

Harry A. Cuff et al., eds. *Where Once We Stood. The Newfoundland Quarterly 100th Anniversary Anthology.*

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In her novel, Clark acknowledges the influence of her own particular “tribe,” in particular other Newfoundland artists such as Anne Meredith Barry (whose paintings of the Southern Shore are frequently evoked in Clark’s narrative) and folklorist Barbara Reiti (allusions to Reiti’s *Strange Terrain*, a study in Newfoundland fairylore, contribute to Clark’s depiction of Newfoundland’s folk culture), as well as local artisans, musicians, poets and novelists. One of Meredith Barry’s paintings, “From My Studio Window #10,” aptly selected for the novel’s jacket cover, is strangely evocative of a passage from E.J. Pratt’s *Titanic* (1935): “The sky was moonless but the sea flung back / With greater brilliance half the zodiac.”

*Latitudes of Melt* discloses what Patricia Hampl refers to as “sojourns into the land of memory.” In the process it raises important questions about how stories originate, how we “dream memory, not fiction,” how communal knowledge is transmitted and received, and why at times we are mysteriously inclined to keep the company of certain souls. One of the epigraphs to *Latitudes of Melt* is a fragment of a poem, “Grief and the Sea” by Don McKay: “The sea as it spends itself / can teach us how to grieve.” Perhaps, Clark suggests, if we truly listen to the seductive sirens and songs of the sea, we may learn how to live more fully, how to weather life’s many storms, and perhaps even how to die with greater dignity and fewer regrets.

The author of a dozen works of fiction, Clark is an adept weaver of the real and the imaginary. At its best, her prose has the clear intensity and the hypnotic power of the icy blue stars that illuminate a late November sky over Quidi Vidi.

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Harry A. Cuff et al., eds. *Where Once We Stood. The Newfoundland Quarterly 100th Anniversary Anthology*. Harry Cuff Publications, St. John’s, 2001, ISBN 1-896338-21-6

AS ITS SUBTITLE suggests, this volume celebrates the 100th anniversary of *The Newfoundland Quarterly*. The editors of *Where Once We Stood* have therefore assembled a selection of material from past issues, including articles, short stories, poetry, memoirs, book reviews, and photographs. Many of the contributors and supporters of the *Quarterly* appearing in its pages read like a “Who’s Who” of Newfoundland literature, history, and culture — George Story, Michael Harrington, Patrick O’Flaherty, Paul O’Neill, Percy Janes, Leslie Harris, Art Scammell, and others. The year 2001 also marked the centenary of the first successful trans-Atlantic wireless signal, received by Guglielmo Marconi on Signal Hill in St. John’s. Several of the pieces in *Where Once We Stood* therefore also commemorate that “signal” event, together with the radio communications developments that ensued. Other events and developments that hold significance for Newfoundland and Labrador are also featured, from the sealing disaster of 1914 to the “tidal wave” of

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1929 to the *Ocean Ranger* disaster of 1984. Historians like James Hiller and Melvin Baker look back on such key developments as the construction of the Newfoundland Railway and the Great Fire of 1892 in St. John's. Newfoundland's contribution to the Great War is remembered, as is the establishment of Memorial College, later Memorial University of Newfoundland, founded as a living memorial to those who were willing to sacrifice their all in that great struggle. There is a sampling of book reviews, poetry and short fiction. Those content to dip, sample, and browse their way through this eclectic mix may well be content with this addition to their personal libraries. But for those expecting a more coherent overview of *The Newfoundland Quarterly's* contribution to the cultural and intellectual life of this province, the volume may prove a disappointment.

It should, perhaps, be remarked that the 75th and 85th anniversaries were also marked by special publications, and there were two compilations of the best of the *Quarterly's* poetry. Compared with these earlier volumes, *Where Once We Stood* lacks coherence and focus. The 75th-anniversary volume offered a selection of articles and essays reprinted in chronological sequence; readers could, in effect, trace the history and evolution of the *Quarterly* directly. Essays in the present volume, in contrast, follow one after the other with no apparent rhyme or reason — an essay on Victoria Cross-winning Corporal Ricketts is followed by one on the Labrador Boundary dispute, then Art Scammell's classic re-writing of St. Luke's account of the miraculous haul of fishes, which in turn is followed by some photographs of Labrador. Though substantial attention is given in the opening pages to Marconi's achievements in 1901, the visit by Marconi's daughter many years later (when exactly? we are not told) is relegated to page 119. Nor are the pieces arranged in chronological order of original appearance; indeed, too often we are not told when a piece was originally written or published. Such drawbacks limit the worth of the volume.

Nor have the editors provided introductions to the essays that might have explained their significance to new readers. The late Keith Matthews's essay on "Historical Fence-Building," for instance, has been re-printed several times, as befits an essay that challenged how we perceived our past. An introduction by one of his students would have placed Matthews within the context of Newfoundland historiography even as it provided an opportunity to explain the degree to which our understanding of Newfoundland history has evolved beyond Matthews's own revisionism.

The 85th-anniversary volume did not reprint past material, but instead offered a series of commissioned essays about the *Quarterly*, followed by a compendium Table of Contents covering the entire period from 1901 to 1986. Had that feature been updated for the *Quarterly's* centennial, it would have made *Where Once We Stood* a valuable research tool. Instead, we have a number of selections from past issues that, individually, may be interesting, but which collectively are not. Indeed, some of the pieces are simply recycled from the previous anniversary volumes.

Will readers recognize that the “Overview” of the *Quarterly* by Percy Janes in the closing pages first appeared in the 85th-anniversary volume and has not been updated to cover the subsequent years of publication?

In short, this volume is an opportunity missed. Though the *Quarterly* has, over its many years, published an enormous volume of material of inestimable worth to historians, geographers, sociologists, folklorists, literary scholars, and specialists in many, many other disciplines, this particular collection will disappoint those who might have turned to it as a research tool. “But the *Quarterly* has never aspired to be a scholarly publication,” some might quickly insist; “this is more a time capsule of what the *Quarterly* has had to offer for the past century.” True. Yet even a time capsule can be assembled and its contents organized, and at the very least *explained*, so that those who examine its contents end up with a better understanding of the legacy contained therein. Such an anthology would have provided a stronger sense of the role that *The Newfoundland Quarterly* has played in the past century in defining not only who we are today but truly revealing where once we stood.

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Gordon Inglis. *Death and Breakfast: A Mystery*. Killick Press, St. John’s, 2001, ISBN 1-894294-38-6

TAKE ONE LARGE country house, one disabled telephone, and blend with a dark and foggy night to thicken. Throw in an awkward parson, an amateur sleuth, a curmudgeon, a retired detective, a couple of doddering sisters and a few colourful types from the neighbouring village. Season with an apparent murder and a well-aged Mountie (Corporal Cameron preferred, trusted by literary cooks since 1912). Stir gently over a low heat until murky pasts and hidden motives bubble to the surface. Skim and discard red herrings until only the solution remains. Serve cold.

Ah, yes! A cherished recipe, passed down by dear Aunt Agatha and others. It has been a staple of the murder-mystery diet for longer than many care to remember. Served too often or with inferior ingredients, however, it tends to curb the appetite.

Gordon Inglis treads a well-worn path here, excepting the fact that his parlour drama is set in rural Newfoundland. Aside from discourse on icebergs, a lamentation on the plundering of outport antiques, and the defining of dinner versus supper, the premise is all too familiar. A murder mystery weekend is organized for a group of genre aficionados and, surprise! an actual murder takes place. Or at least that appears to be the case. As the loathsome Browne says with a barking laugh, “You’ve really covered the clichés.” Inglis is quite conscious of his creative direction. His characters are fully versed in the methods of Marple and Poirot and there is frequent allusion to writers like Dorothy Sayers and Anne Hart. Still, all is not tongue in