

250 Reviews

the voice of the veteran of the game, the coach, player or referee who has seen it all. There are times when the reader longs for a coffee or a beer and a comfortable place to listen to these people tell their inside stories. Poems like “Guys Like Pete Goegan” about a man who would “put out your eye as soon as shake your hand” or the long prose piece “Big Dogs (2)” in which Red Storey reminisces about the game get the reader past the romance and the pretense and onto the bus or into the locker room (125).

Maggs’ collection is impeccably researched. He has an insider view at times thanks to interviews with retired players (his acknowledgements read like a roster for a Hall of Fame game). No doubt having a brother who actually made it to the NHL helped him establish the verisimilitude (Darryl Maggs played 135 games for the Blackhawks, California Golden Seals, and the Leafs). Most interesting is a series of poems based upon a Newfoundland tour taken by the Boston Bruins in 1956. Maggs’ leg work shows here as he renders several intimate and interesting moments from that tour, including the tale of one man who scored on Sawchuk during a shoot out. Such moments add levity to a collection that could be dismal, but also make more tragic the fall when it finally comes. *Night Work: The Sawchuk Poems* is a genre bending book to be enjoyed by both hockey fans and poetry buffs, and how often can that be said about a piece of work?

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Amy Louise Peyton. *River Lords, Father and Son: The Story of the Peytons and the River Exploits*, 2nd ed. St. John’s, NL: Flanker Press, 2005, ISBN 1-894463-51-X.

IN RECENT YEARS THE NUMBER of small publishing houses in Atlantic Canada has grown, resulting in the publication of a large number of notable works of poetry, literature, local history, autobiography, and family history. This is a true liberation of the spirit of writing: freed from the agenda of publishing-house bean counters and curmudgeonly academic press barons, local authors have filled the book store shelves with rich, colorful studies. Amy Louise Peyton’s second edition of *River Lords: Father and Son* is one such valuable contribution to the genre. Drawing on the collection of family papers in the possession of her husband, Peyton has assembled a combination regional history and family memoir which raises important questions regarding life on the frontiers of the Atlantic economic system in the eighteenth century. Much material in this book has been unavailable to academic historians, and it is wonderful to see it coming to light.

John “the Elder” Peyton first traveled to Labrador with George Cartwright, and after a couple of years on that coast he moved to Fogo, where he settled down in the cod fishery. He eventually spotted opportunities in the dangerous but lucrative salmon trade, and set up a salmon facility on the banks of the Exploits. The salmon

trade was pursued in isolated, inner coastal locations, well within the heartland of the Beothuk summer territory. It had its advantages, such as its stationary character, the predictability of the resource, and the growing European demand for the product. Peyton developed a facility for the linked elements of this complicated trade: placing skilled workers at the right place and the right time, arranging for the collection of lumber and the construction of barrels and weirs, procuring supplies of salt, dealing with concerned local Natives, and maintaining relationships with the big merchant shippers.

At the heart of the book are the frequent citations from the *Journal* of Thomas Peyton, grandson of John Peyton, Sr. The *Journal*, featuring the reminiscences of Thomas on the early history of Notre Dame Bay as told to him by his father, surely ranks as a national treasure for researchers of Newfoundland's past, though it apparently remains in private hands. Thomas Peyton's description of his father's experiences on convoys to and from Newfoundland in the early nineteenth century perfectly captures the spirit of early-modern Atlantic crossings (29-30). Similarly, the old man's descriptions of the early economy of Notre Dame Bay paint a vivid picture of settler life, and answer many questions about the details of early travel in this Atlantic borderland. The close proximity of French fishers, and the ways in which the Irish and English planters worked to iron out inevitable territorial disputes that arose in the "Indian territory," is a story that has parallels in the West Indies and colonial Africa, among other places (63).

The mixed economy of this northern region comes alive in Peyton's writing. What made Notre Dame Bay and the Exploits and Gander River systems different from the rest of English Newfoundland were the variety of commodities processed and activities pursued. Whereas the English Shore below Bonavista was predominantly a dried-cod economy, Peyton's region offered a rich variety of resources for enterprising Europeans. Indeed, it was these very resources, such as furs, salmon, seals, and cod that drew both Beothuk (over the long term) and Whites (over a shorter term) to the region. The importance of fur-trading to the region north of Bonavista is highlighted clearly in the book. Peyton makes it clear that many of the early pioneers in the Notre Dame Bay region practiced a seasonal cycle of economic activity, as did the Beothuk, that took advantage of the winter freeze to prosecute a major fur trapping and processing industry. This winter activity, in addition to the spring seal fishery, salmon and cod harvesting throughout the middle months of the year, and gardening, haying, gunning, trouting, wood cutting, and other activities, made settlement viable, if not attractive, in the bays and inlets of the island-studded northern region.

Peyton correctly identifies Fogo Island as a "fulcrum" and highlights its place as a key regional emporium (7). Fogo was indeed the gateway to Notre Dame Bay and acted as an embarkation point for trips to "the Labrador." The merchants who operated at Fogo, Jeremiah Coghlan and then John Slade, may be credited with "opening" the territory north of Bonavista to English enterprise and settlement, but

it is Peyton's people, individual furriers, lumber workers, salmon men, and fishers, who brought the cultural colour to the region. They named the harbours and coves, they developed a material culture which suited local seasonal patterns, and they adapted their Old World customs and culture to the environment of their new home in northern Newfoundland. There is a compelling environmental history woven through Peyton's book. The salmon fishers worked the area of the "inner coast," which was the heartland of the Beothuk people. The random power of the great rivers, the unpredictability of the arrival of certain ocean species, the vagaries of weather and the sheer difficulty of movement through hostile islandscapes all emerge in the Peyton family narrative. The institution by John Peyton, Sr. of a salmon operation on the Exploits River serves as the ostensible starting point for the unique Peyton family story, and it is in John Peyton and his son that the image of the Atlantic pioneer is truly revealed.

It is at this point in the book that interactions between Beothuks and salmon fishers get personal for Peyton. In recent years scholars and popular authors have paid much attention to the atrocities committed by the Peytons, especially John Sr. Amy Louise Peyton admits that it is this shameful narrative that she hopes to dispel, or, at least, place in historical context. She seeks to soften the image of old John Peyton as an "Indian killer," though she seems content to portray the Beothuk as marauding savages. Her efforts at revisionism do not extend to an attempt to rethink the Beothuk. As a hunter-gather people, the Beothuk got into the habit, early in the days of European visitation to Newfoundland, of removing seemingly abandoned iron nails and refuse items from French and English fishing stations. It is unlikely that the Beothuk viewed this harvesting activity as stealing. Their concept of ownership and private property may have led them to believe that abandoned or discarded items were up for grabs. A nod in the direction of some modern scholarship in this area, such as the classic works of Ralph Pastore and Ingeborg Marshall, not to mention the exciting recent work of Donald Holly, would have helped Peyton. In general, Peyton's treatment of the Beothuk, while energetic, harkens back to the old days of "Indian" history, when savages stalked the forest and terrorized well-meaning White pioneers. There is little sense in the book of a Beothuk side to the story, of a violated people searching for ways to communicate with incoming Europeans that their ways ... slinging fish offal and animal bones into coves, indiscriminately trapping any and all fur-bearers, over-fishing the salmon rivers ... were a violation of Beothuk spiritual and economic mores. Nor is there any recognition in the book that the Beothuk had the capacity to change and adapt to new circumstances in the Notre Dame Bay heartland.

Another vaguely unsettling aspect of the book is the complete invisibility of Irish people. A close reading of this second edition reveals only one mention of "Irish emigrants" to the Bay (45). This is strange, because at the very time when John Peyton Sr. was nurturing his salmon operation, the number of Irish flooding into Notre Dame Bay each year was accelerating, aided by merchants such as Benjamin

Lester and John Slade, who transported Irish passengers directly to and from the Bay throughout the 1770s and 1780s. Irish hunters and furriers were involved in the deaths of Beothuk, for example. Irish artisans and servants provided the labour that fueled the fishery, and many Irish became established as yeoman-planters, especially at Fogo and Tilting Harbour, though throughout the wider Bay as well. It seems strange that in a book which otherwise pays careful attention to the human diversity of the region, with its French, English and Beothuk people, the Irish are left out.

There are a couple of factual clangers in the book. John Slade did not have 150 brigs plying the Atlantic trade (29) ... this would have put his Poole-Fogo fleet on a par with the entire British navy. Similarly, Peyton's statement that in 1819, the "Bay of Notre Dame had not yet been surveyed" is incorrect (63). A high-quality survey of the region was conducted by Michael Lane in the late 1760s. These small faults do not condemn what is otherwise a fascinating and important book. Peyton's direct connection (through marriage) to the principle characters of the saga make it more authoritative and, somehow, special. It is a model of regional and family history and I hope that it serves as an inspiration for other writers.

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Helen Fogwill Porter. *Finishing School*, Lawrencetown Beach: Pottersfield Press, 2007, ISBN 978-1-895900-88-0

ONE OF THE MAIN DIFFERENCES between the journal and the story is that stories tend to tie things up, to dispose of matters. In the journal, the preoccupations are recurrent, the sense of finality or closure is impossible to attain, and the idea of returning life to an equilibrium is not done within the bonds of a plot, however loose, but within the limits of the waking time available each day. Life is an intermittent phenomenon that appears always in disarray; we cannot be past the middle of things, as Frank Kermode said (*The Sense of an Ending*, 1966). This is the kind of truth claimed by the journal, the genre Helen Fogwill Porter has chosen for *Finishing School*, a truth she has transferred to the format of another genre, the novel.

In *Finishing School* we listen to the commentaries of Eileen Novak, a spirited woman with a marriage behind, caught in the everyday reality of a low-paying job and a net of close relatives who need her urgent support. The authenticity of her speech, voice, and moods move us forward in a suspenseful manner produced by ordeals such as the violence of her son-in-law against one of her daughters, the aging of relatives that become increasingly dependent on her, or the attempt to come to terms with her affair with a young man. The reader's intimate engagement with her portrait of how she behaves as a reaction to other people's behaviour is also possible because she bears witness to specific social mores (working-class downtown