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**MacLeod, Malcolm. *Connections: Newfoundland's Pre-confederation Links with Canada and the World*. St. John's, NL: Creative Publishers, 2003. Pp. xv + 304; illus. CDN\$22.95 (paper). ISBN: 1894294580.**

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Newfoundland did not become a province of Canada until 1949. To that point, it had been a separate entity of the British empire — a fishery for more than three centuries following its European “re-discovery” in 1497, a colony throughout much of the nineteenth century, an emerging dominion during the opening decades of the twentieth century. When some of the other British American colonies negotiated the political federation that became the Dominion of Canada in 1867, delegates from Newfoundland were present at some of the talks, but in the end, the colony of Newfoundland chose not to participate. Thereafter, whenever the question and opportunity arose to join the Canadian confederation, the governments and people of Newfoundland generally declined — politely, sometimes vociferously, always firmly. This all began to change with the onset of the Great Depression. The effects of that global crisis on Newfoundland’s export-dependent economy, together with a pre-existing national debt caused largely by economic development projects like a trans-island railroad together with the massive expenses necessitated by the First World War, the colony felt that it had no choice but to give up self-government. Instead, it reverted first to a sort of quasi-Crown colony status, and then, following a national debate and two referenda, it became Canada’s tenth province. Even then, the public was divided nearly in two, for the Second World War had revitalized the Newfoundland economy, and many then (and still today) were confident that self-governing autonomy could be restored without the need to subordinate itself to the larger Canadian arrangement. Close ties with Canada therefore seemed something that the people of Newfoundland preferred to minimize, even discourage. Yet close physical proximity, a shared British heritage, strong economic and social linkages meant that Newfoundland and Canada were tied more closely together than most of its citizens realized or understood.

As a Canadian-born academic who found himself accepting a position in the Department of History of Memorial University of Newfoundland in 1978, Malcolm MacLeod has long been fascinated by the degree to which the reality of close associations and ties between Newfoundland and Canada confounded the distance that ostensibly separated them. For twenty years and more, MacLeod explored the many facets of that association, with particular attention to the linkages between Canada and Newfoundland — intellectual, cultural, economic, military, and administrative. The result was a steady stream of publications, mostly of article length, though this interest did lead to one monograph.<sup>1</sup> The work

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<sup>1</sup> Malcolm MacLeod, *A Bridge Built Halfway: A History of Memorial University College, 1925-1950* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1991).

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reviewed here, *Connections*, reprints a great many of those articles; only two essays were not previously published. Predictably, this means that this work does not offer its readers a tightly reasoned or focussed analysis of Newfoundland's "links with Canada and the World," as the subtitle suggests. Rather, as the author freely admits in his Introduction, the essays "sample, probe and explore some of these linkages" (xiii). The essays have been grouped according to several themes: two essays are on "Education," four are on "Marine/ Naval," four are on "Personalities," five examine situations that prompted formal contact or discussions over the years between "Newfoundland and Canada," and two essays offer concluding "Observations/Interpretations." It is therefore a rather mixed bag of odds and ends, one that gives readers the opportunity to delve into some fascinating material and leave them convinced that Newfoundland and Canada did have more in common than is commonly realized, yet which, in the end, will disappoint those readers who hoped to find a substantial body of interpretation here of Newfoundland's relationship with Canada (and the United States).

The fascinating material includes essays on William Hampton and George Whiteley, two Newfoundlanders who made careers for themselves in the United States as scientists in the fields of food chemistry and biology. Their stories provide insight to the paths that many followed in pursuit of higher education and creative careers. Another essay briefly touches upon exploratory feelers by the Newfoundland government to sell the region of Labrador to Canada at the beginning of the Great Depression. Still another essay describes the ways in which steamship links between Canada and Newfoundland evolved over the decades, in part with the encouragement of government subsidies. Yet another recounts the activities in Newfoundland waters of HMCS *Preserver*, which served as a sort of mother ship to a flotilla of Fairmile motor launches on antisubmarine duties during World War II.

A number of problems limit the value of this approach, however; for one thing (and as fascinating as many of them are), most of these stories were told quite some time ago. While MacLeod does include an introduction to each group of essays, little was done to bring them up to date or to correct questionable assertions that were made when the articles were originally published. Thus, there was really never any basis for the claim that the d'Iberville raid of 1696-97 was undertaken "in the defense of important mainland interests" (99). Thus, MacLeod does not take advantage of the enormous literature, published since the *Preserver* essay first appeared in 1980, on Canada's naval effort during World War II and which has emphasized the great challenge that the RCN faced because of deficiencies in sonar and radar.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the essay on Newfoundland's response to the Halifax Explosion of 1917 suggests that Halifax was Newfoundland's "second capital" and that Newfoundland was "part of its natural hinterland, from which surplus population was drained and to which special services were provided" (229). Apart from a discussion of the number of Newfoundlanders who attended various Nova Scotia educational institutions, those linkages are not comprehensively explained in the essay — little is offered on the out-migration of "surplus population" or the nature of the "special services." Nor does the introductory essay to that section draw attention to subsequent literature.<sup>3</sup> Elsewhere, MacLeod notes how the Clarke Company established a steamship link between Quebec and Corner Brook after 1925 (75-76), yet he never

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<sup>2</sup> Marc Milner alone has published a number of important works, including: *North Atlantic Run: The Royal Canadian Navy and the Battle for the Convoys* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985); *The U-boat Hunters: The Royal Canadian Navy and the Offensive Against Germany's Submarines* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); and *Canada's Navy: The First Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> By way of example, two essays appeared shortly after MacLeod's original essay on the important subject of Newfoundland out-migration to Canada. See Ron Crawley, "Off to Sydney: Newfoundlanders Emigrate to Industrial Cape Breton, 1890-1914," *Acadiensis* XVII, 2 (Spring 1988): 27-51; Peter Neary, "Canadian Immigration Policy and the Newfoundlanders, 1912-1939," *Acadiensis* XI, 2 (Spring 1982): 69-83.

mentions the opening of the pulp and paper mill in Corner Brook which just might have generated a powerful incentive for that link.

One reason for these deficiencies is that many of the original essays were too short, covering their topics with more description than analysis, to support persuasive conclusions. Thus, the essay on selling Labrador to Canada is only four pages long and says virtually nothing about Labrador at the time. What was Labrador like? What was the size and nature of its population? What was the nature of the Labrador economy? How well was its economic potential understood? Had there been previous interest in selling or acquiring Labrador, and if so, what were the circumstances that had generated that interest? An essay on Canada's response to the 1914 sealing disaster, when many of the crew of one ship froze to death when caught on the ice by a harsh storm, and another ship on its way home vanished completely, with no survivors, draws attention not only to the Dominion's official response but also to relief donations sent by cities like Toronto. The opportunity is not taken, however, to determine whether many Newfoundlanders lived in Toronto at the time or whether Newfoundland out-migration in the years before 1914 influenced Canada's response to the tragedy. Occasionally, MacLeod compounds the problem with statements that assume attitudes or motives that were not in evidence. Thus, in the five-page essay on Canadian efforts during the Great Depression to bring an end to immigration from Newfoundland, MacLeod concludes that "If [the Canadian government] were ... trying to attract [Newfoundland] into a special relationship," then this was "a very puzzling position for Canada to take" (247). But was Canada seeking a "special relationship" with Newfoundland? All the evidence that MacLeod presents in this and many of the other essays would suggest otherwise.

While most of the book is devoted to Canadian-Newfoundland connections, a few gestures are made to the degree to which links had also developed with the United States. The "world" of links that is promised in the subtitle, however, does not really materialize — the links discussed are almost entirely with North America. The powerful link with Mother England, for instance, in terms of education, cultural ties, and persistent commercial ties, all of which contributed to Newfoundland's outpouring of support for the United Kingdom in 1914 and again in 1939, is not included, not even for balance. And how did Newfoundland's trade in saltfish with southern Europe, the Caribbean, and Brazil shape a rural fisher society that is all too often (and incorrectly) perceived by outsiders as remote and isolated, out of touch with the world?

MacLeod relies heavily on official papers and newspapers as sources for his essays. This narrows his assessment of Newfoundland's external "connections" to members of government and journalists. If, however, the mandate of the essays in this collection is to reveal the many ways in which Canada and Newfoundland were drawn together despite their differences, then in the final analysis we lack any sense of the degree to which these connections shaped public perceptions in Newfoundland towards their mainland neighbours. Did Newfoundlanders in general think very much about the bond established with Canada by navigational aids or subsidized steamship services? Did Newfoundlanders feel that they were drawn more closely to Canada because HMCS *Preserver* was protecting the sea lanes adjacent to their shores? Indeed, the story of *Preserver* is a good example of an opportunity missed. The absence of any memoirs and of any attention given to the activities of the ship's personnel when in port and interacting with the locals means that, in the end, we really do not know the extent to which *Preserver's* service in Newfoundland shaped Canadian-Newfoundland relations or awareness.

Finally, it must also be said that there are enough typographical errors in this collection to be truly annoying. To be sure, these are for the most part reprinted essays, and perhaps a fine line can be drawn between preserving the original and making changes to improve the original text. Personally, I would have been happier had that effort been made, just as I would have been happier had a greater effort been

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made to indicate where and how the essays have become dated by the passage of time and the appearance of two or three decades' worth of new historical research.

In the end, the essays assembled here are usefully brought together, sparing one the need to track down their original sources. Anyone interested in some of the ways in which Newfoundland has been linked to Canada and the United States will be grateful. Yet the collection is not sufficiently comprehensive and addresses the theme of "connections" with too little analysis to be anything more than an introduction to the notion that powerful cultural, social, economic, and political links did develop between those countries. Having worked my way through the essays reprinted in *Connections*, there is certainly little question in my mind that those links were both diverse and important. Important questions remain unanswered, however: how did the links generate a continental pull that competed with, and ultimately overcame, Newfoundland's traditional trans-Atlantic orientation? To what degree did that pull filter down to all levels of Newfoundland society? As important as MacLeod's work has been in drawing attention to the connections between Newfoundland and North America, definitive analysis of their full complexity and impact remains to be done.