



# Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada

## The Politics of Cultural Memory: Themes in the History of Newfoundland and Labrador in Canada, 1972-2003

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March 2003

The views expressed herein are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada.

## **Abstract**

This paper explores the relationship between nationalism and the writing of Newfoundland history. It examines both recent changes in the conceptualization of history and long-term continuities in nationalist rhetoric in the twentieth century. It traces the seminal influence of D.W. Prowse's *History of Newfoundland* and the formation of cultural memory since 1972. This study also assesses recent debates over the economic impact of the Terms of Union, and makes recommendations concerning nationalism and the use of historical research. It argues that nationalism cannot be ignored as a cultural and political force in Newfoundland and Labrador: the Royal Commission should consider both sides of the ongoing debate over the province's place in Confederation. By analyzing the views of a variety of individuals and groups — academic historians, writers, politicians and members of the business community — this paper offers an overview of cultural and intellectual developments over the past 30 years.

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## Introduction: The Legacy of Judge Prowse

For over a century, D.W. Prowse's *History of Newfoundland* has been the island's most widely read historical study. It is difficult to overestimate the influence of Prowse's work. Published to widespread acclaim in 1895, it has inspired generations of scholars and shaped the way Newfoundlanders see their past. Joey Smallwood himself admired Prowse's book, and his extensive writings perpetuated many of its core themes. Although Judge Prowse favoured joining Canada, he advocated, in the late George Story's words, a "sturdy nationalism."<sup>1</sup> The story of Newfoundland was, according to Prowse, a narrative of the long struggle for control over the island between the tyrannical West Country merchants along with their allies in the British government, on the one hand, and the humble settlers and their political champions, on the other.<sup>2</sup> In the 1970s this traditional interpretation received its first systematic reappraisal at the hands of academic historians, but Prowse's view still dominates popular conceptions of history.<sup>3</sup> It continues to exert a heavy influence over the array of literary and commercial constructions of the island's history, thereby providing the basic prism through which Newfoundland nationalism has been reflected in both the arts community and the thriving cultural tourism industry. In his acclaimed novel, *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*, Wayne Johnston goes so far as to depict Prowse's *History* as the secular Bible of the island's people.<sup>4</sup> And with the publication of a new edition in 2002, it is enjoying a remarkable renaissance.<sup>5</sup>

Yet Prowse's conception of history has received relatively little scholarly attention. The best studies remain the late George Story's masterful articles, the last of which was written over 15 years ago. Story's superb analysis of the life and times of Daniel Woodley Prowse provides the basis on which to undertake a reappraisal of the impact of the *History of Newfoundland*.<sup>6</sup> Not surprisingly, academic scholars have taken a critical view of the seemingly indefatigable popularity of Prowse's *History*. They have argued that the continued reliance on Prowse as a historical authority has come at the cost of ignoring important scholarly research conducted over the past 30 years.<sup>7</sup> The tenacity of Prowse's interpretation has perpetuated many of the stubborn nationalist legends which professional historians have worked to debunk and, as Eric Hobsbawm has argued, challenging such myths represents one of the most important responsibilities for historians.<sup>8</sup> But attacking the veracity of Prowse's assertions has revealed little about how or why his work has remained so popular for so long. By fixating on the task of overturning the misconceptions inherited from Prowse, historians have overlooked a key issue.

The reason Prowse remains so popular is not due to the power of myth *per se*; rather, it is because his entire idea of history has been turned on its head. He was a whig historian in the classic sense of the term, and his *History* is an account of how Newfoundland had triumphed in the face of adversity. For Prowse, a crucial break separated the past (backwardness) from the present (progress). In using the past to show how far Newfoundlanders had come in transcending a legacy of repression, he approached history as both a series of enlightening lessons and an entertaining narrative, dividing the past into distinct periods which advanced teleologically. Since the 1970s successive writers have drawn heavily on Prowse's evidence and interpretation, but they have replaced his basic outlook with their own philosophy of history. This new framework takes a radically different approach: it collapses the distance between historical epochs into a single meta-narrative which deliberately blurs the line

between the past and the present. Rather than triumphing over their history of oppression, according to this view, Newfoundlanders are haunted by it. We are not free from our past but trapped by it, forced to endure seemingly endless cycles of economic failure and social misery. Reflecting the zeitgeist of the post-Smallwood era, this outlook grew out of the cultural revival of the 1970s, emerged in one form in Peckford's economic nationalism of the 1980s, and has resurfaced in the wave of historical fiction since the 1990s.

Prowse followed the traditional liberal interpretation first established in 1793 by John Reeves and propagated by nineteenth-century political reformers, most notably William Carson and Patrick Morris. A trained jurist who served as the island's first Chief Justice, Reeves saw Newfoundland history through the lens of conflict. In what is arguably the most influential statement ever written about Newfoundland, he began his book by setting out the heroes and villains:

I intend to give a short history of the Government and Constitution of the island of Newfoundland. This will comprise the struggles and vicissitudes of two contending interests — The planters and inhabitants on the one hand, who, being settled there, needed the protection of a government and police, with the administration of justice: and the adventurers and merchants on the other; who, originally carrying on the fishery from this country, and visiting that island only for the season, needed no such protection for themselves, and had various reasons for preventing its being afforded to others.<sup>9</sup>

As Patrick O'Flaherty has noted, by establishing the paradigm of repression, Reeves spawned the nationalist outlook which so greatly influenced Prowse.<sup>10</sup> Prowse's portrayal of the West Country merchants echoed Reeve's perspective: "Newfoundland settlers of all kinds, from Guy and Baltimore down to the poorest waif from the West of England, had to fight for their lives with the dire hostility of the ship-fishermen or western adventurers from England."<sup>11</sup> On the question of government policy, he took a markedly harsher view than Reeves:

It is no marvel that Newfoundland did not thrive under such a regime; the real wonder is that the settlers lived at all under such oppressive restrictions. But for their allies in New England, doubtless they would have been obliged to abandon their settlements. Our treatment by the British Government has been so stupid, cruel, and barbarous that it requires the actual perusal of the State Papers to convince us that such a policy was ever carried out.<sup>12</sup>

In Prowse's hands, Newfoundland's early history became a tale of conspiracy, as mercantile interests blocked political reform and stunted social development. "There can be no doubt," he concluded, "that it was the influence of these West Country merchants that retarded the grant of a local legislature."<sup>13</sup> Without local control over resource allocation, the island remained economically backward and socially embryonic.

As George Story pointed out, the final third of the *History* resembles journalism as much as history.<sup>14</sup> In reporting on issues current in Newfoundland politics, such as the French Shore problem or Confederation with Canada, Prowse did not have the advantage of historical perspective. Nonetheless, his approach to the problems confronting Newfoundland in 1895 reveals a great deal about his deeper view of history and cultural memory. In the concluding section to the final chapter, Prowse confronted the twin disasters of the great fire of 1892 and



the bank crash of 1894. In the face of what “seemed enough to fill up the cup of our woe,” he chose optimism: “We must remember that whilst much of the working capital of the Colony has been lost in recent failures, the wealth-producing power of the Island has not been seriously impaired.”<sup>15</sup> Though Prowse referred to the need to stamp out the last vestiges of the credit system, there is a telling absence of historical villains in his final assessment. After dominating the earlier chapters, the West Country merchants are no longer to be blamed for the colony’s misfortunes. “The prejudice against the merchants,” he noted, “however reasonable and natural in olden times, should not exist now; employers and employed are mutually dependent on each other.”<sup>16</sup> The one explicit reference to a past event is to the crisis of 1817, which he cited as an example of how Newfoundlanders had persevered in the face of similar problems. This did not mean that Prowse was uncritical of either the merchants’ party or imperial policy — indeed, his comments on the French Shore problem were particularly scathing — but he did not see Newfoundland as caught in a cycle of failure or captive to a history of oppression.

Prowse was a tireless enthusiast of Newfoundland who did not disguise his efforts to promote the island’s development, particularly its tourism industry. The theme of economic progress figured prominently in Prowse’s later writing, such as his *Newfoundland Guide Book* (published in 1905), which emphasized economic growth. His work on other projects, such as Cabot Tower, reflected not nostalgia so much as nationalistic pride.<sup>17</sup> He was in the business of “booming Newfoundland,” as he termed it in a letter to Sir Edward Morris.<sup>18</sup> George Story argued that Prowse’s chapter on telegraphic communication represented the “optimistic climax of his long history of neglect and oppression.”<sup>19</sup> But the emphasis on technological advancement was not merely tacked on to the end of his *History*. It formed part of a larger philosophy of history marking the transition to the progressive era. Prowse was a nationalist of a very distinctive, Victorian stripe, and his *History* cannot be simply lumped together with various strands of nationalism which emerged in the second half of the twentieth century. In his mind, history comprised neither an undifferentiated mass of chance occurrences nor an endless series of cyclical patterns; rather, it was divided into epochs which evolved in a linear manner toward modernity. His whig interpretation was not the unbroken line of relentless progress envisaged in Herbert Butterfield’s classic model but followed instead the broader pattern of nationalist historiography in the late nineteenth century.<sup>20</sup> As Eric Hobsbawm and Benedict Anderson have argued, the invention of a shared historical narrative was a key ingredient in the construction of a political identity.<sup>21</sup> The liberal ideology current in Prowse’s time envisaged the assimilation of smaller polities into larger nations as part of the natural march of progress. He did not see any contradiction between his support for Confederation with Canada and his pride in being a Newfoundlander.

For three-quarters of a century, Prowse’s view of history remained basically unchallenged. The major studies completed in the pre-Confederation period — most notably A.H. McLintock’s *Establishment of Constitutional Government in Newfoundland* — focused largely on how British policy had stunted the island’s economic and political development. Like Prowse, McLintock narrated how the settlers had eventually persevered in the face of adversity to build a successful society. “Modest and unpretentious as is its story,” he concluded, “no student of its history can set it aside without feeling strangely moved at the wonder of human pertinacity in creating from ‘a great ship’ an amazing colony which, in spite of inherited weaknesses and economic disabilities, stands to-day as a testimony to the power of people to nullify Britain’s greatest experiment in retarded colonisation.”<sup>22</sup> Joey Smallwood also took up Prowse’s

themes in his *Barrelman* radio program, which often presented a nationalist perspective, and in his copious writings in Newfoundland history.<sup>23</sup> Smallwood followed the conventional framework by dividing history into the dark age, before the advent of representative government, and the enlightened era ushered in by industrialization and later Confederation with Canada. Amplifying Prowse's grand narrative of struggle, he created an epic tale which at times bordered on hagiography. Smallwood's book on William Carson placed him at the top of the pantheon of Newfoundland's heroes. As the founder of the Newfoundland nation, Carson represented the successful revolt against the ancien régime of the naval governors and the West Country merchants. Like Prowse, Smallwood saw no contradiction between his advocacy for Confederation and his Newfoundland nationalism. And as Premier in the 1950s and 1960s, Joey Smallwood embarked on a crash program to usher in the era of industrial progress which Prowse had championed a half century earlier.<sup>24</sup> The Smallwood government was convinced, as Miriam Wright points out, that creating a "modern" fishery would solve all of the industry's problems in one fell swoop.<sup>25</sup>

The influence of Prowse's *History* reached its apogee in 1968 with the publication of a new provincial textbook. Leslie Harris's *Newfoundland and Labrador: A Brief History* inculcated tens of thousands of Newfoundland schoolchildren with what was essentially Prowse's view of history.<sup>26</sup> Harris adopted the traditional cast of villains (e.g. the West Country merchants and fishing admirals) and heroes (e.g. William Carson and Patrick Morris), as well as the familiar storyline of perseverance in the face of political repression and economic adversity. Harris asserts that "Neither the rule of the fishing admirals, nor the French wars, nor the bad treatment of the Irish made the Newfoundlanders give up hope."<sup>27</sup> With the arrival of Carson, described as a "brave and unselfish man," the great reform movement finally defeated the old tyrannical regime in 1825.<sup>28</sup> "At long last, after more than three hundred years of struggle," Harris concluded, "Newfoundland had become a colony."<sup>29</sup> The textbook extends Prowse's interpretive format into the post-1949 era: the First World War, the Depression, and Commission of Government are explained as obstacles which delayed the progress which Confederation finally bestowed. The textbook ends on essentially the same point that Prowse made about resource potential in the conclusion to his *History*.<sup>30</sup> Like Prowse, Harris separates the legacy of the past from the promise of the future. He espouses an optimistic variant of nationalism which presents Newfoundland history as a story of struggle but not of loss.

# The Newfoundland Renaissance

While schoolchildren were still being taught the traditional view of Newfoundland history, the province was undergoing a remarkable cultural transformation. Beginning in the late 1960s, a cultural revival began to change how Newfoundlanders viewed their past. The provincial government had facilitated this process — Smallwood himself took pains to encourage Farley Mowat's interest in Newfoundland — and the celebration of local heritage became linked with the tourism industry.<sup>31</sup> By the 1970s the province was in the midst of what Sandra Gwyn termed “The Newfoundland Renaissance.” Gwyn charted the remarkable expansion of new work in a wide range of fields: theatre groups such as Codco; artists such as Gerry Squires and Mary Pratt; and writers like Ray Guy and Harold Horwood. Yet mixed with Gwyn's enthusiasm was a lament for a lost heritage. “The old order that produced all of us,” she noted, “is being smashed, homogenized, and trivialized out of existence.”<sup>32</sup> She quotes Patrick O'Flaherty as saying that writers such as Ray Guy were “the last of the real Newfoundlanders.”<sup>33</sup> The passage into industrial modernity which Prowse had trumpeted as a national victory was now mourned as a cultural loss. At the heart of this perspective was the belief that the island's golden age lay not in a modern future of material wealth but in an idyllic past of outport culture. Ray Guy himself has admitted that this romantic view drew in large measure on nostalgia for a past that never actually existed, but he claimed that it was necessary as a way to combat the propaganda of the Smallwood regime.<sup>34</sup>

The province's cultural renaissance was part of a much broader phenomenon which has swept western societies over the past 30 years. As Gerald Pocius has argued, Newfoundland has followed a broader pattern whereby the weakening of traditional communal ties engenders a drive to recapture (and reinvent) local heritage.<sup>35</sup> Within the university community, this process manifested itself in the burgeoning fields of historical anthropology and folklore. Customs like mummering, which Prowse dismissed as quaint traditions, were now treated as serious topics for scholarly research.<sup>36</sup> Folklorism has also been used to promote the expanding tourism industry, and it has helped to fuel the rise of nationalist sentiment. As James Overton points out, government agencies and business elites have supported the fabrication of “traditional” cultural commodities — i.e. tourist-friendly myths and stereotypes — in order to further their own socio-economic interests.<sup>37</sup> Equally important, folklorism in Newfoundland, as elsewhere, has tended to embrace an implicit anti-modernism which divides society into the authentic (traditional, rural, plebeian) and the counterfeit (modern, suburban, bourgeois). As Ian McKay argues, “the national identities created through the use of such categories could not and did not include everyone. Treating some people (normally peasants) as ‘Folk’ (and hence the privileged bearers of ‘national essence’) only worked if there were some who were not ‘Folk’.”<sup>38</sup> With this approach came a philosophy of history that contrasted the unspoiled past with the corrupted present. Change became equated, as McKay notes, with degeneration and deviance, creating an atrophic vision which views economic development with fierce hostility.<sup>39</sup> As a result, the teleology which had been so central to the liberal conception of history had fallen out of intellectual fashion.

In the 1970s the position of Prowse's *History* transformed from an authoritative text into an unreliable source. In the first sustained challenge to the prevailing orthodoxy, Keith Matthews argued the fish merchants did not conspire to prohibit settlement or stunt

the colony's growth. Interdependence characterized relations between the different groups involved in the fishery: the credit system worked to insulate both merchants and planters from cyclical economic depressions. Market forces, resource endowment, and commercial policies comprised the vital factors in the island's development.<sup>40</sup> As for the heroic Carson and Morris, Matthews asserted that the victory of representative government marked simply the success of a colonial elite's ambition: influenced by political currents in Britain, the reformers created a nationalist ideology which bore little relation to circumstances in the colony.<sup>41</sup> In an influential review article Matthews systematically discredited the traditional myths inherited from Prowse as well as the scholarly variants of the retarded colonization thesis.<sup>42</sup>

Although Matthews' work constituted the most important challenge to Prowse's reputation as a historian, it represented only one element of a much larger movement in academic scholarship. The 1970s saw the emergence of new schools of research in a variety of areas — historical geography, economic history, maritime studies, and cultural anthropology — sponsored by agencies such as the Institute of Social and Economic Research. This wave of research involved dozens of scholars and, as a number of different commentators have noted, it revolutionized the way historians approached Newfoundland's past.<sup>43</sup> The new perspectives rejected not only Prowse's specific arguments, but also his entire whig interpretation and its attendant bias toward high politics, great men, and the march of progress. In his authoritative survey of Newfoundland literature, O'Flaherty condemned Prowse as an unimaginative historian who ruined his impressive research with sentimental editorializing and employed a backward historical framework coloured by personal bias. "There was," according to O'Flaherty, "a thick layer of such contrived emotion throughout Prowse's book."<sup>44</sup> Prowse's optimistic conviction that Newfoundland had broken with its dark past and could anticipate a bright future became, in O'Flaherty's eyes, a corrupted fantasy. The reaction against Prowse stemmed in part from a broader debate over nationalism in Canada during the late 1970s, as scholars discussed radical regionalism and worried about the potential breakup of the federation.<sup>45</sup> James Overton argued that "neo-nationalism," as he coined it, was a type of reactionary ideology used to promote the class interests of the bourgeoisie.<sup>46</sup>

## The Past in the Present: The Peckford Era

With the election of Brian Peckford as Premier in 1979, Newfoundland nationalism entered a new phase of development. The province witnessed a surge in nationalist sentiment in the 1980s, culminating in the Peckford administration's battle with Ottawa over jurisdiction of offshore resources. As Harry Hiller notes, the rise in nationalism emanated from a sense of cultural uniqueness and economic disadvantage.<sup>47</sup> Though Hiller hesitated to categorize Newfoundland nationalism as a manifestation of a distinct ethnic identity, he concluded that separatist rhetoric could not be dismissed as merely political flirtation or elite manipulation. While groups such as the Party for an Independent Newfoundland attracted publicity, Brian Peckford was without question the leading political figure in the nationalist movement.<sup>48</sup> As Ronald Rompkey has argued, Peckford saw himself as a student of history and a strong supporter of Newfoundland culture.<sup>49</sup>

At the height of the province's campaign for ownership over offshore oil resources, Peckford published a political manifesto, *The Past in the Present*, which outlined the Premier's view of Newfoundland history. Peckford was certainly a populist, but he was also well read, and he quoted liberally from scholars such as Gertrude Gunn, S.J.R. Noel, James Hiller, Peter Neary and David Alexander.<sup>50</sup> He followed Alexander's basic argument that the federal government was largely to blame for the failure to develop a viable economy in post-1949 Newfoundland.<sup>51</sup> Yet he combined his secondary research with an eclectic mix of personal history, political rhetoric, and statistical analysis. The thrust of his argument was to "show the extent to which the monumental mistakes of the past have resulted in our Province's being one of the poorest regions of Canada, and...to demonstrate how the situation has been aggravated by recent policies of the Federal Government."<sup>52</sup> To achieve this goal, Peckford drew on Prowse's *History*, which he quoted approvingly at the beginning of his historical section.<sup>53</sup> In many respects, *The Past in the Present* was a recapitulation of Prowse's interpretation of the island's past, complete with repressive government and merchants conspiring to restrict settlement, retard growth, and deny Newfoundlanders their natural rights. "Stories are common even now," Peckford notes, "about those early days when we were not legally tolerated in our own land, and of the kind of treatment to which our ancestors were subjected."<sup>54</sup> Echoing the tone and language of Prowse, he used his conclusion to stress the prospect of progress:

Viewed in this context, the Province has before it a fantastic opportunity. We have around our shores now a rich, renewable fish resource. On land we have tremendous water power. Our trees, minerals, agriculture, can all make important contributions to our future well-being. If we can manage the phenomenal oil and gas resource in such a way as to buttress these renewable resources to which our way of life is so intimately related, we can as a people look forward, despite past mistakes, to a bright and prosperous future.<sup>55</sup>

Peckford saw no evident contradiction in citing both revisionist scholars and Prowse, whom he seemed to follow closely in rhetoric and argumentation.

However, a subtle yet crucial difference separates the outlooks of Prowse and Peckford. Unlike Prowse, Peckford did not imagine history as a series of discrete eras moving



teleologically toward modernity, nor did he see the distant past as part of a quaint “olden time” removed from the present. When he envisaged Newfoundland’s experience as a colony, dominion and province, he viewed it as a seamless web of incessant struggle. His manifesto declares that real progress is a dream which can only be achieved by overcoming powerful political and cultural obstacles. As its preface proclaims:

Confederation wasn’t an isolated event, nor was it one emerging from our more recent history. It flowed from our whole history of colonialism, subjugation and exploitation. Newfoundland was frequently, as were all the colonies, a resource base to be exploited for the benefit of the mother country. Not much has really changed: the essential elements are still present. We are today facing choices that are similar to those that have been faced many times in our history. The central question is whether we will be “true to our history” and once again barter away our future; or whether we can translate into self-confidence a pride that is now emerging at certain levels of our psyche, but which we are still hesitant to express.<sup>56</sup>

In Peckford’s mind, history had inflicted a debilitating psychic wound from which it was not certain that Newfoundland could recover. The past haunted the present, making it difficult to break from historic patterns of subjugation and failure.

Peckford’s arguments were part of a larger debate over the state of Newfoundland’s culture and the impact of Confederation. His most vocal supporter in the academic community was F. L. Jackson, a philosophy professor who wrote provocatively on a range of topics. Jackson echoed Peckford’s passionate tone and nationalistic language, and his columns and articles outlined the province’s grievances over its mistreatment by Ottawa.<sup>57</sup> Like Peckford, Jackson contrasted the ancestral virtues of Newfoundlanders with their repression at the hands of outsiders, but he was skeptical of what he saw as artificial attempts to reinvent traditional culture. In *Surviving Confederation*, he condemned ersatz traditions which misrepresented the island’s true history.<sup>58</sup> To learn the truth about Newfoundland, he argued, “it is essential to set a basic fact in focus: as a truly viable and successful society, Newfoundland has never yet existed; or more positively put, it has yet to come into its own.”<sup>59</sup> He asserted that the first two attempts to organize a socio-political system — under proprietary colonies in the seventeenth century and then Responsible Government two centuries later — failed miserably, while the current attempt as a province in Canada had yet to be proven successful.<sup>60</sup> Thus Newfoundland history represents a kind of post-traumatic stress disorder. False nostalgia for a happy past was a dangerous drug that worsened the problem; the only way out was to implant a new progressive political culture.

Despite this iconoclasm, Jackson took a conspicuously conservative approach to the writing of history. He disapproved of recent attempts to overturn the traditional model of Newfoundland history, arguing that it did little to serve the public good, and he condemned the recent wave of revisionist scholarship.<sup>61</sup> In place of Marxist historiography, which was derided as a “mystification of Newfoundland history,”<sup>62</sup> Jackson seemed to favour reverting back to Prowse’s *History*, though he offered no specific suggestions or citations. Like many commentators who emphasize the importance of history, he was remarkably vague on its details, relying instead on familiar platitudes when it served his purposes. Not surprisingly, Jackson himself was accused of spreading atavistic myths about the island’s cultural virtues.<sup>63</sup>

In essence, this view of history was Prowse without the progress. Stripped of Prowse's faith that Newfoundland was liberated from its past, Jackson's historical framework embraced a type of scorched-earth liberalism: "The vision and rhetoric of leaders like Carson, Bond, Coaker, Smallwood, or Peckford may on occasion break through for a time, but the impulse to retreat into the at least familiar certainties of the bare-subsistence life, relying only on God and fickle salvation at the hands of unsympathetic benefactors, is never far from the surface."<sup>64</sup> Variants of this type of nationalism can be seen in the work of other writers — Ray Guy, David Benson and Patrick O'Flaherty, for example — who argue that Newfoundland history is an unbroken tale of mistakes and missed opportunities.<sup>65</sup> This conception of history keeps important elements of Prowse's original thesis, such as the notion that settlement and property rights were strictly forbidden in early Newfoundland, but rejects his basic attitude toward the past.

When the revisionist scholarship was integrated into the province's school curriculum in the 1980s, Prowse was no longer portrayed as an important historian. In a new high-school course on Newfoundland culture, students were assigned *Our Newfoundland and Labrador Cultural Heritage*, a hybrid textbook designed to bridge the gap between history and social studies.<sup>66</sup> It included a short commentary on Prowse: he was cited as one of the nineteenth-century authors who "recorded many of the myths and descriptions of Newfoundland and its people which are deeply imbedded in folklore — the oral tribal memory of the people."<sup>67</sup> The text summarized Prowse's career briefly, noting that his *History* "has been reprinted several times and still makes interesting reading."<sup>68</sup> As for the nature of Newfoundland history, the authors tried to strike a balance between progressive optimism and cultural relativism. While claiming that contemporary culture "is both the result and a reflection of the past history and experiences of generations who have lived here," they also concluded that there never existed a "golden age, and certainly old Newfoundland culture has little relation to contemporary life."<sup>69</sup> This dichotomy between the remote past and the modern present appears similar to Prowse, but the authors expressed doubt over the prospect of progress, asserting that "it is difficult to decide what kind of people we are, and what kind we might be in the future."<sup>70</sup> Newfoundland, it would seem, was at a cultural crossroads.

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## From Nationalism to Federalism

When Clyde Wells became Premier in 1989, it signaled a significant shift in the province's political culture. The end of the Peckford era engendered a new style and focus in provincial politics: Wells was neither a populist nor a Newfoundland nationalist. Whereas Peckford had championed provincial rights and local control over resources, Wells advocated a strong federal government as the only means through which regional disparities could be ameliorated. Wells eschewed nationalist rhetoric and his political speeches rarely invoked the province's history or culture. The only instance in which he ever indulged in nationalist language was when he addressed the problem of out-migration. In a televised debate during his 1989 election campaign, Wells' attack of the Tories' record sounded like a nationalist argument: "They've driven 35,000 people out of the province since 1981 to Toronto, or Calgary, or Edmonton to find work....They've failed their fundamental responsibility to provide an opportunity for our young people to come out of school and expect to find a job here with their family and relatives."<sup>71</sup> He invoked the personal example of his own son, who left the province to work, and the slogan "Bring Our Children Home" appeared on signs at Liberal rallies. Wells reputedly went so far as to promise to bring home "every mother's son," though he later denied ever making such a claim.<sup>72</sup> Although Wells was no doubt sincere in his concerns over out-migration, this uncharacteristic foray into nationalist terrain was an isolated aspect of his political campaign and did not carry over into his Premiership.

Although Wells and Peckford pursued different policies, their administrations shared two common traits. First, as Douglas Brown has noted, a continuity of purpose and interests bridged the two political eras. Like Peckford, Wells confronted a legacy of high unemployment, acute financial instability, and a "have-not" provincial status which showed no signs of abating.<sup>73</sup> Rather than following Peckford's strategy of focusing on mega-projects and battling Ottawa for control over resources, Wells concentrated on cutting the provincial deficit and fighting against the decentralization of Canadian federalism. Wells believed that weakening the power of Ottawa would undermine the goal of obtaining equality with the other provinces. This led to a second characteristic shared by both Premiers: their administrations were marked by a sharp and sustained political conflict with the federal government; they were both prominent figures on the national stage, attracting considerable media attention. Wells was an ardent federalist and Peckford a strident provincialist, but both men fought a pitched battle against the Prime Minister of the day. Wells' attacks on Mulroney's Meech Lake Accord were no less heated than Peckford's assault on Trudeau's policy on natural resources. Both Premiers appealed to a sense of constitutional grievance and a belief that Ottawa was conspiring against the province's interests.

However, beneath these similarities, a basic antithesis separated the governments of Wells and Peckford. Where Peckford remained first and foremost a Newfoundlander, Wells became a type of Canadian hero. As Richard Gwyn explained, for most English Canadians, Wells' stubborn resistance to the Mulroney government made him "a populist bard — a constitutional Milton Acorn of Canadianism, of the idea of a community larger than the sum of its parts."<sup>74</sup> Wells' systematic attack on the "distinct society clause" in the Meech Lake Accord reflected his firm conviction that no province should enjoy special status under the Constitution. Wells did not favour greater provincial autonomy in areas such as health care or job training because

he believed that this would impair the financial ability to deliver such services. Brian Peckford saw this as a return to the Smallwood era:

In watching him [Clyde Wells] perform, I don't question his integrity and the fact he means what he says. But there seems to be a throwback to the 60s in the sense that, and Smallwood took this narrow view, too, on a whole range of issues they take very narrow views of their responsibilities and obligations as a provincial government. It's all thrown over to the federal government. He is not a provincialist at all, and in that way he's more like Smallwood, who believed in an extremely strong central government, almost the "Uncle Ottawa" idea that Moores attacked when he won his first election.<sup>75</sup>

Though Peckford's criticism was perhaps rather harsh, it did capture the essential point: Wells wanted to maintain a status quo whereby Newfoundland and Labrador would depend on the extant federalist system to achieve the goal of becoming equal to the other provinces of Canada. Wells was, at bottom, a small-c conservative with whom many English-speaking Canadians could identify. His popularity had really nothing to do with the fact that he was a Newfoundlander, and he addressed national issues from a Canadian rather than provincial perspective.<sup>76</sup> And aside from his work in educational reform, Wells was never engaged deeply in cultural or heritage issues.

When Clyde Wells resigned and Brian Tobin became Premier in 1996, the transition was relatively smooth. Unlike 1989, the adjustment to a new administration marked a continuity, not a break, in provincial politics. Like Wells, Premier Tobin was a federalist who would become, in another guise, a Canadian hero. Tobin was in many ways a populist who had little in common with Wells, but he carried on Wells' tradition of using the premiership to debate national issues. Dubbed "Captain Canada" in the media for his attacks on foreign over-fishing, Tobin worked to enhance his national profile after he assumed office. During the debates leading up to the Quebec Referendum of 1995, he was heavily involved in the federalist campaign as an organizer and key speaker at the Montreal rally.<sup>77</sup> However, unlike Wells, Tobin was highly active in the cultural sector. His administration oversaw a number of major initiatives: the Special Celebrations Agency, which promoted cultural tourism; the Premier's Advisory Committee on Cultural Infrastructure, which launched The Rooms project; and the cultural and heritage policy initiatives. These efforts ushered in a new era in cultural policy but did not mark a larger shift in provincial politics. Like Wells, Tobin never publicly questioned the province's place in Confederation. Yet this commitment to a centralized political system was at variance with broader trends in Canadian politics and, as we shall see, it did not reflect contemporary cultural trends in Newfoundland and Labrador.<sup>78</sup>

## Secret Nation: History and Fiction in the 1990s

During the Wells and Tobin administrations, the province experienced a remarkable period of cultural development. With the decline in traditional historiography came a wave of new writing based on literary interpretations of the province's past. This work includes a range of authors, from E. Annie Proulx and Bernice Morgan (both of whom saw their novels adapted into films), to John Steffler, Gordon Rodgers and most recently Michael Crummey.<sup>79</sup> What they have in common is the goal to create a sense of what it was like to live in a certain time and place in Newfoundland and Labrador. To varying degrees they base their fiction on historical research, and they usually acknowledge the sources on which they relied. In cases such as David Macfarlane's literary memoir, the line between fact and fiction is fairly clear.<sup>80</sup> But in other works the construction of the past is deliberately skewed to serve a literary purpose. For example, John Steffler asserts that while he based much of his novel on primary sources, the "story grew as I handled it, following its own inherent tendencies as well as mine."<sup>81</sup> "Time has been compressed or expanded," he acknowledges, "and events invented or altered according to the narrative's needs."<sup>82</sup> The practice of purposefully merging the present into the past was part of a larger movement in post-modern literature and, as elsewhere, it has been heavily criticized for being intellectually untenable.<sup>83</sup> "The idea that 'all history is fiction'," A.S. Byatt noted pithily, "led to a new interest in fiction as history."<sup>84</sup>

The 1990s also witnessed a noticeable surge in nationalist sentiment within the province's arts community. Nationalism was central to works such as the popular film *Secret Nation*, based on the screenplay by Ed Riche, which suggests that Newfoundlanders are not free citizens of a province in Canada but rather captives in a nation occupied by a foreign power. According to this view, Canada, Great Britain and some Newfoundland turncoats had colluded to rig the referendum on Confederation. Following literary trends, Riche blended together elements of history and fiction into a new version of the old conspiracy myths.<sup>85</sup> The theme of mourning the loss of nationhood became increasingly prevalent as the fiftieth anniversary of Confederation approached. In the poetry of Des Walsh, for example, Confederation is depicted as severing the Newfoundland folk from their true identity.<sup>86</sup> For Wayne Johnston, joining Canada forced Newfoundlanders to forsake their own past:

There is a misconception, by some people much encouraged, by others simply allowed to go unchallenged, that Newfoundland was "born" in 1949, that in 1949, Canadian history retroactively became our history, that, for instance, "our" first prime minister was Sir John A. MacDonald. The same misconception is applied to pre-confederate Canadian literature. Our actual history and literature now exist in a kind of limbo where not even many archivists set foot.<sup>87</sup>

Johnston argued that the status of Prowse's *History* as a "forgotten book" was symptomatic of a deeper cultural malaise. On the question of certainty, the historian Simon Schama has explained eloquently, "We are doomed to be forever hailing someone who has just gone around the corner and out of earshot."<sup>88</sup> Johnston sees it the opposite way: the problem is not that the

truth cannot be caught but that we fail to see it right under our noses, buried in the great tome of a patriarch.

Lost in the heated discussion over the accuracy of Johnston's portrayal of Smallwood has been his treatment of Judge Prowse's *History*. The *History* was a central plot device — in the scandal which forces Joey Smallwood from Bishop Feild School, it is used to write the incriminating letter — and Smallwood's rival is the grandson of Judge Prowse, whom he visits. Johnston depicts Prowse as an old man possessed by history.<sup>89</sup> This possession infects Smallwood himself after he leaves Bishop Feild. His father informs him that they were now all ruined because of Prowse's *History*, which he called The Book. While his father rages against "That cursed Book,"<sup>90</sup> Smallwood compulsively carries it with him throughout his journey of self-discovery. Over the course of the novel, The Book transforms into a type of secular Bible that impels him to seek the truth about the past. The exiled Newfoundlanders are also compared, through the voice of the character Hines, to the wandering Jews:

Hines, in his sermon/column, forever likened Newfoundlanders to the Jews, pointing out parallels between them. There was a "diaspora" of Newfoundlanders, he said, scattered like the Jews throughout the world. He saw himself as their minister, preaching to his flock from his column, most of which began with epigraphs from the Book of Exodus. So often did Hines liken Newfoundlanders to the Jews, we likened him to Moses, asking each other in the morning if Moses had come down from the mountain yet, meaning had he shown up yet for work.<sup>91</sup>

Smallwood is depicted as a type of prophet: his arduous journey across the island enlightens him about the plight of his own folk, instilling in him the mission to see them through to the promised land, i.e. Confederation.

The key to the novel is Johnston's conception of Newfoundland history. In place of religion, he gives Smallwood a conscience based on his relationship with history. When readying himself to return from exile, he experiences an epiphany:

I tried to convince myself that I was ready to return, that only by leaving had I learned to live here. But I wondered if I, too, had reached the limits of a leash I had not until now even known I was wearing and was, like my father, coming home not because I wanted to, but because I was being pulled back, *yanked back by the past.*<sup>92</sup>

In Johnston's portrait of both Smallwood and Prowse, history is not a temporal space but rather a spiritual inheritance from which they — and, by extension, all Newfoundlanders — cannot escape. Smallwood assumes the guilt for their collective failure to live up to the greatness of the land, and the scar of history becomes a type of original sin. *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* is, in many ways, similar to Edmund Morris's controversial fictional biography of Ronald Reagan.<sup>93</sup> Like Morris, Johnston was criticized for projecting too much of himself onto his subject and veering into autobiography.<sup>94</sup> Yet as important as the problem of whether he accurately represents Smallwood is the question of whether he got Prowse right. Prowse might have been haunted in his old age, but his *History* certainly was not: in it he affirmed the capacity of Newfoundlanders to transcend their legacy of oppression and forge a new age of progress.

Prowse's cultural memory was not eclipsed by the blurring of the past into the present, and he would have spurned the notion that we are yoked to a tortuous history of misfortune.

The enduring popularity of Prowse's *History* is due to the fact that it has entered the realm of heritage. Whether it is factually accurate or relies on nationalist legends matters less than its iconic place in Newfoundland culture. With Frank Holden's one-man play, Prowse himself has become a character in the local heritage industry.<sup>95</sup> The role of Prowse's work in the propagation of popular myths is not, in itself, particularly alarming. The problem is that the book exists in a type of cultural no-man's-land, where the line between history and heritage has become muddled. As David Lowenthal explains, this confusion raises important issues:

In domesticating the past we enlist it for present causes. Legends of origin and endurance, of victory or calamity, project the present back, the past forward; they align us with forbears whose virtues we share and whose vices we shun. We are apt to call such communion history, but it is actually heritage. The distinction is vital. History explores and explains pasts grown ever more opaque over time; heritage clarifies pasts so as to infuse them with present purposes.<sup>96</sup>

As Newfoundland writers continue to experiment in historical fiction — Wayne Johnston himself has referred to his work as “historical impressionism” — they have begun to play a larger role as spokespersons for the province's culture and history.<sup>97</sup>

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## The Spectre of Separatism: Recent Debates Over Confederation

As the province entered the twenty-first century, nationalism was increasingly becoming an accepted part of mainstream political culture. This process took a major step forward in October 2000, when Craig Dobbin — President of Canadian Helicopters Corporation and arguably the province’s most influential business leader — made a passionate speech to the St. John’s Board of Trade. In a remarkably candid address, Dobbin confronted the question of whether Newfoundland and Labrador should separate from Canada. “If we’re such a drain, such a sinkhole, let us go,” Dobbin told the business leaders, adding that “We’ll manage our own resources and do what leading economies like Ireland are doing.” Asserting that “we have no power,” he then outlined an argument for separating from Canada:

We’ve never had a Newfoundlander appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada. We have seven MPs [out of 301], so it’s very simple for the Federation of Canada to take our natural resources....We are not a have-not province. We are a very rich province. It’s just been taken away from us.<sup>98</sup>

In reporting Dobbin’s speech, the *Globe and Mail* published a feature article comparing separatist sentiment in Newfoundland with the independence movements in other North Atlantic islands, such as the Faroe Islands. Dobbin’s rhetoric was echoed several months later in another speech before the Board of Trade by Victor Young, then-president of FPI, who argued that Confederation had failed to protect Newfoundland’s interests, particularly its hydro-electric resources. Before the 600 people attending the business luncheon, Young allegedly shouted, “*Vivre Terre Neuve libre.*”<sup>99</sup>

The spring of 2001 witnessed a heated debate over the take-over of Fishery Products International by a new board of directors. Led by John Risley of Clearwater Fine Foods, a company based in Nova Scotia, a dissident slate of directors succeeded in ousting Victor Young, FPI’s popular CEO. FPI is the province’s largest seafood processing company, and changes in its leadership were bound to attract a great deal of public attention. Yet the public discussion of the boardroom intrigues ranged far beyond the specific issues of managing the cod fishery or closing processing plants: the FPI controversy revealed the large undercurrent of nationalism in the province’s political culture. Intertwined with debates over the future of FPI was a strong nationalist sentiment against allowing outsiders to control Newfoundland’s natural resources. Open-line shows in St. John’s were filled with callers warning of Nova Scotia pirates trying to rob Newfoundland’s fish.<sup>100</sup> In “Lament for FPI,” a letter to the editor published shortly after Risley’s victory, the corporate struggle was framed in explicitly nationalist terms:

And so the deed is done without revolt,  
The Island’s people  
Neutered by the “stocks” of trade.  
For we are not a nation now,  
But hide beneath the money changer’s table  
Fighting to catch the scraps that fall our way.<sup>101</sup>



Such letters voiced the deep unease many people felt about seeing an outsider take over one of the province's most important corporations.

While the FPI crisis unfolded, prominent political figures openly flirted with nationalist rhetoric. Walter Noel, a long-time Liberal MHA and member of Premier Grimes' cabinet, stated publicly that Confederation with Canada has been a poor deal for Newfoundland because it is organized primarily for the benefit of Ontario and Quebec.<sup>102</sup> Although Noel was careful to stress that he opposes separation, his central argument revolves around the nationalist tenet of local control over revenues and resources:

In 1949 we owned our offshore fish, mineral and petroleum resources, which would have been managed in our best interests, as happened in Iceland and Norway, *if we were an independent country today*. We had employment rates comparable with the rest of the country prior to Confederation, money in the bank (about \$40 million, equivalent perhaps to \$1 billion today) and little public debt.<sup>103</sup>

The stakes in this critique of Canadian federalism involved more than simply radical regionalism or a renewed provincial-rights movement. In April 2001, James McGrath — a former federal cabinet Minister as well as a former Lieutenant-Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador — called for the establishment of a Royal Commission to examine the adequacy of the Terms of Union.<sup>104</sup> For McGrath, as for Dobbin and others, the crux of the matter is that Newfoundlanders are denied the power to manage their resources in their own best interests. In a sign of how commonplace this debate had become, when a St. John's magazine interviewed people about Newfoundland's status within Canada in July 2001, it phrased the question simply in terms of whether Newfoundland could survive economically as an independent country. None of the five published responses objected to the notion of separating from Canada — the desirability of eventual independence appears to have been assumed — and the answers all focused on the twin issues of economic resources and political management.<sup>105</sup> When Premier Grimes announced the establishment of the Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada, he felt compelled to stress that separation was “not on the government's agenda.”<sup>106</sup>

Yet the spectre of separatism continues to affect provincial politics. In a recent speech at an oil and gas luncheon in St. John's, Craig Dobbin again stoked the flames of Newfoundland nationalism. Dobbin was deliberately provocative, saying “I want to try to shock Newfoundlanders into realizing what's happening -- that our youth are gone, our outport way of life is decimated.”<sup>107</sup> He asserted that the province produced \$3 billion worth of oil in 2002 but received only \$30 million in royalties. Citing this and other examples of resource mismanagement, Dobbin criticized Premier Grimes for signing a poor deal to develop Voisey's Bay and for attempting to “give away” the Lower Churchill. He argued that the federal government should eliminate the “claw back” whereby equalization payments are reduced as the province's revenues increase, and he called on Ottawa to underwrite the development of the Lower Churchill hydroelectric project. Dobbin took pains to emphasize that he was in no way advocating actual separation from Canada, but he threatened that if Newfoundlanders are not permitted to become full partners in Confederation by amending the Terms of Union, “they'll find a way to get out of it.”<sup>108</sup> As in his earlier high-profile speeches, Dobbin received a standing ovation, with St. John's Mayor Andy Wells leading the applause. As an editorial in *The*



*Telegram* noted, Dobbin is seen as an extremely astute and well-connected businessman, and his comments must be taken seriously as an indicator of the political climate in Newfoundland and Labrador.<sup>109</sup>

Despite Dobbin's sharp criticism of Premier Grimes, their political views are in many respects quite similar. The recent Speech from the Throne marks a break with the policies of the Wells and Tobin administrations. Its statement on the province's relationship with Ottawa is reminiscent of the nationalist rhetoric of the Peckford era:

While the province is a partner in the Canadian federation, my Government shares the people's view that we are not truly an equal partner. For a partnership to be truly equal there must be respect on both sides. Unfortunately, at this time, the level of indifference, disinterest and disrespect towards provinces is increasing. This was quite obvious during the recent First Ministers' Meeting on health care. It was also clearly evident in the recent decisions taken with respect to divestiture of the port facility in Stephenville, and the virtual closure of the weather forecasting office in Gander. The federal government has failed to respect the people of this province and this must change.<sup>110</sup>

As a forum for discussing how to respond to such grievances, the government has announced the creation of an all-party symposium to be held each autumn; this year it will focus on the issue of equalization payments. And following the report of the Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening our Place in Canada, the Grimes' administration plans to create a "People's Congress," which will discuss the Commission's findings and devise an "action plan."<sup>111</sup> Though the language is vague, these policies appear to form part of a new unilateralist approach whereby most federal-provincial issues are to be debated within neither a bilateral nor a regional framework. Unlike his predecessors, Premier Grimes has focused on provincial rather than national politics, and his initiatives have come the closest to embracing nationalist discourse since the government of Brian Peckford.

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## The Academic Debate

Accompanying this public discussion has been an academic debate over Newfoundland nationalism and the merits of Confederation. John FitzGerald has been a prominent critic of the impact of the Terms of Union on Newfoundland.<sup>112</sup> Invoking the weight of archival evidence — in a published interview, FitzGerald asserts that “History is incontrovertible on some of this stuff” — he notes that Dobbin and Noel raise legitimate points.<sup>113</sup> FitzGerald views the current reappraisal of Newfoundland’s constitutional relationship with Canada as a positive development: “The one thing that is overwhelming in this is that I think people are starting to realize generally that Canada’s best interests are not necessarily Newfoundland’s best interests....And that’s a good thing.”<sup>114</sup> His scholarly work makes three main arguments: the Terms of Union were negotiated through an extremely unfair and flawed political process; Confederation has not served the province’s economic interests; and joining Canada marked the grievous loss of Newfoundland’s nationhood.<sup>115</sup> The popularity of this view was reflected during the special conference convened by the Newfoundland Historical Society to mark the fiftieth anniversary of Confederation, titled “Encounters with the Wolf.”<sup>116</sup>

Nationalist historiography has faced significant criticism within the academic community. James Overton and Jeff Webb have, among others, challenged many of FitzGerald’s assertions. Overton argues that FitzGerald not only minimizes the degree of poverty in the decades prior to 1949, but also overstates the degree to which rural Newfoundlanders were gullible and easily manipulated by the pro-Confederates. According to Overton, “This line of argument links into a denial that pre-Confederation Newfoundland was poor, and assertions that the loss of responsible government caused the growth of dependence.”<sup>117</sup> Pointing out that historical memory is socially constructed, Overton questions whether history can be excavated for incontrovertible facts, and he argues for a more in-depth analysis of the historical context. In a series of provocative articles he has argued that Newfoundland nationalism is purely a post-Confederation invention, founded on populist myths and ideological biases, without authentic roots in the province’s history or culture.<sup>118</sup> His monograph on the relationship between the construction of traditional culture and the development of the tourism industry is especially critical of the contrived nostalgia produced for commercial consumption. Overton emphasizes that “the version of the past is always a carefully selected one.”<sup>119</sup>

Jeff Webb’s work has complemented Overton’s analysis. Webb has debunked the conspiracy theory that the vote for Confederation was somehow rigged and outlines how nationalist historiography has perpetuated romantic myths rooted in an interpretation of Newfoundlanders as victims.<sup>120</sup> Webb argues that these myths not only ignore the reality of Newfoundland’s history, but also embrace a disturbing right-wing ideology which implicitly rejects the democratic rights Newfoundlanders freely exercised in 1949. In addition to this ideological component, nationalism draws on the wider cultural appeal that conspiracy theories enjoy in the present period of political malaise — in Newfoundland as elsewhere in North America — because they offer a fulfilling romantic fantasy:

For a generation that came of age under Smallwood, Moores or Peckford, creating a mythology about the idyllic communities before confederation is easy. Other critics will admit to the existence of poverty, but point to

the value of the resources that might have made Newfoundlanders wealthy if Canada had not stolen them. While these resources had the theoretical potential to enrich Newfoundlanders, our experience, under several constitutional regimes, has been that the reality of capitalist exploitation of these resources did not benefit most Newfoundlanders very much. In fact, the most hardy perennial in Newfoundland has been the struggle to find a constitutional solution to economic problems.<sup>121</sup>

While acknowledging that the theme of protesting against outside control over natural resources has deep roots in Newfoundland history, Webb maintains that the nationalism expressed by Brian Peckford and others in the 1980s did not exist in the pre-Confederation era.

In addition, Sean's Cadigan's ground-breaking work has undermined some of the central economic tenets of nationalist historiography. Cadigan argues that the inability of the physical environment to sustain substantial agriculture had long-term ramifications for the island's development.<sup>122</sup> With the entrenchment of the reform (subsequently "liberal") agenda in the nineteenth century, Newfoundland governments repeatedly neglected the fishery in favour of agricultural expansion and a series of irresponsible development schemes. Instead of blaming economic underdevelopment on outsiders, Cadigan stresses the twin problems of the island's limited agricultural resources and the legacy of ill-conceived economic policies. He rejects liberal historiography and its conviction that Newfoundland's past could be divided into rungs on a ladder of linear progress. For Cadigan, the history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries comprised a chronic cycle of missed opportunities to develop a successful economy. Although this argument appears somewhat similar to Peckford's nationalism, Cadigan made his political position clear: "As a Newfoundlander, I do not have much sympathy for Newfoundland nationalists. They must confront history. Federal and provincial policies in Newfoundland over the past fifty years are an extension, not a break, with Newfoundland's pre-Confederation history."<sup>123</sup> In a penetrating review of recent studies of the post-moratorium fishery, Cadigan argues persuasively that myths continue to cloud our understanding of the province's economy.<sup>124</sup>

## The Roots of Nationalist Rhetoric

Discussions of nationalism have largely presumed that the loss of nationhood marks the determining watershed in Newfoundland history. With the exception of Cadigan and David Alexander, modern scholarship has largely followed the fault line of 1949, tracing the effects of Confederation and debating whether it has caused Newfoundland's economic underdevelopment.<sup>125</sup> Yet the salient feature of Newfoundland nationalism is the remarkable constancy of its basic rhetoric since the early nineteenth century. Its essential logic has remained basically the same for almost two centuries: Newfoundland has a poor economy but is rich in natural resources; its poverty is due to incompetent resource management by state agencies based outside the island; local authorities have superior technical expertise, moral commitment, and popular legitimacy; the absence of proper policies and administration is caused by the lack of sufficient local control over resource exploitation and allocation; thus the key to prosperity is the transference of power to local political institutions. Nationalist ideology contains three primary ingredients: a version of history constructed to support its aims; an assertion that the panacea for historic economic problems is to adopt a new political system; and a conviction that progress can be made only by increasing local autonomy.

The origins of this perspective stretch back to the beginnings of the island's political culture in the early nineteenth century. Like other colonies during the reform era of the 1810s to the 1830s, Newfoundland witnessed the emergence of the elements needed to support proto-nationalism: a middle class, a bourgeois public sphere, and liberal ideology.<sup>126</sup> Newfoundland nationalism is the progeny of neither cultural exceptionalism nor a unique past; rather, it conforms to the general patterns identified by Eric Hobsbawm and Benedict Anderson.<sup>127</sup> As elsewhere in the colonial world, the St. John's reformers who first campaigned for greater local autonomy — in this case representative government, which was eventually granted in 1832 — invented a history tailor-made to suit their goals. In constructing Newfoundlanders as a special people with unique past, they created a narrative of unremitting tyranny under the system of naval government which had operated since the eighteenth century. Placing the theme of resistance to exploitation at the centre of their rhetoric, the reformers produced the cultural memory on which nationalist ideology was built.<sup>128</sup> Newfoundland differs from most of English Canada, where enthusiasm for British imperialism played a central role in fostering nationalism.<sup>129</sup> Its pattern of nationalism is in many ways similar to the post-colonial societies in Asia and Africa. Edward Said's warning about the troubled relationship between liberation and nationalism is also reflected in Newfoundland, where foreign interests — whether English merchants, Ottawa bureaucrats, or Nova Scotian businessmen — are routinely blamed for all the province's problems.<sup>130</sup>

Early nationalist rhetoric embraced a type of legal determinism which viewed economic growth as a product of constitutional development. Reformers focused overwhelmingly on the socio-economic impact of Newfoundland's system of government. Carson and Morris, like many of their contemporaries, believed that the laws governing Newfoundland had retarded its development: they saw constitutional rights and economic growth as inexorably linked together. The premise that statute law actually restricted settlement — a mistaken supposition that persists to the present day — figured prominently in the writings of both Carson and Morris. Carson noted,

In the preamble to Act 10 and 11 of William III the commercial advantages of this Island, and its consequence as a nursery for seamen, appear, by the English Legislature, to have been fully known and appreciated. The subsequent laws, and the general policy of its every changing Governors, have not been calculated to enlarge its consequence, or promote its interests. The people have obtained but little increase in their civil rights. Population has been checked by restraining laws: by the prevention of agriculture the necessaries of life have at all times been dear; and sometimes difficult to procure.<sup>131</sup>

Though he employed more dramatic rhetoric, Morris made essentially the same point in a public speech:

If, Gentlemen, you are convinced that the statement I have made of the laws by which Newfoundland has been governed is faithful, you cannot be surprised at the present state of the country. *The most luxuriant country in the world, situated in the most temperate climate, under such laws would become an uninhabitable wilderness.* Governed by such laws, even England would be now in a worse situation than it was at the invasion of Julius Caesar; that country, which is now the boast of every Briton, and the wonder of an admiring world, would most probably at this day be farmed out to a company of Jews, and its inhabitants only employed in extracting coal and tin from its mines.<sup>132</sup>

This type of rhetoric was far from unique to St. John's politics — reformers throughout British North America were using such language in the early nineteenth century — but its determinism remains at the core of Newfoundland nationalism. *If only* Newfoundland had been granted a different constitutional regime, so the argument runs, then its economy would have prospered.

Underpinning this rhetoric was the axiom of locality as political currency. Carson and Morris both employed the argument that obtaining political control over the island's resources marked the critical stage in the evolution of Newfoundland into a mature society. "The system of giving extensive grants to individuals, who are not resident," Carson argued, "is found to be highly injurious to the interests of young colonies." He linked this economic injury directly to its political antecedents: "The causes which have conspired, most powerfully to retard the improvement of this country, will be found to exist in the nature of its Government."<sup>133</sup> Carson combined the twin issues of justice and prosperity under the common goal of achieving local governance. As the conclusion to his 1813 public letter to the people of Newfoundland illustrates, this appeal was framed in the language of liberation:

You will then walk erect, under the dispensation of a dignified and enlightened justice. Under the fostering care of *a Government who will know you*; a Government founded on the secure basis of defined laws, free from the blasting influence of unjust favouritism, and ill founded antipathy.<sup>134</sup>

Gaining greater political autonomy through representative government would thus produce not only a more prosperous economy, but also a colonial state regulated by the principle of government by public consent.

Displaying essentially the same style and logic, 14 years later Morris was still reiterating Carson's arguments. "It is only under the fostering care of a local government that the trade, fisheries and agriculture of the country can advance," Morris affirmed," adding that the necessary constitutional measures would "give life to the dormant energies of the country, which are now languishing for the want of such encouragement."<sup>135</sup> The crux of the matter was the inherent problem of trying to manage a local economy via an imperial state. The imperial parliament was unable to pass effective legislation for Newfoundland because its members had neither appropriate expertise nor sufficient time to address the colony's changing needs. As Morris put it,

At present, before the slightest permanent regulation can be made, he [the Governor] has to recommend to his Majesty's ministers to have an act passed in the Imperial Parliament; — he will then have to wait two or three years before the ministers can spare time to attend to his recommendations: But, after devoting his best attention to the subject, and obtaining an Act of Parliament to meet the locality, when it arrives in Newfoundland, it is found quite wide of the object intended. But no matter how ridiculous in some parts, how cruel and unjust in others, it is pressed on the people.<sup>136</sup>

Critics of the Department of Fisheries and Ocean make a strikingly similar argument today, pointing out that the federal government is woefully equipped to meet the needs of outport communities. Under this nationalist tenet, the regulation of a complex local industry from a distant capital — whether London in 1813 or Ottawa in 2003 — is at all times and places a fatally flawed constitutional arrangement.

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## Conclusions and Recommendations

Like its counterparts in other post-colonial societies, Newfoundland nationalism has inherited a troubled historical legacy. It carries with it the noble rhetoric of liberation but also the parochial seeds of tribalism and the danger of racism. Defining Newfoundland history in terms of binary antagonism — insiders (islanders) versus outsiders (mainlanders) — nationalism places the blame for the island's failures squarely on the shoulders of others. Employing the argument of achieving greater political accountability, it disingenuously seeks to avoid holding Newfoundlanders responsible for their past mistakes. Political autonomy, whether through outright independence or some lesser constitutional variant, represents the ultimate panacea, a cure for every socio-economic ill. From William Carson through to Craig Dobbin, the assumption has been that local control would create superior resource management. The mantra of Newfoundland being rich in natural resources but poor in political leadership has for generations provided a highly effective political tool. Boiled down to its essential components, this logic contains a basic syllogism: non-local administration of revenues and resources produces an incompetent and unjust form of government; Newfoundland has non-local administration of revenues and resources; therefore its form of government is incompetent and unjust. While scholars continue to fixate on Confederation and re-fight the battles of the 1940s, these nationalist assumptions continue to go largely unexamined. The issue of whether full local control over resources would transform Newfoundland's development remains, in fact, an open historical question, despite the simplified perspectives which continue to appear in recent scholarship.<sup>137</sup>

Nationalism in Newfoundland, as elsewhere, has depended on creating the cultural means through which diverse peoples can unite behind a single political goal. It has necessarily entailed the masking of social cleavages — e.g., rural versus urban and, perhaps most importantly, Newfoundlander versus Labradorian — in order to sustain the political coalition and image of unity needed to make the case for constitutional reform. Since the early nineteenth century, elites have relied on nationalism when it served their economic and political interests. Their interest in nationalism has ebbed and flowed in cycles according to the changing political currents and, as business leaders again take a leading role in advocating constitutional reform, their motives and strategies need to be critically evaluated. We must remain wary of rhetoric which seeks to gloss over systemic social problems by attacking outsiders. For example, the columnist Jeffrey Simpson is often held up as a prime example of an outsider who has unfairly maligned this province — indeed, he has a penchant for offering patronizing homilies — but his writings cannot be dismissed as anti-Newfoundland rants. While Simpson has claimed that the province's "culture of grievance" needs to be jettisoned if the Royal Commission is to function properly,<sup>138</sup> he has also argued that "Newfoundland is getting jobbed by a revenue-sharing and equalization package that deprives the province of its just deserts."<sup>139</sup>

Nonetheless, Newfoundland nationalism should be taken seriously as a real force in the province's political culture. For post-colonial societies like Newfoundland, the problem is that nationalism has often provided the socio-political force needed to confront the effects of imperialism. Liberation movements in many former British colonies have used it to fuel resistance to systemic exploitation. As Aijaz Ahmad comments,

I have long been very suspicious of nationalism, because a great many nationalists strike me as at least very chauvinistic if not altogether fascistic. *But a blanket contempt for all nationalisms tends to slide over the question of imperialism.* I think that those who are fighting against imperialism cannot just forego their nationalism. They have to go through it, transform their nation-state in tangible ways, and then arrive at the other side.<sup>140</sup>

While the recent spate of separatist sentiment will no doubt decline, there are no signs that nationalism will dissipate anytime soon. Opponents of nationalism have tended to separate its rhetoric from the *reality* of Newfoundland history; this creates a false dichotomy of illegitimate (invented current mythology) versus legitimate (genuine past reality). If we are to come to grips with nationalism, we must recognize that it cannot be dismissed out of hand as a presentist sham. While much of nationalist historiography is indeed a recent creation, we cannot assume that other kinds of history are not social constructions as well. Debunking delusive myths is an undeniably important task, but we must not miss the essential point that nationalism is a significant part of Newfoundland's past, rooted in the history of its political and intellectual culture.

Arguably the most important challenge facing the Royal Commission will be to guard against the lure of historical certainty. We must be careful not to replace one set of myths based on cultural traditions with another drawn from historical research. Historians work in the realm of evidentiary probabilities — not absolute certainties — and the facts which we learn about the past are almost never indubitable.<sup>141</sup> The provincial government must not labour under the false premise that historians can agree upon a single fixed history which can be mined for purely dispassionate facts about our past. Historians continue to quarrel over issues such as the impact of the Terms of Union, and the Royal Commission should take pains to consider the diversity of scholarly opinion. Equally important, it should recognize that the twentieth century witnessed dramatic changes in not only our understanding of past events, but also our entire conception of history. Whereas Prowse had celebrated the achievements of Newfoundlanders in the face of adversity, we now tend to see ourselves as trapped by history. With the line between history and heritage becoming increasingly blurred, it is imperative to avoid seeing historical research as a substitute for political debate.<sup>142</sup> Studying the province's history is absolutely critical to understanding our current challenges, but we must keep in mind that the past is as messy and complex as the present.

## **Acknowledgments**

This paper is based on a postdoctoral research project funded by the Institute of Social and Economic Research at Memorial University. Parts of this paper are drawn from Jerry Bannister, “‘A Government who will know you’: The Origins and Development of Newfoundland Nationalism.” (Paper presented to the Atlantic Canada Studies Workshop, St. Francis Xavier University, August 2001); and Jerry Bannister, “Whigs and Nationalists: The Legacy of Judge Prowse’s *History of Newfoundland*”, *Acadiensis* 32, 1 (Autumn 2002), pp. 84-109.

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## Endnotes

1. George Story, *People of the Landwash: Essays on Newfoundland and Labrador*. Melvin Baker, Helen Peters and Shannon Ryan, eds. (St. John's: Harry Cuff, 1997), p. 120.
2. D.W. Prowse, *A History of Newfoundland from the English, Colonial, and Foreign Records* (Belleville, Ontario: Mika Studio, 1972 reprint of 1895 ed.), esp. p. 428.
3. The classic statement of this revisionist scholarship is Keith Matthews, "Historical Fence Building: A Critique of the Historiography of Newfoundland," *Newfoundland Quarterly* 74 (April 1978), pp. 21-29.
4. Wayne Johnston, *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* (Toronto: Vintage, 1998).
5. Stephanie Porter, "Re-releasing *History*: Prowse's History of Newfoundland may be a classic, but it was practically unavailable — until now," *The Express* (27 March-2 April 2002), p. 5. Terming Prowse's work "indispensable reading," Gavin Will, the publisher of the new edition, claimed: "He [Prowse] felt Newfoundland had been done wrong by the individuals who exploited the fishing resources. By not allowing settlement to flourish, they really handicapped the province."
6. George M. Story, "D.W. Prowse and Nineteenth-century Colonial Historiography," in S. Ryan, ed., *Newfoundland History, 1986* (St. John's, 1986), pp. 34-45. Story's other important essays on Prowse, originally published in the early 1970s, are reprinted in *People of the Landwash*, pp. 77-101 & 116-28.
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8. Eric Hobsbawm, *On History* (London: Abacus, 1997), chs. 1-3 & 21.
9. John Reeves, *History of the Government of the Island of Newfoundland* (New York: Johnson Reprints, 1967 reprint of 1793 edition), p. 1. For examples of nineteenth-century works influenced by Reeves, see Lewis Amadeus Anspach, *A History of the Island of Newfoundland* (London: T.& J. Allman, 1819); William Carson, *Reasons for the Colonizing the Island of Newfoundland* (Greenock: William Scott, 1813); Patrick Morris, *Remarks on the State of Society, Religion, Morals, and Education at Newfoundland* (London: A. Hancock, 1827).
10. Patrick O'Flaherty, *Old Newfoundland: A History to 1843* (St. John's: Long Beach Press, 1999), pp. 109-11, 133-34. For an attempt to rehabilitate Reeves' reputation as a historian,

see Mark Warren Bailey, "John Reeves, Esq. Newfoundland's First Chief Justice: English Law and Politics in the Eighteenth Century," *Newfoundland Studies* 14, 1 (Spring 1998), pp. 28-49.

11. Prowse, *History of Newfoundland*, p. xviii.
12. *Ibid.*, p. xix.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 428.
14. Story, *People of the Landwash*, p. 91.
15. Prowse, *History of Newfoundland*, p. 537.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 530.
17. Shane O'Dea, "Judge Prowse and Bishop Howley: Cabot Tower and the Construction of Nationalism," in Iona Bulgin, ed., *Cabot and His World Symposium, June 1997: Papers and Presentations* (St. John's: Newfoundland Historical Society, 1999), pp. 171-82; Peter Pope, *The Many Landfalls of John Cabot* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), ch. 5.
18. Quoted in Story, *People of the Landwash*, p. 122. On this point, see also Neary, "The Writing of Newfoundland History," pp. 4-7.
19. Story, *People of the Landwash*, p. 121.
20. See Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (New York: Norton, 1965 reprint of 1931 ed.); E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (London: Penguin, 1961), pp. 40-41.
21. E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), esp. ch. 2; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Verso, 1991), pp. 198 & 204-06.
22. A.H. McLintock, *The Establishment of Constitutional Government in Newfoundland, 1783-1832: A Study of Retarded Colonisation* (London: Longmans, Green, 1941), pp. 191-92, Despite the similarities in their interpretations, McLintock termed Prowse's *History* "The standard work on Nfld. but a very poor history."
23. Jeff A. Webb, "Constructing Community and Consumers: Joseph R. Smallwood's *Barrelman* Radio Programme," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association New Series* 8 (1997), esp. pp. 165-67. For the broader context, see Peter Neary *Newfoundland in the North Atlantic World, 1929-49* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill Queen's University Press, 1988); James Hiller, "Newfoundland Confronts Canada, 1867-1949," in E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, eds., *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation* (Toronto & Fredericton: University of Toronto Press and Acadiensis Press, 1993), pp. 349-81.
24. See Richard Gwyn, *Smallwood: The Unlikely Revolutionary* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1972); S.J.R. Noel, *Politics in Newfoundland* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), ch. 17.

25. Miriam Wright, *A Fishery for Modern Times: The State and the Industrialization of the Newfoundland Fishery, 1934-1968* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2001), esp. chs. 5-6.
26. Leslie Harris, *Newfoundland and Labrador: A Brief History* (Toronto: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1968).
27. Harris, *Newfoundland and Labrador*, p. 67
28. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 169.
31. James Overton, "Sparking A Cultural Revolution: Joey Smallwood, Farley Mowat, Harold Horwood and Newfoundland's Cultural Renaissance," *Newfoundland Studies* 16, 2 (Fall 2000), pp. 166-201.
32. Sandra Gwyn, "The Newfoundland Renaissance," *Saturday Night* 91, 2 (April 1976), p. 45.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
34. According to Guy, "After Confederation and before it, there was an inferiority complex in Newfoundland — especially when the Yanks marched in here, and they all had teeth and were plump. After Confederation, Joey and his crowd harped on it for their own aggrandizement. The world started in 1949 (according to Smallwood) — before that, there was only depravity, poverty and corruption." See Mark Paddock, "The Ray Guy Philosophy," *The Express* (3 February 1993), p. 9.
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36. See, *inter alia*, John Szwed, *Private Cultures and Public Imagery: Interpersonal Relations in a Newfoundland Peasant Society* (St. John's: ISER, 1966); Melvin Firestone, *Brothers and Rivals: Patrilocality in Savage Cove* (St. John's: ISER, 1967); Herbert Halpert and G.M. Story, eds., *Christmas Mummings in Newfoundland: Essays in Anthropology, Folklore, and History* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).
37. James Overton, *Making a World of Difference: Essays on Tourism, Culture and Development in Newfoundland* (St. John's: ISER, 1996), esp. chs. 5-7. On the concept of folklorism, see Elke Dettmer, "Folklorism In Newfoundland," in G. Thomas and J.D.A. Widdowson, eds., *Studies in Newfoundland Folklore: Community and Process* (St. John's: Breakwater, 1991), pp. 169-76.
38. Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press), p. 13.



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40. Keith Matthews, “History of the West of England - Newfoundland Fishery.” (D.Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1968); Keith Matthews, *Lectures on the History of Newfoundland, 1500-1830* (St. John’s: Breakwater Books, 1988), pp. 181-84. Matthews’ “Lectures” were originally written and distributed in the early 1970s.
41. Keith Matthews, “The Class of ‘32: St. John’s Reformers on the Eve of Representative Government,” *Acadiensis*, 6, 2 (Spring 1977), pp. 80-94.
42. Keith Matthews, “Historical Fence Building: A Critique of the Historiography of Newfoundland,” *Newfoundland Quarterly* 74 (Spring 1978), pp. 21-30.
43. See, *inter alia*, F.W. Rowe, “Myths of Newfoundland,” *Newfoundland Quarterly* 74, 4 (Winter 1979), pp. 3-16; Eric Sager, “Newfoundland’s historical Revival and the Legacy of David Alexander,” *Acadiensis* 11, 1 (Autumn 1981), pp. 104-15; Neary, “The Writing of Newfoundland History,” pp. 3-13; Janzen, “Newfoundland and the International Fishery,” pp. 280-324; Hiller, “Is Atlantic Canadian History Possible?,” 16-22; Jerry Bannister “‘A Species of Vassalage’: The Issue of Class in the Writing of Newfoundland History,” *Acadiensis* 24, 1 (Autumn 1994), pp. 134-44; Ingrid Botting, et al., “Evolutions in Research on Resource Development in Newfoundland, 1960 to the Present.” (Paper presented to the Atlantic Canada Studies Workshop, October 1999).
44. Patrick O’Flaherty, *The Rock Observed: Studies in the Literature of Newfoundland* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), p. 80.
45. See David Alexander, “New Notions of Happiness: Nationalism, Regionalism, and Atlantic Canada,” in Eric Sager, Lewis Fischer, and Stuart Pierson, eds., *Atlantic Canada and Confederation: Essays in Canadian Political Economy*, by David Alexander (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), ch. 5. Matthews’ review article had, rather fittingly, appeared in a special issue of the *Newfoundland Quarterly* (Spring 1978), which featured 10 papers by prominent local scholars (including George Story, Harold Paddock and David Alexander), on the problem of Newfoundland’s place in Confederation.
46. James Overton, “Towards a Critical Analysis of Neo-Nationalism in Newfoundland,” in Robert J. Brym and R. James Sacouman, eds., *Underdevelopment and Social Movements in Atlantic Canada* (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1979), pp. 219-49.
47. Harry Hiller, “Dependence and independence: emergent nationalism in Newfoundland,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 10, 3 (July 1987), pp. 257-75.
48. Ibid., pp. 270-72. For overviews of politics in the 1980s, see E.R. Forbes, “Epilogue: The 1980s,” in E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, eds., *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation* (Toronto & Fredericton: University of Toronto Press and Acadiensis Press, 1993), pp. 512-14; Margaret R. Conrad and James K. Hiller, *Atlantic Canada: A Region in the Making* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2001), ch. 11.
49. Ronald Rompkey, “The Idea of Newfoundland and Arts Policy Since Confederation,” *Newfoundland Studies* 14, 2 (Fall 1998), pp. 272-74.



50. A. Brian Peckford, *The Past in the Present: A Personal Perspective on Newfoundland's Future* (St. John's: Harry Cuff, 1983), pp. 42, 44, 60.
51. David Alexander, *The Decay of Trade: An Economic History of the Newfoundland Saltfish Trade, 1935-1965* (St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1977), esp. pp. 1-19.
52. Peckford, *Past in the Present*, p. 79. On Peckford's use of rhetoric, see James Overton, "Oil and Gas: The Rhetoric and Reality of Development in Newfoundland," in R. Clark, ed., *Contrary Winds: Essays on Newfoundland Society in Crisis* (St. John's: Breakwater Books, 1986), pp. 150-75; Robert Paine, *Ayatollahs and Turkey Trots: Political Rhetoric in the New Newfoundland* (St. John's: Breakwater Books, 1981), ch. 1.
53. Peckford, *Past in the Present*, p. 35.
54. *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.
55. *Ibid.*, pp. 104-05.
56. *Ibid.*, p. vi.
57. Jackson presented his views in a series of columns in the *Evening Telegram* and in the articles, such as, "Can Newfoundland Survive? Thoughts on Traditional Values and Future Prospects," *Newfoundland Quarterly* 75, (1979), pp. 3-11; "Local Communities and the Culture Vultures," *Newfoundland Quarterly* 81 (1986), pp. 7-10.
58. F.L. Jackson, *Surviving Confederation: A Revised and Extended Version of "Newfoundland in Canada"* (St. John's: Harry Cuff, 1986), p. 21. Original italics.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
62. F.L. Jackson, "The Marxist Mystification of Newfoundland History," *Newfoundland Studies* 6, 2 (1990), pp. 267-81; F.L. Jackson, "People and Place: The Academic Celebration of Outport Life," *Newfoundland Studies* 7, 2 (1991), pp. 203-10.
63. James Overton, "A Newfoundland Culture?," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 23, 1 (1988), pp. 5-22.
64. Jackson, *Surviving Confederation*, pp. 37-38.
65. Ray Guy, *You May Know Them as Sea Urchins, Ma'am*, Eric Norman, ed. (St. John's: Breakwater Books, 1975), pp. 104-22; David Benson, "Dutch Arses and Cargo Cults," *TickleAce: A Journal of Literary and Visual Art* 37 (2000), pp. 70-86. O'Flaherty's views appear to have changed over time: in 1975, for example, he argued that Confederation represented a break in the pattern of historic failure; 20 years later he is far less sanguine. See Patrick O'Flaherty, "Looking backwards: the milieu of the old Newfoundland outports," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 10 (1975), pp. 3-9; Patrick O'Flaherty, *Come Near*

*at your Peril: A Visitor's Guide to the Island of Newfoundland* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed. St. John's: Long Beach Press, 1998), pp. 14-27.

66. Keith Matthews, E. Rex Kearley and Paul Dwyer, *Our Newfoundland and Labrador Cultural Heritage* (Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hall, 1984).
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69. *Ibid.*, p. 336. This section of the textbook was titled in Peckfordian language as "The Past Points to the Future."
70. *Ibid.*, p. 336.
71. Claire Hoy, *Clyde Wells: A Political Biography* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1992), pp. 140-41.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 141.
73. Douglas M. Brown, "Sea-Change in Newfoundland: From Peckford to Wells," in Ronald L. Watts and Douglas M. Brown, eds., *Canada: The State of the Federation, 1990* (Kingston: Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, Queen's University, 1990), pp. 200-02.
74. Quoted in Hoy, *Clyde Wells*, p. 151. See also Richard Gwyn, "That was your fifteen minutes, Clyde Wells," *Saturday Night* 106, 1 (January/February 1992), pp. 28-34.
75. Quoted in Hoy, *Clyde Wells*, p. 138.
76. On the failure of the Meech Lake Accord, see Deborah Coyne, *Roll of the Dice: Working with Clyde Wells during the Meech Lake Negotiations* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1992); Andrew Cohen, *The Deal Undone: The Making and Breaking of the Meech Lake Accord* (Vancouver/Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 1991).
77. On Tobin's involvement in provincial politics, see Douglas Letto, *Run: Brian Tobin's Quest for a Second Term* (Paradise, NL: Blue Hill, 1999); Major, *As Near to Heaven by Sea*, pp. 456-60. On the national context, see Donald Savoie, *Governing from the Centre: The Concentration of Power in Canadian Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).
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79. E. Annie Proulx, *The Shipping News* (New York: Touchstone, 1993); Bernice Morgan, *Random Passage* (St. John's: Breakwater, 1992); Bernice Morgan, *Waiting for Time* (St. John's: Breakwater, 1994); John Steffler, *The Afterlife of George Cartwright* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1992); Gordon Rodgers, *A Settlement of Memory* (St. John's: Killick, 1999); Michael Crummey, *River Thieves* (Toronto: Doubleday, 2001).
80. David Macfarlane, *The Danger Tree: Memory, War, and the Search for a Family's Past* (Toronto: Macfarlane Walter & Ross, 1991).
81. Steffler, *Afterlife of George Cartwright*, p. 294 ["Author's Note"].

82. Ibid., p. 294 [”Author’s Note”].
83. See Stuart Pierson, “Review of John Steffler, *The Afterlife of George Cartwright*,” *Newfoundland Studies* 8, 2 (1992), pp. 202-20; Gordon Inglis, “Truth and Fiction,” *Newfoundland Studies* 16, 1 (2000), pp. 67-77.
84. A.S. Byatt, *On Histories and Stories: Selected Essays* (New York: Vintage, 2001), p. 38.
85. *Secret Nation*. Director: Michael Jones, Screenwriter: Ed Riche, Producer: Paul Pope. Newfoundland Independent Film-makers’ Co-Operative and Telefilm Canada, 1992. 109 minutes. On the use of history in the film, see John Edward FitzGerald, “Newfoundland Politics and Confederation Revisited: Three New Works,” *Newfoundland Studies* 9, 1 (Spring 1993), pp. 103-24.
86. Des Walsh, “March 3, 1999: Notes on an Upcoming Anniversary,” *TickleAce: A Journal of Literary and Visual Art* 37 (2000). The poem was part of a “Special Confederation 50 Issue,” edited by Bruce Porter. Walsh’s nationalist view of history is not exceptional in the local arts community. In the screenplay “Power of the Unemployed,” for example, Chris Brooks and Kathryn Welbourn portrayed the suspension of responsible government in 1934 as the means through which a tyrannical ruling elite oppressed working-class Newfoundlanders. Directed by David Ferry, “Power of the Unemployed” was performed in St. John’s by the Resource Centre for the Arts Theatre Company in May 2001.
87. Wayne Johnston, “*A History of Newfoundland — D.W. Prowse [and] The Newfoundland Journal of Aaron Thomas, 1794 — Aaron Thomas*,” in Michael Ondaatje, et al., eds., *Lost Classics* (Toronto: Knopf, 2000), p. 140.
88. Simon Schama, *Dead Certainties (Unwarranted Speculations)* (New York: Vintage, 1991), p. 320.
89. Johnston, *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*, p. 49.
90. Ibid., p. 65. See the following chapter titled “The Book.”
91. Ibid., p. 191.
92. Ibid., p. 211. My italics.
93. Edmund Morris, *Dutch: A Memoir of Ronald Reagan* (New York: Random House, 1999).
94. Stuart Pierson, “Johnston’s Smallwood,” *Newfoundland Studies* 14, 2 (1998), pp. 282-300.
95. Frank Holden, *Judge Prowse Presiding: A Play about the Rugged World of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Newfoundland* (St. John’s: Published by the Author, 1987), pp. 1-44. The first production of the play was directed by Marion Cheeks and staged at the LSPU Hall in June 1986.
96. Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade*, p. xv.
97. H. J. Kirchhoff, “He’ll take Manhattan...[interview with Wayne Johnston]” *The Globe and Mail* (August 31, 2002), p. D3.

98. John Ibbitson, "Newfoundland Looking out to Sea," *The Globe and Mail* (October 7, 2000), p. A3.
99. Craig Westcott, "New found nationalism: Political and Business elite make the case for a new deal with Canada," *The Express* (25 February 2001), p. 3.
100. For a summary of the FPI controversy, see the editorial, "You win, Mr. Risley...so what happens now?," *The Telegram* (3 May 2001), p. 6.
101. Larry Small, "Lament for FPI," *The Telegram* (13 May 2001), p. 7.
102. See Noel's comments quoted in Westcott, "New found nationalism," pp. 3-4.
103. Quoted in Dee Murphy, "We Got Gyped: MHA Walter Noel explains why Newfoundland got the raw deal in Confederation with Canada," *Downhomer* 14, 1 (June 2001), p. 19. Emphasis added.
104. James McGrath, "Time to revisit the Terms of Union," *The Express* (4/10 April 2001), p. 8.
105. Leslie Doyle, "Do you think Newfoundland could survive on it's [sic] own?," *The Newfoundland Herald* (30 July 2001), p. 9. The responses were: (1) "I think we could definitely survive on our own. There is no shortage of resources in this province, they have just been managed terribly"; (2) "I don't think so. Being an island it would be very difficult and with the way the resources are being managed today it just doesn't seem possible"; (3) "I don't think we could survive on our own. The provincial government needs to be stronger and get back what we're entitled to. So until then, no"; (4) "There's really no reason why we couldn't. We have everything here to be prosperous but we are not being managed properly"; (5) "Absolutely not. First of all the unemployment rate is too high here. Something has to be done about that first, and secondly we need better leadership."
106. See "Vic Young to head up commission on Confederation," *The Telegram* (20 April 2002), p. A3.
107. Quoted in Moira Baird, "Mediocre politicians harming province: Dobbin," *The Telegram* (27 February 2003), p. A1.
108. *Ibid.*
109. "Dobbin has his finger on political pulse [lead editorial]," *The Telegram* (1 March 2003), p. A10.
110. *Speech From the Throne. Building Our Future Together: The New Newfoundland and Labrador*. Delivered at the Opening of the Fifth Session of The Forty-Fourth General Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador on Wednesday, March 19, 2003. (St. John's: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2003), pp. 25-26.
111. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
112. See John Edward FitzGerald, "Newfoundland Politics and Confederation Revisited: Three New Works," *Newfoundland Studies* 9, 1 (Spring 1993), pp. 103-24; John Edward FitzGerald, "The Orthodoxy Unchallenged: On Raymond Blake's *Canadians at Last*,"

- Newfoundland Studies* 11, 1 (1995), pp. 127-44; John Edward FitzGerald, “‘The True Father of Confederation’?: Archbishop E.P. Roche, Term 17, and Newfoundland’s Confederation with Canada,” *Newfoundland Studies* 14, 2 (Fall 1998), pp. 188-213.
- <sup>113</sup>. See FitzGerald’s comments quoted in Westcott, “New found nationalism,” pp. 3-4.
- <sup>114</sup>. Ibid.
- <sup>115</sup>. See John Edward FitzGerald, “‘The Difficult Little Island’ That ‘Must Be Taken In’: Canadian Interests in Newfoundland During World War Two,” *Newfoundland Quarterly* (Spring 2001), pp. 21-28.
- <sup>116</sup>. The symposium was organized by the Newfoundland Historical Society and held in February 1999 at St. John’s. The “Wolf,” i.e. Canada, is an allusion to a verse in a popular anti-Confederate song, circa 1869.
- <sup>117</sup>. James Overton, “Poverty, Dependence and Self-Reliance: Politics, Newfoundland History and the Amulree Report of 1933,” in Garfield Fizzard, ed., *Amulree’s Legacy: Truth, Lies and Consequences Symposium, March 2000, Papers and Presentations* (St. John’s: Newfoundland Historical Society, 2001), p. 65.
- <sup>118</sup>. See, *inter alia*, James Overton, “Towards a Critical Analysis of Neo-Nationalism in Newfoundland,” in Robert J. Brym and R. James Sacouman, eds., *Underdevelopment and Social Movements in Atlantic Canada* (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1979), pp. 219-49; James Overton, “Economic Crisis and the End of Democracy: Politics in Newfoundland During the Great Depression,” *Labour/Le Travail* 26 (1990), pp. 85-124; James Overton, “Academic Populists, the Informal Economy and Those Benevolent Merchants: Politics and Income Security Reform in Newfoundland,” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 28, 1 (October 2000), pp. 1-54.
- <sup>119</sup>. James Overton, *Making a World of Difference: Essays on Tourism, Culture and Development in Newfoundland* (St. John’s: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1996), p. 147.
- <sup>120</sup>. Jeff Webb, “Confederation, Conspiracy and Choice: A Discussion,” *Newfoundland Studies* 14, 2 (Fall 1998), pp. 169-87; Jeff Webb, “The Way It Was Done: How Newfoundlanders Chose Confederation,” *Newfoundland Quarterly* New Series (December 2002), pp. 25-32.
- <sup>121</sup>. Webb, “Confederation, Conspiracy and Choice,” p. 181.
- <sup>122</sup>. Sean Cadigan, *Hope and Deception in Conception Bay: Merchant-Settler Relations in Newfoundland, 1785-1855* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).
- <sup>123</sup>. Sean Cadigan, “Missed Opportunities: The Rock at Fifty,” *The Beaver* 79, 1 (March 1999), p. 7.
- <sup>124</sup>. Sean Cadigan, “Whose Fish? Science, Ecosystems and Ethics in Fisheries Management Literature since 1992,” *Acadiensis* 31, 1 (Autumn 2001), pp. 171-95.
- <sup>125</sup> Aside from Cadigan’s studies, noted above, the most notable exception is, of course, the work of David Alexander. See especially “Development and Dependence in



Newfoundland, 1880-1970,” in David Alexander, *Atlantic Canada and Confederation: Essays in Political Economy*, compiled by Eric Sager, Lewis R. Fishcher, and Stuart O. Pierson. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), pp. 3-30.

126. For overviews of this process in the British colonies which later joined Confederation, see Allan Greer, “Historical Roots of Canadian Democracy,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 34, 1 (Spring 1999), pp. 7-25; Jerry Bannister, “The Rhetoric of British Justice in Colonial Reform Movements, 1815-1841.” (Paper presented to the American Society for Legal History, October 1999).
127. E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Verso, 1991); and Eric Hobsbawm, *On History* (London: Abacus, 1997), esp. ch. 21.
128. On the process of creating cultural memory, see Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory*. Steven Rendall & Elizabeth, trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), pp. esp. 150-51.
129. D. R. Owrarn, “Canada and the Empire,” in Robin Winks, ed., *Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume V: Historiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 146-48.
130. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), ch. 5.
131. William Carson, *Reasons for Colonizing the Island of Newfoundland, in a Letter Addressed to the Inhabitants* (Greenock: William Scott, 1813), p. 6.
132. Anon, *A Report of Certain Proceedings of the Inhabitants of the Town of Saint John, in the island of Newfoundland, with the view to obtain a REFORM of the LAWS, more particularly in the mode of their administration, and an INDEPENDENT LEGISLATURE* (St. John’s: Printed by Lewis Ryan, 1821), p. 50. Emphasis added.
133. Carson, *Reasons for Colonizing the Island of Newfoundland*, p. 10.
134. *Ibid.*, p. 24. Emphasis added.
135. Patrick Morris, *Remarks on the State of Society, Religion, Morals, and Education at Newfoundland* (London: A Hancock, 1827), pp. 47-48.
136. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
137. In a recent article comparing the historical development of Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island, David Milne asserts: “For Newfoundland, it was the British merchant class of the West Country that conspired to stunt Newfoundland’s development to ensure their own economic interests in a migratory fishery. But the rich cod fishery had, in any event, always been the scene of greedy conflict and ambition by outsiders, where the rules were set without Newfoundland’s own priorities in mind.” See David Milne, “The Federal Model: Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island,” in Godfrey Baldacchino and David Milne, eds., *Lessons from the Political Economy of Small Islands: The Resourcefulness of Jurisdiction* (London and Charlottetown: Macmillan Press and Institute of Island Studies, University of Prince Edward Island, 2000), p. 80.

- <sup>138</sup>. Jeffrey Simpson, "Pitch the culture of grievance overboard," *The Globe and Mail* (August 30, 2002), p. A15.
- <sup>139</sup>. Jeffrey Simpson, "Just another Canadian fault line," *The Globe and Mail* (November 19, 2002), p. A23. For other columns in which Simpson displays a marked sympathy to some of the province's economic problems, see Jeffrey Simpson, "The balancing act of Roger Grimes," *The Globe and Mail* (August 21, 2002), p. A13; Jeffrey Simpson, "Between the Rock and a hard place," *The Globe and Mail* (November 16, 2002), p. A17.
- <sup>140</sup>. Aijaz Ahmad, "Culture, Nationalism, and the Role of Intellectuals," in Ellen Meiksins Wood and John Bellamy Foster, eds., *In Defense of History: Marxism and the Postmodern Agenda* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1997), p. 53. Emphasis added.
- <sup>141</sup>. As E.H. Carr stated in his classic study, history is "a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the past and the present." See E.H. Carr, *What is History?* (London: Penguin, 1961), p. 30.
- <sup>142</sup>. This is not to suggest that historical research cannot help us chart current trends or imagine the future: my point is simply that it cannot be examined in isolation from contemporary politics. As Neil Postman explains: "To forget our mistakes is bad. But to forget our successes may be worse. In remembering the past, we must keep in mind that, while it is no illusion, it is elusive, a collection of shadowed memories immersed in ambiguities, wish fulfilments, and oversimplifications. Nonetheless, there is something there to see, to learn from, to provide material for new myths. There *is* a there there, and it will show itself though the windshield if we look hard enough in the rearview mirror." See Neil Postman, *Building a Bridge to the 18<sup>th</sup> Century: How the Past Can Improve Our Future* (New York: Vintage, 1999), p. 6.

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