of his reach. Maybe that's how he came to be such a fine long-distance caster" (p. 220). In the 1940s, Saunders operated a passenger service alongshore to the nearest hospital, using a 32-foot boat with temperamental equipment. On one frustrating trip there was trouble with the propeller. After putting everyone ashore, he loaded down the bow with rocks to raise the stern out of the water so he could work on it. After repairs they were able to limp on a few more miles, then it broke down again. "Again we ballasted down the bow with rocks — that's one good thing about Newfoundland; you're never short of rocks" (p. 180).

While Brett Saunders' life story is rooted deeply in the Gander river valley, connections with Canada and the United States also form a natural part of the account. The first sawmill in Gander Bay, he recalls, was established by the Phillips Lumber Company of Maine (1890s). Later there was another mill owned by the Nova Scotia Steel Company. He tells how Newfoundland children were outfitted with "Star" skates from Nova Scotia; how the trapper's best friend (long underwear) was either Stanfield's (Nova Scotia) or Penman's (Ontario); how the Montreal *Family Herald* and Eaton's catalogue were equally popular as reading material and for back-up duty in the outdoor toilet. Significant for the outdoor life, around 1900 the snowshoe hare and the moose were introduced from the Maritimes. A First World War fox-farming craze that swept the region, separating more people from their savings than animals from their pelts, was promoted from North Sydney. The niftiest canoe of his youth was brought into the country from Old Town, Maine; the patriarchal physician for that whole stretch of Notre Dame Bay was a Connecticut Yankee who came to Twillingate from Johns Hopkins University; it was an editor of the influential New York magazine *Field & Stream* who advised Saunders on establishing his fishing camp; and most of the guests who made it a paying proposition came from the eastern United States.

This equal balance between Canada and the United States occurs throughout the book. In the previous generation, one of Saunders' aunts moved from Change Islands to Toronto, but an uncle settled permanently at Buffalo. Saunders himself spent the years from age 20 to 26 away from Newfoundland, living and working in New York, Buffalo, Toronto and Huntsville, Ontario. In 1930, with his Newfoundland wife and baby boy, he came back to the Gander River to stay. One way of orienting this period in his life to established historiography is to see it as an illustration of how the Great Depression started to reverse the tide of Newfoundland migration to the North American mainland, which had been flowing since the 1880s. Saunders, however, no economist, merely came home again.

A second exemplar of the outdoor, trapping life is Harold G. Paddon's *Green Woods and Blue Waters: Memories of Labrador* (St. John's, Breakwater Books,

1989). Important episodes in his life show the same twin attractions of the United States and Canada. Paddon's father was from England, his mother from New Brunswick. Both professionals, residing in Labrador, and seeking for their sons a more rounded education than could be obtained locally, what could be more natural than to have them schooled in New England? The winter he was seven, and steadily from age 11 onward, Paddon spent his impressionable years in Massachusetts. He was not favourably impressed. Looking back 60 years later, the outstanding memory is of how strongly he yearned for Labrador. The bulk of this book tells how he fared there, won his spurs as a trapper, married and took a living from the land until the age of 41, just after Confederation. Then he felt the pull of the other coast, and went off to British Columbia for the rest of his working life.

The book has one feature that some will find entrancing, but others annoying. Paddon frequently interrupts the accounts of his own doings to pass along his version of yarns he heard about past times and the origin of legends. The publisher signals this shift from autobiography to folklore by stepping down one type-size and indenting. One-third of the text is spent, or misspent, in this fashion. Paddon makes this an exercise in creative literature by supplying possible motivation, context and dialogue for what would otherwise be just crude one-liners: "This is where A.B. went through the ice". No matter how polished, these tales lack verisimilitude when compared with the straightforward, often rivetting accounts of the author's own exploits.

A good example concerns the Labrador Sasquatch. Paddon devotes a whole chapter to describing how the eldest girl in one settler family 80 years ago saw a seven-foot tall, hairy, man-like creature come of the woods grinning at her. He (it) hung around the homestead all autumn long, then vanished. The story carries about as much credibility as the teenage testimony in the Salem witch trials. Later, however, Paddon and his trapping partner saw with their own eyes evidence of big feet along the Canairiktok River:

These footprints were larger than either of ours and were spaced farther apart....We packed the grub-bag and set out to follow him.... Low branches of the smaller trees were heavily laden with light snow and had our mystery man carried any weapon or implement in his hand, it would have left marks where it brushed against the branches. There were no such marks....He had on several occasions stepped over windfall logs that came nearly shoulder high on me and had not brushed the newly fallen snow that lay on them. This fact, together with the length of his unhurried pace, suggested a height of somewhere near eight feet (pp. 226-7).

This believable, if puzzling, testimony is only undermined by being confined in the same book with third- and tenth-hand gossip about old times. There are two very different books here, and both suffer by being squeezed together between one set of covers.

Harold Paddon's older brother has also published his autobiography. W.A. (Tony) Paddon's *Labrador Doctor: My Life with the Grenfell Mission* (Toronto, Lorimer, 1989) opens with a brief account of the Paddons' father, an idealistic

physician who came to North America in the wake of Wilfred Grenfell. Tony Paddon, the first-born, followed a way of life and career extremely similar to his father's, a coincidence strengthened by conscious planning — and probably polished for publication. He too studied medicine, dedicated himself to selfless work in a wilderness; and fell in love with the nurse, but had to postpone the wedding from spring until fall because, although working side by side, they were too busy. Like his father, he too pursued a medical practice full of unusual rigour and improvisation, pulling many more teeth than tonsils. He finally surpassed his father (and his brothers) by becoming lieutenant-governor of Newfoundland.

Tony Paddon's book is the more balanced and complete of the two brothers' works. Twelve chapters deliver a narrative of his life from childhood in the 1920s to his retirement from medicine in 1978. Three topical chapters are added, on the Grenfell Mission's boarding school in Northwest River, bush flying, and Labradorians in general — these last two being vehicles for Paddon to include some of the most outlandish risky adventures that came his way in 30 lucky years.

The whole story of the Grenfell Mission, from the time its founder first arrived in St. John's as the city was burning down in 1892, is a good illustration of the weakening involvement of Britain, and greater concern of neighbouring North American countries, in the affairs of Newfoundland. Grenfell, ever the publicist, spread interest in and support for his activities to St. John's, Eastern Canada and the closest corner of the United States. While nurses and medical technicians continued to come from Britain even after Confederation, from the early 1900s the main sources of financial support and enthusiastic volunteers were New England and New York.²

From his earliest childhood Tony Paddon remembers the 46-foot ketch which ferried supplies and people in Hamilton Inlet — acquired in 1912 and named Yale after the university whose undergraduates donated her. The Northwest River school, opened in 1926, was also named Yale. American links were prominent throughout the Grenfell period and well into the 1950s, when the commander on the U.S. side of the Goose Bay airfield gave Paddon an entire jail, and had his people move it to Happy Valley to become a new nursing station. Paddon himself had an American education — Lenox School, Massachusetts; Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut; Long Island School of Medicine; and internship at St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital, New York.

He arrived at age 25 without any particular Canadian influences in his career. Then Canada intruded with a vengeance, when for five years Paddon served as a medical officer in the Royal Canadian Navy, mostly in corvettes and frigates. The longest chapter in the autobiography is devoted to his fascinating naval experience: anti-submarine warfare; participation in the Normandy invasion; being torpedoed in HMCS *Teme*; and acting as chief artist of a wardroom mural in HMCS *Kitchener*, portraying the full range of convoy escort operations, with the greenery of Londonderry at one end of the painting and the rugged entrance to St. John's at the other.

2 See Ronald Rompkey, *Grenfell of Labrador: A Biography* (Toronto, 1991).

Once the war ended, Padden was bound north to St. Anthony and Northwest River to stay. During the conflict, Canadian and American influence and personnel had penetrated right into the heart of Labrador. It was an RCAF bingo at Goose Bay which purchased for Padden's hospital its first supply of the miracle drug streptomycin. When the medical service needed something, Canadian and American officers "competed fiercely to find any serviceable equipment, and a series of plausible reasons for releasing it" (p. 123). After Confederation, Newfoundland as part of Canada gave much firmer support to educational, health and welfare efforts than ever before.

After a dogsledding doctor and two woodsmen, quite a different kind of career is recorded in *My Life as a Newfoundland Union Organizer: The Memoirs of Cyril W. Strong, 1912-1987* (St. John's, Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1987), edited by Greg Kealey. This is not a case, like *Rattles and Steadies*, of one person writing another's autobiography. Kealey explains that the text is "Cyril's story in his own prose", with just a little material added and some reorganization. Also, the book is something less than a full autobiography. Although Strong's wife Hazel comes into the story several times — accompanying him to labour conventions, usually — there is no mention of other family members. After giving an account of his childhood to the age of 16, he jumps cleanly over a dozen years and takes up his description of events only with his first active involvement in the union movement, as president of the newly formed Hotel Workers Protective Union.

Throughout the 1940s Strong kept his job in the bar of the Newfoundland Hotel, while becoming an executive member of the umbrella organization, the Newfoundland Federation of Labour (NFL). During 1949-56 he was a full-time organizer in Newfoundland for the American Federation of Labour (AFL). After the big merger between the craft and industrial wings of the Canadian union movement, he maintained the same activities and responsibilities, now as an employee of the Canadian Labour Congress, until his retirement in 1977.

His book gives an account of nearly four dozen unions he helped organize or service. Most of the workers whom he coached and coaxed along to effective organization and collective bargaining were employees of general merchants, or workers in fishplants and other processing industries. He also organized some of the skilled trades, miners, office and airline employees. Missing from Strong's life-diary were railway unions; government employees other than police and firefighters; women; construction workers (who had defected from the NFL before Strong became one of the leaders); and actual fishermen, who finally formed an effective organization in the 1970s without benefit of the transcontinental affiliation he represented. He did not charter any loggers' unions either, but makes sure to devote one of five core chapters to that industry, telling a valuable story of the famous 1959 struggle from the point of view of a sympathetic insider. He closes his book with comments on Newfoundland's labour laws, and on the "travails" of union-organizing in his time: travel and bookkeeping.

It is clear in Strong's account that 20th-century Newfoundland was an integral part of North America. His father left Twillingate before 1900 for Yukon and Alaska. One of the uncles settled in Cape Breton, another "headed West" — probably to the United States, since he "was never heard of again" (p. 1). His

mother also had a sister who moved from Newfoundland to Cape Breton; in fact, it was in Sydney that his parents first met, while visiting their respective siblings. When Cyril was a child the young family spent three years in England; he remembered visiting relatives in Massachusetts on the way home.

Moving away from family matters, Strong tells how two key Newfoundland laws implemented in 1949-50, the Trade union and Labour Relations acts, were directly patterned by the J.R. Smallwood government on Canadian laws. There was also borrowing from the United States. For a Seafarers' International Union (SIU) local at Burin, he provided model agreements from New England. The outstanding, overriding evidence of Newfoundland's continental connection is the event that changed Strong's life, lifting him from bartender to bureaucrat — his appointment as an agent and activist of the AFL in Newfoundland, paid and directed from its headquarters in Washington.

Whereas the previous works contribute mostly to our understanding of economic and social history, the memoirs of Don Jamieson (edited by Carmelita McGrath) are directly focused on politics as conceived in the narrowest, simplest sense: campaigns, parties, leadership and strategy. Volume 1, *No Place for Fools* (St. John's, Breakwater Books, 1989), is a highly significant addition to the historiography of the 1940s and 1950s. The second volume, *A World Unto Itself* (St. John's, Breakwater Books, 1991), is of much less value. This is not the author's fault. Jamieson, the first Newfoundlander to become genuinely important and influential in Canadian national politics, obviously realized what a lucky and significant life he had. He began preparing his memoirs immediately upon retirement, but death intervened too soon, when volume 1 was almost complete but volume 2 barely started.

No Place for Fools is a sophisticated and reflective account of events surrounding the greatest crisis of 20th-century politics in Newfoundland, the postwar debate over the country's future. Jamieson gives four chapters to his youth and early adulthood before the onset of that crisis in 1945-46 (he was 25); leisurely leads us through the period of the National Convention and referendum votes with six chapters of superb recollection and commentary (average of six months per chapter); and glides more lightly (approximately four years per chapter) over the following two decades before he was personally immersed in politics again. This book was eagerly awaited for the light it might shed on the anti-Confederation campaign, and the short-lived Party for Economic Union with the United States, in which Jamieson was a leading activist. It does not disappoint in those regards.

What was less expected, perhaps, was the wisdom, restraint and pithy authority of Jamieson's pronouncements on a wide range of topics. People today may have forgotten what a previous generation knew so well — that Jamieson's resonant broadcaster's enunciation (deep but never gruff), the St. John's blarney modulated to an innocuous mid-Canada accent, came as close as humanly possible to the voice of absolute authority. Now his memoirs make us realize that a good deal of the punch and conviction in his radio and television utterances came not from mere delivery but from actual substance. On the conspiracy of British officials to push Newfoundland into Canada: their "pro-Confederation bias...fell short of constituting a distortion of democracy or a mockery of the National Convention....

It was the Newfoundland people themselves who made the decision". On the Responsible Government League: "an inefficient hodge-podge of reactionary businessmen and recycled politicians. Most were sincere enough in their own blinkered way, but their stale rhetoric and threadbare arguments sounded stodgy and self-serving". The provincial government's pursuit of development during the 1950s, he writes, had "all the ingredients of both high drama and low farce. Among the cast of thousands were visionaries, high rollers, opportunists, confidence men, and just plain crooks.... Presiding over it all was Smallwood, ringmaster and undisputed impresario" (pp. 36-7, 90, 160).

For the theme of links with the rest of North America, the questions to concentrate on are, why did Jamieson in the 1940s not want confederation with Canada, and what was the thinking of those like him who called for at least partial union with the United States instead? He explains his rejection of Canada as the product of logic and sentiment:

I could not deny that there were distinct advantages in some of the measures being offered by Canada; social services at Canadian levels would be a godsend to thousands of Newfoundlanders. But the overall financial arrangements simply did not add up. Combined with this practical concern were a number of deeply-felt emotions not easy to articulate... (p. 87)

Under this heading he cites Newfoundlanders' strong sense of identity, which combined the paradoxical products of relative isolation: cocky self-assurance and obsequious insecurity. "I was almost totally ignorant of the world outside, and what little I knew made me highly suspicious of its influences" (p. 88). This seems a sound set of principles for rejecting links with both continental neighbours. How is it then that Jamieson was found strenuously advocating "economic union" with the United States? Part of the answer lies with Jamieson's colleagues at the time. The little inner group that coalesced around Ches Crosbie during the National Convention, and afterwards pushed for ties with the United States, had personal dossiers that belied the isolation Jamieson himself felt. Crosbie, the official leader, and his brother Bill, another activist, had both attended private school in Ontario and served, like Tony Paddon, as officers in Canadian forces during the war. Geoff Stirling had been educated in the United States — Tampa University, of all places — and was enthusiastically, uncritically "pro-American".

In addition, Jamieson's articulation of his thinking satisfactorily explains the apparent contradiction. The economic union platform, he says, was the least bad of possible alternatives. For one with his sentiments and suspicions, joining Canada was out. Extending the Commission of Government system was undemocratic, denying the autonomy Newfoundland deserved. But a full return to responsible government "was not all that appealing if it meant launching out entirely on our own into the very uncertain post-war era". Economic union with the United States — an idea never very precisely defined, but sure to be less absorptive than the Canadian deal under consideration — was advanced as a reason to vote for responsible government against Confederation. An American partnership would be

"an anchor to add stability to the Newfoundland economy under self rule " (p. 88).

Soon after the failure of the quaint pro-American campaign (evidently ahead of its time), Jamieson realigned his partnerships. One had to swallow the unpalatable:

With Confederation a reality it made sense to do everything possible to make it work. This meant, under the circumstances, allying myself with Smallwood provincially, and with the Liberal Party on the national scene (p. 151).

In turning to volume 2, therefore, which opens with Jamieson's 1966 election to the House of Commons, it is no surprise to find him working in close cooperation with several of those who were his favourite political enemies in the 1940s. He found Parliament Hill truly "a world unto itself". The book starts well with deft insights on a backbencher's role. After Jamieson achieved the first of his half-dozen cabinet posts, there are frank accounts of inner circle debates: tax reform, spending on social policy, federal-provincial relations, national regulation of broadcasting. This juicy narrative ends in 1971 and there is no account of the next dozen years, including Jamieson's period as minister of external affairs.

The key event of the years he describes was the 1970 October Crisis brought on by the Front de Libération du Québec. Unfortunately, Jamieson spent a crucial week in Europe. He landed back at Toronto on the Friday the War Measures Act came into effect. The next day he was in St. John's to receive an honorary degree at Memorial University, but said nothing more substantial than that "Our political institutions still offer our best defence against anarchy".³ He could not be more specific, being ignorant of what had been happening in cabinet.

When the murder of Pierre Laporte was made known the following morning, he rushed to Ottawa before noon and rejoined the leadership. What had happened, he now makes clear, was that the government had over-reacted in panic and ignorance. Ministers were bickering. They were unanimous only on the need to rescue the other hostage unharmed if possible, and on the pronounced inefficiency of the police. A key question was whether the clamping down of an armed dictatorship, suspending civil liberties, could be justified once minds had cooled. Jamieson the advertiser early saw the need for damage control and positive public relations: "[I] felt strongly that someone should be at work documenting the various developments and supporting them with facts to the maximum extent possible". Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau was not so keen to do this, which Jamieson now ascribes to his "growing awareness...that very little in the way of concrete evidence was going to turn up" (pp. 85-6).

Jamieson calmly tells the true story as it was known behind the scenes. The commissioner of the RCMP explained how no great conspiracy had been uncovered:

... no discovery of firearms or explosives. Reports of radio-controlled

vehicles loaded with explosives had proven to be largely false.... The commissioner was asked if what he had been able to uncover both before and after the proclamation of the Act would be enough to support a claim that an insurrection was being planned...he had no such evidence (pp. 105-7).

Future generations will be indebted to Jamieson for making it so clear that even Canadian governments can embrace hypocrisy over plain dealing and fudge the facts in defence of poor positions.⁴

Margaret Bennett's *The Last Stronghold: Scottish Gaelic Traditions in Newfoundland* (St. John's, Breakwater Books, 1989) features Allan MacArthur (1884-1971), "memorable tradition-bearer" of the fertile Codroy valley in Newfoundland's southwest corner. His genealogy and life are presented in two of the book's seven chapters; four others are devoted to what the author learned, in numerous visits to the MacArthur household, about bygone patterns of life: domestic and farming routines, folklore and holidays, songs and stories. The author's interest is chiefly focused on the differences and similarities she found comparing the Gaelic traditions of Codroy with those extant in Scotland, or unearthed in ancient publications there.

Once again, links to the mainland are many. The Codroy clans of MacIsaacs, MacArthurs, McNeils and MacLeans all had their origins in an emigration from Cape Breton and eastern Nova Scotia during the 1840s and 1850s. Some of the families that arrived in Newfoundland had been in Nova Scotia only a few years. Others were second-generation North Americans, for whom the migration represented a further shifting of New World locations. The notion of Newfoundland families having human ties to New England and the Maritimes, resulting from the migration of relatives to those places, is familiar enough. For the Codroy Scots, similar links and connections began earlier than they did for people in other parts of the island, resulting from the movement of people in the opposite direction.

Connections across Cabot Strait remained strong in Allan MacArthur's lifetime. An important Codroy house building style dated from the late 1800s, "when a number of Cape Breton carpenters came to work and settle in the area" (p. 24). In 1907-9, Allan's youthful wanderlust took him first to Sydney, where he worked in coal and construction, then to Bar Harbor, Maine, where he shipped Christmas trees to New York. Cape Breton was a major cultural capital for the rustic, Scottish life he knew. It was the main source of weaving looms, a stubborn toehold of Gaelic after the language faded in Codroy, and a revitalizing influence on Scottish music, through the agency of radio. Tucked away in MacArthur's repertory, incongruously flanked by "I Will Go to Kinlochaline" ("Theid mi Cheann Loch

4 There are few published accounts from other cabinet insiders with which to compare Jamieson's version. In *La crise d'octobre* (Montreal, 1971), Gérard Pelletier expresses an opposite opinion: "The apprehension of insurrection was not an error of judgement on the part of the authorities; nor was it an impulse of panic or a political manoeuvre" (p. 93). The War Measures Act is not mentioned in the memoir-by-committee edited by Pierre Trudeau and Thomas Axworthy, *Towards a Just Society: The Trudeau Years* (Markham, 1990). Jean Chrétien indicates he was initially against use of the War Measures Act, but was easily argued around; see *Straight from the Heart* (Toronto, 1985), p. 76.

Alainn") and "Ho Ro My Brown-Haired Maiden", was "The Dominion Mine Strike Song". Indeed, from the evidence Bennett presents it is clear the title of her book would much better fit the society on the other side of the Cabot Strait.⁵

An industrial rather than an agricultural lifestyle, and a different set of important interactions with Cape Breton, are recalled in Gail Weir's *The Miners of Wabana: The Story of the Iron Ore Miners of Bell Island* (St. John's, Breakwater Books, 1989). The author ranged through a good assortment of print and archival sources, and conducted interviews with eight former miners and their wives. The result is a well-organized social history of the work force that, under Canadian corporate management, during 1895-1966 fed the indispensable intake of iron ore to the steel mill at Sydney. While a few ghosts and fairies are admitted to let the volume earn its inclusion in Breakwater Books' Atlantic Folklore-Folklife series, most of the information and observations concern more basic and essential aspects of miners' working lives: wages and hours, pensions, foodways, clothes and gear.

The core chapter presents the biographies of seven men born between 1905 and 1937. They were all second and third-generation mine employees, some born on Bell Island, others into families that moved there from other parts of Conception Bay when the children were young. Urbanization promoted by Canadian investment in this part of Newfoundland finally produced a community of over 12,000 people before the population began to decline again when the mine closed. Six of the biographies which Weir presents are of men who spent their entire working lives in Newfoundland. Only one went briefly abroad at the age of 18, working in coal mines in Cape Breton, participating in the harvest excursion to Western Canada, and returning to settle on Bell Island with a Canadian wife. Other mainland connections included the affiliation of miners' organizations at different times with United States-based unions; the setting of wages for Newfoundland by executives in Sydney or Montreal; the importation of huge Nova Scotia horses for hauling ore cars underground; and, towards the end, the importation of hard-rock miners from Ontario. Some of these outsiders could not work smoothly with Newfoundlanders and would not learn mine procedure from them: "That would be an insult to the Canadian dignity, to admit that a Newfoundlander knew more than they did" (p. 128).

Two final works present the histories of important institutions. Harold Horwood's *History of the Newfoundland Ranger Force* (St. John's, Breakwater

5 Even 20 years ago when Bennett was doing most of the research for this apparently delayed book, Codroy Valley Scots culture seems more the decayed and hopeless outpost, unarmed and barely even occupied, than any kind of "stronghold". Of the cultural hero she offers us, she has to stipulate that "Although unable to read Gaelic, Allan had a few books and Cape Breton newspaper clippings which contained Gaelic songs" (p. 60). The 1961 census found, in all of Newfoundland, only 29 people who gave Gaelic as the language they first learned in childhood. By contrast, there were 1,183 of Gaelic mother-tongue in Inverness County, N.S. — more than 10 per cent of the population in that district — and all Cape Breton Island had 3,352; see Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Canada 1961*, series 1.2, Bulletin 1.2-9, table 66. A more reliable study than Bennett's, because it relates the situation of Scots in Newfoundland to 19th and 20th-century developments in Nova Scotia, and clarifies the local linguistic context, is Gilbert Foster, *Language & Poverty: The Persistence of Scottish Gaelic in Eastern Canada* (St. John's, 1988).

Books, 1986) tells the entirely 20th-century story of the special squad of police and administrative agents that the Commission of Government created to be its interface with rural Newfoundland. Horwood's slim study relies upon official records, and especially the oral history collected from many of the 204 men who served as Rangers during 1935-50. He takes an uncritical approach and is not apologetic about it, beginning his preface with the caveat "Neither the author nor the Ranger Force Association is prepared to vouch for the truth of every statement made in this book" (p. 9). Lacking bibliography and notes — but with 30 pages of valuable documents appended, and five dozen photos — this is an attractive and effective example of popular history. Horwood shows off his writing talents in this skilful blend of narrative, anecdote and interpretation. The chapter titles, however, tend to be lurid: "Mediators of starvation", "Teeth, babies and broken bones", "Sex and violence" and so forth.

The origin and operation of the Ranger Force teach a very important lesson about Newfoundland's external links in pre-Confederation times. The lesson is that by the 1930s, it had become customary to look to Canada for models that might be adapted and reproduced in Newfoundland. The Commission of Government, which constitutionally strengthened the tie with Britain, did not much affect this tendency. This point is still insufficiently appreciated by some students of 20th-century Newfoundland. Peter Neary, for example, may have taken what he read in British documents too much at face value when preparing his landmark study, *Newfoundland in the North Atlantic World*. He has written that the Ranger Force "was modelled on the familiar colonial 'district commissioner' concept"⁶ (as in British Africa). In reality, the pattern for the new institution was not nearly so foreign.

Horwood first tells how a witness before the Amulree Royal Commission recommended establishment of a new force along the general lines of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. After Commission of Government was established, one of its British members went to Ottawa for talks and came back with both an RCMP officer (Sergeant-Major Fred Anderton) to train the Rangers, and a uniform design which closely resembled that worn by the mainland force. During the 1936-40 period when the Rangers, new in the field, grew into their amazingly wide range of duties, and into the legend of probity and resourcefulness which Horwood's book celebrates, the leaders of the force (Chief Rangers) were Anderton and then another serving Mountie seconded from the mainland. Despite these administrative linkages in the background, however, the Ranger Force expressed a distinct Newfoundland identity. Horwood records how at Confederation the force was disbanded and its 77 members invited to apply to join the RCMP, with the indignity of stepping down one rank (but no loss of pay). A question on the application form asked, "What are your reasons for wanting to join the RCMP?" "I don't want to join the RCMP", wrote one Ranger, "I have no other choice" (p. 148).

Patricia O'Brien discusses the organized responses of society and state to the problem of mental illness in her *Out of Mind, Out of Sight: A History of the*

6 Peter Neary, *Newfoundland in the North Atlantic World, 1929-1949* (Montreal, 1988), p. 51.

Waterford Hospital (St. John's, Breakwater Books, 1989). It covers a relatively long period of time, from the mid-1800s to the 1970s, and its 35 pages of notes and extensive bibliography of primary and secondary sources give it impressive weight. In easily the most thorough, polished, professional and dependable history in this selection of works, the author smoothly traverses 125 years of hitherto uncharted history. She discusses successive decisions about the nature and scale of psychiatric care to be made available, the influences behind these decisions, whether originating from near or far away, and the often-frustrated efforts of reformers.

O'Brien claims this important territory for herself by developing the first chronology of the subject. She discerns four periods in Newfoundland's history of mental health services. First, from the 1840s to the 1870s, a period that witnessed the magnificent efforts of Dr. Henry Stabb to humanize and make much more specialized arrangements for care of the mentally ill, foundation of the Hospital for Mental Diseases under his superintendency, and its dedication to "moral treatment" and the abolition of physical restraints. Second, for a full half-century starting in the 1870s, a shameful period when the hospital declined to a mere custodial institution for a wild variety of social misfits. Treatment was abandoned and conditions at the "home for incurables" were hardly affected by the public and mental health movements that flourished, or at least appeared, in Newfoundland's partner societies of Europe and America. A 1911 report on the hospital found some of its wings "surely ... the most primitive construction [of their kind] surviving in a civilized country". A reformer was still pounding on the governor's desk about them a quarter-century later, insisting he remove "a blot on humanity" (p. 133). Third, the beginning of active treatment in the 1930s, but haltingly and benefitting only a minority of patients: fever and hydro-therapy, electric shock and insulin treatments. Finally, from the late 1940s onwards, the development of a variety of community-oriented services that decentralized care and stressed prevention and aftercare over committal to hospital, while treatment was radically altered and improved by advances in pharmacology.

O'Brien notes and evaluates the off-island influences and practices that affected what happened in Newfoundland, without directly comparing them. When we look closely at the foreign examples Newfoundland psychiatry looked to for inspiration and example, the expected pattern emerges. Throughout the 19th century treatment of patients and management of the mental hospital were for the most part modelled on British practice. Specialized personnel were usually hired there. Henry Stabb, who was born in Devonshire, graduated in medicine from the University of Edinburgh, and arrived in 1837 (age 25) to establish a practice in Newfoundland, personifies this important era. The Newfoundland Lunacy Act (1897) was directly modelled on British legislation, and in 1911 when a thorough examination of the mental hospital was desired, as on previous occasions a British expert was asked for a report.

By the 1920s Newfoundland's orientation had turned westward. Now when there was to be a house-cleaning at the Waterford, an official was first sent to visit similar facilities in Canada and the United States. Mainland hospitals, especially at Dartmouth, N.S. and Whitby, Ontario, became the models to emulate.

Canadian mental health crusaders extended their campaign into Newfoundland just after the First World War. In the 1930s improvements in record-keeping — family trees and case histories — were based on standards established by the American Psychiatric Association. Whereas in 1912 a Newfoundland government engineer had been sent to Britain to study hospital designs, in 1935 St. John's retained Montreal architect A.J.C. Paine to survey facilities and recommend priorities. When insulin shock therapy was introduced in the 1930s the superintendent took guidance from the New Brunswick Hospital at Saint John, and it was from there that nurse Kathleen Fraser (postgraduate psychiatric training in Toronto) returned in 1938 with a test-tube of malarial blood strapped to her body, to introduce fever therapy.

From hunting and trapping to modern psychiatric therapies, the subject matter of the books examined here is extremely varied. The range of styles is equally broad: some are primary sources and autobiographies (or cunning imitations thereof), others are secondary sources and monographs. What these books have in common is that from different perspectives they reveal and discuss conditions in Newfoundland during the first half of the 20th century. What have we learned?

First, they remind us that there was a wide range of livelihoods and lifestyles in Newfoundland of that era. A certain cliché, common even in the Atlantic region, holds that Newfoundland's economy and society were dominated by fish. In fact, Newfoundland's modernization and diversification began in the 1870s with developments in mining and transportation, and rejection of Confederation. Our scattergun collection of recent publications emphasizes the point. Except for O'Brien's superb study of psychiatric care and neglect, these works present case-studies that epitomize the lives and concerns of a goodly variety of groups in the island's population: trappers and woodsmen, physicians, politicians, farmers, miners, policemen and union organizers. Interestingly, absent from this list are any workers or families directly engaged in the fishery.

"When I started my career as a union organizer", wrote Cyril Strong, "I should have known that the fishing industry would provide the greatest number of union members and the greatest challenge of my new career". None of the locals he chartered in that sector, however, had members who went to sea; they were all fishplant employees. In this case there was a definite philosophy at work, which made Strong concentrate on the more modern sector of food-processing: "I felt that the fishermen should have a union separate from the plant workers, because there would have been a conflict of interest involved were I to negotiate on behalf of both groups" (pp. 67, 70). This and the other books show how occupations had diversified, and how much more there was to the 20th-century economy than the traditional fishery.

A second point to note, with regret, is how women continue to be absent from or slighted in the historiography. All the biographies are of men. They had women in their lives; we learn their names but little else. Among the monographs, three of four authors are women, but the subjects — always excepting O'Brien's *Waterford* — are overwhelmingly male. One at least would not have to be. A chapter in *The Last Stronghold* features songs sung while working, especially at the milling frolic, and brings to the forefront the contribution women made to the work of the farm,

and to its lively traditions. The book as a whole, however, is conceived very much as a recollection of what was taught by the patriarch and tradition-bearer extraordinaire, Allan MacArthur. Allan's second wife, Mary, receives only honourable mention. Yet her story, barely glimpsed here, would be of great interest: married at age 27 to a man 12 years older; instant mother to four children all under seven, followed by eight of her own. How evil a place does the step-mother have in Scots culture and myth? The feminine angle is not probed. A most durable part of the Gaelic tradition, it seems, was male dominance.

Not only are women overlooked, or even excluded in places where it could have been easy and natural to include them, but their absence in these pages is rarely even noticed. Only one author makes a properly courteous apology before turning to his main, male business. "If few women figure in these stories", writes Gary Saunders in the preface to the book he wrote for his outdoorsman father,

it is because in those days they considered the river and the woods a male domain. They stayed home to look after the children and grandparents, to tend the livestock and keep house. When their menfolk returned they baked and sewed and mended for the next expedition. As a boy I recall seeing Mom mending pair after pair of socks and mitts worn out or accidentally scorched on the trail. And before each trip I remember her filling a large cotton flour bag with a whole day's baking of fresh bread, which Dad would carefully stow under canvas on his dogsled. Once while working on the television script I remarked to her that I realized there was another side to the story, and that perhaps we would do hers next. "Thanks for the thought my son," she said with a smile, "but I doubt you could tell it in twenty-eight minutes." So if men seem to dominate this narrative, remember that in the background the women were doing, as Hilda Chaulk Murray so aptly phrased it, *More Than 50%* (p. xiii).⁷

A generation of feminist agitation, and no end of hand-wringing over how incomplete our idea of history is, has produced this result: women have earned equal billing among the most skilful writers of history, yet much of our society, women included, still go on thinking that male endeavours are the really important ones calling out to be chronicled.

The hypothesis with which we began this reading — that Canadian influences already loomed large in the life and work of Newfoundland for several decades prior to Confederation — has proved to be a valuable one. There are many signs of outside societies reaching into Newfoundland, affecting lives, values and experience. British connections were present but waning. From early in the 20th century, North American influences were more significant. The United States, however, appears of about equal importance with Canada, as the source of these influences.⁸

7 Hilda Chaulk Murray, *More Than 50%: Woman's Life in a Newfoundland Outport 1900-1950* (St. John's, 1979).

8 This would not likely have been the conclusion, if any of the works reviewed had touched at all

Don Jamieson wrote of Newfoundland in the 1940s that it was "a community very much to itself well outside the North American mainstream". All these works, however, suggest he exaggerates the isolation. Brett Saunders' first child was born in Buffalo. His first full winter of trapping was in lake and river country just north of Toronto that resembled the Gander district. Harold Paddon attended elementary and secondary school, and a forestry college, in the United States; his brother Tony also had an American education, followed by a five-year commission in the Royal Canadian Navy. Cyril Strong explains how in the 1940s the Newfoundland Federation of Labour began exchanging fraternal delegates with the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada, and he became a representative in the colony of the American Federation of Labour. The Gaelic world of western Newfoundland reverberated to the declining fortunes of Scots culture emanating from Cape Breton. Wabana miners from the 1890s on, and the Ranger Force in the 1930s, worked in the heart of Newfoundland under the direction of Canadian managers. From the time of the First World War, Newfoundland mental health services accepted standards, training and ideas for improvement chiefly from Canadian and United States sources.

Jamieson's own book records and reminds us of influences that promoted knowledge of conditions on the mainland, and sometimes an urge to reproduce them at home, among a good number of Newfoundlanders. In the inner circle of four who tried to steer the country towards economic union with the United States, he was the only one who did not have extensive personal experience of one or the other neighbouring countries in North America. In the sphere of broadcasting which became Jamieson's private-sector specialty, from the 1930s on radio inserted such productions as "Hockey Night in Canada" and "Amos 'n Andy" into the cultural life of Newfoundland. His stress upon how isolated and parochial Newfoundland was in the 1940s may well be a case of overlooking the obvious.

No doubt Jamieson is correct, however, when he writes that Smallwood's "avowed support for Confederation, declared with his usual flair, marked the first occasion on which I, and a majority of Newfoundlanders, even thought about such an alternative" (p. 37). Despite the many indications of continental familiarity and integration we find in these works, they do not give us any reason to believe that Newfoundlanders were in any way thirsting for, or even thinking about, Confederation. Social and economic connections, as plentiful and plain as they were, were by no means necessarily linked to any particular political outcome. One might have relatives in Canada and the United States, visit or work there oneself, observe that the bulk of goods available in the stores were imported from those places — but these were natural parts of everyday life, and only slightly more common in the 1940s than they had been 25 years earlier.

upon Canadian dominance of banking in Newfoundland, from the mid-1890s on. The undisputed reign of Canada's dollar as the currency of the smaller country signally undermined Newfoundland's separateness and sovereignty, and created a tie much stronger than any with the United States. The theme of American influence in Newfoundland, which is ignored in existing literature even more thoroughly than the impact of Canada, is valuably presented in W.G. Reeves, "Alexander's Conundrum Reconsidered: the American Dimension in Newfoundland Resource Development, 1898-1910", *Newfoundland Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Spring 1989), pp. 1-37.

There are two ways to interpret these various interactions among the North American nations. One interpretation sees United States and Canadian interests in competition, rivals — whether consciously so or not — with overlapping spheres of ambition in the colony. When Newfoundland voters chose Confederation they declared Canada the winner in this contest. Another interpretation is that Newfoundland and Canada were never so well-twinning as in this — that both societies similarly experienced the outreach of the rich, republican neighbour. Through the first half of the 20th century the United States was a magnet pulling surplus population from both societies, creating bonds of individual experience and internationally distributed families. Unions and branch plants from the United States penetrated both countries. Both came under the umbrella of American strategic thinking during and after the Second World War. United States bases in Newfoundland helped promote the americanization of popular values. One expression of these modernizing attitudes was the pro-Confederation vote in 1948,⁹ as Newfoundlanders opted for closer ties with the more convenient and accessible of their two neighbours.

History did not stop in 1949, for Newfoundland or for Canada. Nor has North America become any more roomy. Influences emanating from the United States, and forces making for continental integration, have not ceased to operate. By the 1990s all of Canada, now including Newfoundland, was receiving a daily dose of culture and crime from Detroit, Dallas and Disneyland, carried by cable television. In 1971 Don Jamieson was disappointed, when as minister of transport he opened a new radio station at Tuktoyaktuk, that the first musical selection broadcast was American country and western. Twenty years later, he might not have noticed. Canada has even had a government which actually went to war, although no important Canadian interests were involved, because Washington wanted it. Tellingly, public opinion approved this followership, as it also voted for a free trade pact that indicated everything was negotiable.

For a long time, the policy of Canada towards the United States has been to seek and foster association, without assimilation.¹⁰ Newfoundland, too, once had the same general approach in its interactions with both larger neighbours. Looking through the lives of Newfoundlanders from 50 to 90 years ago, we are reminded how naturally a certain degree of one leads by subtle stages towards the other. The geopolitical aspects which they knew then — the links and leanings to outside societies — seem familiar in our time. As in Plato's reincarnation myth, we find in these lives models that might well have been used for many of our own.

MALCOLM MacLEOD

9 This idea is explored more fully in my *Peace of the Continent: The Impact of Second World War Canadian & American Bases in Newfoundland* (St. John's, 1986), pp. 42-50.

10 Reginald Stackhouse, reviewing J.L. Granatstein and Norman Hillmer, *For Better or for Worse: Canada and the United States to the 1990s*, in the *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 30 November 1991.