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GRADE / DEGREE:	ANNÉE D'OBTENTION / YEAR GRANTED
Ph.D. (English)	2003
TITRE DE LA THÈSE / TITLE OF THESIS: Distinct Society: Cultural Identity in Twentieth Century Newfoundland Literature	

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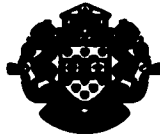
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**Distinct Society: Cultural Identity
in Twentieth-Century Newfoundland Literature**

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**A thesis submitted to
the School of Graduate Studies
of the University of Ottawa
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of**

**Doctor of Philosophy
in English Literature**



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Abstract

This thesis examines selected representations of Newfoundland cultural identity in twentieth century Newfoundland literature from Norman Duncan, E.J. Pratt and George Allan England to Bernice Morgan, Patrick Kavanagh and Wayne Johnston. The discussion is located within a broad context of popular and scholarly writings on the subject and a conceptual framework influenced by Benedict Anderson's book *Imagined Communities* and Seamus Heaney's essay "The Sense of Place." Nineteenth century attempts to maintain the distinctiveness of Newfoundland identity were politically motivated by advocates of home rule, civil liberties and sovereignty, and constituted part of the rhetoric and mobilization that resulted in responsible government and dominion status for the colony. In the twentieth century, a variety of writers addressed the subject, some from the perspective of visitors, others from the perspective of residents. Early in the century, this resulted in representations in the heroic mode that focussed upon the struggle of outport Newfoundlanders to wrest a living from the sea. At mid-century, this myth of heroic Newfoundland was supplanted by the romantic myth of the old outport in which the community life of Newfoundland coastal villages was recorded and extolled. By the 1970s, the outports had become symbolic of Newfoundland but by this time they were also beset by enormous changes brought about by the Second World War, Confederation with Canada, and government policies of industrialization and resettlement. Some writers responded by intensifying explorations of the cultural roots of the province in the traditional life, others addressed the challenges of the present, which included issues of neo-colonialism and economic imperialism as well as cultural dislocation. In all of this, Newfoundland writers contributed in significant ways to the imagining of their community and the survival of a country of the mind.

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Introduction

“With her unique traditions and fierce pride, Newfoundland is, like Quebec, a distinctive homogeneous cultural entity – a *nation*; possibly the only true English-speaking *nation* left in North America.”

– Kenneth Peacock¹

By the time the Canadian folklorist Kenneth Peacock completed his research into songs of the Newfoundland outports in 1965, he was profoundly impressed by the cultural homogeneity and distinctiveness that he had experienced in field trips made to various locations in the province over the period of a decade. In suggesting that Newfoundland, like Quebec, was a nation, Peacock was giving expression not only to a strong sense of place in Newfoundland but also a sense of shared cultural identity that often has a political dimension. Politically, of course, Newfoundland, unlike Quebec, had already been a nation. A self-governing colony of Britain since 1855, the country had come of age during the first World War, contributing to the allied cause in enlistments and losses well out of proportion to its size and significance on the world stage. After the war, Newfoundland, like its more prosperous sister colony Canada, assumed the status of dominion within the British Empire. But the war was both the making and the undoing of Newfoundland as a country. Massive casualties decimated the ranks of the new generation of leaders and an enormous war debt crippled the economy. A post-war slump, combined with political mismanagement, brought the country to the brink of ruin. The world-wide economic collapse of 1929 was the *coup de grace* and in 1932 Newfoundland bowed under pressure from Britain to relinquish its sovereignty and its democratic institutions and accepted government by

an appointed commission of British civil servants and Newfoundland administrators. By the time Peacock was writing the introduction to his collection, *Songs of the Newfoundland Outports*. Newfoundland had endured fifteen years of Commission of Government, recovering democratic rights in 1948 only to opt narrowly for Confederation with Canada rather than return to independent nationhood.

It is no small thing for a country to relinquish its sovereignty, especially one that had on previous occasions fiercely fought off threats to its independence. Newfoundland's surrender of its democratic institutions in 1932 and its decision in 1948 to join Canada were of one piece, and the significance of these events has been probed relentlessly, even obsessively, by Newfoundland scholars, intellectuals, artists and writers over the past thirty years. They have been joined in this analysis by observers from outside the province and even from outside Canada because, although personally relevant to Newfoundlanders, these matters are of interest to anyone pondering the nature of cultural identity and the relationship between cultural identity and sovereignty. In the case of Newfoundland, the political rhetoric surrounding the events of 1932 and 1948 has obscured their true meaning. The symbolic significance of surrender is powerful, however, and resists a positive interpretation because it connotes the triumph of force and a failure of will. Psychologically it can be deeply damaging if not truthfully confronted. Historians, social scientists, and writers have addressed this issue over the past thirty years with varying degrees of success. Within the realm of creative literature, it is fair to say that cultural dislocation has been the major, although certainly not the only, preoccupation of contemporary writers choosing to write about Newfoundland. But attempts to articulate the culture of Newfoundland go back to the mid-nineteenth century and it is illuminating to consider recent works in an historical context.

The most thoughtful results of this probing – scholarly and creative – speak not only to Newfoundlanders but to students everywhere who are interested in the interaction between writers and society, especially the interactions of writers and societies characterized by such a strong sense of place and shared cultural identity that they might plausibly be classified as nations.

Three scholars, in particular, are of critical importance to the discussion of these issues as they are treated in the literature. No one embarking upon research in the field of Newfoundland Studies can escape indebtedness to the work of G.M. Story. If Story was not “the onlie begetter” of Newfoundland Studies at Memorial University in the mid-1950s, he was surely its greatest champion.² In addition to being a superb and prolific scholar, Story was effective in convincing the University to find the resources to develop its capacity to study Newfoundland, including the disciplines of linguistics, folklore and anthropology. Story’s training as a textual critic at McGill and Oxford was reflected in his approach to Newfoundland Studies, which was to review scrupulously the printed record and translate into text the oral tradition so that a canon of Newfoundland discourse could be objectively considered by students. His early immersion in Renaissance English may account for his appreciation of a variety of scholarly disciplines and perspectives, making him a congenial collaborator and a generous mentor. Story’s strong sense of the distinctive culture of Newfoundland fueled his conviction that it merited the highest standards of scholarly scrutiny. This is evident in his work, the subtle and suggestive essays on various aspects of Newfoundland life, history and culture, and his *magnum opus*, the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*.³

More directly concerned with the literature are Patrick O’Flaherty, especially in his book,

The Rock Observed, and Patrick Byrne in his unpublished Ph.D. thesis, *Folk Tradition, Literature and a Society in Transition*.⁴ Opinionated and combative, *The Rock Observed* is a ground-breaking piece of research that comprehensively explores the printed record in the manner of an entertainingly written, if sometimes quirky, annotated bibliography. It is an indispensable scholarly tool, especially for the earlier literature. Byrne's work, though not yet published, is an impressive work of scholarship. It focuses mostly on twentieth-century literature up until 1970, offering a balanced and insightful analysis of the interaction between the folk culture and the literature of Newfoundland. The present work is more concerned with broad issues of cultural identity that have their roots in the earlier literature and that emerge with great energy in the last three decades of the twentieth-century.

The writers of Newfoundland during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s struggled to define, locate and affirm the cultural identity of the province during a time of immense change. The country's decision in 1949 to join the Canadian Confederation constituted in itself a powerful blow to Newfoundlanders' sense of themselves as a people, if only because in the twentieth century the terms *nation* and *state* were usually considered to be coterminous. If Newfoundland was no longer a state, therefore, could it any longer be a nation? As if this were not traumatic enough, the social changes that swept the old colony and the new province during the 1950s and 1960s had an even greater destabilizing effect.⁵ Confederation entitled Newfoundlanders to the security of the great Canadian social safety net. Many of them had indeed voted for union with Canada for exactly this purpose. But although social security, unemployment insurance, and the so-called 'baby bonus' redistributed much-needed income to the underprivileged, the new economy quickly undermined Newfoundland's fragile industrial base. Manufacturing companies

and retail businesses designed to serve a small local market collapsed, unprotected by tariffs, to be replaced by Canadian suppliers and branch outlets. The fishery, for centuries based upon the export of salt cod to Europe, South America and the Carribean, turned decisively to the provision of frozen fish for the North American market. This spelled the final demise of the centuries-old truck system, in which fish were exchanged for goods and supplies, and established a cash economy in outport Newfoundland. The fisherman was freed from servitude to the merchant but the new economy required fewer fisherman. The loss of jobs caused by this economic rationalization was not made good by the strategy of industrialization adopted by the post-Confederation Smallwood Government. The strategy indeed was a dismal failure and Newfoundland entered the 1960s with high unemployment levels and deeply in debt, the \$40 million nest egg it had carried into Confederation frittered away, and many of its people, within one short decade, locked into a lifestyle of dependency.

During the 1950s and 1960s, however, Newfoundland was also becoming, for the first time in its history, a broadly self-reflective society. This also was a change brought about by Confederation and by the messianic dreams of Joseph R. Smallwood. The Premier believed in education even more passionately than he did in industrialization, and Canadian equalization payments made it possible for the province to afford mass education. Among the first acts of the newly elected provincial government in 1949 was the granting of full university charter to the Memorial University College. The development of Memorial University during the 1950s and 1960s transformed the entire education system in the province. Not only did this vastly enlarge the class of persons in society who were trained to think critically, and to develop ideas based on evidence and logic, it also secularized this class, because the University, unlike the secondary

school system, was non-denominational.

By the 1970s, Newfoundland was no longer isolated from the outside world. Mass education and mass communications had connected the province to McLuhan's global village. Newfoundland youngsters, even in remote communities, were as tuned in to drugs, sex and rock and roll as youngsters anywhere. At the same time, they were intensely aware of their roots. Indeed, the discrepancy between their heritage and their future at times seemed irreconcilable. This was the painful psychological fissure that afflicted the first post-Confederation generation of artists and creative writers in Newfoundland who came of age during the early 1970s, and it became the spur to their work. The savage satire and romantic nostalgia of Ray Guy provided daily sustenance in the columns of *The St. John's Evening Telegram* for citizens who looked for an alternative reading to the oppressive booming of the benefits of Confederation put out by the public relations machinery of the government of Premier Joseph R. Smallwood. During that decade the poetry of Al Pittman and Tom Dawe became known, the plays of Michael Cook, the Mummers Troupe and Codco were produced, and the paintings of Christopher Pratt and the engravings of David Blackwood began to reach a wide audience in Newfoundland and across Canada.⁶ Young musicians, schooled in the folk and rock idioms of the 1960s, came to appreciate the traditional musicians in their midst and went to school again at the feet of fiddlers, accordion players and singers two and three times their age, whose fame had been previously limited to a few small outport communities in isolated parts of the island. This explosion of creative energy was enthusiastically termed "the Newfoundland renaissance" in a substantial article by journalist Sandra Gwyn in the magazine, *Saturday Night*, published in April 1976.⁷

It might be expected that twenty-five years later the energy behind this creative activity

would be flagging, but such is not the case. Some changes are evident, however. Whereas the literary genres that flourished during the 1970s and early 1980s were poetry and theatre, since the mid-1980s strong works of prose fiction and non-fiction have come to the fore. As well, the 1970s were characterized by a sense of engagement in a struggle for what Cyril Poole called “the Newfoundland soul” in which the past was still regarded as living and extending into the present.⁸ This is summed up in the opening line of the narrator in Al Pittman’s *A Rope Against the Sun* (1974): “It is a year near our time.”⁹ In the literature of the 1990s, the old outpost seems more distant, personal memoir and historical fiction evoking a past that is truly past. Nevertheless, Newfoundland writers continue to confront the denigration of traditional values that accompanied Confederation and the ushering in of “the new Newfoundland.”¹⁰ The *thesis* of Confederation is often succinctly summed up in the injunction attributed to Joe Smallwood: “Burn your boats!” Gwyn’s “renaissance” was its *antithesis* in which the vocabulary and idiom of a boat-building society were defiantly reasserted. The spectrum of contemporary Newfoundland writing, however, presents a more complex view, a *synthesis*, which tests the possibility of an imaginative reconciliation between the old and the new.

Early attempts to characterize the outstanding traits of Newfoundlanders often emphasized their remarkable powers of endurance. In the hands of highly skilled writers, the “hardy” Newfoundlander soon became the heroic Newfoundlander. This was the perspective taken by such writers as Norman Duncan and E.J. Pratt writing in the first decades of the twentieth century. This myth still commands respect but after the Second World War it was no longer the predominant myth of Newfoundland literature. The heroic myth was replaced by the myth of the old outpost. On the verge of their extinction, the outposts came to be valued for the

unique communities they were. The virtues of the way of life they represented: their egalitarianism; their strong bonds of kinship and support; their use of irony as a means of avoiding conflict, saving face and maintaining individuality in the midst of powerful forces for cohesion; their fatalism; their amalgamation of various mainstream Christian denominations with superstitious beliefs and pagan practices; their rich tradition of story-telling; their employment of a bantering, baiting style of social intercourse popularly known as tormenting – all these characteristics of outport culture came to be cherished as representing a distinctive and valuable world-view. At the same time, the new Newfoundland was a changing society. Some writers expanded the definition of Newfoundland culture beyond the traditional outport community. Others delineated the stresses and strains implicit in the struggle to retain a sense of cultural coherence in the face of widespread culture shock.

Benedict Anderson, in attempting to comprehend the rise of nationalism in the late eighteenth century and its continuing strength two centuries later, adopts an anthropological approach, classifying it not as ideology but as culture and treating it “as if it belonged with ‘kinship’ and ‘religion’ rather than with ‘liberalism’ or ‘fascism.’”¹¹ He begins his consideration of the cultural roots of nationalism with the fact of human mortality: “The great merit of traditional religious world-views (which naturally must be distinguished from their role in the legitimation of specific systems of domination and exploitation) has been their concern with man-in-the-cosmos, man as species being, and the contingency of life.” In contrast, “[t]he great weakness of all evolutionary/progressive styles of thought, not excluding Marxism,” is that questions relating to the overwhelming burden of human suffering – disease, mutilation, grief, age, and death, “are answered with impatient silence.” Furthermore, religious thought responds to

obscure intimations of immortality whereas evolutionary/progressive thought has “an almost Heraclitean hostility to any idea of continuance” (10-11). Anderson’s view is that nationalism, like kinship and religion, provides comfort to individuals facing the profound loneliness and uncertainty that is at the heart of human life. His explication of the phenomenon stresses the potential strength of community in answering deep human needs for reassurance. The nation, which he defines as “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign,” combines salient functions of kinship and religion, expanding the notion of kinship and secularizing the notion of religion (6).

Seamus Heaney, in his essay “The Sense of Place,” articulates a similar concept, except that he is less concerned with the idea of sovereignty.¹² Heaney contrasts those place names of Ireland that are evocative of an older culture that has largely been lost with places such as Drumcliff, Ben Bulbin, Lissadell and Innisfree that now live in the imagination, stirring responses other than the merely visual, through their association with the poetry of Yeats:

Irrespective of our creed or politics, irrespective of what culture or subculture may have coloured our individual sensibilities, our imaginations assent to the stimulus of the names, our sense of place is enhanced, our sense of ourselves as inhabitants not just of a geographical country but of a country of the mind is cemented. It is this feeling, assenting, equitable marriage between the geographical country and the country of the mind, whether that country of the mind takes its tone unconsciously from a shared oral inherited culture, or from a consciously savoured literary culture, or from both, it is this marriage that constitutes the sense of place in its richest possible manifestation. (132)

Although scholars of Newfoundland language and culture have demonstrated the importance of distinguishing between the two culturally distinct parts of the British Isles – Southeastern Ireland and Western England – from which most of the populace originated, the strong sense of shared cultural identity evident in Newfoundland arises from the common experience of struggling to survive as a coastal people in an extreme environment with little technological support and isolated much of the year from the outside world. Life and death crises were common in this situation and human vulnerability was a fact that could not be ignored. Community provided a means of physical and spiritual sustenance when all else failed. In time, it overcame differences of religion and origin, and interdependence became an imperative of living in this place, a defining element of a shared heritage. For eighty years, this shared heritage, and the values of endurance and community that are at its core, constituted Anderson's imagined political community, both limited and sovereign. Even now, fifty years after the national dream was abandoned, and despite enormous changes that have fundamentally altered the structure of the society, Newfoundland still strives to maintain a country of the mind, and Newfoundland writers play a crucial role in the enterprise.

Endnotes

1. "Introduction," *Songs of the Newfoundland Outports* (Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, 1965), xxv.
2. English scholar E.R. Seary and historian G.O. Rothney were also early advocates of research into Newfoundland subjects.
3. The essays are collected in *People of the Landwash: Essays on Newfoundland and Labrador*, ed. Melvin Baker, Helen Peters and Shannon Ryan (St. John's: Harry Cuff, 1997). See also the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, ed. G.M. Story, W.J. Kirwin and J.D.A. Widdowson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), hereafter known as the *DNE*.
4. *The Rock Observed: Studies in the Literature of Newfoundland* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979) and *Folk Tradition, Literature and a Society in Transition: Newfoundland* (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis. St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1994).
5. Not all of these changes originated with Confederation. Indeed many, such as the shift from salt fish to frozen fish production and the collapse of the "truck" system, had been underway for decades. As well, the construction of large American military bases in Newfoundland during the Second World War had a significant modernizing effect on Newfoundland society. There is no doubt, however, that the pace of change dramatically increased after Newfoundland joined Canada in 1949. See G.M. Story, "Newfoundland: Fishermen, Hunters, Planters, and Merchants," *Christmas Mumming in Newfoundland: Essays in Anthropology, Folklore and History*, ed. G.M. Story and Herbert Halpert (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 32. David Alexander, *The Decay of Trade: An Economic History of the Newfoundland Saltfish Trade, 1935-1965* (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland / Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1977), and Peter Neary, *Newfoundland in the North Atlantic World* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988). *truck*: "Arrangement by which a fisherman and his family are supplied by a merchant with provisions, gear, etc., against the season's catch; goods and supplies so received: also attrib: *truck agent, truck system*; CREDIT SYSTEM." [DNE]
6. For critical commentary on Tom Dawe, see Terry Goldie, "Al Pittman and Tom Dawe: Island Poems," *Studies in Canadian Literature* 7 (1982): 200-213 and Adrian Fowler, "The Literature of Newfoundland and Labrador: A Roundabout Return to Elemental Matters," *Essays on Canadian Writing* 31 (1985): 118-41.
7. "The Newfoundland Renaissance," *Saturday Night* (April 1976): 38-45.
8. Cyril F. Poole, "The Soul of a Newfoundlander," *In Search of the Newfoundland Soul* (St. John's: Harry Cuff, 1982), 91-101.

9. *A Rope Against the Sun* [1974] (St. John's: Breakwater, 1980), 5.

10. The phrase was used by Joseph R. Smallwood for the title of a book published in New York by Macmillan in 1931. Fifteen years later, Smallwood, more than any other person, helped to bring about the changes that can justifiably be said to have created a new Newfoundland.

11. *Imagined Communities* [1983] (New York: Verso, 1991), 5.

12. *Preoccupations: Selected Prose, 1968-1978* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1980), 131-149.

Chapter One

Heroic Newfoundland

From Hardy to Heroic

Historians of Newfoundland trace the origins of nationalism in the colony to the nineteenth-century reformers, William Carson and Patrick Morris.¹ Carson, a transplanted Scottish doctor, and Morris, a transplanted Irish merchant, initiated the clamor for constitutional government in Newfoundland in a number of publications starting with Carson's *A Letter to the Members of Parliament of the United Kingdom* in 1812.² Using John Reeves's *History of the Government of the Island of Newfoundland* (1793) as ammunition, both agitators sought to persuade British reformers that the mother country had treated the poor "livyers" of Newfoundland abominably, discouraging settlement through statute and harassment, by omission and commission upholding the interests of powerful west country fish merchants who had traditional rights to "fishing rooms" on a first-come, first-served basis every spring and who therefore opposed colonization because it threatened these privileges (Matthews, *Lectures* 66).³ As O'Flaherty has noted, "[t]he documents [Reeves] selected and summarized effectively revealed the English policy of withholding government in order to discourage settlement" (*Rock* 52). The essence of Reeves's analysis can be seen in his blunt assessment of the objections of the "western merchants" to the development a properly constituted legal system in Newfoundland:

They have been in the habit of seeing this species of weakness and anarchy ever since Newfoundland was frequented, from father to son: it was favourable to their old impressions, that Newfoundland was *theirs*, and that all the planters and inhabitants were to be spoiled and devoured at *their* pleasure; in support of this,

they had opposed, as we have seen, every attempt at introducing order and government into that place.⁴

The same year Justice Reeves published his history, the traditional attitude towards the colony was memorably summed up by William Knox, an Under-Secretary of State in the American Department, who reminded the British House of Commons that “[t]he island of Newfoundland has been considered, in all former times, as a great ship moored near the Banks during the fishing season, for the convenience of English fisherman.”⁵ Knox went on to explain the measures that had been taken to ensure that the Newfoundland fishery remained a British fishery, and did not become a Colonial one:

To prevent the increase of inhabitants to the Island the most positive instructions were given to the Governors not to make any grants of land, and to reduce the number of those who were already settled there. Their vessels, as well as those belonging to the colonies, were to be denied any priority of right in occupying stations in the bays or harbours, for curing the fish, over the vessels from England, and the Governor was instructed to withhold from them whatever might encourage them to remain in the Island.

Knox succinctly characterized the instructions given the naval governors of Newfoundland by quoting the colourful expression of Lord North: “whenever [the settlers] loved to have roasted [the Governor] was to give them raw; and whenever they wished to have the raw he was to give it them roasted.”

No doubt, Carson and Morris to some extent exaggerated and otherwise distorted Reeves’s conclusions to suit their political ends, and Reeves’s analysis has itself been challenged

during the past thirty years by historians influenced by the work of the late Keith Matthews. Matthews argued that, despite the prohibitions enacted in law, there is little evidence to prove that settlement was actively discouraged in Newfoundland.⁶ But for one-hundred-and-sixty years the opposite view prevailed and, despite the efforts of revisionist scholars such as Matthews, it has retained its hold in the minds of many Newfoundlanders well into the late twentieth century.

Thus, this summary by philosopher F.L. Jackson in *Surviving Confederation*:

as nothing more than an outpost for European fishing monopolies, Newfoundland was prevented from establishing itself as a legitimate colony until the early 19th century. Before that, literally burned and shelled off the rocks, legally disallowed the ownership of facilities or land, forced to inhabit the most temporary dwellings in what were essentially seasonal settlements, these renegades somehow managed to survive under a succession of indifferent admirals and governors, under whose repressive regimes no economic foundation was laid, no society developed, no institutions of education, fiscal management, general welfare or public law and order took root.⁷

In the context of this thesis, the historical validity of this narrative is beside the point. The point is that Reeves's analysis, dramatized in the nationalist rhetoric of Carson and Morris, and repeated and embellished by later historians such as Moses Harvey and D.W. Prowse, entered the collective imagination of Newfoundlanders as a defining myth of the tribe. It portrays Newfoundlanders as outlaws, victims and underdogs, clinging to the rocks like barnacles, heroically enduring wind, water, ice, fog and sleet in addition to the arbitrary justice of the fishing admirals and, in general, the denial of rights and liberties that were being accorded to

British subjects elsewhere in the Empire.⁸

Carson and Morris adopted the only rhetoric available to those who would argue rights and privileges for a people who are essentially powerless. They attempted to prick the consciences of reformers in the mother country to the plight of the poor benighted subjects of what Morris called “the oldest . . . Transatlantic possession belonging to his Majesty” (5-6). This phrase evolved over time into the popular formulation “Britain’s oldest colony,” a claim, as O’Flaherty points out, that belonged more properly to Ireland (*Rock* 67). The oratorical intent, however, was to underscore a discrepancy between the age of the colony and its undeveloped system of governance and to suggest a comparison with more recently settled possessions that would reveal an intolerable unfairness in the treatment of British subjects living in Newfoundland. Part of the psychology of such a pitch was to stress the loyalty of the livyers and their sterling qualities of character. The argument therefore required the development of a concept of the Newfoundlander.

The development of such a concept is an act of the imagination rather than a matter of empirical deduction. It is an assertion rather than a rationally derived conclusion. The evolution of the concept over time involved the participation of many writers, some of them writing as “natives” from deep within the society, others observing with the fresh eyes of newcomers. It also involved the acquiescence of readers. It was an idea whose truth lay not in its correspondence to “reality” but rather in the extent to which it commanded the assent of those whom it was supposed to describe and the approbation of outside observers. It was, in effect, a declaration, not of independence, but of cultural distinctiveness.

O’Flaherty identifies the first crude expressions of Newfoundland identity in the polemics

of Carson, marking its emergence as “the beginning of that perennial, sturdy myth, the ‘hardy Newfoundlander’” (*Rock* 56). Interestingly, Carson first acknowledges that at the time when he is writing Newfoundlanders as an ethnic group do not exist. “The inhabitants of Newfoundland,” he writes, “have as yet acquired no fixed character, being English Scotch or Irish or their immediate descendants, they participate of the peculiarities of their respective countries” (*sic.*).

Nevertheless, he goes on to characterize them collectively as “a hardy race, fearless of danger, and capable of undergoing the greatest corporeal exertion. They have no strong antipathies, violent prejudices, or unjust prepossessions: they have that fondness for liberty which all men possess, that are not subdued by fear, or unseduced by the illusions of vice. Their love of liberty is chastened by a sentiment of just subordination, and a respectful demeanor towards those in superior situations” (*Reasons*, 8-9). The significant sentences are the first and, ironically, the last. The middle sentence is wholly rhetorical and says nothing distinctive about Newfoundlanders. Many other writers, however, would affirm the capacity of Newfoundlanders to endure incredible hardship and to survive unimaginable deprivation. On the negative side, other writers would note a passivity and deference in Newfoundlanders that Carson may unintentionally have anticipated in the phrases “sentiment of just subordination” and “respectful demeanor towards those in superior situations.”

An early comment on the hospitality of Newfoundlanders comes from a more dispassionate source, J.B. Jukes, a young graduate of Cambridge University, who was commissioned to carry out a geological survey for the Newfoundland Government in 1839, and who published an account of his experiences in 1842. He warned the prospective visitor to “get rid of all delicate and fastidious notions of comfort, convenience, and accommodation he may

have acquired by journeying in England” but acknowledged that “so far as the inhabitants are concerned, under a rough exterior, he will meet with sterling kindness and hospitality.”⁴ Jukes also attested to a readiness among Newfoundlanders to come to the aid of those in distress. He cited “several instances of shipwrecked crews, and large bodies of emigrant passengers, not merely clothed, fed, and taken care of, but refitted, their losses partly compensated, and themselves forwarded free of expense to ports near their places of destination.” Furthermore, in proportion to its size and wealth, Jukes suggested that “there are few places in any part of the world where larger and more frequent subscriptions for charitable purposes are . . . raised than in St. John’s” (109).

O’Flaherty traces examples of a developing notion of a distinctive Newfoundland identity throughout the nineteenth century. Some of these come from observations by missionaries of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. Julian Moreton, writing from his experiences at Greenspond, Bonavista Bay in 1863, asserts, in contrast to Carson, that his parishioners “are much altered in temper and bearing from the class in England to which they belong.” He is struck, in particular, by a “stronge imperturbable habit” that leaves them “hardly to be excited to action unless impelled by their own perception of need.” He notes as well an odd “tone of mind” evidenced by their tendency to “enter your house unasked to light their pipes at your kitchen fire, and perhaps sit down to smoke and spit.” Another SPG missionary, F.E.J. Lloyd, who served on the Great Northern Peninsula from 1882 to 1884, was also impressed by the differences between his Newfoundland parishioners and the English farm labourers from whom they had descended. He put it down to “[t]ransplantation to a country where there was absolutely nothing to be obtained but by their own individual exertions.” Necessity had apparently “transformed these

country bumpkins into carpenters, boat-builders, netters, foresters, fishermen, coopers, blacksmiths, and sawyers" (*Rock* 88). Lloyd's comment contains the important observation that outport Newfoundlanders, forced to forgo dependence upon the specialization of trades, had learned to turn their hands to anything that needed doing, using whatever tools or instruments that were available, and making them when none could be obtained. This ingenuity was recalled, in a sense, by stepping backward in time, coming to terms with a life perhaps freer but also more primitive than the one they had left behind in the mother country.

Observers from this era also began to comment upon the unusual qualities of Newfoundland speech and lore. As O'Flaherty points out, these had been noted as early as 1794 in the journal of the seaman, Aaron Thomas, who had remarked that native Newfoundlanders, whether of British or Irish ancestry, spoke English in "a manner peculiar to themselves." Julian Moreton, in an effort to understand his parishioners more fully, made a study of "words and phrases peculiar to Newfoundland." Lady Blake, wife of Governor H.A. Blake, published an account of the origins of Newfoundland folklore in the *North American Review* in 1891. And George Patterson initiated the scholarly study of Newfoundland dialect with several articles in the *Journal of American Folklore* in 1895 and 1896 (*Rock* 88-89).

By the end of the nineteenth century, Newfoundland had begun to attract the attention of numerous British and American authors. The British had more of a political interest, tending to take up the cudgels on behalf of the mistreated "oldest colony," while the Americans began to see in Newfoundland "an imaginative outpost of the eastern United States, with authors recreating in this sparsely populated and primitive territory an image of their own diminishing frontier" (*Rock* 82-83). Thus were the ardent assertions of a distinctive Newfoundland identity by

local zealots augmented and qualified by the views of outside observers. O'Flaherty cites a comment, for example, by the Earl of Dunraven in 1881, in which the hardships of the climate and the demands of the seafaring profession are cited as determining influences on Newfoundlanders whom he describes as "hardy, adventurous, self-reliant." O'Flaherty sees in Dunraven's view "an implicit perception of nationhood, a perception made the more interesting in the way it embraced both St. John's residents and the people of the outports" (*Rock* 89).

The other side of hardy is rowdy, and the ranting and roaring Newfoundlander makes an appearance at about this time in an article by the St. John's priest, Richard Howley, who acknowledges that although not "a persistent drinker. . . . [the Newfoundlander] drinks thoroughly when about it."¹⁰ When drinking, he goes on to observe, the Newfoundlander "becomes noisy but not usually quarrelsome. No country is more free from acts of crime or violence than Newfoundland" (*Rock* 90).¹¹ Howley's distinction between the noisy and the quarrelsome may have some general validity in traditional Newfoundland society in which violent language often seems to be a substitute for violent behaviour. For example, D.W. Prowse, in his monumental *History of Newfoundland* (1895), gives an account of a threatening letter that frightened Chief Justice Cesar Colclough into fleeing the colony during the so-called "Winter of the Rals" in 1815. Prowse, a native-born judge, has nothing but scorn for Colclough's misreading of the situation, pointing out that "the threatening letter is a common Hibernian device" and that magistrates of any standing "could 'paper a trunk' with such epistles." The letter in question, he witheringly points out, did not even have "the traditionary coffin and cross bones at the head of it."¹² In Newfoundland, defiance is often like a sunken lurking just below the surface of deference, as O'Flaherty makes clear in this observation on an episode in R.T. Lowell's novel,

The New Priest in Conception Bay (1858): "When the magistrate's enquiry ends, the deference of the individual fisherman gives way to a somewhat menacing collective disdain for erring authority and contempt for official pomposity" (*Rock* 94).

Patrick Byrne cites St. John's writer, P.T. McGrath who, in an article published in *Outing* (1904), suggested an additional trait in the developing composite of the stereotypical Newfoundland character. Although Newfoundlanders, according to McGrath, were "a people who for sheer daring and absolute endurance" had "no equal in the world today," they remained "as simple . . . as guileless . . . and [as] innocent as children." McGrath, being a propagandist, was probably playing to expectations of visitors from England who liked to adopt this romanticized and ultimately patronizing view of the natives. If *naiveté* ever was a trait of Newfoundlanders, it has not survived down to the present except as a guise to have some sport with the unsuspecting outsider. McGrath's second claim, on the other hand, is repeated by other observers: "[S]elf-reliant and adaptable." Newfoundlanders were ready to risk "their own lives to rescue an endangered colleague" and to share "their last crust with a poorer neighbour" (Byrne 98).

Most, if not all, of these attributes were summarized in a remarkable poem by a Scottish *émigré*, P.C. Mars, published in 1924 and quoted in full by Byrne. Written in the ballad style of Robert Service, Mars's poem is not only notable for its summary of the stereotypical Newfoundland character but also significant in that it found its way into the oral tradition. Now practically unknown as a piece of written literature, it is alive and well as a recitation. Byrne concludes that "the acceptance of this piece into the [folk] tradition as a recitation suggests that the evolved image [of the Newfoundlander], despite the penchant for hyperbole and idealization,

is not simply a construct of the literate imagination" (98-101). Perhaps it is more precise to say that although this image may be a construct of the literate imagination, it came to compel the allegiance of ordinary people.

Alongside this romanticized image of the "hardy, handy, hospitable" Newfoundlander, Byrne has identified its opposite, the "Newfoundlander as a species of northern Caliban, a barely civilized half-brute who had been beaten into submission and stupefaction not by magic but by centuries of neglect, oppression and ceaseless, grinding poverty – conditions which were exacerbated by the capricious sea, the unproductive soil, and the intolerable climate" (101-104). This is the *shadow*, in a Jungian sense, of the idealized version.¹³ Not surprisingly, this representation has usually been "externally imposed," although the partisans, Carson and Morris, were not above using negative images of Newfoundlanders in order to underscore the effects of deprivation and the need for reform. Among the uncomplimentary traits cited by nineteenth-century visitors to Newfoundland, many reflect the biases of Victorian morality or the English class system. Others betray a snobbishness towards colonials that was not limited in application to Newfoundland. Many of them are the kinds of insults that are hurled at any underclass, and these survived into the late twentieth century as Newfie jokes. A few of critical observations, however, are deserving of note because they persist in the literature and are sometimes confirmed by writers sympathetic to Newfoundland. Among them are two comments by J.B. Jukes cited by Byrne. The first asserts that Newfoundlanders, at least those of "the lower classes," are "easily led" and "ready to follow anyone who will take the trouble of thinking for them." and, insofar as this represents as much cynicism as gullibility about politics, it has some resonance. The second point is that Newfoundlanders have a "propensity to take advantage of the calamities of their

neighbours during fires and shipwrecks.” This comment contradicts Jukes’s observation about the readiness of Newfoundlanders to assist those in distress but it has a certain credibility given the outlaw reality that characterized early life in Newfoundland (*Jukes’s Excursions* 108).

Another nineteenth-century view of the annual seal hunt, presents the hardy Newfoundlander as the hardened Newfoundlander, and it is worth quoting at length for two reasons. First, it has a contemporary quality, almost the verbal equivalent of a television commercial by the International Fund for Animal Welfare. Second, one of the co-authors, the Rev. Moses Harvey, a prolific writer on mostly scientific subjects, was an unabashed “boomer” of Newfoundland:

Fancy two or three hundred men on a field of ice carrying on this murderous work. Their persons smeared with sanguinary evidence of the wholesale slaughter: the ice stained with gore and covered with the skinless carcasses of the slain: “the shivering seals’ low moans” filling the air like the sobbings of infants in distress: the murderers every minute smiting fresh victims, or dragging the oleaginous prizes to the vessel’s side! Then what a picture the vessel presents as the pelts are being piled on deck to cool previous to storage below! One after another the hunters arrive with their loads, and snatch a hasty moment to drink a bowl of tea and eat a piece of biscuit and butter. The poor mother seals, now cubless, are seen popping their heads up in the small lakes of water and holes among the ice, anxiously looking for their young.¹⁴

Counter-balancing the characterization of the Newfoundlander as stouthearted, generous, sociable, community-minded, resourceful, rambunctious, good-natured, and colourful in speech,

therefore, is the Newfoundlander as ignorant, servile, lawless and savage. Although they may appear to be opposites, in the sense that some are positive and others are negative, these traits are not necessarily incompatible with one another. It stands to reason that all of them could be observed in encounters with Newfoundlanders over the past one-hundred-and-fifty years frequently enough that they might be taken to represent a rough composite of what E.J. Pratt might have called "the breed." As suggested earlier, however, the greater significance may not be in the extent to which these attributes correspond to "reality" – they constitute, after all, a caricature rather than a real entity – but rather in the fact that Newfoundlanders came to insist upon sharing a distinct identity and came to embody it convincingly enough to themselves and to others that it came to be widely accepted. For obvious reasons, this sense of identity is impossible to define in any rigorous sense. Yet its existence is not only undeniable but also – and this is the point – it is a creation of the collective will and imagination of the people who chose to call themselves Newfoundlanders.

Byrne explores the complex dynamic between the literate imagination and the folk tradition, demonstrating that in Newfoundland the relationship between them has been interactive rather than sequential. As well, he exposes "the reductionist fallacy" that exaggerates the level of homogeneity in Newfoundland society, and ignores what the anthropologist Anthony P. Cohen has called "the enormous internal variety and diversity" of Newfoundland culture.¹⁵ This *caveat* concerning the assumption of cultural homogeneity expressed by Kenneth Peacock and others prompts the question: Which is it? Is Newfoundland society homogenous or heterogeneous? The answer, of course, is both. On one level, the cultural homogeneity of Newfoundland is obvious. The population consists overwhelmingly of white, English-speaking people originating from the

British Isles. On the other hand, settlers coming from the West Country of England and those coming from the Southeast of Ireland carried with them important ethnological, religious and linguistic differences. And even if the common experience and challenge of life on the coast of Newfoundland surely had the effect of muting some of these distinctions, there were also significant differences in the requirements of life on the south coast of Newfoundland compared to the northeast coast, or in remote outports compared to communities close to St. John's. Furthermore, perception enters into this. From a distance, Newfoundland appears to be homogeneous; up close, this seems less obvious. Generalizations of the magnitude of declaring a society homogeneous are relative statements: homogeneous compared to what? Kenneth Peacock set out to collect songs of the outport, not to make a definitive statement about Newfoundland culture. He developed a sense of Newfoundland's cultural homogeneity in the course of his fieldwork that seemed striking in comparison with other parts of North America except for Quebec. Scholars of Newfoundland making internal comparisons within the society are likely to view things differently. What they, and many ordinary Newfoundlanders see – perceiving the phenomenon, as it were, at a higher level of magnification – is a surprising amount of diversity, from one place to another and from one time to another.¹⁶

The elusive nature of what is called the traditional way of life is illustrated by Byrne with an quotation from the folklorist, Gerald L. Pocius:

What is perceived as Newfoundland's traditional way of life is believed to have existed just a step or two back: perhaps in the 1960s, before the road network on the island expanded; the 1950s, before the government's resettlement program forced many residents to abandon the more inaccessible communities all over the

island: the 1940s, before Newfoundland joined Canada: the 1920s, before electricity and radios: the turn of the century, before the opening of a railway link between the west and east coasts of the island: the 1870s, before a major economic expansion program led to the development of a series of factories in St. John's; or the 1830s, with an elected assembly and quasi independence from England.¹⁷

This analysis indicates that the "recovery" of a Newfoundland traditional way of life is an illusion, at least to the extent to which such a way of life could be generalized to include most Newfoundlanders – even most outport Newfoundlanders – and also be said to endure in some essential sense over time. But it is a significant illusion – a creation, in fact – designed to encourage allegiance to a level of community beyond the outport and the town and encompassing them both. It was, and is, an artificial construct, but not one without meaning – in Benedict Anderson's phrase, an imagined community.

Political events in nineteenth-century Newfoundland history contributed to the developing sense of national identity. In addition to the attainment of Representative Government in 1832 and Responsible Government in 1855, one can point to the election of 1869 in which the confederate party of F.B.T. Carter was soundly defeated. The oft-quoted lines from the "Anti-Confederation Song" dating from this period – "Her face turns to Britain, her back to the Gulf. / Come near at your peril Canadian wolf!" – demonstrate colonial loyalty rather than national self-assertion, but the decisive defeat of Confederation did lead to a period in which the country began to pursue policies designed to establish its independence.¹⁸ Attempts were made to diversify and stabilize the Newfoundland economy. In 1886, the Newfoundland Legislature

defied the British Government after the House of Commons, pressured by French diplomats, refused to pass an act prohibiting the sale of bait to French fishermen. And in the 1890s Sir Robert Bond attempted to negotiate reciprocity agreements with the United States that would have given Newfoundland exporters unrestricted access to the American market. In the event, Newfoundland's efforts to assert itself politically by exercising a strategy of independence on the international scene were stymied by the collusion of British, French, Canadian and American interests.¹⁹ In spite of this political failure, the development of a national identity was strengthened by two events of great symbolic significance: the ritual of the annual seal hunt and the performance of the Newfoundland Regiment in the Great War.

The seal hunt had been of great importance to the economy of Newfoundland since the early decades of the nineteenth century when the mode of harvesting underwent a significant change. During the eighteenth century seals were caught inshore in large heavy nets or were hunted from shallops by fishermen using muzzle-loading rifles.²⁰ By the turn of the century larger vessels – schooners – started going to “the front.”²¹ The result was that the number of seals taken escalated dramatically – from 4,900 in 1795, to 81,000 in 1805, to 685,000 in 1841. In the 1860s, another major change in the industry occurred with the introduction of steam-assisted whaling vessels. This represented a more efficient method of harvesting seals, although it did not lead to increased numbers of seals taken and there were large fluctuations in the annual catch. Nevertheless, the seal fishery continued to be significant economically. By the early 1880s, for example, it accounted for 1/8 of the value of all Newfoundland exports. The introduction of the steam-assisted, so-called “wooden walls” changed the nature of sealing from a community-based hunt to an increasingly centralized industry that helped to define and fuel a national

economy based in St. John's. Its development paralleled the rise of national sentiment in the capital and it became a nation-building activity because it brought Newfoundlanders together in an endeavour that required heroic sacrifice to achieve an end – a bumper voyage – that was associated not only with the good of individual sealers or their home communities but with the good of the entire country.²² The annual seal hunt had become a rallying symbol for the nation in much the same way as an army may in times of war:

the whole population, from the richest to the poorest, take a deep interest in the fortunes of the hunt. It's like an army going out to do battle for those who remain at home. In this case the enemies are the icebergs, the tempest, and the blinding snow-storm The successful hunters are welcomed [home] with thundering cheers, like returning conquerors, and are the heroes of the hour.

It would be difficult, the writers continue, completing the military metaphor, “to find a more stalwart lot of fellows in the royal navy itself” (Hatton and Harvey, *Newfoundland*, 248-250).

The seal hunt was an annual ritual that gradually worked its way deep into the psyche of Newfoundlanders' sense of themselves as a people. The First World War represented a sudden coming-of-age similar to that experienced by Canadians, and for the same reasons.²³

Newfoundland's contribution to the war effort was on a smaller scale but in proportion to its population it was great, perhaps too great, and the practical consequences of Newfoundland's involvement in the war can hardly be overestimated. Young Newfoundland men competed with one another to enlist for service overseas in much the same way that they vied with one another for berths on vessels going to “the ice.”²⁴ The Newfoundland Regiment saw action in Gallipoli in 1915, at the Somme in 1916, and several other battlefields during 1917 and 1918. The Regiment

sustained heavy casualties throughout the war but it was near the village of Beaumont Hamel in the Somme offensive of 1 July 1916 that its terrible history was made. At 8:45 a.m. that day the Newfoundlanders were ordered to attack the enemy lines. They advanced in full view of German machine guns and were cut to ribbons as they moved relentlessly forward. The bodies of the dead and wounded were piled high at every gap in the barbed wire. Of the eight hundred and one men who went "over the top," only sixty-eight were able to answer the roll call the following morning. Two hundred and thirty-three were killed. One year later, in recognition of its performance at Cambrai and Ypres, the Newfoundland Regiment was granted the title "Royal," the only regiment to receive this distinction during the war.

The intermediate-term effect of Newfoundland's involvement in the Great War was two-fold. First, the rising generation of leaders in the fledgling nation was seriously depleted as a result of the severe casualties sustained throughout the war, undermining the country's ability to deal with formidable post-war challenges. Second, the crushing debt incurred by the country to finance its war effort became an unbearable burden during the 1920s and was a significant cause leading to the collapse of responsible government in 1933 and its replacement with government by a commission appointed by Britain. The short-term and long-term effect, however, was to engender intense pride in the performance of Newfoundlanders on the world stage in a theatre of war. It was a performance of heroic failure – although some would call it senseless slaughter – a national tragedy that became a source of national inspiration.

What O'Flaherty facetiously terms "that perennial, sturdy myth" of "the 'hardy Newfoundlander'" is a myth, then, but not in the pejorative sense he intends. It is a myth in the ancient sense of story and the postmodern sense of narrative – a story or a narrative that

inhabitants and observers of Newfoundland began to recount concerning the people who lived there. It arises in a political context, and is politically motivated, although it also arises from observations that have some basis in reality – however polemical or tendentious they might be. They contain at least a grain of truth. More important, however, this myth represents the creation of a reality and a truth that did not previously exist, establishing an elusive and ultimately indefinable sense of cultural integrity where none had been before. Eventually it would come to exercise considerable power over the imaginations of Newfoundlanders, transcending diverse and even conflicting cultural, religious and community boundaries that were much older, more fundamental, and, in a certain sense, more real than the myth of the nation.²⁵

The Way of the Sea

The development of the myth of the Newfoundland nation in the twentieth century would not have been possible without the sophistication and refinement it received through the literary treatment of the Canadian journalist Norman Duncan and the Canadian (albeit Newfoundland-born) poet E.J. Pratt. Born in Norwich, Ontario and educated at the University of Toronto, Duncan was working at the New York *Evening Post* when he was “seized by an impulse to write of the sea” and made his way to Newfoundland in 1900.²⁶ Ironically, he discovered that he was himself a poor sailor. Intent upon interviewing Dr. Wilfred Grenfell in his hospital mission in St. Anthony on the tip of the Great Northern Peninsula, he got as far as Exploits Island in Notre Dame Bay where, wasted by sea sickness, he put ashore. There he spent the rest of the summer, befriended by the local merchant, Jabez Manuel. It was an interruption that had a profound effect upon his writing career. Through the Manuels, he was introduced to life on the northeast coast of

Newfoundland. From this point on, although it was not the sole source of material for his writing, Newfoundland was his major and, it is said, his best inspiration.²⁷

Duncan's first book set in Newfoundland, *The Way of the Sea* (1903), is a collection of short stories first published in *McClure's Magazine*, *Harper's Magazine*, and *The Atlantic Monthly*. In this collection, widely considered to contain his finest work, the crude, polemical stereotype of the hardy Newfoundlander is transformed into the literary myth of the heroic Newfoundlander. This is especially evident in three stories: "The Strength of Men," "The Raging of the Sea," and "The Breath of the North." The first of these, the only story in the collection that depicts the seal fishery, is the one that most explicitly locates his subjects under the comprehensive category of "the Newfoundlander." The opening paragraph, in fact, not only presents a general picture of the colony, making socio-economic distinctions between townie merchants and outport fishermen, it also contrasts the extreme environment of Newfoundland with the more temperate climates Duncan associates with himself and his readers. The story depicts a crisis on board a schooner that is being drawn by a moving ice floe to disaster upon a shoal, but the particularity of the crisis is placed within this broad context:

It may be that there comes a time in the life of the Newfoundlander when chance flings him into the very vortex of the unleashed, swirling passions of wind, night, and the sea. That event, to be sure, never disturbs the course of the pallid days of the city men, the fellows with muscles of dough and desires all fed fat, who, as it were, wrap the fruits of toil in pink paper, tie the package with a pretty string and pass it over the colony's counter. It comes only to the brawny, dogged men of the coast, to whom cod and salmon and seal-fat are the spoils of grim

battles. . . . Most men, too, have to face this supreme trial of brute strength in the season when they go to hunt the hair-seal which drift out of the north with the ice to whelp – but that is an empty phrase: rather let it be said that it may be set down in significant terms, when, each with the lust of sixty dollars in his heart, they put forth into the heaving, wind-lashed waste of ice and dusk and black, cold seas, where all the hungry forces of the north are loosed as for ravage. It came upon Saul Nash of Ragged Harbour, this fight did, when in temperate lands mellow winds were teasing the first shy blossoms in the woods and peopled places were all yellow and a-tinckle and lazy. (36)

After this panoramic introductory paragraph, Duncan cuts immediately to the critical scene in which a handful of sealers peer through the gradually lightening dawn to make out the shape of Deadly Rock and Blueback Shoal, towards which they are being pulled relentlessly and helplessly by the ice-pack. In a striking image, he compares the shoal to “some gigantic machine . . . fed by the wind, which drove the pack: it was big as the wind is big. Massive chunks came through in slush. The schooner may be likened to an egg-shell thrown by chance into the feeding-shute of a crusher” (42). The sealers contemplate their fate with a striking economy of fear. They recognise that the situation is out of their control. Since it is not yet time to abandon ship, there is “no call upon [their] strength or understanding,” so they occupy themselves in an expert dissection of where the vessel will strike the shoal. The *sang-froid* of the men reflects their seamanship and their knowledge of the situation. The time for panic will come but not yet. For the present, they conserve their energy and as the moment of doom gets closer they go below deck to prepare themselves, like soldiers anxiously but methodically readying themselves for

battle:

they ate their fill of pork and biscuit and drank their fill of water: being wise in the ways of the ice. each stuffed his stomach. which they call. at such times with grim humour. the long-pocket. Some took off their jackets to give their arms freer play in the coming fight. some tightened their belts. some filled their pockets with the things they loved most: all made ready. (45)

Similarly, when they abandon the vessel, the sealers are seen to be accustomed to the fearsome environment of the heaving ice field. The skill and daring required of their profession are depicted in images of them “copying” over the ice pans.²⁸ Each of them leaps “from one sinking fragment to another. choosing in a flash where next to alight. chancing his weight where it might be sustained for the moment of gathering to leap again – he must leap without pause: he must leap or the pack would let him through and close over his head” (49). The ghastly death that results from the slightest miscalculation is captured in the fate of Ezra Bull who, “missed his leap and fell between two pans which swung together with crushing force in the trough of the lop: he sank without a cry when they went abroad” (52).

The men work as a well-trained team until it is “every man for his life.” at which point Duncan asserts that an “accepted creed of that coast” takes over: “At such times. escape is for the strong: the weak ask for no help: they are thrust aside; they find no hand stretched out” (46). When the wind suddenly changes after the men have left the ship and they scramble to get back on board the swiftly moving schooner. they battle each other with “brute unreason” for a grip at the rail: “No single bit of ice would hold a man up. It was like a fight upon quicksand. Men clawed the backs of men to save themselves from sinking; blows were struck; screams ended in

coughs: throats were thick: oaths poured from mouths that were used to prayers." The established code in such desperate straits, this permission realistically acknowledges the natural imperative of the survival instinct. Saul Nash may appear to be an exception to the rule because he not only risks his own life to preserve his brother, John, but also attempts to save another man, Bill Anderson, who clutches his foot as he tries to climb on board. But when another sealer tries to climb on his back, he turns "in a rush of terror to defend himself," falls to the ice grappling with this man, and both are trampled by others struggling to board the schooner (53-55).

The acceptance of this code is emphasized once again when, having saved his brother but failed to save himself, Nash swims to an ice pan. The three men stranded on the pan help him out of the water "for the pan was thirty feet square, and there was room for him" (57). The implication is clear: if the pan had not been big enough, they would have let him die. There Nash encounters the man who jumped on his back, and questions him without rancour:

"were it you jumped on me back – out there?"

"Sure, an' I doan't know, Saul. Maybe 'twere, I forgets. 'Twere terrible – out there."

"Iss, 'twere, b'y. I were just a-wonderin'." (58)

A careful reading reveals the subtlety and complexity of Duncan's presentation of this theme. The narrative does not support a simplistic interpretation that depicts the triumph of animal instincts and the defeat of civilized behaviour. Rather it accepts the elemental survival instinct as natural, but strictly limits its domain to situations in which it is "every man for his life." This does not nullify all obligations to help, nor does it prohibit more conventional acts of heroism such as Saul Nash performs in saving his brother. In situations of extreme danger,

however, it permits the right to save one's own life before all others. It represents a kind of mutual forgiveness in advance for the limitations of our nature as human animals, a notwithstanding clause built into a rigorous set of conventions governing the behaviour of those who "maintain the sovereignty of the race to the edge of the uninhabitable."²⁹

Although the sealers are described as "big, thick-chested fellows, heavy with muscles and bones," their humanity is affirmed in the statement that their "forbidding, leathery faces . . . were not unused . . . to the play of fine simplicity" (38). It is also seen in their competitiveness in predicting the collision of the vessel and in their consoling words to the skipper as he contemplates the loss of the schooner – "his life's achievement: he had builded her" (43). It is evident in the comfort the four stranded sealers extend to one another as they remember families left behind. It is apparent, of course, in the sacrifice of Saul Nash to save his brother, in the hospitality of Abraham Coachman who shelters and feeds Nash after he staggers ashore at Neighborly Cove, the only survivor of the group of lost sealers, and in the scene at the end of the story which makes clear how outpost families are sustained by the efforts of such men.

This final scene returns to the broad context presented at the beginning of the story as it describes how Saul Nash, having recovered from a gash on his forehead, a broken collarbone, and hypothermia, does not hesitate, "when next the sea baited its trap with swarming herds," to go with his brother John to the ice:

for the world which lies hidden in the wide beyond has some strange need of seal-fat, and stands ready to pay, as of course. It pays gold to the man at the counter in Saint John's: and for what the world pays a dollar the outpost warrior gets a pound of reeking pork.

This passage posits, on the one hand, a malevolence in nature, revealing a reversed order in which the hunter unwittingly becomes the hunted, and, on the other hand, an exploitative class system that undervalues the toil and the bravery of the outport hero to produce wealth for the merchant in St. John's. That the man of the coast is seen to be a hero is evident in the use of the word "warrior," a metaphor that is used repeatedly in the literature of sealing. But, in Duncan's eyes, the unheralded heroism of the sealer is redeemed by the worth of his sacrifice – the survival of loved ones – and by the existential value of life lived on the edge: "What matter – in the end? Ease is a shame: and, for truth, old age holds nothing for any man save a seat in a corner and the sound of voices drifting in" (65-66).

The second of these stories, "The Raging of the Sea," presents a more idiosyncratic hero than Saul Nash. Job Luff is "a tawny lout, frowsy, greasy, shiftless; with a queer twist to him – a glint in his eye, a fleck of red in his shifty glance." He is an outsider in the community, having "cast loose from religion when old Dick Lute went mad of it" and having "achieved a lurid reputation for unrighteousness":

He lived up to the obligation of scouting hell-fire: he smoked, said "By Gawd!" (in fine weather), left his nets out over Sunday, sold more quintals than he caught and gave away half as much again – which is an invidious remark – and looked hell in the teeth in every gale that blew. (73-74)

To the contemptuous eye, his punt is constructed in his image, "stubby and stupidly squat" (70).³⁰ But, like Job himself, she is underestimated. For him, "She nosed her way through high seas with gusto" (72).

On the day in question, Job Luff has been fishing apart from "the fleet" of the

community, with his boy, Billy, in Windy Cove, where he has found the cod, "nine fathoms deep, dawdling in the shadow of the rocks" (77-78). He cunningly masks the jigging of the fish from the lookouts of the fleet while Billy keeps the bow of the punt in position. Having filled the punt to the gunwales with cod, they are caught in a sudden gale and must "beat to harbour" behind the rest of the fleet.

Duncan bestows considerable powers of observation delineating Luff's skill and audacity in attempting to get his craft to harbour. As we might expect of Job Luff, he does not do this the easy way. Having first secured the safety of his son by having him jump ashore at Windy Cove, he manages through strength and wile to get the punt through the mouth of the cove to open sea where he can raise his rag of sail. Although laden with cod, the little punt bravely breasts the whitecaps and, with the whole community eagerly attending the outcome, Luff brings his little craft through to the tickle within sight of the harbour.³¹ He has defied the wisdom of his peers by refusing to heave his catch over the side and merited their grudging admiration by having apparently succeeded despite the folly of this decision. But then, in the merest moment of *hubris*, he allows himself to glance upwards in exultation to the people of the community and loses the punt to the wind and the current. He himself survives through a miraculous leap to safety, clinging to a sheer cliff. But the punt and the catch are gone. As Luff watches helplessly from the summit of Black Rock, the sun breaks through a rent in the dark clouds, shining on the lost fish in the sea below:

Shafts of sunlight struck the bellies of the catch, and were radiantly reflected. The fishes of the gunwale load gleamed for a space, where they floated with the splinters of the punt that had gone to wreck in all honour. They shone like

burnished silver while they sank, fluttering, into the thick hidden depths of the tickle. (95)

Because of his unconventional nature, Job Luff is a more interesting hero than Saul Nash, not least for what he tells us about the community's ability to tolerate diversity. Interestingly, the community's indulgence of him prevails over strongly held fundamentalist beliefs. Even more deeply rooted than religion are the imperatives of survival, and these seem to evoke an unacknowledged, bedrock culture of empathy among those schooled in the lore. When Job Luff's much-maligned punt beats through to the tickle against all odds, the folk of Ragged Harbour seem almost exhilarated to admit that their established wisdom has been overthrown:

"'Tis a stiff punt," said Sammy Arnold.

"'Tis that."

The punt was coming to her own. Ragged Harbour watched her keenly as she reeled through that head-sea. In all the years of her unhonoured life, not so much had been said before.

"'Tis a gran' punt," said Eleazar Manuel.

"'Tis the best punt t' Ragged Harbour."

There was no one to gainsay it. In the end the ill-favoured craft had found honour. (90)

In Ragged Harbour the triumph of the underdog must be acknowledged over all other values because this success speaks so directly to the common circumstances of all who live there.

Something of an anti-hero, Job Luff is a different character from Saul Nash. Yet he similarly displays incredible strength, skill and heart in struggling to bring his precious catch

home against all odds. Moreover, his dissenting disposition promises to make his moment of triumph not just a conquest of nature but also a victory over the pious orthodoxy of peers who disparage him and his punt. But it is not to be. Job Luff is left battered and bereft by the raging sea, still in possession of his life but cruelly defeated.

The third story, "The Breath of the North," recounts the experience of old Eleazar Manuel and his stepson, young Jim Rideout, who set out in November to cross the bay, eighteen miles to Snook's Cove, to sell a late season's catch of fish. On their return, their punt weighed down by a cargo of musty flour, they run into a fog bank and a sudden frosty calm. They have no option but to unship their oars and row their way across the bay sightless. The moist air congeals on their sail and covers their boat with a hard mantle of ice, lowering it further in the water. Both are soaked to the skin from the heavy loup at the start of their return, but the young man is the first to succumb to exhaustion, leaving more and more of the weight of the rowing to the older man.³² Eleazar tries to revive his stepson by forcing him to stand, kick the flour barrel and swing his arms. He lights a small fire to provide temporary warmth. But soon Jim is pulling on one oar, more as a gesture than to much effect, and he has begun to hallucinate.

A great mass of ice looming out of the fog provides Eleazar with a clue as to their whereabouts. He calculates that the iceberg has drifted a mile northeast from its position that morning and he sets his course accordingly. Soon, on the verge of collapse himself, Eleazar feels the approach of a great wind. A wave splashes over the gunwales, then a second. The punt, weighed down with the barrel of flour and the coating of ice, has no buoyancy, and Rideout is incapable of bailing. At just that point the opposing headlands of Ragged Harbour, the Pillar and the Staff, become dimly visible and Eleazar brings the punt into the harbour and up to his stage in

the fog just ahead of the gale.³³ The old man's savvy, his physical and mental stamina, and his refusal to succumb to panic carry them through.

Duncan's characters are defined largely by their environment. Miller suggests that in *The Way of the Sea* three central propositions arise: that humans and nature are in perpetual conflict, that human destiny is determined primarily by external forces beyond our control, and that to survive and remain optimistic in these circumstances is to live on an heroic plane. In *The Way of the Sea*, she observes, nature is presented often as indifferent to human existence but more frequently as deliberately malign, as can be seen in the personification of the sea as "forever reaching, clutching, thieving and lying in ambush" (*The Frayed Edge* 97-98). A similar image is provided in "The Raging of the Sea" when as Job Luff fights his way into the tinkle "the breakers reach from the rocks on either side like claws" (*The Way of the Sea* 90). A more elaborately developed example of the ruthless design of nature is the extended symbolism of light and dark delineated in the November ordeal of "The Breath of the North":

They who live in the dusk of the borderland live by the grace of heavy courage. In the days of the light's slow decline, they stand, as Eleazar, and gaze into the night of the North, passing, in the space of a breath, up through the miles they have dared in the hopeful strength of Summer, to the white lands they have seen: and they perceive a measureless uncompassionate force unloosed and advancing. In light is compassion: but the chasm between the frost of night and compassion is infinite in its depth and width. (108)

Two pages later, the cosmic origins of this situation are cited. The cold, which is prefigured as an extension of the dark, "fills the uttermost parts of the universe. It is inexhaustible. Stars blaze in

it, disturbing it: but blazing suns are transient, infinitesimal. Night and cold are of all time." The cold, through time, "extinguishes suns and freezes the heavenly systems" (110). When Eleazar lights the fire to help revive Rideout, the human will to live and endure is associated with the "tiny, leaping flame" which "radiated courage as it radiated light" (114).

O'Flaherty observes that the endurance of outport Newfoundlanders represented, for Duncan, "a kind of heroism that merited the dignity of prolonged scrutiny." In his work, outport life is seen as "unwitting epic" (*Rock* 97). The heroic character of this life was both an inspiration and a challenge for Duncan. It is the source of his considerable strengths as a writer and also of his major weakness, a particular kind of stylistic excess that has frequently annoyed readers of *The Way of the Sea* and others of his works. Gordon Roper, S. Ross Beharriell and Rupert Schieder, for example, complain about Duncan's failure "to maintain objectivity" and about his "rhetoric loaded with apostrophe and grandiose generalization" (*Literary History of Canada* 328). And O'Flaherty criticizes him for "sentimentality, a flowery, rhetorical style, and a liking for melodrama" (*The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature* 223). While the values associated with some of these terms – "objectivity," for example, or "melodrama" – may shift with the wind, Virginia Ryan is unnecessarily tentative in identifying "a persistently intrusive narrative voice and an epic style that might repel a modern reader" (177). Indeed, it is Duncan's "epic style" that is most often the problem and even by the standards of his time it represents an embarrassing lapse of judgement. Witness his personification of the north wind in "The Breath of the North":

I am the Wind of the North! Swift I come from the Waste of Death. Out of Silence and Solitudes vast and the Whiteness of Snow I sweep. From the Night of the

*North I steal with Gaunt Death in my train; and I ravage the Seas of the North,
and I gather me Sons of Men. (99)*

Ironically, this overblown rhetoric is in sharp contrast with the understated expression of his characters. Consider the laconic observations of Eleazar Manuel and Jim Rideout as they attempt to cope with their increasingly dreary prospects, or the greeting of Eleazar's wife when they safely tie up at his stagehead after their harrowing ordeal:

"Eleazar!" This was in the voice of Eleazar's wife.

"Iss, woman?"

"Has you fetched the flour?"

"Iss, wife – an' a ball o' twine for the rent in the salmon net."

For Duncan, as O'Flaherty points out, "[t]here was . . . something sublime in the way mere fishermen day after day pitted their puny strength against the vast, capricious, and incomprehensible forces of the north" (*Rock* 97). When he imitates the terse and somewhat formal speaking style of his characters, faithfully presenting their heroism as "unwitting," Duncan does his subject infinitely more justice than when he consciously strives for an "epic style." It must be said, however, that the purple prose is contained rather than pervasive. It does not contaminate much of the actual writing in *The Way of the Sea*, nor does grandiosity seriously affect the narrative structure of the stories, which is, for the most part, skillfully, and sometimes brilliantly, managed. A capable editor could easily have excised the passages of over-writing, and it is indeed a pity that Duncan was not blessed with such an editor because in so many respects *The Way of the Sea* is an outstanding achievement.³⁴

"The Strength of Men" translates the individual heroism portrayed in "The Raging of the

Sea” and “The Breath of the North” into a more general form perhaps because the seal hunt was more of a collective enterprise than most kinds of fishing and by the end of the nineteenth century it had assumed a symbolic significance. Miller quotes a passage from Duncan’s non-fiction work, *Dr. Grenfell’s Parish*, which gives a vivid description of the return of the fleet in the fall indicating that the Labrador fishery may have had a similar import:

The home-coming, I fancy, is much like the return of the viking ships to the old Norwegian harbours must have been. The lucky skippers strut the village roads with swelling chests, heroes in the sight of all: the old men, long past their labour, listen to new tales and spin old yarns: the maids and the lads renew their interrupted love-makings. There is great rejoicing – feasting, merrymaking, hearty thanksgiving. Thanks be to God, the fleet’s home! (*The Frayed Edge* 74)

True, this is more a scene of community than of country, but it is on the way, perhaps, to that greater level of generality. More noteworthy may be the reference to the warrior culture of the Norsemen. This was to become a common allusion in the literature of sealing and it reveals the kind of heroic society that sprang to mind when writers educated in English literature at the University of Toronto or Harvard came into close contact with Newfoundland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The Iliad of Death upon the Floes

A reference to a warrior culture of classical rather than Nordic origins commended itself to E.J. Pratt when he came to write about the great sealing tragedy of 1898. According to David Pitt, Pratt was among the crowd that lined the wharves and hillsides of St. John’s harbour on

Sunday, 28 March of that year, when the S.S. Greenland sailed into port with its flags at half-mast bearing the frozen bodies of twenty-five men who had perished in a blizzard on the ice. A further twenty-three bodies had not been recovered. "I was only a boy at the time," Pratt later recounted. "but it is an ineffaceable memory."³⁵ More than twenty years later, the experience inspired a recreation of the tragedy in *The Ice-Floes*, a poem Pitt considers "without doubt the finest and most durable of Pratt's shorter narratives," and a recollection of the funeral service for the sealers in "The Toll of the Bells" (*The Truant Years* 206). The latter poem concludes: "Only the bells' slow ocean tones, that rose / And hushed upon the air, knew how to tongue / That Iliad of Death upon the floes."³⁶

The Ice-Floes begins – properly according to the heroic tradition – *in medias res*, and with a comparison in the fifth line to a warship:

Dawn from the Foretop! Dawn from the Barrel!
 A scurry of feet with a roar overhead;
 The master-watch wildly pointing to Northward,
 Where the herd in front of *The Eagle* was spread!
 Steel-planked and sheathed like a battleship's nose,
 She battered her path through the drifting floes;
 Past slob and growler we drove, and rammed her
 Into the heart of the patch and jammed her.

As the hunters stand on the deck awaiting the command to attack the herd, their "pulses stirred / In that brisk, live hour before the sun," the narrator discloses their collective wonder at the amazing ability of the female harp seals who plunge through "bobbing-holes" to seek food

for their young, searching "a hundred miles it well might be" beneath the ice, finding their way back to their individual openings even though the ice-field may have drifted many miles in the meantime. This appreciation for the navigational capacity of the seals, and the powerful maternal instincts of their fellow mammals, occurs in a compartmentalized moment of reverie, however, and it is quickly "flung . . . aside" when the master watch orders the men over the rails.

Immediately they are drawn into the "wild carouse" of the slaughter:

. . . From the nose to the tail we ripped them.

And laid their quivering carcasses flat

On the ice: then with our knives we stripped them

For the sake of the pelt and its lining of fat.

They work tirelessly, returning twice to their vessel, then go back on the ice a third time in the late afternoon to see if they can better the count of the day before. None of them notices – "(For the slaughter was swift, and the blood was warm)" – the change in the wind or "the signs of recall" until they feel "the first sting of the snow on [their] face."

Caught in a sudden storm, they are lost on the ice. Blinded by the blizzard and the growing darkness, and fighting down a mounting panic, they lose their sense of direction. Some break from the band and stray off on their own. Weakened by exposure, some fall from exhaustion into a deathly sleep, some hallucinate, others tear out the frozen hearts of dead seals for nourishment and comfort. Then the sealers notice the dreaded dark spaces indicating that the ice field has begun to come apart, and they hear the cries of members of their crew who are carried out to sea on drifting pans and lost.

The sealers have experienced a complete reversal in their situation. In "that brisk, live

hour before the sun.” totally in control and poised to begin the slaughter, they were able, in a calm moment, to empathize with their fellow creatures over whom they have mastery. Now they themselves are at the mercy of nature, and Pratt’s nature is merciless. This reversal is made especially ironic by the brilliant repetition of the identification of sealers and seals. *The Eagle*, close by but unable to help, is figured as the “mother . . . fully as blind as her brood,” bringing back the image of female seals helpless to prevent the slaughter of their young. Allowing for the fact that the genre is narrative and the protagonist is a collection of humans rather than an individual human hero, this reversal resembles the *peripeteia* of classical tragedy.³⁷

The Ice-Floes ends as abruptly as it begins, the urgency of the first sighting of the seal patch counter-balanced by the desperate rescue of the surviving sealers, capped by an eight-line denouement that seems to stagger to a conclusion:

And the rest is as a story told,

Or a dream that belonged to a dim, mad past,

Of a March night and a north wind’s cold,

Of a voyage home with a flag half-mast:

Of twenty thousand seals that were killed

To help lower the price of bread:

Of a muffled beat . . . of a drum . . . that filled

A nave . . . at our count of sixty dead.

“For narrative,” Northrop Frye succinctly comments on this ending, “the poet must have a story worth telling, and then get out of the way.”³⁸ Its emphasis, however, united by the final rhyme of “bread” and “dead,” is unmistakable. This is not fox-hunting. The sealers are locked in a life-

and-death struggle just as the seals are. The landscape of their lives is located on a primitive plane far removed from the “temperate lands” and “peopled places” Duncan ironically evokes in “The Strength of Men.” Their tragedy is the tragedy of a people for whom the heroic life is a daily requirement for survival.

Pratt’s economy of language in depicting this life parallels the understatement previously noted in Duncan’s characters, and it emerges as an explicit theme in the concluding lines of “The Toll of the Bells” quoted above. In this poem, the Christian obsequies for the dead sealers are meant to speak for the “dumb hearts” of the stricken community: “the band’s low requiem”: the “throbbing organ prelude”: “the Litany” that ends “like a sobbing wave”: the “tale of life’s fore-shortened days”: the “tidal triumph of Corinthians.” But neither these religious signs, nor the secular gestures of respect – “the hoarse din / of Guns” and “the drooped signals from those mute / Banners” – “could find the language to salute / The frozen bodies that the ship brought in.” “Sorrow,” we are told in a bitter image, “[h]as raked up faith and burned it like a pile / Of driftwood, scattering the ashes while / Cathedral voices anthemed God’s tomorrow.” In Pratt’s memory of this event, only the great notes swinging out from the belfries of the town were able to hold “the winds and the pagan roll / Of open seas within their measured toll.”

One element of experience in life lived at this extreme is expressed in “The Last Survivor,” a less well-known poem about a sealing disaster – the supernatural connection between men in danger and their families waiting at home.³⁹ Ghosts and visions are consistent with the delirium that accompanies physical exhaustion, but the symbolic significance of these encounters is on another plane of reality. The intense bond between fishermen and their loved ones is a common theme in Pratt’s Newfoundland verse. At times, it is the after-effect of loss that

expresses the near totality of the relationship. This is reflected most famously perhaps in the short poem, "Erosion":

It took the sea a thousand years.

A thousand years to trace

The granite features of this cliff.

In crag and scarpe and base.

It took the sea an hour one night.

An hour of storm to place.

The sculpture of these granite seams

Upon a woman's face.

This kind of experience is succinctly summed up in the last lines of the lyric, "Newfoundland": "the story is told / . . . Of dreams that survive the night. / Of doors held ajar in storms." At other times, such relationships are characterized by a relentless watch during a period of danger whose premise seems to be that passionate and unwavering attention upon the fate of the separated one in such circumstances may influence the outcome. Such a watch is evident in poems like "In Lantern Light" and "The Weather Glass." Sometimes the intensity of these relationships is believed to transcend the bounds of ordinary reality. Such a view is given in "The Last Survivor," in which one sealer out of fifteen survives the night on an ice-floe because, unlike his companions who had staked "bone and flesh and blood," he had thrown "his heart into the fight." But the poem presents a cruel irony when on the second night death prevails, despite "the partner at his side / When, in the home, she joined the fight / Against the wind and snow and tide."

A life-and-death battle with wind, snow and tide is not a common requirement in lives lived at a distance from nature. Pratt's Newfoundland heroes, like Duncan's, do not have that luxury. Although his cosmology is more clearly marked by the evolutionary theory that he had imbibed as an experimental psychologist, and struggled with as a Christian theologian, Pratt's view of nature is similar to Duncan's.⁴⁰ He sees it at best as an implacable force embodying a mechanistic principle alien to human aspirations, at worst as a malign power representing evil in the universe. Like Duncan, he is given at times to personifying nature as an active enemy of humankind. A clear illustration is the relatively early lyric, "A Coast," in which a waterspout, or an incipient squall, enshrouded in fog, is envisaged as "some wild thing with twisted shape" hanging "like a felon off the Cape." This sense of menace sometimes emerges from things of awesome beauty like the iceberg in "The Sea-Cathedral" or "The Mirage": sometimes it is felt as a vague but powerful disturbance, as in one of his later lyrics, "A Call"; other times it is explicitly stated as in "The Way of Cape Race": "Lion-hunger, tiger-leap! / The waves are bred no other way."

But, at the same time, humans are seen to be a part of nature. Thus the identification of sealers with seals in *The Ice-Floes*. In her analysis of Pratt's thought, Sandra Djwa convincingly delineates the witches' brew of intellectual influences on the young scholar: his theological writing on demonology and Pauline eschatology, his training and education in the determinist theories of the psychologist, Wilhelm Wundt, and his fascination with the English poet and novelist, Thomas Hardy. Her view is that Pratt came to a conclusion similar to that propounded by T.H. Huxley in which humans were seen to represent a stage in evolution that made possible a rejection of its first principle. Huxley believed that the ethical perspective of humans was a

product of evolution that had the potential to supersede the imperative of survival of the fittest. That Pratt espoused something much like this makes sense not only of his Newfoundland poems but of most of his other work as well (5-6, 12-18).

Pratt's Newfoundland, however, like Duncan's, brought clarity to this struggle between the natural and the human because life in the outports of Pratt's time was lived on such a primitive level that romantic illusions about beneficent nature were impossible to uphold.⁴¹ The intellectual temper of the times, therefore, coincided with Pratt's early experience of nature: "We lost the habit of interrogating nature as a kind mother whose task it was to lead us from joy to joy, who never did betray the heart that loved her."⁴² Anyone growing up in outport Newfoundland at the turn of the century would have had a hard time developing this habit in the first place. Instead, the engagement Pratt depicts between Newfoundlanders and nature is combative. Nowhere is this clearer than in the central poem of his first collection, "Newfoundland," with its image of the sea relentlessly and destructively battering its way into human hearts:

Here the tides flow,
 And here they ebb:
 Not with that dull unsinewed tread of waters
 Held under bonds to move
 Around unpeopled shores . . .
 But with a lusty stroke of life
 Pounding at stubborn gates,
 That they might run

Within the sluices of men's hearts.

Here "the sea-kelp on the beach" is "red as the heart's blood. / And salt as tears." Here the winds hold a special "partnership with life": "Their hands are full to the overflow. / In their right is the bread of life. / In their left are the waters of death." Here the "Tide and wind and crag. / Sea-weed and sea-shell" are intimately connected with "human veins and pulses" through the emblem of the "broken rudder."

It was this powerful, unromantic, post-lapsarian view of nature that seemed so fresh to Canadian eyes in the 1920s. In his review of *Titans* in *The Canadian Forum* in 1927, Barker Fairley wrote: "we recognize, almost for the first time in Canadian poetry, the existence, behind and around the narrative, of a mental climate which is not Anglo-Canadian, but which truly belongs to the uncivilized world. Take any previous Canadian poet and you have to admit that an Englishman residing in Canada might have written his work. No Englishman could have written *Titans* . . . [For seeing] with primal freshness . . . the Newfoundlander has it."⁴³ The implication for people inhabiting this kind of environment, for Pratt as well as for Duncan, is life lived on an heroic plane: "Newfoundland has always been for me this place of great deeds which have been traditionally the texture of its seafaring life. The people are accustomed to taking chances – great gambles, if you like, with the highest stake of all, life itself" (quoted in Djwa 19).

Finding inspiration in the heroic life is one thing, finding a language suitably matched to the expression of that life is something else. Like Duncan, Pratt was tempted by the easy emotions of grandiloquence and bombast, and sometimes seduced into a rhetorical style at odds with the economical speech often employed by persons engaged in life-and-death crises. In Pratt's case, it was his war poems rather than his Newfoundland poems that were most badly

flawed in this way. They are worth looking at because they explore the meaning of heroic action and because the war became a landmark in Newfoundlanders' understanding of themselves. They are, however, the poems of someone who had not directly experienced the disillusionment of war. Most of them, also, were written before Pratt found his poetic voice, when he was still experimenting with language and form, trying out the diction and syntax of earlier poets he had read. For the most part, they gratuitously offer verbal effort as though in compensation for the horrors he had escaped in not going to war. Few reveal a sensibility that has come to view Horace's ancient line – "Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori" – as an old lie. "For Valour," for example, written in October 1917, betrays no discomfort in employing the imagery of the battlefield to convey a rarefied notion of spiritual combat. No doubt the metaphor of the Christian soldier seemed natural for an ordained Methodist minister to employ, but, in the context of modern poetry and modern warfare, it seems jarring and even insensitive. Although the conception of life and values expressed in this early poem remained a fundamental part of Pratt's vision throughout his career, it may be, Pitt suggests, that Pratt felt special pressure as a clergy-man poet in wartime to preach the message of Christian affirmation (*The Truant Years* 168).

Two war poems that relate more directly to events that touched him personally, "Before a Bulletin Board" and "Before an Altar," seem more sincere in that they communicate a greater sense of emotional and spiritual dislocation. The first was written after the battle of Beaumont Hamel in which the Newfoundland Regiment was practically annihilated. Pratt happened to be visiting St. John's at the time of the catastrophe and the fate of his injured brother, Arthur, was not clear for several days. Several of his former schoolmates also fell in this encounter. He

witnessed and experienced the anguished waiting for postings of the dead, wounded and missing in action on the public bulletin board at the St. John's General Post Office (Pitt. *The Truant Years* 159-160). The consoling cliché that "strange things happen at the will of God" is implicitly challenged in the concluding line that it is stranger still that God should "[b]ring on night before the sun go down." The second poem, written to commemorate the battle of Gueudecourt, in which Newfoundland soldiers also experienced heavy losses, is even more explicit in its desolation. The bread and wine of Christian communion are put aside: "Blurred is the rubric now. / And shadowy the token. / When blood is on the brow. / And the frail body broken."

The whole of Pratt's work records the ultimate triumph of optimism in his belief in the human ability to ameliorate the conditions of fallen nature. His Newfoundland work, most of it written early in his career, is much darker. For him, the heroic deed became the secular equivalent of Christian sacrifice, an act, as he put in "For Valour," that enabled the human soul to emerge "from the clod, redeemed." Decades later, in a remarkable late poem entitled "The Deed," he is still giving voice to this theme. Here the fate of the medieval chivalric code is questioned, then answered with the description of an anonymous act of heroism in which a man plunges into the sea to save a drowning boy. But although the imagery and diction are reminiscent of Newfoundland – "ledge of rock," "salmon's lunge," "grapnel's rust," "seagulls" – the poem is not particularly a Newfoundland poem. The heroic life depicted in Pratt's Newfoundland poetry is more closely related to the incredible physical and spiritual demands daily made upon a people living on Duncan's "frayed edge of the continent" than it is to individual acts of heroism or self-sacrifice. It is collective and cultural more than it is singular and existential. And it is about loss more than it is about victory.

Vikings of the Ice

The bloody realities of the heroic theme are directly confronted in George Allan England's *Vikings of the Ice* (1924).⁴⁴ England was a Harvard-educated journalist who went to the ice in the spring of 1922 on board the *Terra Nova* under the command of the famous sealing skipper, Captain Abram Kean, widely regarded as the unofficial admiral of the fleet. In a book that one writer has called "by far the best account of the seal hunt." England documented in vivid detail his month-long experience at the front.⁴⁵ He was both appalled and awed by the visceral Dionysian violence of the seal hunt, with its ritual hardship and danger, its easy camaraderie and fellowship, its insouciant and foolhardy courage. On the one hand, he was deeply shocked and repelled by the slaughter on the ice. On the other hand, he was fascinated by it. But if his feelings were ambivalent, his location of the genre of the experience was not. It is, he says, a "gorgeous epic of violence, hardship and bloodshed" (23).

England's sense of alienation from this environment is expressed early in the book as his romantic notions of adventure are quickly shattered. His ship, the *Terra Nova*, had twice been pressed into service on behalf of Robert Falcon Scott in his famous expeditions to the Antarctic, including the successful but fatal attempt in 1911 to reach the South Pole. The *Terra Nova* had carried Scott's diary back to Cardiff in 1913 with its poignant details of the great explorer's last days storm-bound in a tent eleven miles from home base.⁴⁶ But when England seeks her out on a "snow-sheeted wharf" in St. John's, penetrating "narrow white-washed runways already populated with sealers," she reminds him of a ship designed to transport slaves or convicts:

This veteran of the ice is dark, dingy, coal-dusty, and dirtier than anything I have ever seen; with snowy decks, rusty hand pumps; a stuffy and filthy cabin,

extremely cold: tiny hard bunks, a dwarf stove, a table covered with smeared oilcloth: everything inexpressibly dreary and repellent.

A sharp contrast is established between the romantic adventurer seeking excitement and extremity as a refuge from civilization and the gritty reality of the lives of those who carry such heroes, like Sherpa guides, upon their backs. His hopes fading, England looks out over the harbour "grinding white with heavy ice. Beyond, snow-swept hills soared to a pitiless gray sky of storm. Gulls volplaned and screamed. Wharves swarmed with types of men unknown to me, strange men, ominous and wild, with never a friendly glance or word for the outlander. Winches cluttered and roared: steam drifted" (29). England is dejected by the squalor, the harshness, and the unfamiliarity of the scene at the waterfront but the sealers, in contrast, are "having high jinks in an environment to me distressing. It makes a difference," he concludes, "whether one has reached St. John's . . . from a steam-heated apartment in Boston or from a tiny little 'tilt' (hut) in some frozen outpost jammed on stilts at the bottom of a fjord riven deep into a heaven-scraping cliff" (30-31).

This is a more industrialized hunt than the one described in Duncan's "The Strength of Men." Centred in St. John's, capitalized by a large Water Street import/export company, prosecuted from a 744-ton steam-assisted whaler carrying 160 men, commanded by a self-styled "admiral" who was a skipper in the Royal Naval Reserve, this expedition is larger scale, less community-based, more hierarchical in its management, and much more exploitative of the sealers, if not the seals, than the voyage described in Duncan's story.⁴⁷ The realities of the hunt on the ice are much the same. The same dangers obtain. The same knowledge, courage, endurance and skill are required in order for the sealers to survive and prosper. The same warrior

mentality is evident in the attitude they bring to the task. But the socio-economic context in which the activity takes place is now more reminiscent of the Industrial Revolution popularly evoked in Blake's "mind-forg'd manacles" and "dark Satanic Mills."⁴⁸

Although he overcomes his trepidations as the voyage gets underway, England's sense of culture shock becomes almost overwhelming when the slaughter suddenly begins at the first sighting of whitecoats:

Cap'n. bosun. carpenter. master watches. all jumped up. The checkerboard was overturned: pieces rolled to the floor: no matter. On deck, louder yells summoned. Keen with the blood lust. all who could go on ice began heaving on their gear.
(106)

.
In came the sculps. fur side to the ice. flesh side quivering like currant jelly – quivering and smoking. The thin streams of life departing. not yet quite gone. hung tenuously. (111)

.
The ice grows spotted with *disjecta membra*. Some of these twitch and quiver. One can see the ripple of muscles in carcasses that. dead. still protest death. (113)

.
Niagaras of blood cascade. A seal appears to be merely a bag of blood and fat. The head of the skin is rapidly but perfectly dissected off. How the enormous eyeballs stare! (114)

At the approach of night. the sealers are called back to the vessel. They "cheer and laugh as they

swarm in. Up ropes and over side-sticks, red-painted now, they escalate with the agility of apes. They catch the rail with gaffs, haul themselves to the rail, leap over to the reeking deck" (116). This image of happy animality is later complemented with an image of unwitting savagery. England is startled to see "our plump, good-natured store-keeper" holding a pulsing seal's heart in his hand:

"Look, dere's life in de heart, yet!" he smiles to me and passes on, to return in a couple of minutes with a pipe in fingers incamadined. A fortnight ago, I could not possibly have dreamed anything like this; and now, at times, I ask myself: "Is it real? Or is it only, after all, an amazing dream?" (178).

England cites a succinct summation of this orgy of violence by the Canadian journalist Beckles Willson: "The annual seal hunt of Newfoundland is one great carnival of cruelty and bloodshed" (32).⁴⁹ The word *carnival* summons up not only the ritualistic, festive and cyclical nature of folk customs such as the ancient tradition of Saturnalia or the French *mardi gras* but also their transgressive and subversive nature. Bakhtin has shown how the norms of "official" culture were challenged during the middle ages by the "unofficial" culture of the carnival.⁵⁰ There are elements in this analysis that seem applicable to England's experience. The corner stone of Bakhtin's argument is the concept of grotesque realism and its governing principle of degradation. Certainly there is plenty of grotesque realism in the scenes described by England and others.⁵¹ As for degradation, Bakhtin uses the word in a non-pejorative sense: "Degradation means coming down to earth, the contact with earth as an element that swallows up and gives birth at the same time. To degrade is to bury, to sow, and to kill simultaneously, in order to bring forth something more and better" (21). The nature cycle is present as well in that the hunt is a

ritual of spring and also it involves the notion of death feeding life. But the seal hunt is not a festival that celebrates a harvest, it is the harvest itself, and it is grueling and dangerous toil. Furthermore, if we enquire whether the seal hunt represents, in Hutcheon's formulation, an "authorized transgression of the usual norms," or whether it creates an "inverted world, parallel to that of the official culture," the answer is ambivalent. The world of the seal hunt is perhaps an inversion of the values of the "temperate lands" and "peopled places" of the world, but it is not at all at odds with the norms of a coastal fishing culture. This is why it is appropriate to use the term "culture shock" to express the dismay of England and others over the bloody realities of the hunt.

This suggests that a more apposite frame of reference for this experience might be Freud's notion of the *Unheimliche* as discussed in Julia Kristeva's book, *Strangers to Ourselves*.⁵² *Das Unheimliche* is translated, unhelpfully I think, as the "uncanny" by Freud's English translator, James Strachey, and as "uncanny strangeness" by Kristeva's translator, Leon S. Roudiez. A better sense of its meaning may be gleaned from Kristeva's formulation in French, "*l'inquiétante étrangeté*." The term describes a sense of dislocation, a shattering of the customary – the regime of reason and repression – that may be accompanied by anxiety to the point of anguish or exhilaration to the point of hysteria. In its extremes, it may portend breakdown but it also allows for growth.

The *Unheimliche* – *l'inquiétante étrangeté*, a worrisome or disturbing strangeness – is a return of the repressed. In Schelling's words, "everything is *unheimlich* that ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light" (*Strangers* 183). Freud believed that the experience was commonly triggered by encounters with *death, female sexuality, and raw human*

drive. Epilepsy and madness were sometimes thought to be somatic symptoms, or extreme bodily manifestations, of *drive*, and what was thought to be especially worrisome about such manifestations was that they were dimly sensed within each of us. Kristeva's notion of the stranger within ourselves is thus an elaboration of Freud's theory of repression. The irreducible and indestructible residue that cannot be rationalized within our conscious acceptance of our selves is repressed, usually returning, however, in the experience of the *Unheimliche*. According to Kristeva, this experience "occurs when the boundaries between *imagination* and *reality* are erased." It involves "a crumbling of conscious defenses, resulting from the conflicts the self experiences with an other – the 'strange' – with whom it maintains a conflictual bond, at the same time 'a need for identification and a fear of it'" (188).

This helps to explain the psychology of England's response to the slaughter on the ice. It is clear from the uncompromisingly vivid imagery he employed that his sensibilities were assaulted by the killing and the cruelty he witnessed. At the same time, it is clear that his reaction is characterized more by exhilaration than by anxiety, and, in the end, he achieves an unmistakable if uneasy identification with the sealers. Jukes before him, although haunted by dreams of "one poor [seal] writhing its snow white woolly body with its head bathed in blood," had come to accept "the hunting spirit which makes almost every man an animal of prey" (*Jukes's Excursions* 129). Similarly, England writes of being caught up in the blood lust of the hunt: "Nothing mattered now but the kill. The whole ship quivered for that – the berserker rage of shooting, flailing, ripping, cutting, flinging carcasses and blood about – the glory of domination over brute creation" (298). In retrospect, the experience behind him, he dedicated *Vikings on the Ice* to "The Strongest, Hardest and Bravest Men I Have Ever Known – The

Sealers of Newfoundland.”

While insightful, however, Kristeva’s framework lacks an ethical dimension. Perhaps this is most effectively provided in the work of the contemporary Newfoundland painter, Mary Pratt. Within the domestic imagery of much of Pratt’s art lurks the violence of a meat-eating culture. In such paintings as “Eviscerated Chickens” (1971), “Salmon on Saran” (1974), “Cod Fillets on Tinfoil” (1974), “The Service Station” (1978) and “Another Province of Canada” (1978), says Tom Smart, “a salmon is not simply a fish but a metaphor for violence: a gutted carcass is a trophy of a hunt, a winter’s supply of meat, a crucifixion, a metaphor for human violence. Many potential meanings rest in each of Pratt’s images.”⁵³ Pratt reminds us that if we are going to take our moral sensibilities to the ice, then we must also take them to the salmon streams and inside the slaughter houses. Her painting, “Roast Beef,” for example, eerily presents “parcelled flesh” as a metaphor for “the unquenchable human appetite and the violence underlying the domestic ritual of Sunday dinner” (*The Substance of Light* 82).

Shannon Ryan observes that there is a fundamental cultural divide between people for whom hunting is a sport and those for whom it is a livelihood, and he illustrates the point in his comment upon Jukes who, though horrified by the bloodshed of the seal slaughter, thought nothing of shooting seals indiscriminately for sport. “It is very likely,” Ryan notes, “that the sealers viewed Jukes’ actions as wasteful and destructive; it is probable that he was also perceived as immature and childish; and it is possible that the sealers actually thought him cruel” (*The Ice Hunters* 389). Traditionally, in fact, Newfoundlanders did not consider sealing to be a hunt but rather a fishery.⁵⁴ As Ryan points out, it could be construed as a hunt, in any event, only until the seal herd was found. After that, “the hunt became a slaughter, and the ice became the

abattoir." Whatever we may think of slaughter houses, ethical considerations and compassion were not absent from the icefields, according to England. He presents little, if any, evidence of cruelty for the sake of cruelty at the hunt. The rule, for purposes of efficiency if nothing else, is to kill your seal quickly. Because the experience and skill of the sealers varies considerably, this is not accomplished in every instance, but Captain Kean repeatedly instructs his men, "kill y'r seal—*don't* sculp 'em alive" (111, 288). Furthermore, occasionally, amidst the mayhem, odd acts of mercy occur. Joe Sturge, an expert "swatcher," walks away from a female seal when he spies her young one because "[p]oor little fellow perish if I kill de mudder" (230).⁵⁵ Even though sealers were accustomed from youth to killing and gutting fish and animals, and knew from experience that it was a necessity for their survival, they were not unmoved by the massacre. England cites the case of one "grizzled old fellow" who reflects on the heaps of innocent blood spilled. "You t'ink us got much chance o' heaven, spillin' so much?" he asks rhetorically. Then he answers his own question, in his homespun way citing the orthodox Judao-Christian view:

[D]on't de Bible say as how ahl de animals was sent down fer de use o' man, in a nit [net]? I 'lows dere must of been a swile in dat nit, sir.⁵⁶ An so we'm sove from sin, from de sin o' killin' dey poor swiles, an' ahl dat crool business. My glorianna, I 'spects de good Lard must *want* us to kill dey! (247)

While individual Newfoundlanders may have been as repelled by the business of slaughtering animals as anyone else, their culture rationalized and justified the activity. "The old outporters," as O'Flaherty observes, "were killers, not from deliberate cruelty, but through exigency."⁵⁷ In this respect, they were not very different from people who lived in farming and fishing communities throughout Canada. O'Flaherty is also right when he argues that "the quality

of mind that enabled this killing to go on, year in and year out, coexisted . . . with feelings of affection toward housepets, and scrupulous attention to the feeding and care of farm animals.” Nor did it “impair [the] love [of] families or concern for neighbors.” Nor did it create a violent society. The old outports were almost entirely self-policed: people never locked their houses and serious crime was practically unknown.⁵⁸ In Newfoundland, however, the seal hunt came to symbolize a process of acculturation in which individuals learned, within limits, to accept the necessity of killing. It became, therefore, a rite of passage to manhood. Such rites of passage are psychologically as well as physically stressful. It is neither surprising nor irrelevant, therefore, that the seal hunt should evoke for comparison the anarchic impulses Bakhtin associates with the medieval carnival, or the sexual frenzy Kristeva identifies with exile (*Strangers* 30), or the erotically charged violence in the otherwise mundane imagery of Mary Pratt, because these elements are commonly experienced in any shattering of a former self.

Equally interesting is the fact that the seal hunt came to be depicted in military terms.⁵⁹ Newfoundlanders, says Cyril Poole, “came to look upon the fishery, whether on the Grand Banks or the Labrador, whether at the Funks or at the Front, as a battle to be waged” (*Search* 96). While this may be an apt metaphor for other fisheries, and indeed for the very struggle for survival in Newfoundland, it was the seal hunt, in particular, that was usually described in this way. Poole cites this reflection by an old sealer given in *Wake of the Great Sealers*: “Oft-times I asks myself why we was so foolish. Perhaps it was like going off to the wars. Certainly there was risk enough and blood enough. It seemed like you weren’t a proper man at all unless you’d gone to the ice” (*Wake* 57). It is not surprising, therefore, that England, like Duncan and Pratt before him, sought a warrior culture as a point of reference in characterizing the ethos of the hunt. Not only does the

title of his book allude to the ancient Norseman. England also invokes the heroic and the epic on several occasions. The most striking of these parallels is employed to describe not the hunt itself but rather the social milieu of the sealers. "Past and Present," for example, a chapter about memory and story-telling, boasting and hyperbole, heroic figures and heroic feats, is pure epic. England himself advances the notion: "Something epic, thought I, in such boasts" (205). The narration, the themes, the values, all invite comparison with *Beowulf*. The emphasis upon the corruption or dissipation of heroic values by "luxury," the camaraderie, the pride in courage, dominance, endurance – the manly warrior virtues – all evoke the heroic strain.

England develops the Norsemen metaphor even more explicitly in a later chapter, "Tails and Tobacco." Summarizing an account of the day's reckoning in Captain Kean's cabin, he makes direct reference to *Beowulf* and, perhaps more incongruously, to Southey's poem, "The Inchcape Rock":

What a scene! I wondered if perhaps in the true old Viking days, banquet halls of ancient northlands after battle might not have been quite like that? Those black-faced men with blood and grease-stained jackets, with bristle-bearded jowls and crimsoned hands, seemed transmuted to ancient Norse heroes: that bogey became for me the Eorl's blazing and huge-mawed fireplace: that table a sea rover's board; those fippers and toast, wild boar's head; that tea, flagons of mead. Ice enough was there, and violence of elements, for any feast of Thaness; and the same northern stars looked down and wondered as in the days of Ralf the Rover or of Beowulf! (349)

In another passage, England modulates from a social scene on board ship, which depicts

the initiation of a sixteen-year-old boy into a male warrior culture. to an eerie description of the moving icefield that is the sealers' world:

Young Cyril, when I go below, is loudly boasting that he has killed seven seals so far, to-day. The master watches are having a "scoff," or feed; and an amazing picture that makes – the huge men in dirty, blood-stained, and grease-soaked, once-white canvas jackets, with belts and knives on, with nunch bags and bloody skin boots, slouching, hulking and sprawling on benches at the table.⁶⁰ The boy, cramming and laughing with them, is in his element.

Presently we strike another patch, and all hands gather in the waist, with gaffs, bristling flags, gear like crusaders. Soldiers they seem, indeed. The canvas jackets, slung ropes, high boots give them a mediaeval air. "Take y'r watches an' go," commands the Old Man. "Starburd over. Go on, me sons!"

Away and away the hunters run; they become mere dots that crawl over the dazzling fields, among the monstrous masses that swing, advance, retreat. To me they look like skirmishers on solid land; in New England meadows, perhaps – meadows of winter. Hills of ice, lakes, brooks, valleys; one looks for a red barn, a cow, a white farm-house with green blinds. And yet, the slow rhythm of this landscape numbs the illusion. (178-179)

This remarkable description, drawn from England's notebook, moves from a strange but humanly recognizable scene of the boy and men to the fantasy images of medieval crusaders and New England skirmishers before focussing upon the unworldly reality of the heaving icescape.

Given the military imagery of the seal hunt and given the national pride that had been

engendered by the performance of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment during the Great War. Abram Kean's treatment of a war veteran is instructive. It occurs after the whitecoats become scarce and a few marksmen are set to "swatching" – the shooting of mature seals in open patches of water. A man who had been a sniper during the war timidly begs the chance to try his hand at seals. The Old Man patronizes him and puts him off, saying that he may give him a gun if there are any to spare, but in the end he ignores the request. England is amazed and notes ironically: "Supreme favours like a gun wherewith to run over open ice and risk one's life shooting seals are not in any such haphazard manner doled out to mere heroes" (351). It may be that Captain Kean was unwilling to give special standing to the ex-soldier because a number of Great War veterans were alleged to have been the ringleaders in a "manus," or mutiny, aboard the *Diana* just a few days before.⁶¹ But the incident also distinguishes between the older heroic quotidian, the bedrock life of the Newfoundlander, and the translation of the elements of this life into the modern war hero. According to this view, the war hero is given no special respect on the ice because heroic behaviour is the norm. A more sinister perspective suggests that the heroism of ordinary Newfoundlanders was taken for granted and used instrumentally, as though they were a sturdy breed of work dogs rather than human beings. Their *virtus* in this way became their Achilles' heel.

The heroic perspective reveals a fault line in the culture where it meets the modern, industrialized world. Workers holding such values could be easily exploited. It was, after all, a point of manly pride *not* to complain – to complain was to reveal weakness. The seal hunt at the beginning of the twentieth century was a modern industry by Newfoundland standards. Compared to the 1850s when it had utilized 400 sailing vessels, employed approximately 14,000

sealers, and operated out of a number of prosperous outports, the industry in 1914 utilized 21 steamers, employed approximately 400 sealers, and operated almost exclusively out of St. John's.⁶² For most fishermen, sealing was the first and only work for which they were paid a cash wage and, unlike other fishermen, sealers had engaged in collective action to better their lot.⁶³ Returns to sealers nevertheless fell substantially at the turn of the century and conditions of work in the seal fishery declined rather than improved. As the industry became centralized in St. John's, fishermen were forced to travel long distances in extreme winter weather, often on foot, to compete for a shrinking number of available berths. The sealers' share of the bounty was reduced from one-half to one-third with the introduction of the steam-assisted whalers in the 1860s. The "wooden walls," fueled by coal, were dirty, noisy and overcrowded compared to the sailing vessels of former years. There was less room to cook and less time in which to do it. When they were "in the fat" (in the midst of a seal herd), the men now ate a greater proportion of raw seal meat – livers, hearts and flippers. The scene in Pratt's *The Ice-Floes*, of sealers fleshing their teeth in the frozen hearts of seals, is not, therefore, an aberrant act of desperation – it was commonplace. As ships became more powerful, they could move about more quickly and at greater distances, leaving the sealers on the ice for longer periods without rest or sustenance. Over the decades, the old whalers deteriorated badly through insufficient maintenance, and the introduction of iron-clad vessels in 1906 brought a new problem of condensation dripping down onto the sealers' bunks. While this is all well-documented, there are almost no records of complaints from the men. The ethic of their profession was endurance (*The Ice Hunters* 345, 353, 343, 259-262).

Poole considers this the natural outgrowth of a cosmology that assumes that nature is

impervious to human influence. Utilizing references from Duncan and J.R. Smallwood, he raises the question whether the battle with the sea induced in Newfoundlanders "resignation on the land, passivity in social and community affairs?" (*Search* 97) Commenting on a contrast drawn by Duncan between farmer and fisherman in "The Fruits of Toil," he elaborates:

To till the soil is to enclose it against the beasts of the forest: to spread lime where there is acid; to fertilize when it is deficient: to irrigate against a drought and to ditch against the flood. In a word, to till is to thwart laws of nature or at least to bend them to one's will.

But the fisherman can do none of these things. It is not given to him to still the waters. (93)

Smallwood makes the same point in his memoir, *I Chose Canada* (1973).⁶⁴ While Canadian farmers, he writes, had "coaxed millions of acres into smiling green meadows and prosperous fields," Newfoundlanders "at the end of the first 400 years of toil . . . had no productive meadows . . . For during those four centuries, their cultivation was of the unquiet, infuriate North Atlantic . . . and all the toil and danger had not won an acre for them" (10). This thought was central to Smallwood's vision of Newfoundland because he introduced it in one of his earliest articles on the country, "Newfoundland Today," published in 1937, drawing a provocative conclusion that has haunted many students of Newfoundland:

Perhaps the very nature of our struggle, of our methods of wresting a living from Nature, has helped to unfit us for creative and constructive effort.

It is a fact that for centuries we have lived by *killing* cod and other fish; by *killing* seals in the water or on the ice, and animals on the land; by *killing* birds.

and *cutting down* trees. Has all this developed in us a trait of destructiveness, or narcotised what ought naturally to be an instinct of creativeness?⁶⁵

England quotes a similar pronouncement by Beckles Willson: "Newfoundland has probably produced hundreds of painters and poets and musicians; but unfortunately their talents have all been stifled by the spirit of their environment" (280). Willson, however, ascribes the relative dearth of creative output – at least as conventionally conceived – to impoverishment and deprivation rather than to culture. Poole and Smallwood perhaps overstate the influence of cultural world-view and do not take sufficiently into account the effects, in the past, of the limited educational opportunities available to most Newfoundlanders.⁶⁶ On the other hand, a one-dimensional emphasis upon educational impoverishment often conceals the bias of 'high' culture, and typically underestimates, or undervalues, the creativity that went into folk arts and that emerged in proverb, wit, story and song, a collective achievement that much impressed outside observers like England, as is evident in his chapter "An Evening with the Muses."⁶⁷

In any event, the ethic of endurance among Newfoundland fishermen was a central value of their culture and its re-enforcement was peer-driven. England recounts the case of one sealer who falls into the open water and turns back to the ship only to be shamed by hoots and jeers of his fellow sealers into continuing to work until his clothes are "frozen stiff as boards." Another instance is given of two men who find themselves caught on an ice pan floating across the bay. "Wild hilarity burst from rail and barricade," England reports, and the poor unfortunates are subject to a torrent of abuse until they copy their way back to the ship, "without her having slacked for them" (329-330).

This cavalier attitude towards extremity and danger is perhaps due to their omnipresence.

It is evident in the casual way the sealers treated high explosives – sometimes with tragic consequences – and in Newfoundlanders’ tendency towards understatement (even to the point of unacknowledgement) in times of real crisis.⁶⁸ This curtailment of utterance is the reverse side of an exuberant delight in words and extravagant taste for hyperbole that England observes in the sealers’ leisure-time tale-telling.⁶⁹ It is nicely illustrated in the chapter, “A Touch of Near-Tragedy,” which recounts an incident in which a crew of sealers are found to be missing after dark with a storm coming on. Captain Kean, who had been widely blamed for the *Newfoundland* disaster eight years before, becomes anxious for their safety, and desperately turns his ship towards where the men were last seen, all lights blazing. England hears Kean blaming himself for overlooking the absence of the men – “What’s the matter wi’ us, anyhow? Whitecoat crazy?” – and his commands betray barely concealed panic. At midnight, the weather has closed in and a gale is blowing when someone spies a glimmer in the distance and the *Terra Nova* discovers the missing men on a pan of ice, strolling around a fire and surrounded by seal sculps. The relief is tremendous but England is astonished when the Captain’s first words to the missing men are, “How many seals ye got, me sons?” and the master watch, without missing a beat, proudly replies, “Sixty-one sculps, sir!” (213-215)

G.M. Story wrote of the old outports: “They were, above all, communities on a human scale and societies with a consciousness, or an illusion, of mastery over their environment” (“Newfoundland” 33). The refusal to assign words to one’s worst fears in life-and-death crises, as in the situation described above, or the one earlier cited in Duncan’s “The Breath of the North,” represents the assertion of control over one’s environment, an attempt, as it were, to put danger in its place, or to cut it down to human size. But the strategy recognises, at the same time, that this

control may indeed be an illusion. Understatement of this kind is a complex psychological mechanism to overcome intimidation, one that encourages assertion but honours the ancient injunctions against *hubris*.⁷⁰

England, like Duncan and Pratt before him, consciously evokes an heroic culture in his attempt to depict the life of Newfoundland sealers, and, by extension, Newfoundland fishermen. The focus is not on individuals but on a people. While the protagonists might be distinct characters, they are rendered more as representatives of the values of their society, as a way of seeing the world, a way of being. They are collective, anonymous, proletarian, male and, most often, tragic. "Newfoundland," says England, "has its rich folk and its cultured ones aplenty. With them I am not concerned. I am thinking, writing only of the types who catch the cod and hunt the seal: the obscure, patient, tireless ones who live and labour by the chill and fog-bound northern waters: the poverty-bitten, humble, heroic, cheerful, truly pious, and indomitable men who gamble with death, and who all too often lose" (325).

The Proletarian Hero

Norman Duncan, E.J. Pratt, and George Allan England variously tap the heroic vein – in the elevated style of their writing, in allusions and comparisons to heroic mythology and narrative, and in a concentration on great feats of physical and spiritual bravery within the broad context of a life-and-death struggle – but their protagonists are ordinary men, anonymous to the world, and representatives of a culture rather than individuals. In the work of Duncan, they are also portrayed as an underclass in society that is exploited by powerful capitalist interests. Finally, more often than not the protagonists lose the struggle and, therefore, although lacking

public greatness in Aristotle's sense. they are tragic heroes.

The development of this kind of hero in Newfoundland literature is brought about by writers of some literary sophistication but its origins lie in the crude nationalist mythology of the early nineteenth century. The proletarian subject of this myth, however, predates the evolution of a cultural concept of "the Newfoundlander."⁷¹ According to this tradition, the downtrodden west country Irish and English who settled the coves and coasts of Newfoundland became, over successive generations of abuse and neglect in an alien and extreme environment, a new cultural entity. Although the subject of this myth was working class, the source was always middle class. From the nineteenth-century nationalists, William Carson and Patrick Morris, to the twentieth century writers, Norman Duncan, E.J. Pratt and George Allen England, the mythology of the Newfoundlander was formulated by well-educated intellectuals who, however knowledgeable and empathetic they might be in relation to the culture they described, were in a sense outside it. Ironically, therefore, middle and upper class Newfoundlanders found themselves trapped outside of the myth their classes had created. If Newfoundlanders were, by definition, hardy fisherfolk, then what were they? The mythology had not made room for heroes of their classes. This was because, to begin with, they identified themselves not with Newfoundlanders but with their counterparts in the old country.

A glimpse into the genesis of this divide is given in two plays by Michael Cook written in the 1970s. *Colour the Flesh the Colour of Dust* (1972) and *The Gayden Chronicles* (1977) depict the origins of the proletarian hero, imaginatively reconstructing the political and socioeconomic realities of pre-colonial Newfoundland.⁷² *Colour the Flesh the Colour of Dust* is set in St. John's in 1762. Strongly influenced by the aesthetic theory and political ideology of Bertolt Brecht's

epic theatre. the play recounts a six-month period during which the town is occupied by the French. The working class inhabitants of St. John's are Irish and their circumstances are depicted in Brechtian songs such as "The Song of the Woman" (D7) and "The Ballad of Making Ends Meet" (D16), and in a long speech by Spokesman towards the end of the play (D42). Their counterparts within the English garrison are Soldier 1 and Soldier 2 who have been stationed in the colony for twenty years. The amorality of capital ("trade" in the play) is represented by the Magistrate, who engineers a deal with the conquering French, and his ally, the Merchant, who cheats his poor customers by cutting his flour with sawdust. Empire sits in the background, ostensibly representing civilization and justice but actually facilitating trade. The soldiers, officers and men, are caught in between. The Captain, who surrenders to the French, is a burnt-out case. The Lieutenant, who becomes the lover of a woman whose man he hanged, struggles to maintain some sense of morality and integrity in a world of bankrupt ideals and values. There are no Newfoundlanders in *Colour the Flesh the Colour of Dust*. But their antecedents are present in the working class Irish peasants of the town and the working class English soldiers of the garrison. Both are portrayed as pawns in the struggle for empire.

The Gayden Chronicles, set in St. John's during the last years of the seasonal naval governors, depicts the plight of ordinary British seamen who were forced into service by the notorious west country press gangs of the period. It is based upon the diary of William Gayden who in 1812 was flogged through the fleet and hanged in St. John's for murder, mutiny, desertion and other offences. In Cook's portrayal, however, Gayden is not simply a trouble-maker but an incipient revolutionary conversant with the ideas of William Blake and Thomas Paine, a man born into poverty whose natural intelligence and leadership abilities are frustrated by the class

system and channelled into futile and self-destructive acts of violence and defiance towards authority. As in *Colour the Flesh the Colour of Dust*, a kinship of dispossession is established between the common seamen and the working class poor of St. John's, represented by two prostitutes who service the fleet. In a discussion between the Governor, Admiral Duckworth and Gayden, distinctions are drawn between revolution and rebellion and between orderly change and anarchy. In keeping with his code, Duckworth, although sympathetic to Gayden, nevertheless carries out his cruel sentence to uphold the authority of the law.

The Gayden Chronicles describes a St. John's which, although well-established, is still pre-colonial in that there is no self-government and no resident governor.⁷³ The Crown's representative is still an Admiral of the British Navy and the inhabitants still subject, in Story's vivid phrase, to "the rough customary justice of the fishing smack and the rum-keg court" ("Newfoundland" 13). It is precisely the St. John's described in William Carson's *Letter to the Members of Parliament of the United Kingdom* in which the reformer declares that although he esteems the character of the British sailor, he conceives him "but ill calculated for filling the situation of a Governor or Judge," going on to argue that "[f]orce being the power, he knows best how to direct, the toils of investigation, deliberation, and judgement are seldom had recourse to, by a Naval Governor" (*sic.*, 8-9). Indeed, the presiding Governor at the time of Carson's pamphlet was the same Admiral Duckworth of Cook's play. As Cook portrays it, this St. John's is also pre-national. The inhabitants are identified by their Irish or English lineage rather than by their Newfoundland heritage. Having no sense of themselves as being culturally distinct from the countries from which they originated, Cook's working class poor are protagonists in the making of heroic Newfoundland. Already oppressed and resilient, they are just not yet Newfoundlanders.

Death on the Ice

Although written on an epic scale, Michael Cook's plays are modern in technique and sensibility. In contrast, Cassie Brown's work is closer to the ancient style of epic in its reliance upon a found story and in its valuing of simple narrative. In its dependence upon research, on the other hand, Brown's work is modern, influenced by the genre of the documentary. *Death on the Ice* (1972), her account of the terrible 1914 sealing disaster, written with the assistance of Harold Horwood, is based upon transcripts of two official enquiries that were held that year and interviews she conducted with survivors.⁷⁴ In addition, she studied the newspapers of the day, the meteorological records, and other sources. Her commitment to heroic narrative and her insistence upon research give her work some of the characteristics that distinguish the documentary poetry of Pratt. Although she exercises considerable craft in her management of sources, characters and time, as well as plot and subplot, like Pratt she allows nothing to get in the way of the story. As a journalist, and also as someone familiar with a strong oral tradition of story-telling, Brown knew that great stories are often found rather than created, and she understood the power of allowing protagonists to speak for themselves. Written in vivid, racy prose, *Death on the Ice* has the immediacy of an action film and the urgency of a breaking news story. At the same time, it honours and mimics the ancient tradition of recounting the myths of the tribe, narratives of great deeds and terrible catastrophes that marked the lives and shaped the identity of those who went before.

Brown's heroes are described as a "breed" of humans. Their appearance in the narrative is preceded, however, by an inhospitable image of the island of Newfoundland prior to human habitation rising "gaunt and grey out of a cold grey sea" (9). The country, characterized by

“fogs.” “sharp breezes” and “shallow soil.” is barren but sits adjacent to the “teeming silver shoals” of the nearby Grand Banks. “the richest fishing ground in the world.” As Brown recounts it, the history of Newfoundland is dominated by these facts. Europeans come to harvest the bounties of the sea and their temporary harbour camps slowly become permanent settlements of seafaring men mainly from the west of England and Ireland, over time creating a distinct and elemental lifestyle:

it was a harsh life, a constant struggle for survival. The men fished: the women grew what vegetables they could, and raised some sheep, goats and poultry. The only other meat was what they got by gun or snare – ducks, geese, rabbits and, in hard times, sea birds. In bad fishing seasons families starved. (10)

The descendants of these people are the heroes of Brown’s story, “a hardy, manly breed.” moulded by the sea “to withstand great privation” (16). When they flock to St. John’s in the spring to prepare for the annual seal harvest, they come by train, horse and sleigh, and on foot, and they seem like strange men, out of time, with their “rough worn clothing, their . . . clumsy home-made sealskin trousers with boots of rawhide or sealskin . . . gunny slacks (*sic*) slung over their shoulders, sculping knives belted around their middles . . . raw boned . . . their faces seamed by constant exposure to the biting winds” (17).⁷⁵ Brown records that, fifteen hundred strong, they are not the least bit intimidated by the condescending townfolk, and, absorbed thus in their *métier*, this is not hard to believe. Rather, it is easy to see how, for someone like George Allan England, the sealers, with their outlandish garb and rough ways, were themselves intimidating.

Mostly illiterate, these men shouldered heavy responsibilities before they were out of childhood. Fishing in open boats with their fathers as early as age ten, by fourteen they were men.

resigned to “hard unceasing labour and bitter poverty to the end of their days” (15). Little wonder, then, that they accepted, as normal, conditions on board that to contemporary sensibilities are reminiscent of an eighteenth- or nineteenth-century convict ship. Subsisting at first on a diet of salt fish and hard tack, by the end of the voyage, when the holds were filled up with seal pelts, they would sleep on top of the blood and fat, drink melted snow and eat raw seal hearts.⁷⁶ Writers repeatedly observed an identification between sealers and animals. Describing the sealers boarding the *Stephano* as she continues to move through the ice, Brown writes: “Agile as monkeys, the sealers swarmed up the side sticks and over the railing” (85).⁷⁷ In another instance, she compares them to that other arctic predator, the polar bear, in that “they soon came to relish the taste of live meat” (30).

These poverty-stricken fishermen thought of themselves, however, as free men, and they took pride in their power of endurance and their ability to survive extreme conditions. Early in the voyage, when the fog closes in on a party of sealers on the ice, they calmly build a fire by cutting shavings from flagpoles with their sculping knives and fuel it with seal fat. Then they sit around swapping yarns about days gone by until their vessel eventually finds them. The charismatic union leader, William Coaker, along on the voyage as a government observer, is unintentionally left on the ice with this group, and he listens intently as older sealers – survivors of the 1898 Greenland disaster – recount their memories of the ordeal. In the meantime, younger men play tag to pass the time and one man dances a jig and sings a ditty for entertainment. Although their lives might be characterized by “grinding poverty,” the sealers do not seem at all ground down. Mostly they exhibit *sang froid*, good humour and camaraderie. They resemble an ancient party of hunters or warriors.

When such men are asked to walk five or six miles over rafted ice because their vessel, the *Newfoundland*, is jammed in the floes and unable to approach the main patch of seals, they do not hesitate.⁷⁸ Led by their second hand, George Tuff, an experienced sealer who had survived the *Greenland* disaster, some of the young men even remove their guernseys and strip to the waist as they trudge along sweating from the exertion of their trek. The plan of their skipper, Captain Wes Kean, is that they will be taken aboard the *Stephano* and the *Florizel*, captained respectively by his father, Captain Abram Kean, and his older brother, Captain Joe Kean. Unfortunately, George Tuff is apparently unaware of this plan, and trusts to the directions he receives from "the old man," Abram Kean, the widely acknowledged, albeit unofficial, "admiral" of the fleet.

Disaster ensues when Abram Kean puts the sealers from the *Newfoundland* back on the ice at the beginning of a snow storm, convinced that they will have enough time to slaughter some seals and return to their vessel by nightfall. Soon, however, the men are lost and no one but them knows it. Wes Kean believes the men are safe on board his father's vessel for the night. Abram Kean believes they have found their way back to the *Newfoundland*. Neither is able to communicate with the other to confirm their assumptions because Harvey and Company, owners of the *Newfoundland*, had removed the wireless set from the ship for the reason that it was not paying for itself.

The tragic result of these decisions is that one-hundred-and-thirty-two of the crew of the *Newfoundland* were lost on the ice for two-and-one-half days in weather that lurched demonically from blowing snow, to rain, to sleet, to blizzard. When darkness fell the first day, the master watches directed the sealers to build ice shelters but already they were too exhausted

to make anything but rudimentary snow walls that gave them no protection from the torrential rain.⁷⁹ They were soaked through by the time the temperature dropped below freezing once again. All the while, the wind remained at gale force. During the night, men wandered off into the darkness and perished. Individual sealers made heroic efforts to sustain the hope of others and the next day several heartbreaking attempts were made to reach nearby vessels, but all of them failed. The men had to prepare themselves for a second night of this icy hell. By the time they were finally sighted by their horrified skipper at 6:00 a.m. the next morning, seventy-seven sealers were dead. Many were frozen in grotesque sculptures, in walking poses or praying on their knees. One father lay on the ice holding his sixteen-year-old son in his arms, the son's head pulled under his guernsey in a final attempt to comfort him. Another was found in a standing pose with his arms around his two sons. Eight bodies were never recovered. Many of the survivors lost fingers, toes and feet to frostbite.

Brown's analysis, like Duncan's, presents Newfoundland as a divided society in which the rich St. John's merchants exploit the poor outport fishermen. In her account, the fishery of the country, including the annual seal fishery, was by the early 1900s dominated by grasping townie capitalists. The aristocracy of the island, they maintained import and export links with a host of foreign countries and sent their children "to the best public schools in England" (15). The Newfoundland disaster, as Brown interprets it, reveals the sealers to be both incredibly brave and exceedingly timid. When these qualities are combined with the paternalism and greed of the ruling class, the threshold of exploitation is raised to tragic levels. Accustomed to hardship and proud of their ability to endure it, Newfoundland fishermen looked for little relief, and the monied owners of the sealing fleet fully obliged their meagre expectations. The idea of returning

to port because a crew member died or suffered severe injury was not a part of the value system. Human life and human sentiment were routinely sacrificed to practicality as is evident in the story Coaker hears the men recount of Captain George Barbour, skipper of the *Greenland* in 1898. Although Captain Barbour is singled out among sealing skippers as one who put “the safety of his ship and his men above the desire to be ‘highliner’ for the year.” he did not hesitate to continue sealing after picking up the survivors from the tragic storm, only his men were not capable of it, and so he gave up the voyage and returned home (24 and 39). Similarly, in the hunt of 1914, when Henry Pridham falls headfirst into the hold of the *Bonaventure* and loses consciousness, he is put in a bunk to die (41). Sealing companies used the ethic of endurance to their advantage in keeping costs to a minimum. Not only did the *Newfoundland* not have a wireless, it did not even have a deck thermometer and its barometer was malfunctioning (46 and 138). Later, at the public commission of enquiry, Alick Harvey, representing the owners of the *Newfoundland*, admitted with unintended irony: “The safety of the crew was not thought of at all, or [the wireless] would not have been removed” (261).

According to Brown’s account, the attitude of the *Newfoundland*’s owners embodied a retrogressive entrepreneurial mindset pervasive among the St. John’s sealing merchants, and it stands out in contrast to the progressive marriage of technology and humanity depicted in Pratt’s narrative, *The Roosevelt and the Antinoe* (1930). In this poem, the wireless transmitter and the direction-finder enable Captain Fried to find the *Antinoe*, which was not aware of its position, and they make possible the heroic rescue of its crew. Later, Pratt commented upon the deed: “It was a call well answered. The call of the instruments joined with the hail of the human voice and the sacrificial blood beating at the pulses. Science in league with good will; individual courage

and humanity behind the machine. It is that sort of thing, and only that sort of thing, which is the hope of this world.”⁸⁰ Such a view seems not to have been part of the world picture of the captains of industry who ran the Newfoundland seal fishery in 1914.

The authoritarian and hierarchical nature of Newfoundland society, and the subservience of the fishermen, are tragically evident in the inability of anyone to confront Captain Abram Kean even though fear for the safety of the crew of the *Newfoundland* was widely shared by sealers and officers alike. George Tuff, although second hand on board the *Newfoundland*, keeps his misgivings to himself when Captain Kean informs him that his men will be put back on the ice to pan some more seals before walking back to their own vessel. The closest he comes to contradicting the Old Man is just before the *Stephano* steams away when he feebly remarks: “It looks fer weather, sir” (95). Master Watch Garland Goulton, prompted by the gutsy young sealer, Mark Sheppard, questions Captain Kean about the welfare of the crew of the *Newfoundland* but immediately backs off when the skipper proclaims them safe (125-126). Captain William Martin, a master mariner engaged as navigator for the hunt, also raises the issue with Captain Kean but does not press the matter (126-127). Similarly, Skipper Sam Horwood, the master of his own schooner and a “blunt” and “forceful” man, goes so far as to voice his disquietude to the wheelsman aboard the *Stephano*, Sam Kean, the brother of Captain Kean. Horwood is certain that his fears, shared by Sam Kean, will be thus conveyed to the self-styled admiral of the fleet, but this does not happen:

what Horwood didn't know was that Sam Kean, too, was afraid of the Old Man. They were *all* afraid of him. So although the men below deck continued to mutter amongst themselves, none had the courage to go to the bridge. The officers spoke

cautiously to one another about the *Newfoundland's* men, but none suggested to the Captain that he should go look for them. (146-147)

This excessive respect for authority can be seen elsewhere in the narrative. Master Watch Thomas Dawson, for example, displays great stamina and determination throughout the ordeal on the ice and is not slow to speak his mind to Second Hand George Tuff. But on board Captain Kean's vessel, the *Stephano*, he is ill-at-ease and unwilling to assert himself, claiming that he does not have any authority on the ship even to ensure that his men are provided for. He follows them down to the crew's quarters rather than go to the officers' mess with the other master watches because no one has invited him there (88-89).⁸¹ Even the redoubtable leader of the Fishermen's Protective Union, William Coaker, feels compelled to stifle his rage when he protests the continuation of the hunt and is told by the owners of the *Nascopie* to mind his own business. He fills his log with the rhetoric of outrage but to Job Brothers he contents himself with two sentences of succinct sarcasm: "Taken 250 past week Exceedingly obliged advice tendered" (243). By now, the sealers themselves are in a rebellious mood as evidenced by the mutiny on board the *Bloodhound* and by Mark Sheppard's direct challenge to Captain Kean when he refuses to continue sealing (250-252). But these are futile gestures, betokening a recklessness born, too late, of grief. Even after acknowledging that paternalism at this time was by no means unique to Newfoundland society, and that the hierarchy of command was a universal code of the sea, the deference towards their "betters" exhibited by these men is striking. It reflects a society in which the gap between privileged and poor is extreme and apparently unbridgeable. Despite the efforts of William Coaker to organize the fishermen, few among Newfoundland's leaders had set their agenda to better the lot of the dispossessed.

The behaviour of George Tuff is instructive in this regard. Tuff's subservience to authority overcomes his better judgement and leads directly to his men being placed in grave danger. Furthermore, once the sealers are lost, Tuff proves incapable of exercising initiative in leading them to safety. To the disapproval of his men, he takes up the rear. He instructs Dawson to take the lead to find the path they had broken that morning while he himself stays at the end of the line to ensure that the weaker ones keep up (103). Certainly there is self-sacrifice in this decision, and perhaps it represents a different interpretation of leadership, one more in keeping with his experience as a seaman. For example, when a sick, inexperienced sealer named William Pear begins to weaken and fall behind, Tuff will not abandon him. "Now if there's two men on the ice tonight I'm goin' to be one of 'em," he declares, calling for two volunteers to stay behind with himself and Pear (130). This imitates the ethic of the captain being the last to abandon ship. If it is not the appropriate role for the occasion, perhaps Tuff chooses it because self-sacrifice came more easily to him than self-assertion, and in this he may have personified a common, if not universal, cultural trait among this generation and class of Newfoundlanders. Tuff also endures. Along with a few other men possessing extraordinary stamina and determination, he strives tirelessly to reach one or the other of the ships in the area on day two of their ordeal. And on the morning of day three, he is among the group who eventually stagger close enough to the *Newfoundland* that they are spotted by their appalled skipper, Wes Kean. Sixteen years after weathering the *Greenland* storm, Tuff survived the second great sealing tragedy in Newfoundland's history. Many of the strengths and weaknesses of the Newfoundland hero are evident in his struggle.

Brown places the *Newfoundland* tragedy in a physical and social context through a

narrative lens that telescopes in and out, temporally and spatially, creating a sense of distance, foreshadowing, and dramatic irony. Although the focus most often is close up, the reader is constantly made aware of the broader framework through the provision of historical background or through allusions to present events occurring simultaneously but in different places. This latter device is especially effective. The storm, for example, is tracked five days before it hits the sealers on Tuesday, 31 March. We view it as from outer space, or on a weather map, an enormous high pressure area centred near Bermuda, feeding winds into the Gulf of Mexico, forcing warm moist air above a second high that is pushing cold, dry air outwards over the province of Manitoba. The low pressure system between these two highs is followed as it brings rain and snow into Mississippi, the Great Lakes and Southern Ontario (47-48). Five days later, we see it "tearing across the centre of the Grand Banks" while the "first flakes of snow [are] falling over St. John's" (79). References to the storm are often juxtaposed with reports of the progress of the *Southern Cross*, one of the smaller vessels at the Gulf hunt. Laden with seal skins, the ship was racing its way across the South Coast of Newfoundland for the honour of being first vessel back to port that year. Steaming pell-mell directly into the storm, she was sighted several times over a period of five days, but finally disappeared somewhere between Cape Pine and St. John's. No trace of the ship and its crew of one-hundred-and-seventy-three was ever found. The cross references to the storm and to the *Southern Cross* create a sense of fatality similar to that developed by Pratt when he introduces and tracks the iceberg early in his narrative poem, *The Titanic* (1935).

Brown notes that Newfoundlanders are firm believers in fate (50-52).⁸² It is a fatalism that gives special emphasis to the interconnectedness of things beyond the natural laws of this earth.

Death on the Ice gives several examples of stories told among the sealers of apparitions and visions, often connecting men in distress with loved ones at home, which reflect the same cosmology underlying Pratt's "The Last Survivor." Young Jesse Collins, a teacher in a small community named Doting Cove, witnesses the door of her school burst open from a gust of wind and sees the face of her fiancé, Cecil Mouland, appear before her eyes (116). Conversely, during his worst moments on the ice, the image of Jesse's face inspires Cecil Mouland to keep going (170). Similarly, John Howlett, shortly before the voyage, has a dream in which he is on a mountain of ice, lost and freezing, surrounded by vague, indefinable shapes (2). A few weeks later, delirious from exhaustion, he finds himself in a graveyard of frozen bodies and tries in vain to awake himself from a nightmare that has become reality (204).

Reinforcing the experiences of the sealers is the deployment of portents within the narrative itself. At least one of these is purely literary. Chapter Seven, which recounts the first day of the ordeal, begins – "The sun rose in a blood-red sky" – anticipating the disaster to come and evoking, as well, the famous Homeric formulation, "rosy fingered dawn" (65). But many of the experienced sealers have misgivings about the weather despite the reassurance of the barometer. Captain George Barbour notes "mare's tails" in the sky the evening before the fateful first day and predicts a storm (60). As they start their trek across the ice to the *Stephano*, several of the men ominously observe sun hounds, caused by ice crystals flying far ahead of the storm and far above it.⁸³ One description of these is that they looked "rather like a skein of knotted wool," recalling the classical iconography of fate (69). Another is the premonitory image of the sun being "veiled" (68).

The sense that the tragedy takes place within a cosmic context is balanced by the stories

of individual sealers that are skilfully interwoven within the narrative. It is a triumph of Brown's story-telling technique that the reader comes to know so many of the sealers. The relationships of forty-nine-year-old Reuben Crewe and his sixteen-year-old son, Albert John, Edward Tippett and his three sons, Abel, Norman and William, Alfred Maidment and his brother, Bob, and Cecil Moulard and his sweetheart, Jessie Collins, are sketched and recapitulated throughout the story. The personalities of such men as Abram Kean, Joe Kean, Wes Kean, Thomas Dawson, Arthur Moulard, Jesse Collins, John Howlett, Sidney Jones, and George Tuff are presented with impressive individuality, especially considering the constraints of compression embraced by the author. Their humanity is recognisable, their courage inspiring, their struggle poignant. Despite the intensive research and the strong documentary basis underlying Brown's re-telling of the Newfoundland disaster, her work is very much a re-imagining of the story rather than an historical account, so that it is not far-fetched to call it a novel.

In the end, though, *Death on the Ice* is more than an heroic tale. It is an indictment of the class system in Newfoundland in the first decades of the twentieth century, an arraignment of the paternalism of the old Newfoundland which made profitable use of a culture of passivity in the face of authority and generated a self-serving competitiveness around the annual seal fishery that was even more exploitative of humans than it was of animals. Brown refers to the nationalist sentiments associated with the annual voyage to the ice:

For Newfoundlanders, the seal hunt had a significance even beyond its cash value.

Theirs was the only sealing fleet in the world, commanded by captains who were national heroes, and in great demand as ice pilots for polar expeditions. (17)

At the end of the book, however, this sense of national pride has turned into a "storm of national

indignation" largely focussed upon Captain Abram Kean, not only for the role he played in causing the tragedy but also for his insistence on continuing to hunt seals rather than return to port after the sealers' bodies had been recovered, and for his refusal, when he finally did return, to take any responsibility for the tragedy.

This highlights a divide between the traditional nationalism of the ruling elite and the emerging nationalism of the proletariat. It is evident in Coaker's log where he writes that the object of his appeal to Job Brothers to discontinue the hunt was

to have the sixty-nine sealers' bodies escorted to port, in a national manner, comparable with the respect which the whole fleet consider was due to the memory of the seventy-seven men who died in an endeavour to secure wealth to maintain their country, and whose lives were sacrificed to greed for gold. (242)

He expresses his indignation to the denial of respect to "our almost assassinated countrymen" who "were only toilers in the innermost thought of the slave owners" (243). At the same time, Coaker excoriates the insensitivity of Captain Billy Winsor in racing the *Beothic* back to port for the honour of being high-liner for the year, leaving the *Bellaventure* to creep along with her tragic freight of sixty-nine dead and forty-six survivors.⁸⁴

Coaker's sentiments matched the mood of the people. The arrival of the *Beothic* was greeted with silence by the thousands who filled St. John's waterfront awaiting the *Bellaventure*, and Captain Billy Winsor's behaviour "was universally regarded as a piece of callous bad manners" (245). Newspaper editorials and letters to the editor questioned Captain Kean's regard for human life and his fitness to command a ship. Upon his return to port, Coaker pressed the attack on Kean, accusing him, among other things, of being responsible for the tragedy and of

giving false evidence at the magisterial enquiry into the disaster. Kean sued and the action was settled out of court but the settlement did not require Coaker to withdraw his accusations. Six months later, a public commission of enquiry found that Captain Kean (and Second Hand George Tuff) had made errors in judgement, but no action was taken against him. The only remedy implemented was that the Sealing Law was amended to require all ships to carry wireless.

It is perhaps in keeping with the times that the "storm of national indignation" centred on the figure of Captain Abram Kean, leaving the sealing owners for the most part unscathed. Although Coaker's log revealed a sharp and bitter class analysis of the tragedy, his actions upon his return to port focussed upon the culpability of Captain Kean, who, although personally responsible, became something of a scapegoat, drawing attention away from systemic problems in the seal fishery and Newfoundland society in general. Nevertheless, a divide had opened up between the nationalist rhetoric of the upper and middle class exponents of the virtues of the hardy Newfoundlanders and the nationalist aspirations of the hardy Newfoundlanders themselves. One measure of this is the fact that sixteen years earlier no one had accused Captain George Barbour of callous behaviour in attempting to continue to hunt seals after picking up the frozen bodies of the men lost in the *Greenland* disaster. The value system of the time indicated that this was simply practical and economical. By 1914, however, such an action implied a callous disregard for human life. Coaker's log expressed an emerging consciousness and solidarity among the working class and an attempt to redefine nationalist mythology to include and accommodate an empowered proletariat. Two years later, the Battle of Beaumont Hamel provided another occasion in which the heroic sacrifice of ordinary Newfoundlanders expressed a mass investment in the national dream but at the same time the sense that it inevitably entailed

defeat.

The Danger Tree

David Macfarlane's memoir, *The Danger Tree* (1991), an exploration of "memory, war, and the search for a family's past," is both an imaginative evocation of heroic Newfoundland and an elegy for that way of life.⁸⁵ Macfarlane contrasts his experience of Hamilton, Ontario, where he grew up, with his imagination of Newfoundland, the home of his mother's people. Hamilton is "a safe place," he says, whereas Newfoundland is "an old, lost world" (198). The son of an ophthalmologist, Macfarlane spends the early years of his boyhood writing social studies projects on his prosperous hometown, acknowledged in adulthood as "an unexceptional place" but eulogised in youth as "the Ambitious City" (5). The tug of his Newfoundland legacy on his imagination begins later, prompted by the strong, contrarian presence of his mother's relatives, particularly his grandfather, upon their occasional visits. It is then that he comes to realise that his mother's distinctiveness within his family is not due to her individuality so much as to her Newfoundland upbringing.

The first element of this contrast is in the use of language and narrative. His Ontario relatives "ended up talking as directly as they came [to the country]: without the wayward tacks of complaint or entertainment or exaggeration. They sailed from the noun they'd left to the noun where they were going without digression, without anecdote, and without idle chatter in between" (11). Macfarlane grew up with people "who spoke in straight lines, darting from subject to subject like foxes looking for winter cover," but his Newfoundland relatives "talked in great, looping circles . . . [They] set their stories going and then let them roll from one tale to

the next until I – sitting on the steps of the veranda – was certain they had no idea where they had begun Tales were abandoned in the telling in favour of other tales, but one story led seamlessly to another, spiralling like drifting pipe-smoke, farther and farther away from the conversation's beginnings." yet somehow, "without so much as a where-were-we, the stories found their way back, hours later, to where they had started" (29-30).

The second element of contrast is in the content of their conversation. Macfarlane's Scottish ancestors excelled at silences:

They incorporated the untroubled, empty views of Ontario into their temperament – the fields, the windbreaks, the circling hawks – and settled down to stay in the quietude of rising bread and in the chill fall of November dusks. Then the silences spread like the shadows of a family tree, across the tilled and frost-ridden landscape. One hundred and eighty years later they came down to us like heirlooms. (11-12)

The Newfoundlanders, on the other hand, told stories of encounters with royalty and movie stars, of ancestors who harboured pirates and confronted ghosts, of legendary forest fires, tidal waves and German submarine attacks, of family who built roads, made and lost fortunes, hunted seals and died in war. At the age of ten, Macfarlane realises that he is who he is "because inside of me is wedded the discomfiture of two societies as distinct from one another as night and day" (14).

Still a boy, Macfarlane is moved to include Newfoundland in his social studies projects, composing an essay entitled, "Hamilton and Newfoundland: A Comparison." "It wasn't a complete revolution," he observes, but his mother "regarded it as a step in the right direction" (27). When he comes to write *The Danger Tree* many years later, however, he goes much further.

adopting the story-telling style of his Newfoundland relatives in his exploration of his Newfoundland heritage. The book is a complex, interconnected series of narratives, set “in great looping circles,” all of them eventually reaching conclusions that subtly and powerfully reinforce one another. One of these circles centres on Canada’s Newfoundland-born poet, E.J. Pratt. Pratt is introduced in an early chapter when he is brought to the Colonial Building in St. John’s to meet the celebrated scientist, Guglielmo Marconi, in 1901. He re-enters the narrative a few pages later in Macfarlane’s account of the TB scourge in Newfoundland as the peddler of callobogus “to the desperate mothers of dying children” (42).⁸⁶ This episode sets the stage for Macfarlane’s portrayal of Pratt as a shallow, self-serving fraud. Aunt Kate’s story that the poet was lent money that he never repaid seems to confirm Pratt’s untrustworthy nature and the family’s disdain for him is evident in their attitude towards his first book, *Newfoundland Verse*. Sent to the Goodyears with an inscription by the author, it is a gift none of them has any use for and eventually it is passed on to the young David Macfarlane.

This thread – of Pratt the charlatan – is taken up again in a crucial chapter near the end of the book. Here Macfarlane takes Pratt to task for exploiting the memory of his great uncle, Hedley Goodyear, who was killed by a German sniper at the end of the Great War. Shortly afterwards, Pratt printed Hedley’s supposed last letter home in the Victoria College literary review, *Acta Victoriana*, remarking upon its surpassing “noble feeling” and testifying that “the sons of Josiah Goodyear were cast in heroic mould, every one of them a physical and moral giant” (202). The Goodyears regarded this comment as presumptuous in one who knew Hedley very slightly and the rest of the family hardly at all. Macfarlane concludes that his Aunt Kate perhaps begrudged Pratt his survival: “he never enlisted, and for that reason his life was allowed

to extend beyond 1918." He does not think she ever forgave Pratt "for being indiscriminate and therefore untrustworthy in his praise of the Goodyears in general and Hedley in particular." And in a stinging rebuke to Pratt's careless intrusion upon his family's grief, he remarks, "She knew that sometimes – in the face of an untimely death, for instance – silence was best" (203).

The view presented here is an indictment of Pratt's sensibility rather than his moral character. Macfarlane objects to bluster about war and heroism partly because he feels that, not having volunteered to fight, Pratt had not earned the right to speak about such things. He also objects to Pratt's claim of intimacy with the Goodyear family, which he regards as insincere. The requirement that the emotion of rhetoric be based upon real as opposed to imagined experience is a hallmark of modernism. Although a product of disillusionment growing out of the Great War, modernism, Macfarlane wryly observes, "took its time crossing the Atlantic, and when it arrived in downtown Toronto, it was as if it had eaten too much roast beef and drunk too much claret during its first-class passage" (43). By the 1960s, however, modernism was well-established in the sensibilities of young educated Canadians and it created a gulf between E.J. Pratt and the generation then coming of age. The symbolism of fifes and drums was no longer considered appropriate in fashioning a response to the experience of war. The heroic mode was suspect, and heroism itself, if not absolutely rejected, was being re-valued.

This "generation gap" also helps to explain Pratt's estrangement from Newfoundland, or rather Newfoundland's estrangement from E.J. Pratt, a phenomenon that first appears in the response of the writers coming of age in the 1970s.⁸⁷ Critics such as Clyde Rose, Patrick O'Flaherty and Patrick Byrne argued that Pratt, though Newfoundland-born, is not a Newfoundland poet. To some extent, their disappointment stems from the expectation that a

writer inspired by Newfoundland will choose to write realistically and in a focussed way about the traditional life of the Newfoundland outport. Pratt's failure to live up to this expectation is attributed to various factors: that his outport experience was unsettled and superficial because his family was constantly on the move; that his social class, as the son of a preacher, would have separated him from the ordinary fisher folk; that his parents protected him from the blood and guts of outport life because he was bookish and sickly; that he did not begin to write about Newfoundland until quite some time after he left – and he rarely returned – so his memory of outport life faded. But perhaps the expectation itself is the problem. The heroic myth did not lead writers to concentrate much on the texture of life in outport society. They tended to be interested only in the life-and-death struggle to wrest a living from the sea. True, Duncan and England evince more interest in Newfoundland dialect and culture than Pratt, but this may well have been exactly because Newfoundland society was unfamiliar to them. Outport Newfoundlanders did not themselves find outport life very remarkable in a non-heroic sense until the 1950s and '60s when writers like Ted Russell and professors like George Story began to legitimize it in literature and scholarship.

It is important to remember that Pratt was writing much earlier. His outport experience was turn of the century, not mid-century. And his sensibility was post-Victorian, early-modern. What Pratt remembered about Newfoundland was heroic struggle and tragic loss. While this gives only a partial picture of the society and culture of that time, and while the language and style of his work was influenced more by English literary tradition than by Newfoundland folk tradition, it is surely true, as Pitt and others have contended, that his early experience growing up in Newfoundland had an indelible and distinctive effect upon his poetic outlook. It may be, as

Byrne points out, that the gulls of Lake Ontario would put the same demands on the language to supply a simile as the gulls in Pratt's "Sea-Gulls," and the seas around the ancestral Devon coast possess the same powers metaphorically to line the face as the Newfoundland seas in his "Erosion." but this does not demonstrate that these poems did not grow out of Pratt's Newfoundland experience (231). Writers tapping the heroic vein are more inclined to focus on the exalted conflict rather than the mundane quotidian. Critics such as Rose, O'Flaherty and Byrne were part of a generational shift that rejected the heroic, as was David Macfarlane, and this naturally led to their rejection of E.J. Pratt.

I say "partly" because, in the case of David Macfarlane, this is not the whole story. Whatever we may conclude about the authenticity of Pratt's Newfoundland poetry, the authenticity of his war poetry is certainly suspect.⁸⁸ Not only did Pratt not write from experience about war, he also lacked the confidence to write about it out of his imagination. But again, it must be remembered that Pratt's war poems were written at an early stage in his career as a poet, before he had found his own distinctive voice, and it may be, as well, that Pratt felt a pressure, experienced by many men who did not enlist, to extol the heroism of those who did, only dimly aware perhaps that such praise was sometimes resented by those who had personally suffered the horrors of combat. With few exceptions, Pratt's war poetry commits the cardinal sin of sentimentality, which is to lay claim to an emotion that is not earned. This cannot be said about most of his Newfoundland poetry.

Macfarlane's reports of family encounters with Pratt present the story-teller telling stories about another story-teller. Nothing could be more characteristic of Newfoundland than that. It is ironic that a writer who grew up in Hamilton, Ontario, should so confidently criticize a writer

who grew up in a succession of outport communities for losing touch with his Newfoundland roots. Even though it must be admitted that Pratt's *Newfoundland Verse* (1923) was not revolutionary in comparison with contemporary works such as Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) or Pound's *Cantos I-XVI* (1926). Macfarlane's adjectives "old-fashioned, uninventive and ornate" do not constitute a fair assessment of Pratt's first published work (43). Nevertheless, the Pratt stories do effectively illustrate characteristics of the poet's sensibility that did not sort well with the deep disillusionment of modernism, creating a suspicion of superficiality and parochialism in his world-view.

Although a relatively minor thread of Macfarlane's interwoven narrative, the seal hunt is the subject of two stories that serve to flesh out his depiction of the "old, lost world" of Newfoundland. One is a family story about the gruff heroism of his great grandfather in saving the life of a mad sealer, and the other a re-telling of the *Newfoundland* disaster of 1914. The first of these is the more interesting in that it portrays the world of the sealer ambivalently as a symbol of poverty and hardship and as a site of heroic action. Macfarlane speculates that any number of things could have caused a sealer to go mad: the weather – blizzards, ice storms, howling winds; the diet of *switchel tea*, hard bread, salt pork, duff and seal meat (including raw seal hearts to battle scurvy); the exhausting, dangerous work on a constantly moving, always treacherous icefield.⁸⁹ Whatever the cause, the poor mad sealer climbs to the top spar of the foremast and sings out all manner of forebodings of doom to his mates down below. Macfarlane's great grandfather, Josiah, an experienced master watch who is also blessed with the legendary size and strength of the Goodyear men, puts an end to the drama by climbing the icy mast and bringing the sealer back down "tucked under his arm like an oversized rag doll" (53). The story has a

larger-than-life quality that characterizes accounts of heroic deeds when they are related in the oral tradition. However based upon real events, it is already understood, by teller and listener alike, that the story has entered that realm of fact and fiction that is legend.

The account of the *Newfoundland* disaster in *The Danger Tree* leans heavily upon Cassie Brown's *Death on the Ice*. A succinct summary of the tragedy, it presents the sad tale in skeleton form almost entirely for the sake of telling it. Notably, however, it prompts a brief reflection on the way in which the St. John's newspapers responded to the disaster in a solemn and romantic tone. "It was the same approach they would take – along with almost every other newspaper in the Empire – to the War. The reporting had less to do with accuracy than with an attempt to impart some dignity to a senseless and stupid blunder" (102). We see again Macfarlane's impatience with the romanticization of avoidable tragedies. This comment segues into the call to war, which introduces the over-riding theme of *The Danger Tree*.

Macfarlane's development of the theme of war resembles a conceit by John Donne in its concentric structure of microcosm and macrocosm. It presents the war as an exploration of a family tragedy that is emblematic of a national tragedy, the demise of the country of Newfoundland. He comes to this enquiry from a distance on both counts, having relations from Newfoundland but being only dimly aware of the story of their lives and that of their homeland. His appetite to know more is whetted by their passionate and unapologetic distinctiveness from his Ontario family. While Hamilton, his home, is a known quantity – a *place*, Newfoundland, the other, is a mystery – a *world*.

In attempting to come to terms with this difference, Macfarlane is finally brought to a meditation on the tears of his great-aunt Kate. One of the earliest memories of the author's

childhood, they are all the more remarkable because they are the tears of an unsentimental woman. They come unbidden in a sudden memory of her three brothers who were killed in the war and Aunt Kate always laughs at her crying – “Oh, look at me now. Isn’t this ridiculous?” But her seventy-five years of mourning for her brothers never seem excessive to the author.

“Somehow, in our present – in the disappearance of an innocence, in the bankruptcy of an enterprise, in the dimming of a country’s political vision – I seem to know who these young soldiers are. They are the missing pieces” (138-139, 176-177). Through the lives of the three lost brothers, Macfarlane examines the meaning of heroism through a modern lens. They become exemplars of the hundreds of young Newfoundlanders who gave their lives in the war.

Furthermore, Macfarlane connects their idealism with Newfoundland’s dream of nationhood, and their loss with its loss.

Five of the six Goodyear brothers enlisted to fight in the First World War. Two were invalided home from the front, the other three were killed in action. Their only sister, Kate, trained as a nurse in Ottawa and was on her way overseas when the armistice was signed (179). The death of the three brothers created an imbalance in the family that was never regained: “Ray’s innocence and enthusiasm would never temper Ken’s guile and ambition; Stan’s charm and level-headedness would never leaven my grandfather’s stubbornness; Hedley’s wisdom and learning would never sustain Roland’s flights of fancy” (139). The same is true, Macfarlane suggests, of Newfoundland itself:

On the eve of the war, the island seemed to be on the brink of prosperity. . . .

Then, between 1914 and 1918, a country with a population of less than two hundred thousand, and with an accumulated public debt of thirty million dollars,

raised and sustained its own regiment. . . . But the cost was higher than anyone had dreamed. . . . Of the 5,482 men who went overseas, two-thirds were killed or wounded – the largest proportion of casualties suffered by an overseas contingent of the imperial forces. . . . The cost of equipping, clothing, arming, training, feeding, and paying the regiment was compounded by the cost of caring for the wounded, assisting the disabled, and supporting the widows and families of the dead. By 1932, Newfoundland had borrowed close to forty million dollars for ‘war purposes,’ more than doubling its pre-war debt. It carried this – the price for its great moment of nationalism – into the teeth of the Depression, and never recovered. Newfoundland’s role in the Great War led inexorably to bankruptcy, to an unelected government, to the colony’s abandonment by England, and, finally, to confederation with Canada. (139-140)

I have indicated that Macfarlane’s attitude towards the war is characterized by the disillusionment that we associate with modernism. It is obvious that it was also strongly influenced by the views of his Aunt Kate who would not countenance stories of gallantry, courage and sacrifice. “There were no stories that she could repeat. For her, the war had been an unspeakable tragedy” (180). Macfarlane himself gives a decidedly unromantic view of combat, especially in the chapter on Aunt Kate. “Flame-throwers turned brows and noses and jaws to featureless masses of flesh. Shells and grenades and mortars ripped away ears and arms and legs. Young boys who, even in the wet misery of the trenches, had awakened with erections in their pants were emasculated by machine-gun fire” (185). Yet Macfarlane’s view is more complex than this. He admits that World War I is now remembered as an education in disillusionment,

and he cites the legacy of the war poets “that the battles of stupid old men were fought by their innocent sons, and that it was all for nothing.” But he also points out that many soldiers, like his grand uncle, Hedley, never succumbed to “so bankrupt a possibility” (203). Hedley was the intellectual of the family. His M.A. thesis at the University of Toronto, on relations between Newfoundland and Canada, was published before he went to war.⁹⁰ He was killed just three months before the armistice. It is clear from his last letters home, one of which was read out in the House of Commons on Remembrance Day seventy years later, that he maintained his innocence and his idealism to the end of the war. It is equally clear that Macfarlane admires this even though he believes that war betrays such nobility.

This ambivalence also characterizes his attitude towards Newfoundland’s collapse as an independent country. On the one hand, he applauds the migration of Josiah and Louisa Goodyear from their outport home to the new industrial town of Grand Falls in an attempt to escape the poverty and disease that were endemic in turn-of-the-century Newfoundland, a migration pattern that symbolically moves the country away from what is most distinctively itself – what Cyril Poole would call its soul – towards a kind of generic settlement, the company town, a product of international finance whose origin, purpose and identity are essentially alien. Similarly, Macfarlane depicts Newfoundland’s eventual confederation with Canada as growing inevitably out of the country’s “oft-proven inability to govern its own affairs” (18-19). On the other hand, *The Danger Tree* is a lament not only for “the old, lost world” of Newfoundland but also for the national dream that was meant to give it a future. Macfarlane notes that the generosity of Newfoundland in going beyond its means in responding to the call of the mother country in 1914 was not reciprocated in 1933 when Britain pressured the country to surrender its democratic

institutions because it could no longer meet payments on a debt that had mostly been created by its war effort.⁹¹ He also points out the compounded irony that ten years later Newfoundland, having recovered fiscally if not economically, was lending England funds to support another war effort. The ingratitude of the mother country seems only to have been matched by the gullibility of its so-called oldest colony. "It would never have occurred to stout, loyal Newfoundland," he writes, "that the loans might have been a way of prying their own democracy back out of Whitehall" (113).

Macfarlane is right to point out, however, that Newfoundland's generosity in 1943 had less to do with rash patriotism than with the economic boom that resulted from the leased military bases agreement with the Americans that came into effect in June 1941.⁹² As for the possibility of Newfoundland using this economic windfall as a bargaining tool in negotiating a return to democracy, this was simply not in the cards. Since 1934, Newfoundland had been administered by a committee of unelected civil servants, three Englishmen and three Newfoundlanders, under the chair of an English Governor, all appointed by Britain. This benevolent oligarchy could not be expected to argue boldly and aggressively for a return to self-government. Even when they tried valiantly to defend Newfoundland's interests and sovereignty, as they did during the leased bases negotiations in 1940-41, their efforts were nullified by British officials desperately seeking American destroyers for the Battle of the Atlantic. The wartime moral authority of Prime Minister Churchill, no less, was enlisted to silence the Newfoundland Commissioners (Neary 146-147). The reality is that it was meaningless at this time to speak in terms of the people of Newfoundland being able to take a decision to act out of altruism or self-interest. These decisions were taken for them.

Another kind of ambivalence underlies Macfarlane's account of the decline of Newfoundland's traditional way of life. It is ironic that the relatives whose strong sense of cultural identity piqued his curiosity about his Newfoundland heritage were single-mindedly engaged in moving beyond the limitations of that life. In *The Danger Tree*, outpost life is depicted in the starkest terms as constituting unrelieved hardship and woe. Some of this imagery is evident in Macfarlane's description of the working conditions of the seal-hunters, but more of it coalesces around the scourge of tuberculosis that touches the Goodyear family in the rapid decline of Roland's young wife, Susie Green, who grew up in the coastal community of Newtown:

The sickness came from the coast, of course – not from a town like Grand Falls, with its plumbing and coal delivery and a hospital donated by Lady Northcliffe. It came from poor fishing households where, by March, the potatoes and cabbages were gone, the pork barrel was emptied, and a family lived on salt cod and hard bread and the occasional boiled seabird. (41)

Tuberculosis, we are told, was one of the reasons Louisa Goodyear had insisted that her family move from Ladle Cove on the Straight Shore to the brand new "paper town" of Grand Falls.⁹³ Carved out of the forbidding interior wilderness of Central Newfoundland in 1906, Grand Falls was the almost overnight creation of English newspaper magnate, Lord Northcliffe, owner of the *Daily Mail* and *The Times*, and a dozen other London publications. There, on the banks of the mighty Exploits River, Northcliffe built a large pulp and paper mill designed to secure the supply of newsprint to his papers in case of war. A planned town, built according to English aesthetic values, Grand Falls was modern and attractive. Northcliffe somewhat grandly but not

entirely without reason called it “the garden city” (76). The industrialization characterized by the pulp and paper company in Grand Falls, and later in Corner Brook, was a manifestation of a new form of colonialism – economic rather than political. It was authoritarian, paternalistic, and anti-democratic. Almost no one owned a house or land in Grand Falls. Citizens leased their property from the company and rented company-built homes (99). And since the company owned the town, there was no need of municipal government. The regime was also anti-Semitic – Northcliffe decided that Jews were not welcome in town (88-89). But for the people from the outports who came to work and live in these communities, the company town was in many ways an advance over what they had known.

In Grand Falls, the mill paid cash wages. Josiah Goodyear established himself as a carpenter and millwright. His sons, Joe and Roland, worked under contract with the company, overseeing woods crews and selling pulpwood by the cord. Young Stan somehow acquired the Grand Falls Stables and started hauling freight and passengers. The Goodyears adapted well to the new industrial climate in central Newfoundland and the family prospered, eventually branching out into the road construction business (48-49). By the time young Ray turned sixteen in 1914, he was “among the first generation of Newfoundlanders to come of age out of sight of the sea. He knew nothing of boats or nets. He didn’t know how to wield a gaff or pull a tow of pelts or how to cobby – the Newfoundlanders’ term for jumping over channels of deep, black water from one wobbling pan of ice to the next” (100). In this, Ray was separated from his older brothers who had fished on the Labrador during the summer and gone to the ice in the spring. And in March of 1914 when boys from Ladle Cove who would have been his schoolmates walked fifty miles to Wesleyville to join the crew of Captain Wes Kean’s *Newfoundland*, Ray

was going to the store for his mother and taking wagons to Grand Falls Station to meet the trains. The retreat from the heroic symbolized by the migration from outport to company town is evident in this fact.⁹⁴

Grand Falls is the manifestation of a vision in which the economy of Newfoundland is expanded beyond, or away from, the sea-based fishery to land-based industries such as paper-making and mining. This was the “new Newfoundland” envisaged by Joseph Smallwood in the 1920s as a young journalist and political apostle of the farsighted but corrupt Liberal Prime Minister, Sir Richard Squires. It was a Newfoundland the Goodyears of central Newfoundland enthusiastically embraced. It was perhaps the only Newfoundland that made long-term economic sense. But it implied a kind of progress that logically moved Newfoundland away from the stubborn, tough, heroic life, whose loss Macfarlane mourns, towards the safety of Hamilton, “the Ambitious City” of his Ontario youth. In a sense, the whole tenor of *The Danger Tree* is in this direction.

The profession of the Goodyears – the building of roads – was dedicated to the kind of change that put an end to the old, lost world of Newfoundland. In the late 1950s, they won a government contract to construct a road around the Straight Shore, connecting a host of outport communities by land for the first time to each other and to the wide world. Included were the home communities of Ladle Cove and Carmanville, where the family still maintained the great grandmother’s house for their holidays. Called “the Loop,” the road brought with it electricity lines, telephone poles, televisions, automobiles, lay-away plans, eight-percent financing and year-round access to grocery stores:

Nothing on the Straight Shore was the same again. One by one, all along the coast,

the carefully tended little vegetable plots disappeared. Antennas appeared on rooftops. Cars were parked where the flowers had been. By the time I first saw the Carmanville property, its perennials had long run their course, its raspberry canes had been rooted out, the lush yellow potatoes were gone, and it had become a field of high, sweet grass. (77)

In contrast, the Newfoundland railway symbolized the aspirations of independent nationhood. An ambitious project started in 1881, it had the same purpose as the building of the Canadian railway. It was designed to unite the country from coast to coast and open the riches of its interior to development. Like the seal fishery and the war effort, the railway was an expression of national aspiration. Socially, the train produced occasions on which Newfoundlanders – especially outport Newfoundlanders – could come together and sense their oneness as a people. It helped to generalize diverse outport cultures into one Newfoundland outport culture in which the differences between communities, while acknowledged, became less important than the similarities. The seal fishery and the war effort had the same effects, breaking down barriers between isolated communities, bridging the urban/rural dichotomy, and even reducing sectarian hostilities.⁹⁵ The Newfie Bullet – affectionately so-known because of its legendary slowness – was not just a transportation system – it was a symbol of nationhood and a rich subject of folklore. For this reason, its eventual abandonment, in 1988, was for many Newfoundlanders a traumatic experience.

On the other hand, the railway was built at enormous expense, like the war effort nearly bankrupting the country. As Macfarlane points out, it was also the model for future private investment in Newfoundland. In 1890, the country capitulated to the brazen demands of the

builder, Scottish entrepreneur Robert Reid, for more than one million acres of land, a monopoly on passenger operations, coastal steamships, postal freight and telegraph services, a \$75,000 annual subsidy, a substantial government grant, a construction fee of \$15,000 per mile, and the option to buy the railway upon completion for \$1 million. This was the first of a long list of government "giveaways" that went on well into the Smallwood years. Macfarlane cites Richard Gwynn's pronouncement on the Grand Falls paper mill, for example, to the effect that it was secured at the cost of signing away forever the best timber stands on the island (91-92).

A complex set of connections is established in *The Danger Tree* linking the railway, the war effort and the imagery of dead trees. The lynch pin of this set of motifs is "the danger tree" itself. It refers to a single, dead, gnarled tree, an old apple tree, that had somehow survived the shelling on the field at Beaumont Hamel and was the landmark indicating the beginning of No Man's Land. The Newfoundlanders called it "the danger tree" and Macfarlane refers to it several times in connection with the battle of Beaumont Hamel. But he extends its associations by also referring to a "dead, gnarled stub of a tree" at the point where Stan was blown to pieces between Langemark and Broembeek (139 & 171) and "a dead tree" used to steady the aim of the sniper who kills Hedley (211), as well as by conjuring up "a gnarled old tree" in a future scenario of a nuclear wasteland (178) and by imagining his grandmother's loss of her mind to Alzheimer's: "Finally, she passed the last gnarled landmark on her horizon and found herself in No Man's Land" (211).

This image of "the danger tree" is associated with sustained metaphors about the burnt-over forests of Newfoundland. The connection is introduced in a passage tracing Northcliffe's journey to open the Grand Falls paper mill in 1909. Suddenly, he notices that the train is passing

through nothing but dead trees. He thinks of death's kingdom and dead men's fingers. but the author announces that his Aunt Kate always said that these trees reminded her of pictures she'd seen of Flanders during the Great War (83-84 & 176).⁹⁶ The image of a forest fire is then used to describe the onset of war: "It started like a forest fire, running underground through a complicated network of roots, flaring up here and there in the tangled underbrush: troublesome, dangerous, though manageable at first" (87-88). The forest fire in full flight is a terrible destructive force and Macfarlane develops the comparison with war. It is described as fanning out behind "like flanks of infantry," the tremendous heat makes beads of sap "explode like bullets," its flames lick up curling shards of bark "with a crackling as loud as a machine gun," and it sends burning spruce and pine boughs into the sky "as if a landmine had exploded beneath them" (96 & 97). In Ypres, in a wasteland called Railway Wood, young Ray sees the charred trees and thinks of Newfoundland (95). At eighteen years the youngest of the six brothers, Ray has just arrived in France. A few weeks later he is dead, nearly cut in two by a piece of shrapnel at the battle of Gueudecourt. Forty-five years later when his older brother, Joe, visits Ray's grave near Baupaume, Macfarlane remarks that it was the summer of the worst forest fire in Newfoundland's history (107). And finally, the analogy is broadened to fire in general. Shortly after Hedley is killed, a fire at the Goodyear shed in Grand Falls destroys all the remaindered copies of his young life's work, his published M.A. thesis (211).

The connection with the railway, hinted at in Ray's observation at Railway Wood, is made explicit a little earlier. "From the time the trains began to run," we are told, "the middle of the island was on fire" (94). Embers blowing out of the train's smoke stack are blamed for the forest fires that seemed a constant menace during the Newfoundland summer. An attempt to

parse the significance of this imagery leads to a couple of circular arguments. The railway, a symbol of national aspiration, creates the forest fires that are compared in their destructiveness to the war. The war leads to bankruptcy and default, the loss of the nation and confederation with Canada. But the railway is also a symbol of progress. Without the railway, Grand Falls would never have been built. This progress pulls people away from the poverty-stricken, disease-ridden outposts to prosperous company towns like Grand Falls and Corner Brook and towards the blandness of Hamilton. The inescapable conclusion seems to be that Newfoundland could not survive as a country without embarking upon schemes for progress that contained within them the seeds of its destruction as a country. Macfarlane presents the failure of Newfoundland's national dream as inevitable. Indeed, a tautology is evident in the phrase "old, lost world." But this assertion of inevitability conceals in the end a romantic, if highly respectful, view of Newfoundland. The country according to this construction could not progress into the twentieth century because it was by definition an old, lost world. This was its value and the tragedy of its demise was therefore the tragedy of all the old worlds that are lost to modernity.

This view comes directly out of Macfarlane's background. First, Hamilton is the place of his experience. Newfoundland is the country of his imagination. And Newfoundland for him is imagined memory, not imagined future, a major point of *The Danger Tree* being that the country's future was foreshortened by the loss of so many of its young during the Great War. Second, the Goodyears, although individually passionate about Newfoundland's distinct identity, were most of them confederates. Hedley Goodyear registered his nationality at the University of Toronto as Newfoundlander but his thesis argued for confederation with Canada (206 & 207). Much later, Roland and Ken, for different reasons, became backers of Joey Smallwood, the father

of Newfoundland's union with Canada, although Roland "jumped the confederate ship," choosing to support economic union with the United States (128). It was Macfarlane's grandfather, Joe, who stood apart in his refusal to countenance Newfoundland as a mere province of Canada .

But Macfarlane's language indicates that Joe Goodyear's loyalties were to Newfoundland as a British colony rather than as an independent nation. He characterizes the anti-confederates as believing Canada was "made up of people who lacked the spirit to be American and the good sense to be true subjects of the British Crown" and he quotes the old anti-confederate song which, as indicated above, celebrates colonialism, not nationalism. In describing the options open to Newfoundland between 1945 and 1948, he says the question "appeared to have only two sides: whether to join Canada or to remain a British colony" (126). This was not the choice, however. Very few Newfoundlanders at this time were in favour of remaining a colony of Britain. It must be remembered that the "Anti-Confederation Song" dates back to the election of 1869 – and even then the pro-British sentiments of the song could not have sat very well with the large number of anti-confederates who were Irish Catholic. By 1918, Newfoundland had become a Dominion, like Canada, and most voters in 1948 favoured either a return to that status or union with Canada.⁹⁷ The sovereignty of Newfoundland in these matters was recognised in the fact that the forum in which the debates took place was called the *National* Convention. The author of what is still the most judicious analysis of twentieth-century Newfoundland political history summarized the results of the 1949 referenda as follows:

The Confederate case was strong; it was ably and at times brilliantly presented.

The case for responsible government was by contrast weak and presented with

almost pathetic ineptitude. That it so very nearly succeeded is an indication of the powerful hold which the idea of a separate national life had upon the hearts and minds of Newfoundlanders.⁹⁸

It is this yearning for an imagined *national* life as opposed to nostalgia for the British Crown that is missing in Macfarlane's analysis. If *The Danger Tree* purported to be a history of the country, as opposed to a memoir of a family, this would be an unforgivable flaw. As it is, insofar as it represents a generalization beyond the views of his family to an historical reality concerning the country, this interpretation at least needs correction. Macfarlane is right to assert that Newfoundland had a strong sense of itself as a distinct country. He is wrong to suggest that this sense of national identity was widely characterized by loyalty to the British Crown.

The Danger Tree concludes with the author's return to Newfoundland to visit his grandmother who is living out her final days in an old-age hospital in Gander. The last surviving member of her generation of the Goodyear family, his grandmother has developed "a kind of wildness about her that comes from living in another world" (214). She has lost her bearings – no longer recognises loved ones or remembers her life – and her strangeness frightens her grandson, the author, who has dedicated himself to recollection. This visit also takes place on 1 July, the anniversary of the Battle of Beaumont Hamel, Memorial Day, since 1917 a national holiday in Newfoundland. Following Confederation in 1949, Memorial Day has coexisted uneasily alongside Canada's national holiday, Canada Day, but on this 1 July Canada Day has displaced Memorial Day. When Macfarlane drives to Grand Falls to observe the ceremonies, he finds out that the church parade and the march to the war memorial were held the week before. On the other hand, Canada Day is being celebrated with a performance by the aging members of a

famous American rock band, whose name, as pronounced by the Newfoundlanders, is the Beach Bys. Cultural erosion seems everywhere.

Macfarlane walks around the still sleeping, seemingly deserted town in the early morning, past streets memorializing the Great War – Haig, Suvla, Beaumont – to the now vacant site of the family home, the shed where Hedley’s thesis had been stored, and the stables Stan had acquired.⁹⁹ For a while, he stares across the Exploits at the still ridge of the forest. Then he makes a solitary pilgrimage along the route of the Memorial Day parade to the war memorial containing the inscription of the names of the three granduncles who died in the conflict. Although two of the brothers – Ray and Hedley – did not fight at Beaumont Hamel, and the other, Stan, along with Joe and Ken, was among the survivors that day, it is at this point that Macfarlane recounts the heartbreaking story of that apparently meaningless assault. He connects the existential forward march of the Newfoundlanders into a hail of bullets with their fatalistic attitude towards nature, quoting a contemporary observation: “Instinctively, they tucked their chins into an advanced shoulder, as they had so often done when fighting their way home against a blizzard in some little outpost in far-off Newfoundland” (220).¹⁰⁰ Back in Gander to see his grandmother, he is drawn to a commotion down by the railway line. There he sees a diesel engine with dust rising from the wooden ties stretching back along its route:

I stayed where I was and watched. The engineer was leaning from the window of the locomotive, and it wasn’t until he passed me and we nodded to one another that I could see what he was doing. By then, I could hear a steady scraping. I looked down at the ground behind the wheels. The diesel was dragging two long, parallel lines of rusted steel along the railbed. The engine – perhaps the last in all

Newfoundland – was pulling up its own tracks. (220-21)

This is a powerful image. The train was, like the Newfoundland Regiment, an instrument of national ambition, as well as an icon of its traditional culture. But the word "tracks," with its more general meaning of "traces," resonates with the fact that on this occasion the annual Memorial Day activities had been re-scheduled in Grand Falls, and in some of the neighbouring communities cancelled, in order to accommodate the concert by the elderly Californian rockers. The conclusion is that the central importance of the Great War for Newfoundland's sense of itself had lessened to that extent, a diminishment almost beyond comprehension for generations that went before, and a measure of the gradual disappearance of the "old, lost world." The finality of its disappearance is perhaps challenged in the book by the characters of George and Danny, the two rambunctious Newfs the young Macfarlane meets in a Hamilton steel mill during the summer of 1973, and who, in their way, possess the same combative sense of who they are that the author first remarked in his grandfather Goodyear. On the whole, though, *The Danger Tree* is an elegy. As well as being a remarkable meditation on "memory, war, and the search for a family's past," it is a respectful and insightful exploration of Newfoundland's changing cultural identity, a profound lament for the loss of an imagined community.

Endnotes

1. See especially G.M. Story. "Newfoundland: Fishermen, Hunters, Planters, and Merchants": Keith Matthews. *Lectures on the History of Newfoundland, 1500-1830* [1973] (St. John's: Breakwater, 1988); Patrick O'Flaherty. *The Rock Observed*; and Patrick A. Byrne. *Folk Tradition, Literature and a Society in Transition*.
2. Carson's Letter was published in Greenock, Scotland by William Scott. See also his *Reasons for Colonizing the Island of Newfoundland, in a Letter Addressed to the Inhabitants* (Greenock: William Scott, 1813) and Morris's *Remarks on the State of Society, Religion, Morals, and Education at Newfoundland* (London: A. Hancock, 1827).
3. *liver*: 1. "a permanent settler of coastal Newfoundland (as opposed to migratory fisherman from England)": *fishing room*: "a tract or parcel of land on the waterfront of a cove or harbour from which a fishery is conducted." [DNE]
4. *History of the Government of the Island of Newfoundland*. [1793] (New York: Johnson Reprint, 1967), 164-165.
5. Quoted in D.W. Prowse. *A History of Newfoundland* [1895] (Belleville, ON: Mika Studio, 1972), xix.
6. See Matthews's *Lectures on the History of Newfoundland, 1500-1830*, 60-76, and "Historical Fence Building: A Critique of Newfoundland Historiography." *Newfoundland Quarterly* LXXIV, 1 (1978): 21-30.
7. F.L. Jackson. *Surviving Confederation* (St. John's: Harry Cuff, 1986), 66.
8. *fishing admiral*: "the master of the first English migratory fishing vessel to reach a harbour in Newfoundland, exercising certain privileges for the season." [DNE] According to Matthews, "the colonial experience of Newfoundland was unique" in that the collapse of the private adventurer companies was not followed by the development of civil governmental institutions (*Lectures* 63).
9. J.B. Jukes. *Jukes's Excursions* [1842], ed. Robert Cuff and Derek Wilton (St. John's: Harry Cuff, 1993), 217.
10. The allusion is to H.W. Lemessurier's famous song, "The Ryans and the Pittmans" whose first verse goes: "We'll rant and we'll roar like true Newfoundlanders / We'll rant and we'll roar on deck and below / Until we see bottom inside the two sunkers / When straight through the channel to Toslow we'll go." [*Old-time Songs and Poetry of Newfoundland* (1927), 5th ed. (St. John's: Gerald S. Doyle, 1978), 37.] *sunker*: 1. "A submerged rock over which the sea breaks: familiar form of SUNKEN ROCK; BREAKER; GROUNDER." [DNE]
11. For a recent analysis of violence in Newfoundland society, see Elliott Leyton, "Drunk and Disorderly: Changing Crime in Newfoundland." *Contrary Winds: Essays on Newfoundland*

Society in Crisis, ed. Rex Clark (St. John's: Breakwater, 1986), 76-88.

12. Prowse 401.

13. "The *shadow*, the archetype that we inherit from our prehuman ancestors, provides us with a tendency to be immoral and aggressive." [B.R. Hergenhahn, *An Introduction to the History of Psychology*, 2nd ed. (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing, 1992), 483.]

14. Joseph Hatton and the Rev. Moses Harvey, *Newfoundland: Its History, its Present Condition, and its Prospects in the Future* (Boston: Doyle and Whittle, 1883), 258.

15. Anthony B. Cohen, "The Anthropology of Proximate Cultures: The Newfoundland School and Scotland," *The Scottish Journal of Sociology*, 4 (1980): 221. Quoted in Byrne 105.

16. Insiders, as well, sometimes over-estimate the homogeneity of Newfoundland society, basing their sense of cohesiveness on the part of Newfoundland they know intimately and generalizing mistakenly to the whole.

17. Gerald L. Pocius, *A Place to Belong: Community Order and Everyday Space in Calvert, Newfoundland* (Athens and Montreal: University of Georgia Press and McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 287. Quoted in Byrne 114-115.

18. *Old-time Songs and Poetry of Newfoundland* 55.

19. For an account of this period and these events, see O'Flaherty, *Rock*, 89-90, 111, 113.

20. *shallop*: 1. "A large, partly-decked boat, rigged with lugsails and used in the cod and seal fisheries." [DNE] The following account is indebted to Hatton and Harvey, *Newfoundland*, 247-265. For a modern scholarly study of the seal fishery, see Shannon Ryan, *The Ice Hunters: A History of Sealing to 1914* (St. John's: Breakwater, 1994).

21. *front*: 2. "the seas east and north-east of Newfoundland, esp the area covered by the leading edge of the ice which moves south in the spring and on which the seal-herds whelp; the seal-hunt." [DNE]

22. This is not to say, however, that the entire country participated in the seal hunt. By the end of the nineteenth century the economic centre of the industry was located in St. John's while the sealers themselves usually came from traditional sealing communities on the northeast and east coasts of Newfoundland.

23. "World War I convinced many Canadians of the need for political and cultural independence. And evidence of this new nationality, so the argument ran, would be the emergence of a distinctly Canadian art and literature." [Sandra Djwa and R.G. Moyles, "Introduction," *E.J. Pratt: Complete Poems*, Vol 1 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), xvi]. In Newfoundland, an upsurge of nationalism after the war led to the assumption of the title of

“Dominion” [O’Flaherty, *The Rock Observed* 127]. As for the role of the arts, there were individual writers in the 1920s and 1930s, such as Irving Fogwill and Margaret Duley, who may have believed that it was one of their functions to help forge a sense of social conscience and national purpose, but in Newfoundland this vision did not achieve widespread acknowledgement until the 1970s.

24. *the ice*: 1. “the ice-cover formed by the southward drift of the arctic ice-floes off Labrador, the northeast coast of Newfoundland, and the Gulf of St. Lawrence: the floes as the breeding ground of the harp and hooded seal-herds, the objects of the annual hunt.” [DNE] For accounts of the Newfoundland Regiment in the First World War, see “Regiment, Royal Newfoundland” in *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador* (Vols. 1-2, ed. J.R. Smallwood, St. John’s: Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1981-84; Vols. 3-5, ed. Cyril F. Poole, St. John’s: Harry Cuff, 1991-94; hereafter known as the *ENL*), Vol. 4, 552-560; Richard Cramm, *The First Five Hundred* (Albany, NY: C.F. Williams and Son, nd. [c. 1920]); and Col. G.W.L. Nicholson, *The Fighting Newfoundlander* (St. John’s: Government of Newfoundland, 1964).

25. A defining moment in this process came with “the Harbour Grace Affray” in 1887, which marked the end of serious sectarian violence in Newfoundland. One historian has argued that the settlement of this conflict was due finally to “a recognition that Englishmen had not killed Irishmen, nor was it Catholics and Protestants killing one another. Newfoundlanders were killing Newfoundlanders” [Frederick W. Rowe, *A History of Newfoundland and Labrador* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1980), 300; see 297-301 for a summary of the episode.]

26. John Coldwell Adams, Introduction to Duncan’s *The Way of the Sea* [1903] (Ottawa: Tecumseh, 1982), viii. See also Patrick O’Flaherty’s commentary in *The Rock Observed* 95-102; Virginia Ryan’s article “Outport and Cosmos: Meaning in *The Way of the Sea*,” *Newfoundland Studies* 5, 2 (1989): 177-202; and Elizabeth Russell Miller’s literary biography, *The Frayed Edge: Norman Duncan’s Newfoundland* (St. John’s: Harry Cuff, 1992).

27. Duncan’s “stories and tales of city life deal with unheroic failures who, regardless of how they are wept over and caressed by their author never succeed in arousing the reader’s admiration, sympathy or interest. . . . *The Way of the Sea* [on the other hand] deserves a place on the same shelf with Melville’s *Moby Dick* and the best work of Conrad.” [Fred Cogswell, “The Way of The Sea – A Symbolic Epic,” *Dalhousie Review* 35 (Winter 1956): 374.] “His few years of experience with Newfoundland and Labrador life provided him with feeling and material which brought out his best writing.” [Gordon Roper, S. Ross Beharriell and Rupert Schieder, “Writers of Fiction, 1880-1920,” *Literary History of Canada*, ed. Carl F. Klinck *et al.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), 328.] “Nothing else Duncan experienced seems to have fired his imagination so strongly as Newfoundland.” [Patrick O’Flaherty, “Norman Duncan,” *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*, ed. William Toye (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1983), 224.] “Newfoundland gave, Duncan found, the impetus and inspiration for his best work.” [Miller, *The Frayed Edge*, 59.]

28. *copy*: 2. “To jump across loose or floating ice while pursuing seals on the ice-floes.” [DNE]

29. "The Breath of the North." *The Way of the Sea*. 108.
30. *punt*: 1. "An undecked boat up to 25 ft (7.6 m) in length, round-bottomed and keeled, driven by oars, sail or engine and used variously in the inshore or coastal fishery." [DNE]
31. *tickle*: "A narrow, salt-water strait, as in an entrance to a harbour or between islands or other land masses, often difficult or treacherous to navigate, because of narrowness, tides, etc." [DNE]
32. *lop*: 1. "The rough surface of the sea (or a pond) caused by a stiff wind and marked by a quick succession of short breaking waves." [DNE]
33. *stage*: 1. "An elevated platform on the shore with working tables, sheds, etc. where fish are landed and processed for salting and drying, and fishing gear and supplies are stored." [DNE]
34. It is interesting to speculate whether Duncan's occasional descent into mawkish sentimentality might have been caused by his alcoholism. Miller documents Duncan's battle with the bottle in *The Frayed Edge* 38 and *passim*. She does not suggest, however, that his drinking might have impaired his judgement in this way.
35. David G. Pitt. *E.J. Pratt: The Truant Years, 1882-1927* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 56.
36. All quotations from Pratt's poetry are from *Complete Poems*, 2 vols., ed. Sandra Djwa and R.G. Moyles (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989).
37. "A peripety is the change . . . from one state of things within the play to its opposite . . ." [Aristotle, *Art of Poetry*, trans. Ingram Bywater, intro. Hamilton Fyfe (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 29.] See also Humphry House, *Aristotle's Poetics* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1964), 96-97.
38. "Editor's Introduction." *The Collected Poems of E.J. Pratt*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Macmillan, 1962), xiv.
39. See the prints by David Blackwood in Farley Mowat and David Blackwood, *Wake of the Great Sealers* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), "Sealer's Dream" (77), "Two Survivors Discovered" (79), and "Vision of the Lost Party" (105), along with the accompanying narratives. Also relevant in the broad context of supernatural experience at the ice are the prints evoking "the beast spirit": "The Search Party" (113), "Great Lost Party with Beast Spirit" (119) and "Vision of the Lost Party: Outport Funeral" (123). The text of this highly readable book is an insufficiently acknowledged mixture of fact and fiction, the kind of work that may have prompted G.M. Story's characterization of Farley Mowat as "Canada's leading literary strip-miner." ["The Flat Islands Newfoundlander." *People of the Landwash: Essays on Newfoundland and Labrador*, ed. Melvin Baker, Helen Peters and Shannon Ryan (St. John's: Harry Cuff, 1997), 131]. The stunning engravings by David Blackwood, on the other hand, constitute the most significant visual evocation of the culture of sealing and sealing communities to date.

40. See Sandra Djwa, *E.J. Pratt: The Evolutionary Vision* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1974), and also the Introduction to *Complete Poems* by Djwa and R.G. Moyles.

41. This is true for those who were bound, like all early immigrants of whatever class, to construe this life within the framework of western European culture. Aboriginal peoples, living on an even more primitive level, did not apparently experience the same conflict between human values and the natural world. The term *heroic*, being a construct of western civilization, carries within it the idea of conflict, and may not be an appropriate word to describe the aboriginal experience.

42. Pratt, in the E.J. Pratt Collection, Victoria University in the University of Toronto. Quoted in Djwa 18. The allusion is to Wordsworth's "Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey": "Nature never did betray / The heart that loved her: 'tis her privilege, / Through all the years of this our life, to lead / From joy to joy."

43. Quoted in "Introduction," by Djwa and Moyles in *Complete Poems*, Vol 1, xvii.

44. Republished under the title *The Greatest Hunt in the World*, intro. Ebbitt Cutler (Montreal and Toronto: Tundra Books and Collins Publishers, 1969). All references are to this edition.

45. Cyril F. Poole, "The Soul of a Newfoundlander," 96.

46. See Ebbitt Cutler, Introduction, *The Greatest Hunt in the World*, 18, and *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed., Vol. 10 (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1986), 564-565.

47. *ENL*, Vol 5, 359; *The Greatest Hunt in the World* 53.

48. William Blake, "London" and Preface to "Milton."

49. The quotation is from Willson's book *The Tenth Island* (London: Grant Richards, 1897). No page reference is given.

50. See *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968), especially 1-58. The allusion to Bakhtin was prompted by Linda Hutcheon's discussion of Bakhtin's notion of the *carnavalesque* in "Caveat Lector: The Early Postmodernism of Leonard Cohen," *The Canadian Postmodern* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988), 30-33.

51. See, for example, the reference to Joseph Hatton and Moses Harvey quoted above, and also J.B. Jukes's account of his voyage to the ice aboard *The Topaz* in 1840 (*Jukes's Excursions* 112-142).

52. Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991). See especially 182-192.

53. Tom Smart. *The Art of Mary Pratt: The Substance of Light* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions and The Beaverbrook Art Gallery, 1995), 85.
54. The use of the word *fishery* in reference to the hunting of seals seemed queer to George Allan England but it would have come as no surprise to Herman Melville who understood that in the parlance of sea-faring nations the harvesting of all creatures of the deep – mammals included – is a fishery. See England 39 and Melville, *Moby Dick* [1851] (London: Chancellor Press, 1985), 136, and *passim*. The Newfoundland usage, *fish-killer* – “a fisherman, esp a ‘skipper.’” known for catching great quantities of fish” – implies this inclusiveness from the opposite direction since in standard English *killing* is associated with hunting animals rather than catching fish. [DNE]
55. *swatcher*: “One who hunts seals with a gun on the ice-floes near patches of open water or ‘swatches.’” [DNE]
56. *swile*: variant spelling and pronunciation of *seal*; also *sile*, *soil*, *swale*, *swoil(e)*. [DNE]
57. Patrick O’Flaherty, “The Killing Ground,” *Weekend Magazine* (31 March 1979): 22.
58. Leyton, “Drunk and Disorderly: Changing Crime in Newfoundland.” 76-88.
59. In addition to the earlier cited reference to Harvey and Hatton, see Mowat and Blackwood, *Wake of the Great Sealers* 57 and 74.
60. *nunch-bag*: “small canvas bag used to carry food.” [DNE]
61. England tells the story of the mutiny on pp. 303 and 308-309. Mowat and Blackwood also recount the episode in *Wake of the Great Sealers* 86-89.
62. Ryan, *The Ice Hunters*, 202.
63. There were successful strikes for better conditions in the sealing industry as early as 1832. In 1902, a strike by sealers achieved some improvement in the price of fat, the elimination of the coaling fee, and a standardization of the crop advance and surcharge. [Ryan, *The Ice Hunters* 345] *fat* 1: “The layer of fatty tissue cut from the skin of seals for rendering into oil; blubber”; *crop* n 1: “In sealing and fishing, the personal equipment or supplies issued against the profits of the ‘voyage.’” [DNE]
64. J.R. Smallwood, *I Chose Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1973).
65. *Book of Newfoundland*, Vol 1, ed. J.R. Smallwood (St. John’s: Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1937), 1-2.
66. For a compelling discussion of the political and economic effects of these limitations, see David Alexander, “Literacy and Economic Development in Nineteenth-Century Newfoundland,” *Atlantic Canada and Confederation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 110-143.

67. See Byrne's discussion of the views of Harold Horwood and Patrick O'Flaherty with reference to Horwood's "Political Notebook" column in the St. John's *Evening Telegram* (11 September 1952), 4, and O'Flaherty's essay, "Looking Backwards: the Milieu of the Old Newfoundland Outports," in *The Blasty Bough*, ed. Clyde Rose (Portugal Cove: Breakwater, 1976), 145-150. [*Folk Tradition, Literature and a Society in Transition* 105-107]

68. See the eye-witness account by wireless operator, Clayton King, of the explosion that destroyed the *Viking* in 1931 killing twenty-eight, including the American film-maker, Varrick Frissell, and most of his crew: "Last Voyage of the *Viking*," *The Book of Newfoundland*, Vol 1, ed. J.R. Smallwood (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1937), 76-85. The episode is also recounted in *Wake of the Great Sealers* 80-85.

69. For the place of comic exaggeration in the tall tale genre, see Gerald Thomas, "Towards a Definition of the Tall Tale," *The Tall Tale and Philippe d'Alcriste* (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland and the American Folklore Society, 1977), 6-16, and Pat Byrne, "'Tall Are the Tales that Fishermen Tell': Manifestations of the Tall Tale Impulse in Selected Examples of Contemporary Newfoundland Writing," *Studies in Newfoundland Folklore: Community and Process*, ed. Gerald Thomas and J.D.A. Widdowson (St. John's: Breakwater, 1991), 309-328. See also the comment on the well-known Newfoundland folk song, "Jack Was Every Inch a Sailor," in Paul West, "The Unwitting Elegaic: Newfoundland folk-song," *Canadian Literature* (Winter 1961): 34-44, and, from a somewhat different perspective, Sandra Djwa's discussion of balladeer Johnny Burke's comic masterpiece "The Kelligrew's Soiree" in *E.J. Pratt: The Evolutionary Vision* 46-49.

70. Although they may not have known the word, the sealers' dread of *hubris* is seen in Joe Sturge's story about the skipper who curses the lightning on the Labrador (277-278). It is also identified in Farley Mowat's characterization of North Atlantic fishermen in *Grey Seas Under*: "They believe that man must not attempt to overmaster the primordial and elemental forces and break them to his hand. They believe that he who would survive must learn to be a part of the wind and water, rock and soil, nor ever stand in braggart's opposition to these things" (quoted in Poole, *Search*, 92). The psychology of understatement is also evident in the use of diminutives that England correctly observes to be a characteristic feature of Newfoundland speech: "A gale becomes a 'breeze,' oars are 'paddles,' an axe is a 'hatchet,' and a schooner is sometimes a 'skiff.' A two-masted vessel may be called a 'punt,' a cable is a 'string,' and a heavy steel hawser is a 'wire.' The wickedest kind of weather is often only 'dirt,' while the finest is but 'civil'" (190). See Byrne's comment on England's interpretation of diminutives in *Folk Tradition* 237-238 and A.R. Scammell's comment on understatement in his *Collected Works* (St. John's: Harry Cuff, 1990), 41.

71. The word *Newfoundlander* is used first by Captain Griffith Williams in his *Account of the Island of Newfoundland* (London: T. Cole, 1765) and there are two other citations before 1820. All of them reflect the simple definition: "permanent inhabitant or native of Newfoundland." [DNE]

72. *Colour the Flesh the Colour of Dust* (Toronto: Simon and Pierre, 1974) and *The Gayden Chronicles in Canadian Theatre Review* 13 (Winter 1977): 40-104. Although *Colour the Flesh the Colour of Dust* was not published until 1974, Eugene Benson is correct in assigning its completion to as early as 1972. See Benson's article on Cook in *Encyclopedia of Post-Colonial Literatures in English*, ed. Eugene Benson and L.W. Conolly, Vol 1 (London: Routledge, 1994), 267-268.

73. The population of St. John's in 1815 was over 10,000. See the article, "St. John's," *ENL*, Vol 5, 29 & 33. The first resident Governor was Sir Francis Pickmore, who was required to winter in Newfoundland in 1817, but it was not until 1825, with the assignment of Sir Thomas Cochrane, that the colony was granted a civil administration in the form of an appointed Council to advise the Governor. See Prowse 406 and Rowe, *History*, 249.

74. *Death on the Ice* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1972), viii-xii.

75. *sculpting knife*: "stout knife with a broad, thin, rounded blade five or six inches . . . in length, used to remove the skin and blubber from a seal." [DNE]

76. *hard-tack*, or *hard biscuit*, or *hard bread*: "thick, oval-shaped coarse biscuit, baked without salt and kiln-dried; ship-biscuit." [DNE]

77. This figure evokes a similar scene in *Vikings of the Ice* where England writes: "The men cheer and laugh as they swarm in. Up ropes and over side-sticks, red-painted now, they escalate with the agility of apes" (116). There is a further parallel between these similes and the identification of the sealers with the seals in Pratt's *The Ice-Floes*.

78. *rafter*: 1. "Of sheets of ice, to buckle from the pressure of wind, wave and tide; to override another sheet of ice." [DNE]

79. *master (of) watch*: "man placed in charge of one of the groups aboard a sealing vessel organized to hunt seals on the ice-floes; cp WATCH." [DNE]

80. *E.J. Pratt on his Life and Poetry*, ed. Susan Gingel (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1983), 85-86.

81. Dawson's behaviour is dictated by social class. He is able to speak his mind to George Tuff, even though Tuff is in a position of authority over him, because they are of the same class. But on board Captain Kean's vessel, he is completely out of his element and reveals an astounding lack of confidence.

82. On fatalism as a defining element of Newfoundland culture, see Cyril F. Poole, "The Soul of a Newfoundlander." *In Search of the Newfoundland Soul* (St. John's: Harry Cuff, 1982), 91-101.

83. *sun hound* (also *sun-gall*): "bright gleams in the vicinity of the sun." [DNE]

84. This is Coaker's statement, and it may be that there were other survivors on board other vessels. In any event, Ryan agrees with Brown that there were actually sixty-five survivors in all, although one of them, John Keels, died after his return to St. John's. See Ryan, *The Ice Hunters*, 312-315.

85. *The Danger Tree* (Toronto: Macfarlane, Walter & Ross, 1991).

86. As O'Flaherty demonstrates, this was not just a story told at Pratt's expense, it was a story he delighted to tell himself, apparently unaware of the negative implications of an educated parson exploiting the misery of poor and illiterate people. See *The Rock Observed* 118-119.

87. Perhaps the first expression of this estrangement was that of editor Clyde Rose, who wrote in the foreword to his ground-breaking anthology: "Pratt is a Toronto poet who uses Newfoundland and its people as a canvas for his work." [*Baffles of Wind and Tide: An Anthology of Newfoundland Poetry, Prose and Drama* (Portugal Cove, NF: Breakwater, 1973), ix-x.] That this was not a universal view is demonstrated by poet Tom Dawe's tribute, "To E.J. Pratt (#2)," printed in the same anthology. Nevertheless, Patrick O'Flaherty advances essentially the same criticism as Rose, although in much more detailed terms. He objects to Pratt's "huffing and puffing about the heroism of Newfoundlanders" and his "boasting about Newfoundland – so patently contrived," arguing that, in fact, the body of his work gives the overwhelming impression "that Newfoundland was a good place to escape from." O'Flaherty concludes: "Pratt's Newfoundland . . . is a Newfoundland jettisoned, and half-remembered." [*The Rock Observed* 120-126.] Similarly, albeit more dispassionately, Patrick Byrne sets out to "show that references to things Newfoundland are only incidental in most of [Pratt's] early work" and "that where depictions of the traditional culture are more substantial the presentation is often unauthentic." He goes on to say: "Indeed, detachment is the operative word when the relationship between E.J. Pratt and Newfoundland is being assessed" [*Folk Tradition, Literature and a Society in Transition* 227 & 233]. The orthodox view, which these writers challenge, is most eloquently expressed in the writing of David G. Pitt, in the Introduction to his edition of selected poems by Pratt [*Here the Tides Flow* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1962), vii-ix], in his two-volume biography of Pratt [*E.J. Pratt: The Truant Years, 1882-1927* and *E.J. Pratt: The Master Years, 1927-1964* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984 and 1987)] and in his article, "The Challenged Heritage: The Sea as Myth and Milieu in the Poetry of E.J. Pratt," *Myth and Milieu: Atlantic Literature and Culture, 1918-1939*, ed. Gwendolyn Davies (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1993), 160-74.]. See Susan Gingell's analysis of the controversy in "The Newfoundland Context of the Poetry of E.J. Pratt," *Essays on Canadian Writing*, 31 (1985): 93-105.

88. The criterion of "authenticity" is itself no doubt suspect in the context of postmodern values. Nevertheless, I believe it has meaning as a comment upon the legitimacy of feeling in relation to experience as represented within a literary work. I am uneasy, however, with Byrne's usage, which purports to adjudicate *literary* depictions of outport life in relation to the *reality* of the culture. Even synchronically, the diversity of outport culture is attested to by many writers. What, then, is its authentic essence when one adds the diachronic dimension? Whose reality of outport life, and at what time, are we talking about? Byrne refers to the special knowledge of the

“initiated” but he does not adequately explain to the uninitiated his criterion of authenticity.

89. *switchel tea*: “Tea, esp that once drunk by fishermen and sealers at sea.” The citations indicate a derogatory connotation or denotation, as in “This tea is not bad but the stuff next door is switchel” and “weak, cold, left-over tea.” [DNE]

90. H.J. Goodyear, *Newfoundland and its Political and Commercial Relation to Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, [1913]).

91. Literally adding insult to injury, according to this view, the suspension of democratic institutions in 1933 was blamed on the victim. It was recorded in the mother country as “the only failure in the history of the British Empire of our own people to govern themselves” (*The Danger Tree* 19). On the other hand, while the pressure from Britain was very real, Gene Long has argued that the seeds of the Commission of Government were sown within Newfoundland and by Newfoundlanders. Long points out tendencies to invest authority in extra-parliamentary institutions in the activities of the Newfoundland Patriotic Association and the suspension of elected municipal government in St. John’s during and immediately following the war. He also traces notions about the advisability of “a rest from politics” with particular attention to a proposal in 1925 by Sir William Coaker for an elected commission of government divided along sectarian lines that would govern with consent for as long as ten years without an election. It is important to note, however, that Coaker’s suggestion preserved the principles of independence and democracy. Interestingly, Long puts these flirtations with more authoritarian forms of government in the context of the international disillusionment that followed the Great War and which led, in its most extreme manifestation, to the rise of fascism and totalitarianism. See Long’s book *Suspended State: Newfoundland Before Canada* (St. John’s: Breakwater, 1999), esp. 14, 19, 27-28, 41-45, & 79-105.

92. For a scholarly account of the negotiations relating to the American military bases and their economic effect in Newfoundland, see Neary, *Newfoundland in the North Atlantic World*, 135-188.

93. The Straight Shore runs between Bonavista Bay and Hamilton Sound on the northeast coast of Newfoundland, originally from Cape Freels and Musgrave Harbour but now usually including the southern shore of Hamilton Sound to Gander Bay. [ENL, Vol 5, 315.]

94. It is true that the activities of logging, usually a winter-time occupation of fishermen, are presented heroically in a celebrated Newfoundland folksong, “The Badger Drive,” composed by John V. Devine. But John Ashton points out that “The Badger Drive” was actually atypical of Newfoundland logging songs in this and other respects. [“The Badger Drive’: Song, Historicity and Occupational Stereotyping,” *Western Folklore* 53:3 (July 1994): 211-226] As well, the first lines of the song indicate that loggers are not sufficiently celebrated for their bravery: “There is one class of men in this country / That never is mentioned in song. / And now, since their trade is advancing, / They’ll come out on top before long. / They say that our sailors have danger / And likewise our warriors bold / But there’s none know the life of a driver. / What he suffers with

hardship and cold." [*Old-time Songs and Poetry of Newfoundland* 39]

95. This was less true of the seal fishery than the war effort because sealers from particular communities stuck together and sought berths on the same vessel. But the Newfoundland Regiment encouraged an over-riding allegiance. While it was originally made up of the members of four separate cadet corps – the Church Lads Brigade, the Catholic Cadet Corps, the Newfoundland Highlanders, and the Methodist Guards – in the crucible of war these denominational-based groups became one unified battalion. When, in April 1918, a Returned Soldiers and Rejected Volunteers Association was formed, the wording of their pledge was instructive: "That we will be united in and for one cause only, *ie.*, the upkeep of our Royal Newfoundland Regiment at the front" (Nicholson, *The Fighting Newfoundlander*, 438).

96. The phrase attributed to Northcliffe echoes T.S. Eliot's formulation "death's dream kingdom" in "The Hollow Men." Whether this is a deliberate allusion is unclear, but it is appropriate given Northcliffe's social class and occupation and given the aura of disillusionment surrounding the war. At one point in *The Danger Tree*, Northcliffe is implicated through the jingoistic journalism of one of his major newspapers: "The *Daily Mail*, among others, had been blowing on the coals [of war] for years" (88).

97. In the first referendum of 3 June 1948, 44.5% voted for responsible government, 41.1% for confederation with Canada, and 14.3% for the retention of Commission of Government. In the second referendum of 22 July 1948, 52.3% voted for Confederation and 47.4% for Responsible Government. In general, Protestants (who tended to be of English origin) supported Confederation and Catholics (who tended to be of Irish origin) supported Responsible Government. This was similar to the voting patterns in the 1869 election. In fact, the Catholic Archbishop, Edward Patrick Roche, campaigned vigorously against Confederation in the second referendum in what is said to be the last example of overt sectarian influence in political affairs. See S.J.R. Noel, *Politics in Newfoundland* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 255-260, and *ENL*, Vol. 4, 615.

98. Noel 260.

99. General Sir Douglas Haig was the British Commander during the Great War. Suvla Bay on the Gallipoli Peninsula was the site of the Newfoundland Regiment's first action during the war.

100. The unattributed observation is given in Nicholson 270.

Chapter Two

The Old Outport

The Deserted Village

The myth of heroic Newfoundland, established by such writers as Norman Duncan, E.J. Pratt and George Allan England, survives into the modern era in a few works casting a theme of courage and endurance in the management of hardship and oppression as a defining element of the Newfoundland character. The prevailing myth of Newfoundland literature during the 1970s and 1980s, however, was the myth of the old outport. An interest in the texture of outport life, as opposed to the brave exploits of Newfoundland fishermen, sealers and soldiers, can be seen in earlier literature, notably in some of Duncan's stories in *The Way of the Sea*, in Pratt's early narrative poem, *Rachel*, and in the first three novels of Margaret Duley. But the outport as community is not a major theme in Newfoundland literature until the 1940s with the stories and essays of Arthur Scammell and Ron Pollett and, a decade later, in the radio yarns and plays of Ted Russell. By 1970, it was widely recognised that these little fishing communities were unique to Newfoundland, that they constituted a treasure trove of folklore and dialect, and that, after centuries of gradual evolution in isolation from the outside world, their distinctive character and their very existence were threatened by the enormous changes that swept over Newfoundland following confederation with Canada in 1949. Previously taken for granted as the quaint social background against which extraordinary acts of bravery and endurance were highlighted, the outport community was now acknowledged to be the heart and soul of Newfoundland. If the survival of the outports was in doubt, then so was the identity of Newfoundland itself.

There are many factors, local and global, that led to this change in outlook. First, confederation with Canada ushered in a period of unprecedented change in Newfoundland. Canada's social security programmes – old age pensions, family allowances, and unemployment insurance – were accessed by thousands of people who had previously lived their lives on the edge with no safety net below, and this represented a significant change in the imperatives of life, not to mention a significant increase in disposable income. As well, the government of Joseph Smallwood set out on a course “to bring Newfoundland kicking and screaming into the twentieth century,” and, to this end, an aggressive industrialization plan was put into effect.¹ While Smallwood denied that he ever advised fishermen to burn their boats, the new economic plan not only concentrated on the creation of new industries outside the fishery, it also complemented a social plan that encouraged outport Newfoundlanders to leave the small, remote, fishing communities and move to “growth centres” where the new industries would be located. In its first phase, the “centralization” programme, launched in 1953, resulted in the abandonment of one-hundred-and-fifteen outport communities and the relocation of 7,500 people. The second phase, the federal/provincial “resettlement” programme, initiated in 1965, brought about the desertion of a further fifty or sixty outports. By 1967, over two hundred settlements had disappeared since confederation, some of them without any incentives from government but most as a result of the centralization and resettlement policies. This represented a dramatic shift in the number of Newfoundlanders living in tiny outport communities. In 1951, 57.2% of Newfoundlanders lived in communities defined as rural (with populations smaller than one thousand) compared to 42.8% living in urban communities. By 1971, these figures had been reversed (Matthews 210). By the late 1970s, says anthropologist Robert Paine, “Newfoundland

[was] a place of raw urbanization.”² Resettlement was a wrenching experience for many outport Newfoundlanders, and it was not made easier when, after the failure of the government’s industrialization programme, they often moved away from good fishing grounds near their isolated coves and islands only to find no employment in the so-called growth centres. Resettlement more than anything else created the perception that Smallwood was, at best, neglecting the industry that constituted the country’s *raison d’être*, and, at worst, bent upon uprooting everything that was distinctive to its identity.³

But outport society was also changing irrevocably as a result of a policy no one could reasonably condemn. The government’s “war on isolation” was designed to provide land transportation links to communities previously accessible only by water. In 1950, there were 121 miles of paved roads in all of Newfoundland. Twenty-five years later, there were 2,605. In 1950, there were 16,375 registered motor vehicles. Twenty-five years later, there were 173,642.⁴ As Noel writes, “The young in particular [were] no longer bound to their home communities, either physically or psychologically, the way their parents were. Further, apparently, outport life [had] little to offer compared with the liberty of the open road or the public entertainments of the nearest town” (272). In the private sector, a new radio station, established in 1951, and commercial television, launched by the same company in 1955, quickly led to province-wide coverage by private and public broadcasters, putting Newfoundlanders not only more closely in touch with North America but also making them more a part of it. American country music, previously unknown in Newfoundland, rapidly started to replace the traditional and indigenous folksongs of the outports. As Noel and other writers point out, such changes, while fostering the growth of ‘continental consciousness,’ at the same time seriously eroded the established patterns

of outport life and encouraged a level of materialism and consumerism previously unknown (Noel 272-274). Nor were these changes limited to the outports. The distinctive vernacular architecture of St. John's, for example, was popularly written off in the 1950s and 60s as behind-the-times, and householders renovating their old homes often "improved" them in ways that destroyed their aesthetic integrity.

In the late 1960s, a reaction set in that eventually led to the downfall of the Smallwood government in 1972. A new generation, beneficiaries of dramatically improved accessibility to education, began to object to the unthinking acceptance of a value system that denigrated the traditional culture as hopelessly backward and intrinsically worthless. "We were hell bent on throwing the whole of our heritage out the window," said G.M. Story, who pioneered the development of Newfoundland Studies at Memorial University of Newfoundland.⁵ But if the first reaction to these changes was scholarly and intellectual, the second was artistic and political. In 1976, this "cultural revolution" was described by Sandra Gwyn as an illustration of a society fighting back.⁶ And readers of the *Ottawa Law Review* could have glimpsed the phenomenon a year earlier in a learned article entitled "Newfoundland's Case on Offshore Minerals: A Brief Outline."⁷ In this unlikely context, a profoundly radical change in perspective is evident in Cabot Martin's conclusion:

as in other parts of Canada, many Newfoundlanders (no doubt spurred by the environmental and energy crises and by inflation) now perceive both a "limit to growth" and the precariousness of North American consumerism. Having placed only one foot in the grave, [they] are now re-emphasizing their alternate traditional society. . . . the tremendous resurgence of interest in Newfoundland

music and history and in the growth of an indigenous theatre and literature together with a renewed sense of pride are significant signs of a society on the rebound. . . . the people of rural Newfoundland no longer permit their governments to conduct social genocide by “resettlement” in the name of cutting the cost of public services. and young people no longer flock to Toronto. That this renewal is taking place is not surprising. An independent Newfoundland, the product of a long and painful social evolution, is not history but the common experience of many living Newfoundlanders. (54)

Several points are worth noting in this passage and in the paper in general. First is the socio-cultural dimension. The argument for control of Newfoundland’s offshore minerals is not just about provincial revenue, it is about social integrity and cultural identity. Second is the theme of independence. The reference to an “independent Newfoundland” is deliberately ambiguous. Its practical meaning speaks to the reclamation of a lost sense of independence among Newfoundland Canadians rather than a serious threat to secede from Canada. At the same time, the statement expresses a yearning for the recovery of national pride in Newfoundland. Third is the futuristic and global sweep of the argument. The phrase “limit to growth” alludes to the ground-breaking book, *The Limits to Growth*, a report for the Club of Rome published in 1972 which argued that the progress/growth model of development then in fashion was predicated upon rates of national resource exploitation that could not be sustained by the planet over the long term.⁸ Earlier in Martin’s paper, the options facing Newfoundland are discussed in relation to strategies adopted elsewhere in the world, notably Scotland and Norway, in coping with the social disruption of large-scale oil and gas development. Fourth is the strong sense of

violation attributed to the resettlement policy. The phrase "social genocide" is excessive if we put it alongside the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia or the massacre of the Tutsis in Rwanda, but metaphorically it expressed a strong sense of cultural degradation deeply and widely felt to have been inflicted upon Newfoundland during the immediate post-confederation years. And it did not make these injuries any easier to bear when it was also understood that they were to some extent self-inflicted wounds.

In questioning the modernization models of growth and development in the 1970s, Newfoundlanders were part of a world-wide phenomenon. The received wisdom concerning progress was being radically reconsidered from a number of perspectives, two of which are particularly important in relation to Newfoundland. The first was the environmental movement which raised the alarm concerning the disastrous implications of unfettered development, particularly in terms of the depletion of natural resources, the undermining of ecosystems, and the destruction of communities. The concept of sustainable growth implied a re-valuing of large-scale development and runaway consumption. An alternate "small is beautiful" view of the future was proposed by such writers as E.F. Schumacher and Ivan Illich that paradoxically involved a return to the past in its emphasis upon conservation, community, and self-sufficiency.⁹ In Newfoundland, this struck a strong chord because the society had not yet emerged from a past to which it seemed much of the world now wished to return. The second new challenge to orthodoxy that had much appeal in Newfoundland was the dependency theory of development.¹⁰ Associated notably with the work of André Gunder Frank in Latin America, dependency theory posits an exploitative relationship between urban and rural, centre and periphery, metropole and hinterland, in which remoter regions are maintained in a state of colonialism, dominated by

metropolitan capital and politics, and drained of raw materials and surplus labour. The hinterland in this scenario is not permitted the control that would enable it to use its resources for the good of its people. Decisions are made elsewhere according to an alien value system that reflects the insatiable appetite of the prosperous metropole. As Overton points out, dependency theory became increasingly popular in Newfoundland during the 1970s because “it [seemed] to make sense of the experiences of many people [during the post-confederation years], and it [provided] a guide for action” (233).

The “small is beautiful” perspective prompted romantic representations of life in the Newfoundland outport, outrage against resettlement, and alternate development policies that critics would call quixotic. The dependency theory perspective stimulated political and economic critiques and strategies that came to be generally accepted by a wide spectrum of Newfoundlanders of all political stripes and backgrounds. For the first of these, at least, there were precursors in Newfoundland literature prior to 1970. In some of the stories of Norman Duncan and in E.J. Pratt’s “Rachel,” the honest virtues and grounded values of outport life were extolled. Margaret Duley explored outport life in her three Newfoundland novels out of a recognition of its symbolic importance for the issue of cultural identity, but Duley, coming from a well-to-do St. John’s family, had an intellectual rather than experienced understanding of the subject.¹¹ Her ambivalence towards the outport reflected her status as an outsider. Much the same can be said, two and a half decades later, of Harold Horwood, who also grew up in St. John’s and whose novel *Tomorrow Will Be Sunday* (1966) depicted the outport in overwhelmingly negative terms.¹² Unlike Duley, who made a genuine attempt to come to terms with the traditional culture, Horwood approached it with an ideology and an aesthetic that privileged individuality and

intellectualism. Not surprisingly, the outport was found wanting in these respects. In the immediate pre- and post-confederation years, however, what was background to Duncan and Pratt, and uncertain territory to Duley and Horwood, was foregrounded in the work of Arthur Scammell, Ron Pollett and Ted Russell. Identified by Byrne as "romantic realists," these native baymen set about memorializing the peculiar qualities of outport life just at the moment when it was beginning to experience a storm of social change much more threatening than anything nature had been able to devise in four hundred years of fierce and unrelenting assault.¹³ Drawing on a variety of styles and genres within both the literate and folk traditions, these writers re-created a rich and distinctive tapestry of outport life. The expatriates, Scammell and Pollett, wrote mainly for the *Atlantic Guardian*, a Newfoundland magazine established in 1945, presenting a somewhat nostalgic and idealized perspective of the traditional fishing villages. Then Russell, in his radio yarns and plays during the 1950s, gave this world-view its most natural and most perfect expression. A popular and unprovocative feature of CBC's regular "Fishermen's Broadcast," his tales from Pigeon Inlet were not understood to provide a revolutionary slant on the worth of outport communities until nearly two decades after they were aired. By then, almost a complete about-face had occurred in the way Newfoundlanders viewed their heritage and culture, and the emblem of this change was the rehabilitation of the outport way of life.

The Holding Ground

In *The Way of the Sea*, Norman Duncan's perspective on the Newfoundland outport is primarily heroic. Nevertheless, there are several extended passages in these stories that vividly

contrast the heroic struggle against wind and tide with the daily routine of the outpost community. While not devoid of hardship and challenge, these scenes evoke a rich, however primitive, home and community life. This is perhaps most marked in the depiction of childhood. In the story, "Concerning Billy Luff and Master Goodchild," for example, the children of Ragged Harbour are observed through the eyes of young Billy Luff, an unusual boy who seeks perfection as laid out in the pages of the only storybook in the village, a volume of *exempla* designed to instruct children in the religious values of the middle-class Victorian family. A contrast is thus established between the natural life of the village children and the artificial, adult-constructed life of Master Goodchild. Billy Luff stands in between, yearning for the careless freedom of his friends but drawn to the "lofty, sacrificial, beautiful" lives of the imagined heroes of *Early Piety*. This internal conflict is seen early in the story when Billy, tending his father's flake in a summer's day, enviously observes a friend exploring the reaches of Ragged Harbour, "roaming the sunlit Head, leaping from rock to rock, rolling over the stubby grass." This scene is followed in quick succession by others characterized by denial: Billy declines to accompany the lads of the village who are setting out in a punt to Squid Cove for a lark; he resists the attractions of other young folk making sport and laughter with sleds and wooden skates on the frozen harbour; he foregoes the custom of Christmas mumming; he refrains from joining his friends in games of "h'ist-your-sails-an'-run" among the boulders of the hillside; he refuses the invitation of his schoolmates to go copying on the fragments of ice along the shore.¹⁴ These sketches, seasonally arranged, give a compelling picture of the energetic social life led by the youth of Ragged Harbour, and which Billy Luff eschews because he thinks he has found something better in a book. Duncan, the outsider, is alive to the irony that what seems fresh and beautiful to Billy Luff,

legitimized in print, is bleak and sterile in reality.

Duncan is impressed by the daily and seasonal rhythm of outport life. This he depicts in association with another lad of the village, ten-year-old Skipper Jo, in "The Chase of the Tides," providing sketches from "the years of idleness" in childhood to the gradually deepening responsibilities of boyhood. He dwells lovingly on the incredible freedom of outport children to explore the wonders of the landwash and to learn "the ways of lobsters and tom cod, the subtle craft of dories, the topography of the wildernesses under broad flakes, the abiding places of starfish and prickly sea-eggs, the significance of squid-squalls, and the virulence of squids."¹⁵ Equally vivid is his description of the adults of the village at work, and especially the women, who, while the men are on the water fishing, pass their time milking goats, making boots, spinning wool, splitting wood, tending babies, spreading fish on the flakes, gathering soil for the gardens, keeping stages clean, and cooking potatoes and brewis.¹⁶ Meanwhile, when the fish are running, children are expected to pitch in. They "stand on tubs at the splitting table, to cut the throats of cod, and when, in the depths of night, they nod, through weariness, a man with a bushy white beard cries, 'Hi, b'y! I'll heave a head at ye if ye fall asleep' – a cold, slimy, bloody cod head" (6-7).¹⁷ A few pages later a vivid scene of early childhood is sketched when Skipper Jo and his companion, slipping out the harbour on their fateful voyage, pass Jake Sevier's whitewashed cottage, a site of congenial anarchy, where "the pigs and chickens were rioting amicably with the babies in the kitchen" (12).

Although an impression given is of ceaseless labour, this is usually presented in a positive light because the work is meaningful. "In the Fear of the Lord," for example, the lively and lusty Nazareth Lute, having been saved by the Lord, finds solace in work and searches "diligently for

things to do in the last light of day" (235). As he toils away at his life's project to build the best sixty-ton schooner that ever sailed the seas, he is sustained in this daunting task by his sense of purpose: "In those long, sunny days, when all the rocks of the harbour cheerily echoed the noise of hammer and saw, and the smell of oakum and paint and new wood was in the air to delight in, he was happy" (245-246). A similar level of contentment maintained in the face of continual disappointment is seen in "The Fruits of Toil" in which Solomon Stride and his wife Priscilla set out as a young couple full of hope for a prosperity that never comes. The seasonal rhythm and pluralistic nature of work in the outport are evident in Solomon's accomplishments that first year. In the winter he makes his cod trap, in the spring he builds a stage and flake, in the summer he fishes. Now he is established. But for the whole of his life there will always be nets to be mended, stages and flakes to be repaired, boats to be built, gardens to be planted and harvested, berries to be picked and preserved, rabbits and sea-birds to be hunted, as well as fish to be caught and seals to be killed. Despite many setbacks and no great gains, Solomon and Priscilla survive into old age, with Job-like acceptance, physically worn out but somehow undefeated in spirit.

Duncan's outport is also a place in which the normal range of human pleasures and delights is evident. Nazareth Lute's hedonistic lifestyle before he is saved by the Lord is observed somewhat indulgently by the community. "They's a spring o' sin in the innards of that there b'y," says Uncle Solomon Luff. "'an 'twill never run dry 'til the fires o' hell sap un up." But Nazareth is loved by the unrighteous and by the children of the village because of his "unfailing jollity" (223-225). Similarly, in "The Love of the Maid," summer romance and courtship are depicted, even though the outcome of these natural inclinations is compromised, in this case, by a basic appetite for sustenance. In "The Breath of the North," an appreciation of home and family is

sharpened by the ordeal Eleazar Manuel and young Jim Rideout have just survived. When the baby, Eli, scatters his pebbles over the floor, startling the cat and dog, he triggers emotions of delight and relief: "What with Tommy's shrill laughter and the buzz of Granny Manuel's spinning-wheel and the clattering of the chickens and the cat's prolonged manifestations of indignation and the roars of Eleazar and young Jim, Aunt Martha's tin-pans were shaken from the shelf; and the cottage was shaken anew by the merriment inside" (124). Again, in "A Beat t' Harbour," in the home of the aspiring songwriter and schooner master, Dannie Crew, the crackling of the kitchen fire, the ticking of the clock and the clicking of Janet Crew's knitting needles all give comfort, albeit only temporary, against the inevitable storms raging outside the walls of the home.¹⁸

In "The Healer from Far-away Cove," we are shown a more unusual human desire that associates freedom with isolation. Ishmael Roth decides to abandon the community of Poverty Cove after Jared Luff comes there because the place is getting too crowded. "Sure, I've nothin' agin Jared Luff," he tells Skipper John East one morning, "but with him come here they's handy t' twenty-seven families t' the Cove" (189). Although individual in its extremity, Ishmael expresses values that were shared by many who kept moving to uninhabited coves and bays. The economic and other imperatives that historically shaped settlement patterns in Newfoundland from the beginning required individuals who were content to get away from the rest of the world.

Nevertheless, although Duncan celebrates the quiet values and joys of outport life, these qualities are exemplified and experienced by mortals constantly threatened in the struggle with nature that paradoxically sustains the community. "The Chase of the Tide" ends with the bodies of the scientifically-minded Skipper Jo and his companion, Ezekiel, being pounded repeatedly

against the Rock of the Third Sister for a day and a night, and "A Beat t' Harbour" ends with a similar loss of the imaginative songwriter/skipper, Dannie Crew. These values and joys are also not only jeopardized by nature, but also by the isolation of the inhabitants from the outside world, an isolation which, again paradoxically, is the source of their strength. In the story, "Concerning Billy Luff and Master Goodchild," Billy Luff's natural virtues are perverted by his family's naive capitulation to the sentimental middle-class morality of an alien culture in a way that robs him of his childhood. And "In the Fear of the Lord," Nazareth Lute, beset by ignorance and superstition, sacrifices his prized schooner, the work of his life, to an imagined command of the Lord. Yet if tragedy overwhelms inherent worth in *The Way of the Sea*, the spirit of Duncan's outport people seems unbreakable. In this way, the collection tends to convert all outcomes into an heroic dimension.

This tendency is also dominant in the work of Pratt and the early narrative poem.

"Rachel" is, in this respect, exceptional. Pitt has suggested that "Rachel" is a personal poem, "a rarity in Pratt," but it is also unusual among Pratt's works in that it provides a sketch, however limited and idiosyncratic, of outport community life (*The Truant Years* 161). The limited and idiosyncratic nature of Pratt's depiction is hinted at early in the poem when Rachel's dwelling is seen to stand apart from the village, set near a stream "which slowly moved / In devious, lonely ways," suggesting that the protagonists may not be typical inhabitants of the community (ll. 29-31). Of relevance, too, is the fact that "Rachel" has a famous prototype – William Wordsworth's "Michael." Although a comparison of the two poems reveals interesting differences between them, showing that Pratt was largely successful in separating his own creation from the model that inspired it, this process of writing did mean that a literary treatment overlaid whatever

reality he may have been working from.¹⁹ This is most obvious in the choice of words like “cottage” and “hearthstone” which evoke the abodes of Lake District shepherds more naturally than those of Newfoundland fishermen.²⁰

Pratt concisely traces the “challenged heritage” of outport culture back to the days of the migratory fishery when “[s]ailors from distant Britain” wrested “their harvests from reluctant depths.” But for four generations, livyers have “found a home”:

Each in its turn re-trod the self-same paths.
 Fought the same storms, the ice-floes and the floods.
 Hailed the same Springs, their sunshine and their hopes.
 The Summer-trade winds with their genial power;
 These lived and toiled and died (ll.15-25)

The implication is that a distinctive culture has emerged, shaped by the peculiar demands of the land and sea, but that in the minds of the people it retains a strong connection to the Mother Country. In the stories handed down from father to son are intermingled “sagas of the Gulf of Labrador,” “stories of the Banks,” “travel lore / Of Ocean tracts, and European marts,” “heroic deeds” representing “[a] thousand years of British seamanship” and disasters on the ice-fields.²¹ This tradition of “valorous action” creates a “birthright” of “ancestral pride” transmitted orally, “[n]ot charactered indeed by History’s pen” but “writ / On worthier parchment than the inked screed – / On memory-woven tissues of the heart” (ll. 197-270). The eclectic content of these stories and the story-telling medium itself are both illustrations of the culture’s disposition to define and re-define itself.²²

Although Rachel Lee and her son live “a few furlongs to the west” of the village rather

than within it, the poem provides a glimpse of life in the community as young Henry attends school, participates in recreational activities with his peers, and undertakes his apprenticeship on the water, handling cod under the eye of an "old weather-beaten salt" of the village. The drilling and rote-memory work of the old Newfoundland schools are faithfully suggested in Pratt's account, as are the youthful hijinks that "outlived / The pickled strap and hickory stick," the "deeds / Of truant muscles feebly held in leash" (ll. 112-126). The passage depicting Henry's feats as a swimmer is criticized by Byrne for being "non-fisherman-like," by which he appears to refer to the poetic language employed (228). But it is a dubious requirement to expect a narrative poem always to imitate the vernacular of its characters, and especially in the description of a physical action. Similarly, Henry's prowess as a swimmer may be considered unusual, as many outport lads never learned how to swim, but while Henry may be unusual, swimmers were not unknown in these communities.²³ Finally, the account of Henry's exploits on the water seems convincing enough as a physical description of the activities of handling cod and making for home. What admittedly is missing in almost of this, however, is a strong sense of community. The Lees' separation from their village is perhaps reflective of the separation of Pratt's own family from the outports in which they lived, as well as the romantic conventions of the genre which he chose.²⁴ Although Pratt certainly imposed his own distinctive vision and voice upon this model, what remains of the language and form of the original often seems at odds with the subject of his poem. The hackneyed phrase "old weather-beaten salt" is one example of this phenomenon, an echo of a sensibility concerning the sea that is literary rather than lived.

All this is background for the emergence of Henry Lee as a protagonist ambitious to accomplish great deeds like those recited in the sagas he had imbibed in his youth. Pratt's

detachment from his materials, which some critics have perceived in his Newfoundland poems, is consistent with the heroic style he was assuming even here.²⁵ This masculine, sea-based ideal of striving and combat is opposed in “Rachel,” however, by a feminine, land-based predilection for sustenance and sanctuary which elicited much greater emotional engagement on his part. “The seaward passion of [Henry’s] bone and blood” is not shared by his mother:

In girlhood days,

Her joys were those of winter and late fall,
 For then her kin were home. The solid earth
 Was safe; it could be trusted in the storm
 As well as calm. ’Twas true November brought
 The chilly rains, and January the cold
 That froze the bay, but then they also filled
 The living room with comfort, gathering all
 Around the hearthstone where the rosy gleams
 Leaped laughing from the pine-knot and the birch.
 The supper board became an evening scene
 Of festival, where yarns and tea both flowed
 With equal strength of stream, and after that,
 When hours grew late, the rest of heavy sleep
 That heard not, cared not for the winds that blew.
 This was the joy of harbour and of land (ll.291-306)

Despite diction that is jarring in reference to a fishermen’s home – “living room” and

“hearthstone” – this is a scene that evokes an alternative to, and respite from, heroic engagement, a rich haven of community living that became the inspiration for Newfoundland writers and intellectuals during the 1970s and 1980s.²⁶

Arthur Scammell, born in Change Islands, Notre Dame Bay, in 1913, composed one of Newfoundland’s best-known folksongs, “The Squid Jiggin’ Ground,” when he was sixteen. But Scammell’s family was unusually conscious of the benefits of education. After fishing with his father during his early years, Scammell attended Memorial University College and became a school teacher. Later, he completed a B.A. (Hons) in English at McGill and an M.A. at the University of Vermont, and from 1942 until his retirement in 1970 he taught high school in Montreal. Among his published works are poems like “Lines to Chaucer,” “A Black Man Speaks” and “Dr. Schweitzer” that reveal him to be a man of no mean learning, progressive views and catholic tastes.²⁷ But Scammell is more self-assured in his employment of the forms and materials of the Newfoundland oral tradition. The outport experience was his true inspiration. His songs, and, even more so, his essays and stories about outport life contain his best work. He was completely at home with the dialect and culture of the northeast coast of Newfoundland, yet his writing is subtly crafted in a way that reveals his knowledge of the wider world.

Scammell’s perspective on his subject is laid out in an early prose piece published in the *Atlantic Guardian* in May 1945 entitled “Outport Heritage.” There he associates a playing up of “the pathos of the hard, unrelenting struggle for existence” with accounts of outport life “written by visitors from other countries.” He detects the condescension implicit in this view – “It made the reader feel as if he should do something for these poor, benighted people” – and, “knowing

something of the social picture both in Canada and in the United States.” he assures these writers “that their well-meaning sympathy could be far better spent on their own regions.” This observation anticipates the dependency theory later developed by the social scientists in that it tackles head-on colonialist measures of worth that bring hegemonic value systems to bear upon the assessment of peripheral societies and cultures. In opposition to the assumption of backwardness and poverty, Scammell insists that “Newfoundlanders in their little communities have built up something worthwhile, something not measured by the size of the churches or the material beauty of the homes.” and he goes on to enumerate “[d]aily lessons in co-operation and kindness.” “[s]tudies in industry and hard work.” a “delightful sense of humour of character and situation, that bubbled in the darkest days.” the development of “initiative and a sense of responsibility early in life.” the communal sharing of “joys and sorrows.” not to mention unsung “heroic deeds of rescue” as people “go about their daily work.” What emerges in Scammell’s stories is an ethic of interdependence and stoicism that is taught by example – observed and recounted: “Incidents and deeds like these were welded into the tradition of the village, told to wide-eyed children around crackling winter fires, sinking into their minds with the multiplication table. Selfishness could not thrive in such an atmosphere.” Scammell illustrates the deeply embedded rule of neighbourliness when his father, after having done a favour for a city man and refusing payment for it, finds himself on the other end of a lecture: “You outport people . . . have to learn to move with the times. You’ll never get anywhere unless you forget this business of giving your time and effort without being paid.” His father’s rejoinder reveals his understanding that “hospitality and kindness to friend and stranger alike” constitute an unspoken law on which his community is built, and that this is a good “that all the inventions and discoveries of modern

civilization cannot lessen or cheapen” (3-5).

Nevertheless, the imperative of interdependence is not based upon sentiment or altruism – it is a requirement for survival in isolated communities in which disaster is a constant and a common threat:

Bill Peters was sick and couldn't go into the woods to get fuel. The others built up his woodpile. Uncle Sam Jensen had a boy drowned gunning. His fishing mates showed their sympathy with the true delicacy of men who fight shy of any demonstration of their feelings: “We'll haul your trawls today, Uncle Sam: no need of you botherin'.”

In the old outpost, the rule “do under others as you would have them do unto you” was no abstraction: it was a prescription whose importance was demonstrated so frequently that there was no escaping its necessity. For this reason, its acceptance was not inevitably accompanied by feelings of Christian charity. Thus, in “Young Peter Takes a Hand,” when Peter Bungay's Uncle Dan comes upon the boat of his enemy, Skipper Frank Fowler, broken down upon the water, he does not hesitate to stop and tow him to shore. But no pleasantries are exchanged: “Tow in a Fowler he would, as he'd do for any man, friend or enemy, but talk to him he wouldn't if it could be helped” (97).

No doubt it was also true, however, that compliance with such a code had its intangible compensations in a sense of closeness within the community that brought comfort and meaning in the face of deprivation and loss. In “Church Memories,” Scammell describes how the communal life of the village was centred around the church: “Men and boys turned up to dig graves, fence or lime the cemetery, shingle the church or paint the rectory.” He is aware that the

high level of community spirit expressed in such activities was to a large extent derived from the lack of any other attractions – cars, organized sports, radio, television. Not only did the church respond to the spiritual needs of the people, it was an indispensable way of “keeping track of neighbours and relatives in a phoneless age.” The investment of time and energy in the church also gave Scammell’s outpost Newfoundlanders a feeling of ownership: “We went to church out of a weekly habit but also out of a sense of loyalty. It was our church, our minister, our choir, our congregation and we had a duty to support them” (22-24). Like neighbourliness, this value also resisted commodification. In “Render Unto Caesar” the community rejects the introduction of modern fund-raising methods by the new parson because they disregard the dependence of the people upon the rhythm and bounty of nature. Skipper Ike Newton sums up the consensus:

I think parson we’d better go on the way we’ve been goin’. I know some of us don’t give enough to the church and then again a scattered one of us might be givin’ too much ‘Tis pretty hard to figure sometimes if the hand held out is God’s or man’s. An’ then again if ‘tis God’s, we can’t always tell what He wants us to put in it – p’raps ‘tis not always money. (124)

At the same time, Skipper Ike reminds his hearers that “we’ll need a lot of help the first blowy day puttin’ them new ashfelt tiles on the church floor and shorin’ up the rectory.” He pointedly tells them that he will not ask them “to sign their names to that” but “the church bells will tickle your ears” (125). The rebuke to the parson is unmistakable. A signed pledge is insulting when the community’s commitment is embedded in its way of life.

Byrne has observed that there are tensions beneath the calm surface of Scammell’s

outport world (290). Indeed, in “Home Thoughts from Abroad,” Scammell acknowledges that although he tries to recall the “pleasant and good memories of Newfoundland,” there were “ugly and sad things in outport life too – the family quarrels and misunderstandings, neglected children, the sectarian divisions of the churches.” But his inclination is towards a comedic resolution. Concerning sectarianism, for example, he writes that, although religious bigotry is not unknown, in the end “men’s hearts are wider than their creeds” (14). Scammell’s conflicts always end in reconciliation, and harmony is usually restored by an unselfish act (as in “Trap Berth”), an obligation discharged (as in “Watch on the Ice Pan”), or a critical service rendered (as in “War Bride”). These endings may sometimes seem too pat and didactic – some of the stories are actually parables – but most of the time Scammell’s wit and wisdom prevail over the demons of sentimentality and piety.

Besides interdependence, the value most associated with survival in Scammell’s world is hard work, and it is a lesson taught at an early age. “We had very permissive parents,” he says, “who allowed, even encouraged us, to work like dogs. That was the way they had survived, and their parents before them. So there was no slindgin’ permitted” (“Is There a Doctor in the House?” 34).²⁸ Coupled with early responsibility, however, was incredible freedom. Children who could discharge many adult responsibilities supposedly needed little supervision. Sometimes, as in “A Shot to Remember,” this nearly resulted in disaster, but it also bred resourcefulness, self-reliance and self-confidence, at least within the ambit of the outport world.

The sense of authenticity in Scammell’s portrait of the Newfoundland outport is due not only to his vivid recollection of its archetypal activities and rituals but also to his ability to render its voice. In this, his natural ear for dialect is complemented by a scholarly knowledge of the

English language. In "St. John's Fullers." he not only shows his understanding of the diversity of Newfoundland speech within the general category of West Country English, but also displays a witty grasp of phonology and philology, as well as the social and political implications of standard and non-standard usage:²⁹

Our speech had been handed down to us pure and unadulterated from tribal patriarchs, jealous guardians of The Word. In vain did some parents and teachers try to narrow our broad A's, bring forward our back formations, substitute S's and F's for our buzzing Z's and V's. The Great Vowel Shift, even if we had heard of it, would have meant to us only the swapping of Leghorn hens for Rhode Island Reds. We rattled our H's around like bullets or omitted them altogether in gay abandon. Our Dorset and Devon ancestors, West Saxons all, would have been proud of us as we murdered East Midland syntax and inflection. Subject-verb disagreements came as second nature to us, as did the double and sometimes the triple negative. We would have had supreme contempt for Robert Browning's Grammarian and would have attended his funeral any day of the week. (61)

Ron Pollett, who supplanted Scammell as the most popular columnist among readers of the *Atlantic Guardian*, depends less on dialect and more on a precise memory of folk customs and physical details to create a vivid sense of the traditional outport experience. Pollett was born in New Harbour, Trinity Bay, in 1900 and taught school in that area for three years before moving to Grand Falls, where he worked as a clerk in the pulp and paper mill operated by Lord Northcliffe's Anglo-Newfoundland Development Corporation. In 1923, he travelled to Montreal and apprenticed as a linotype operator. The following year, he relocated to New York and settled

in southeast Brooklyn, where there was a 'little Newfoundland' community numbering around 20,000.³⁰ Pollett married a Newfoundland woman (from Placentia Bay), established himself as a master printer, raised a family, and remained in Brooklyn for the rest of his life. He began writing in 1945 when his health declined, and for the next ten years, until his death in 1955, he wrote about thirty-four essays, reminiscences and stories for the *Atlantic Guardian*, and a study of an outport character entitled "Peter the Grate," published separately by Guardian Associates Press in 1952.³¹ These pieces were based upon his memory of outport life, his experience of living and working in the big city, and his observations of rural Newfoundland made during visits home during the late 1940s and early 1950s.

Byrne has commented that there is sufficient information scattered throughout Pollett's work to reconstruct an ethnography of life in a Newfoundland outport during the first quarter of the twentieth century (297). His wonderful reminiscence, "The Bridge," for example, provides a remarkably detailed account of daily life in an outport community. Since it was set in the middle of the village, spanning a half-mile "tongue" of salt water at the bottom of the harbour, "anyone who stirred at all had to cross the bridge or sail under it." But it was a special place for the young who practically lived their lives there, fishing for "salmon peels, billfish, tomcods, flatfish, tansies, and whatever else took hold of the hook," watching the punts sail under it during the fishing season, swimming from it during the warm months, dancing on it to the accompaniment of mouth organs and accordions during the long summer evenings, running the gauntlet of the big waves smashing across it during the fall, skating under it during the winter (*Millionaire* 21-26).³² The customs of the Christmas season, mummering chief among them, are described in "Where Christmas is Christmas" and other stories (*Ocean*). The ritual mid-morning meal of boiled cod

and fat back pork, garnished with fresh chives, and cooked in sea water atop a bed of beach rocks on the ballast box of a punt is depicted in loving detail in “The Manly Sport of Handlining” (*Ocean*). The complete absence of locked doors – church, house, stagehead – is described in a way that clarifies the implication not only of trust but also of right of entry to the property of others, especially but not exclusively in case of need (“The Passing of the Stagehead” and “Peter the Grate.” *Millionaire*).³³ The sounds of the old outport are recalled in abundant detail: the calling home of children, the barking of dogs, the ringing of church bells, the “clock-setting sawmill whistle,” “the staccato putt-putt of sometimes mufflerless motor boats,” and, a cynic would recall, “the lazy drone of millions of ‘blue-bottle’ houseflies around the fish wharves” (“There’s No Place Like an Outport.” *Ocean*, 101-102). Pollett has an equally strong recollection of smells: “the pungent headiness of boiling pitch and tar, of oakum, of tree bark boiling in tanpots over wood fires as fisherfolk prepare boats and nets for a busy summer” (“Summer Madness.” *Ocean*, 91). And his memories are stimulated by tokens that “have emotional ties far beyond the imagination of the homefolk”: “a mathook, a friendship cup, a childhood copybook, Grandma’s faded tippet. . . . a powder horn, a squidjigger, a plug of tobacco, a guncap” (*ibid.* 93).

But while Pollett’s writing constitutes a rich source of lore about life in the old outport, it serves to highlight two points that are often overlooked. The first has to do with diversity. Even though conditions of weather, landscape, resources and isolation conspired to produce over time a certain cultural integrity in outharbour communities, they continued to exhibit important differences from one another. They were not clones, uniform products of one social matrix. Pollett’s outport, for example, is gentler than Scammell’s. It is more agricultural, less isolated, less dominated by the fishery. There is a sawmill, a waterwheel, a windmill. The train passes

over a trestle within sight of the community bridge. There appears to be more leisure time available. The second point concerns change. Pollett's emphasis upon change may stem from his perspective as an expatriate writer, although no doubt it also reflects his particular temperament. In any event, mutability is a major theme in his writing. While he recalls the outport of his youth, he sees, on his return visits, the outport of the mid-century and he is painfully aware of the contrast.

Pollett sees that first the railway, then electric power, telephones and radio, and finally the network of motor roads combined to bring about huge changes in outport life. The decline of the fishery has had an even greater effect.³⁴ The young have turned their backs to the water. Many men now travel inland to take seasonal jobs in the mining and newsprint industries, leaving behind "grass widows and numerous offspring," while others work full-time at nearby military bases and airfields and in "businesses fringing the new roads" ("The Village Goes to Town," *Ocean*, 53-54). Pollett approves of some of the changes he witnesses. He does not lament the disappearance of "the effluvium of fish smells that weighed the sunbeams on a buzzing summer day" (*ibid.* 54) or "the insects that lived the life of Riley around the stage" ("The Passing of the Stagehead," *Millionaire*, 90). And although he eloquently celebrates the rituals and the milieu associated with the stagehead, he professes not to regret the loss of the stagehead itself:

"Outsiders may call these stages picturesque and quaint, but in our place they were nothing more than a row of rotten teeth in the face of an otherwise beautiful harbor" (92). This is the essence of idealization: to yearn for a bygone world where the pleasant is preserved and the unpleasant discarded, ignoring the fact that the two may be functionally connected. More realistically, Pollett applauds many of the benefits of Confederation: the social security pensions that have given the

elderly some comfort and pride after a lifetime of scrimping and doing without ("Rum in the Puddin'." *Ocean*) and the cash economy that has ended the dominance of the outport merchant ("On the Pig's Back," *Millionaire*).

On the other hand, he is disappointed to see that the old Sunday school picnic has been replaced by the "garden party," a much more commercialized affair ("Home Grown Happiness." *Millionaire*, 16), and that traditional homemade hooked rugs have been replaced by linoleum in the kitchen and "bought" rugs in the front rooms ("On Going Home Again." *Ocean*, 44). As well, he is irritated by the jukebox in the snackbar and the dust on the gravel roads. The jukebox is especially incongruous because "cowboy and hillbilly" music, "as foreign to the Newfoundland country scene as the jukebox itself," has supplanted the traditional jigs and reels ("Vignettes of the Village," *Ocean*, 59-61). As for the gravel roads that have replaced the old rutted paths, "Now these summers when the visitor returns for a breath of salt air as a change from gasoline fumes, he not only gets more fumes but also breathes the dust kicked up by the heavy traffic" ("The Village Goes to Town." *Ocean*, 52). Among younger women, Pollett is told, baking "is almost a lost art" ("On Going Home Again." *Ocean*, 46) and Newfoundlanders no longer seem to eat fish, forsaking cod, mackerel and salmon fresh out of the water for tinned bully beef and slabs of bologna and ham ("On the Pig's Back." *Millionaire*, 73).³⁵ Signs of cultural dislocation are everywhere: "These days the young blood whose father and grandfather launched a new punt every other spring hardly knows a stanchion from a gunwale any more" ("The Village Goes to Town." *Ocean*, 54).³⁶ At times, Pollett strikes an elegiac note as he marks the passing of "the click of the twine needles against the mesh card in the sailoft on a rainy day" and "the big bait skiff, flush to the gunwales with caplin [rowing] in out of the sunset as the answer to a

handliner's prayer." For the expatriate visitor,

[o]nly the hurry-up honk of the automobile now and the hillbilly scratchings from the jukebox; never the dulcet note of the conkshell calling the schooner crews to the galley. And only dust in his eyes as he walks along the road with his memories. (*ibid.* 56-57)

Not only is Pollett aware of change in the outport, however, he is also aware of change in himself, and this is expressed in ambivalence towards the home he left behind. In "Summer Madness," he describes the yearning of Newfoundlanders, wherever they are, to return home. "Coming back, we can look out the plane window at Nova Scotia or Prince Edward Island without feeling a thing, but the minute we see Newfoundland, which is only land like the other places, our hearts start thumping and sticks come into our eyes" (*Ocean* 90). But in "Memories of Diddy Hill," he confronts the complication. The ex-patriate fantasizes about returning to the homeland but finds that it is "a kind of mirage," like the one in the magazine ad "back in your youth when you set out to see and conquer the world. . . . Because, of course you can't really go home again. Your ties are now in Brooklyn where your children were born and where they will always be" (*Millionaire* 36).³⁷ In his three-part series "Up in the Big City," Pollett vividly captures the loneliness and impersonality of the megalopolis, and expresses his desire to retire to the outport and spend his summers fishing for fun (*Millionaire* 50 and 60), but, once home, before long "the ennui sets in." He begins to hanker after the big-city restaurants and cafés, the bars and clubs, the movie theatres. He even becomes restless to return to the grind, now accustomed to a pace of life that makes him fidgety when back in the outport for more than a few weeks ("On Going Home Again," *Ocean*, 49-50). The alienation of the insider who has become

an outsider is finely captured in a short passage at the end of "Summer Madness" when the author and his wife feel a mixture of inherent Newfoundland pride and acquired New York anxiety as they watch their American-born children join in the robust, and sometimes hazardous, rituals of outport youth (96). Elsewhere, the homecomer finds himself distinguished from his compatriots by making a kind of sidewalk along the shoulder of the road while the locals casually march down the middle ("On Going Home Again," *Ocean*, 45). And he returns to the city forlorn, like a displaced person: "In no time, relics like squidjiggers and muzzle-loader longtoms crop up in the city apartment and maps of Newfoundland and calendars from the village appear on the walls of the playroom" ("Summer Madness," *Ocean*, 95).

Unlike Scammell and Pollett, Ted Russell wrote from within the society and culture of Newfoundland. Born the son of a fisherman in Coley's Point, Conception Bay, in 1904, Russell showed early promise as a student, learning to read and write at an early age and developing a voracious appetite for literature and ideas.³⁸ Encouraged by the local teacher, he moved to St. John's to complete his Junior Associate (Grade 11) and, at the age of sixteen, started a teaching career at Pass Island on Newfoundland's south coast. For the next fifteen years, he taught in various parts of the island, in a succession of outport communities as well as St. John's, while finding time to continue his education at Memorial College in 1929 and 1932. This was followed by seven years as a magistrate and five as Director of Co-operation in the Commission of Government. A reluctant supporter of Confederation with Canada, he was a member of the first Smallwood government, serving for two years as Minister of Natural Resources until his controversial resignation in 1951 on matters of principle. Reportedly black-listed by Smallwood, or by Smallwood associates, he struggled to support his family in the years immediately

following his resignation, working first as a life insurance salesman and then returning to teaching. At the age of fifty-nine, he came back to Memorial as a student, completed an honours degree in English, and spent the last eight years before his retirement in 1973 teaching English at the University.

Although Russell published a few stories in the late 1940s and early 1950s (including his first Pigeon Inlet story, "The Grub Box," in the *Atlantic Guardian* in 1952), he established himself as a writer of monologues and plays for radio. *The Chronicles of Uncle Mose* was introduced as a regular feature on CBC Radio in late 1953 and, by 1961, when the series came to an end, Russell had written and delivered over six hundred monologues, each about six minutes in length, and created eight radio playscripts, some of which were later adapted for stage or television. Radio was a natural medium for someone wishing to draw on the oral tradition of storytelling and, despite his formal education and literary bent, Russell was steeped in this tradition. Although the monologues were scripted, and therefore a product of the writer's art, they skillfully utilized the folk dialect, narrative techniques and rhetorical devices of the yarn, or *cuffer*.³⁹ Also, in writing for radio Russell addressed directly and immediately an audience of contemporary outport Newfoundlanders and this accounts for some of the differences between his work and that of Scammell and Pollett. Most strikingly, Russell's pieces are not, for the most part, reminiscences. Sometimes Grandpa Walcott tells stories of past times, but usually he does this to illustrate a point in relation to some present-day situation. The chronicles are topical, which is to say the issues they raise were current in the 1950s and 1960s. Pigeon Inlet is a post-confederation outport. A fictional community set on the northeast coast of Newfoundland, it is more remote from the modern world than Pollett's New Harbour, Trinity Bay, and, for that

reason. it may create the illusion of being further removed in time.⁴⁰ But Pigeon Inlet is contemporary, and, although not yet connected by road to the outside world. it is beset by changes just as profound and as threatening to its integrity and survival. From the perspective of half a century later, it can be seen that while Pollett's community was becoming a dormitory suburb. Russell's was facing extinction.

Russell's attitude towards change is complex and reveals a less romantic frame of mind than Scammell's or Pollett's. Miller indicates that his "records" for the years 1935-1943, when he worked the Newfoundland coast as a magistrate, amply demonstrate that he witnessed an outport life that was far from idyllic (198-199). Change is something, therefore, that on one level he embraces. He argues that teachers are much improved compared to their counterparts years ago and that youngsters are much better behaved than they used to be, largely thanks to education ("Teachers," *Tales*, 77-79; "Youngsters," *Chronicles*, 37-40).⁴¹ He applauds the modernization of the fishery represented by the new fish plants and the disappearance of the traditional fish flakes ("Tourists," *Tales*, 89-92). He accepts, regrettably but philosophically, that some small communities will have to be re-settled in order that better educational and other services may be provided ("Centralization and Moose," *Best 3*, 47-49). The main narrators, Uncle Mose and Grandpa Walcott, are traditional outport Newfoundlanders in their values, attitudes and homespun reasoning, but they are, for the most part, at ease with a Newfoundland that is moving forward. This reflects Russell's idealism and optimism, which were elsewhere manifested in his commitment to the co-operative movement, a development model that seeks to integrate economic and community initiatives and that emphasizes self-help and interdependence, virtues he felt were inherent in traditional outport life.

While Russell presents change in a positive light, he also extols values he associates with the traditional outport life. A large category of the chronicles comprises moral tales and parables that cleverly illustrate the virtue of self-sufficiency ("Grandpa's Only Sickness," *Chronicles*, 12-14), the folly of bragging ("Potatoes," *Chronicles*, 18-21), the inadvisability of dividing responsibilities ("On the Halves," *Chronicles*, 80-82), the art of compromise ("United Nations," *Tales*, 29-31), the necessity of good manners ("Traffic in Pigeon Inlet," *Best 2*, 21-23), the wisdom of accepting kindness ("Takin' Advantage of Kindness," *Best 2*, 66-68), and the insidiousness of double standards ("Something Cheerful," *Best 3*, 24-26). These stories do not present an uncritical view of morals in the old outport. There are *sleeveens* and *hangashores* aplenty to generate ethical dilemmas and warrant moral judgments.⁴² Sometimes even whole communities such as neighbouring Hartley's Harbour are half-seriously censured: "personally, I wouldn't go to Hartley's Harbour to attend my own funeral," says Uncle Mose ("Weddin's," *Tales*, 99). As in Scammell's work, however, the conflicts are usually resolved, often by Grandpa Walcott. The adroitness of Russell's humour in managing these resolutions is illustrated in the story, "Arguments," in which the wisdom of accepting half an apology is emphasized:

Grandpa put it this way, "Uncle Sol had said part of an apology and kept back the other part." The part he'd said was just enough to save Skipper Lige's face while the part he'd kept back was just enough to save his own. And even though most people might figger that Uncle Sol's face was hardly worth savin', yet after all, 'twas the only one he had, and you had to look at it from his point of view.

(*Chronicles* 54)

An important point is made at the end of this story, however, when Uncle Mose allows:

“Sometimes I think that we handle these things better on Skipper Joe’s net loft than they do in lots of higher places” (54). Russell was writing at a time when the pace of social change in Newfoundland was rapidly accelerating, and, while he was conscious of the benefits of much of this change, he was also concerned about the damaging effects of social upheaval. As he later remarked: “Increased emphasis upon welfare benefits coupled with a de-emphasis upon the inshore fishery in favour of industrialization, was threatening a whole way of life that was unique to this island.” He believed that Newfoundland society was threatened by a new materialism that undermined people’s confidence in their centuries-old hard-won way of life and world-view, and, in this sense, his writing was motivated by one intent: “the saving of the old Newfoundland” (Miller, *Life and Times*, 195).

By *saving*, however, Russell did not mean *preserving*. His view of change and diversity is brilliantly expressed in the metaphor of the holding ground from the play of that name.⁴³ In the first scene, Grandpa Walcott notices how Skipper Joe Irwin’s schooner riding at her moorings seems always on the move:

Swingin’ this way and that with the tide and the baffles of off-shore wind from the hills; fallin’ back till her chain brings up taut – then shootin’ ahead to slacken it. Always and forever on the move. A stranger not knowing the difference ‘d think she was adrift. That is, if he didn’t know about her chain and her anchor – and her holdin’ ground. (11)

The play tells the story of a visitor who turns out to be the son of livyers of Muldoon’s Cove who left Newfoundland forty-six years before. The visitor, Michael Shannahan, is a Roman Catholic bishop who makes a pilgrimage to the home community of his parents in the last months of his

life. He renews a connection with Ben and Lizzie Walcott, Protestant friends of his parents. When they receive word of his death some time later, Grandpa Walcott returns to his meditation on Skipper Joe Irwin's schooner:

Thinkin' about how weak are the things that try to pull men apart – differences in colours, creeds, and opinions – weak things, like the ripples tuggin' at the schooner's chain. And thinkin' about how strong are the things that hold men together – strong, like Joe's anchor, and chain, and the good holdin' ground below. Why, in Pigeon Inlet we've got things stronger even than dyin'. (46)

The holding ground becomes a way of describing the deep structure of a society that permits change and diversity while at the same time providing sufficient cultural cohesion to support and affirm its individual members. For Russell, this is a measure of the health of a society, and, by that measure, Newfoundland, although backward and impoverished according to some standards, had something of special value that deserved saving.

Russell's method was to entertain and persuade. His ability to entertain is bound up in his command of the art of oral narrative, something that he imbibed listening to masters of the craft in many years living and working in a variety of outport communities, and that he honed and translated into a literary form. A large category of tales contains stories that are essentially comic. Many of these illustrate the native wit of the locals, used for good or ill, as in "Jethro Noddy" (*Chronicles* 7-8), "Paddy Muldoon" (*Chronicles* 31-33), "Algebra Slippers" (*Tales* 32-34), and the classic "Stealin' the Holes" (*Tales* 107-109). Others represent the *genre* of the tall tale, expertly deployed in such stories as "Eelskins" (*Chronicles* 90-92), "Geese" (*Chronicles* 110-112), "Football" (*Tales* 113-115), and "The Smokerroom on the Kyle" (*Tales* 172-175).⁴⁴

Sometimes, the taste for comic exaggeration and put-on that underlies the tall tale is used to highlight in a humorous way the culture shock of isolated communities coming to terms with modern living. One example arises from Uncle Mose's explanation that the people do not really distinguish between airplanes and helicopters. When Uncle Bobby Tasker of Hartley's Harbour is queried about an aircraft seen down his way, he says, "To tell the truth . . . 'twas an airplane, but 'twas only a young one – not fully growed and it wasn't able to fly proper. I allow . . . 'twill take that one two or three more trips before it can fly end on, the way 'twas intended to" ("Airplanes," *Tales*, 127). While the joke appears to be on Uncle Bobby, his dignity is preserved in the uncertainty of the truth. The reader or listener who takes the story at face value, and laughs too hard, runs the risk of revealing more gullibility than is ascribed to Uncle Bobby himself. This is a classic rhetorical device for acknowledging awkwardness arising from unfamiliarity with the new while saving face by telling the story on oneself, thereby exercising the control of the fabricator. The employment of such ambiguity is a form of self-assertion, a useful weapon for a people whose culture is under-valued or under attack. It is a defining element of humour in Newfoundland and Russell is one of its masters.

Through his characters, especially Uncle Mose and Grandpa Walcott, Russell modeled an approach to change that is at the same time open and critical. In "John Cabot," for example, Uncle Mose explains how hard it has been to make a Canadian out of Pete Briggs. Just when Pete has begun to mouth the words to "O Canada," his little girl comes home from school reporting that her teacher said that John Cabot did not discover Newfoundland in 1497 but instead landed somewhere on the mainland. This is an assault on Pete's sense of national identity, but Uncle Mose says that he cannot get worked up over the issue:

What I mean is . . . he either discovered Newfoundland or he didn't. Perhaps the mainland people are right. Perhaps when John Cabot got to Newfoundland he said "Well, there's Newfoundland. I've got half a mind to discover it, but on second thoughts, I s'pose I'd better sail 'round it and try to discover something big while I'm at it." What I mean to say is . . . 'twas his own business, and we can't do much about it at this late date. Then again, of course, 'tis possible he come right along by us and didn't discover us at all, but like Skipper Joe says, if John Cabot was as stupid as that, the mainland can have him and welcome. (*Chronicles* 47)

Similarly, in such pieces as "Dictionaries" (*Chronicles* 68-70), "Whorts" (*Chronicles* 108-110), "New Fashioned Things" (*Best* 2 50-52) and "New Name for Codfish" (*Best* 3 4-6), Russell defends Newfoundland dialects, rejecting the notion that in order to be a good Canadian you have got to be like everybody else – "talk like 'em, think like 'em, vote like 'em" (*Chronicles* 68).⁴⁵ In acknowledging the value of new ways of looking at things while also asserting the value of the traditional culture, Russell illustrated a measured response to change that permitted and encouraged Newfoundlanders to continue to feel pride in their heritage.

One of the recurrent motifs in the chronicles, the rivalry between Pigeon Inlet and Hartley's Harbour, serves to avoid an illusion of monolithic harmony and uniformity in the presentation of outport culture. Again and again, the inhabitants of Hartley's Harbour are portrayed as sly, grasping braggarts. When one of their number starts to court a girl from Pigeon Inlet, community concern is widespread: "we figgered that the worst in Pigeon Inlet was a sight too good for the best in Hartley's Harbour," says Uncle Mose ("Ghosts," *Best* 3, 45). Sometimes, Hartley's Harbour prevails, as in its underhanded scheme to have the district nurse located there

rather than at Pigeon Inlet ("The District Nurse," *Chronicles*. 4-6). At other times, the wit and ingenuity of an upright character, like Uncle Paddy Muldoon, succeed in deflating the pretensions of its partisans ("Potatoes," *Chronicles*, 18-21). Uncle Mose lends credibility to the Pigeon Inlet point of view because, having migrated fairly recently from the south coast, he is not a native of the community. His status as an outsider also enables Russell to emphasize the differences in outport life. Uncle Mose, for example, is a neophyte in the hunting of seals because the icefield almost never comes onshore on the south coast. He has not learned the skills of 'copying' over ice pans and his lack of experience hunting seals leads to an embarrassing encounter with an old dog hood which amuses the locals no end ("Swiles," *Tales*. 23-25).

Another recurrent motif of the chronicles is the battle between the sexes, a major variant of which is represented by the on-and-off courtship of Uncle Mose and Aunt Sophy, the widowed daughter of Grandpa and Grandma Walcott. Uncle Mose's discomfort with women, in general, and his ambivalence towards Aunt Sophy, in particular, can be attributed not only to his longstanding bachelorhood but also to sharply differentiated roles between the sexes. On two occasions, Mose's courtship of Aunt Sophy is undermined by his friend, Skipper Joe Irwin, who plays on Mose's fears of having his ways changed by a woman ("Letter to Aunt Sophy," *Tales*, 68-72 and "My Suspicions of Skipper Joe," *Best 2*, 15-17). Other stories such as "Dressmakin'" (*Chronicles* 58-61), "Babysittin'" (*Chronicles* 83-86) and "Troutin'" (*Best 1* 36-39) not only describe men as united in a desire to preserve a common place of refuge from women but also as largely answering to their demands. Russell's women, though they may be the butt of male humour, are strong and in control. They work hard themselves and set expectations for their men. The men, when rebellious, usually resort to trickery rather than direct confrontation. Although

Russell's presentation of the male perspective is partisan, it is subverted by the ironic tone of the narrative and by the failings of the narrator, Uncle Mose, who is seen to be wise about most things but an idiot around women. In the meantime, the traditional relationship of the two privileged characters, Grandpa and Grandma Walcott, is a partnership between equals. And although in "Louella and Grandma" Russell hints that such relationships may now be denigrated as old-fashioned, he observes that the younger generation has a lot to learn from couples like Grandpa and Grandma Walcott (*Best I* 31-32).

Byrne uses the oxymoronic term "romantic realists" to describe the work of Scammell, Pollett and Russell. But given their translation of an oral folk culture into published literature, it may be more accurate to call them folk writers.⁴⁶ Collectively these writers provide a wealth of ethnographic information about Newfoundland outport culture. It is important to pay careful attention to the time of the recollection or reporting and also the location of the community because outports were, and are, dynamic and diverse. Nevertheless, at a general level some strong impressions emerge. One is a sense of the rhythm of outport life as tied to the seasons: repairing gear and premises and hauling wood during the winter, sealing and preparing for the lobster fishery during the spring, tending gardens and catching and 'making' fish during the summer, berrypicking and hunting during the late summer and fall, mummering and marrying during the full twelve days of Christmas.⁴⁷ Also striking is the wide range of mechanisms for managing difference and dissent and codes for enlisting co-operation and support – unwritten, even unspoken, but understood – that these communities exhibit. These mechanisms and codes arose from the common challenge of struggling to survive in an extreme and isolated environment, and they constitute a deep social structure thoroughly adapted to the imperatives of

a coastal existence.

The Outport Dream

Byrne has argued that the transition from the work of Scammell, Pollett and Russell to modern and contemporary portrayals of the outport runs mainly through two novels by Harold Horwood and Percy Janes, and the journalism of Ray Guy (*Folk Tradition, Literature and a Society in Transition* 364-398). According to Byrne's analysis, the negativity towards the outport expressed in Horwood's *Tomorrow Will Be Sunday* (1966) and Janes's *House of Hate* (1970) provide a necessary counterbalancing of the "utopian fantasy" promulgated by the so-called romantic realists, while the political satire and out harbour reminiscences of Guy develop "a future-oriented *apologia* for life in Newfoundland," suggesting both a vision and a call to arms that came to characterize the work of many writers, artists, musicians and academics in the 1970s and 1980s (*ibid.* 386). Horwood and Janes are important in the literary history of Newfoundland for many reasons, not least because their achievements showed that the profession of writer was a possibility for Newfoundlanders, but neither of them can be said to have inspired a school of disciples. Guy, on the other hand, anticipated and helped to shape the temper of the times to come. No one expressed more eloquently, more immediately or more popularly the anguish and the outrage of cultural dislocation that reached the breaking point in Newfoundland in the late 1960s, and, however briefly, the sense of political optimism that attended the end of the Smallwood era in 1972. The *engagement* that characterized the creative endeavours of the 1970s and 1980s, however, was not uniformly focused on overt political action. Many turned instead, or at the same time, to a fresh exploration of the roots of cultural identity in traditional outport life.

In this, Guy also pointed the way, although, as he was aware, the work was already well-advanced within the academy in the development of Newfoundland Studies at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Guy became the popular voice for those who saw a reclamation of the past as a foundation for the future.

The dramatic work of Al Pittman is central to this treatment of the traditional life. His early “play for voices,” *A Rope Against the Sun* (1970), is a loving depiction of one day in the life of an isolated Newfoundland outport, but it is a portrait that reaches out to a universal audience by stressing above all the individuality and humanity of the characters.⁴⁸ “It is a year near our time,” the narrator declares in the opening line of his first speech (5). This statement, however, has more metaphorical than temporal significance. Although there are time references indicating that the action of the play takes place in the mid-1960s, there are no references to automobiles, motorboats, or machinery of any kind.⁴⁹ The village of Merasheen depicted in *A Rope Against the Sun* is not only fictitious, as Pittman indicates in a brief prefatory note, it is also virtually timeless. The characters struggle individually with issues that are beyond time and place – universal issues of loss, disappointment, *angst*, loneliness, alienation, desire, identity, self-destructiveness, suffering. In this sense, the concerns of the play are near our time and every other time.

The Merasheen of *A Rope Against the Sun* is largely an imagined construction. Although Pittman was born in St. Leonard’s on Merasheen Island in the middle of Placentia Bay, he left the small community when he was less than a year old. He grew up instead in the mining town of Bell Island and the paper town of Corner Brook. But his parents, storytellers both, found an eager listener in their oldest son and furnished him with an education in his outport heritage. After

studying in Fredericton and teaching in Montreal, Pittman became principal of a school on Fogo Island off the northeast coast of Newfoundland. He was thirty years old and the move represented a return to his roots. He lived on Fogo for two years and here the memories of his parents tempered by the realities of his experience produced *A Rope Against the Sun*.⁵⁰

Daringly modeled on Dylan Thomas's *Under Milkwood*, Pittman's play achieves its own distinctive identity largely through the writer's command of the idiom and lore of outport Newfoundland. The characters introduce one another in the opening scene before the narrator takes command. This device creates a contrast between the way they present themselves and the way they are presented by each other, so that the limitations of both views are evident. The narrator provides a third point of view, omniscient and godlike, as he guides the reader/listener around the village, re-introducing the characters as they go about their lives from dawn until dark, his perspective free of the prejudice and involvement of the characters themselves. As for the characters, there is little interaction among them. Most of their speeches are internal monologues and the effect of this is to emphasize their individuality and their isolation from one another.

A Rope Against the Sun is not an uncritical portrayal of an outport community, but it is a loving one. All of the characters are flawed in some way but all of them are presented with compassion. This includes the outsiders in the community. Although the frustrations of the priest, Father Power, and the schoolteacher, Michael Kennedy, are presented satirically, their alienation is real and their suffering undeniable. Father Power is cut off from the community by his education and by his strict adherence to the teachings of the Catholic Church. He is unbearably lonely and feels that his pastoral work is a failure. Michael Kennedy had come to Merasheen full

of romantic notions about the outport way of life:

A seafaring people, fishing boats on the water, garden parties and week-long weddings, home-brew and moonshine, fiddles and accordions, seagulls and superstitions – the stuff novels and poems and plays are made of. (22)

But now he is disillusioned and bitter. He finds the people of the community are petty, greedy, narrow-minded and self-centred – not at all, the narrator wryly observes, “the stuff novels and poems and plays are made of” (23). Worst of all, Michael is unable to admit his embitterment to anyone but himself, and he hates himself for his hypocrisy. Father Power’s longing to hear Gregorian chant sung the way it was meant to be sung and Michael Kennedy’s disappointment with the bingo-loving parishioners of the community are gently mocked but ultimately accepted. These characters may lack imagination but their pain is evident. And on close inspection almost all the characters of this cohesive little community reveal a profound sense of alienation deep within themselves.

Thus Pittman presents a dimension that is missing in the work of earlier writers. In their language and lore, the villagers of Merasheen bear a close resemblance to the outport Newfoundlanders depicted by Scammell, Pollett and Russell, but the inner perspective afforded on their lives opens up an existential world that universalizes their experience. On the one hand, either as individuals or in pairs, they can be classified archetypally. Nell Pittman is the disappointed lover; Jake Connors is the hero whose time has passed him by; Joe and Elizabeth Casey are the warring couple; Jennifer Byrne and Billy Collins are awakening youth; Father Power and Michael Kennedy are the outsiders. On the other hand, the characters are all seen to be unique individuals. All of them have some private cross to bear that is far more momentous and

compelling than their social interactions with one another. and. in suffering this. they are essentially isolated from one another. Yet, ironically, the *angst* that highlights their individuality and their uniqueness is. at the same time. the common denominator of their humanity. the tie that binds them together despite their differences. And more important. it connects them to the great human family despite the distinctive culture that sets them apart.

While for Pittman the humanity of his characters. and their individuality. may be more significant than the society to which they belong. he understands that the drama of their lives is played out within a cultural environment that is uniquely their own and integral to their identity. In *A Rope Against the Sun*. the overriding mark of that culture is its paganism. The title of the play itself alludes to this. Father Power's sense of failure is derived from his recognition that. although his parishioners are in many ways ideal Christians. they persist in practicing pagan rites alongside their Christian observances. Despite his prayers and sermons. the people retain their superstitious beliefs:

They believe it is bad luck to coil a rope against the sun. to purchase a broom in May. to meet a red-haired woman. to look over another's shoulder into a mirror. to come in one door and go out another. to cross knives on the table. to whistle on the water. They believe that death is foretold by a dog burying some object near one's home. by a bird entering a room. by a picture falling from a wall. by dreaming of a wedding. by the sudden ticking of a clock that has been stopped for a long time. They believe that the first person of an assembly at whom a cat stares will be the first to die. They believe that stepping over a child will stop the growth of the youngster. None of the men will put to sea unless they have a branch of

witchhazel somewhere on board. They have a tree here, with a name decency forbids me to mention, with which they practice the most open form of idolatry you could imagine. They believe in banshees and fairies. They are, in many respects, virtual pagans. (11-12)

The sunkers of Merasheen are not only feared by fishermen because of the real danger they represent – they are also thought to carry a curse when they are breaking. Numerous stories attest to their malevolent power: “Igg’s Ann, the ugly idiot girl, and Pad’s Ann with the fair hair and the club foot, and Rose in the Bed, who’s been bedridden so long that only the eldest of the elders can remember when she wasn’t” (9). It is this dread of the sunkers that torments young Mrs. Ennis as she waits to deliver her baby, leading her to pay homage to “the Naked Man,” a barren tree at whose base the villagers have piled rocks halfway to its full height. Pittman’s respect for the traditional culture as a way of knowing the world emanates from his respect for his characters. Superstition is legitimized as a primitive religious impulse more natural to the place than the teachings of the Catholic Church. Yet its origin in fear is also acknowledged and it is seen often to be cruel rather than comforting. The superstitious beliefs of the villagers have a poetic and imaginative reach that outstrips the pedestrian, account-book paradigm of Father Power’s training, but they also conjure up a treacherous world in which human life is the sport of the gods.

Another salient feature of Pittman’s Merashen is the sharply differentiated gender roles in the community. This is alluded to in the narrator’s description of the fantasies of the children of the village, who want to be “fish-killers and skippers like their fathers or housewives as good at cookies as their mothers” (19). It is made plainer in the “Evening” section of the play when the

women visit each other in their kitchens and the men gather at Hickey's stage. The differentiation of gender roles in Newfoundland outport society has been noted by Russell. Mowat and other observers, although they also depict the relationships between the sexes as power-balanced.⁵¹ *A Rope Against the Sun* does not contradict this point of view, but it does present a dysfunctional variant of these relationships in the marriage of Joe and Elizabeth Casey. We do not know the reasons for Joe Casey's alcoholism. It is not clear whether his wife's piety is the cause or the result of his drinking, or whether the two are related. But anthropologist Cato Wadel points out that outport men were not comfortable around the house unless they were making repairs to the structure or resting from their work in the fishery. The kitchen was the main social space but it was also the woman's workshop. During the day, when not on the water or away in the woods, men tended to retreat to the "store," a workroom in a separate building on the property, or a "stage" on the waterfront. Joe Casey's disability carries, then, a powerful negative implication in the outport world: by staying at home, he does not do the proper work of a man. It is not surprising that Jake Connors views him with contempt: "Old fool hardly set foot on the water and him going on all the time about boats and stuff" (40).

Within the limited protocols and constraints of the culture, the relationships between the sexes are portrayed in all their complexity, encompassing the regrets of Nell Pittman for the lover who never came to her bed, the curiosity of the convent-bound Jennifer Byrne, and the sexual fantasies of young Billy Collins. A more mature rendering is represented by the husband/wife conversation concerning Herb Follett's suicide (15-17). As Wadel points out, such serious conversations usually took place in bed when the children were asleep and all visitors had gone home. Given the size of the traditional outport family, the visiting rights of neighbours and the

layout of the typical outport house, this was about the only occasion when a husband and wife would be alone (56). In going beyond the customs and conventions that provide structure and coherence to the community to expose the fundamental issues bearing on the individual lives of the villagers, Pittman provides an enriched understanding of the outport.

Pittman's respect for the way of life in Merasheen is evident but it does not translate into a hymn of praise. The toil and the uncertainty of that life are equally evident, and they take their toll. The young in *A Rope Against the Sun* are hopeful in spite of their frustrations but the mature characters are not so sanguine. As mentioned, one of their number, Herb Follett, commits suicide.⁵² Only the ancient fish-killer, Jake Connors, is able to summon up satisfaction, if not hope, as he reflects on his life. Although he crankily resents his old age because it has made him useless, he experiences an epiphany in a brief reverie in his walk to the Jawbones that persuades him for a moment that it is good to be alive:

From out here he can see the white houses shining in the sun, the clean clothes blowing in the breeze, the sheep lying about the hills, the gravestones crumbling in the churchyard, the trap boats bouncing on the harbour waters, the children playing on the stageheads, the dogs sleeping in the shadows, and the fog rolling in from the western ocean. (29)

And later, when he turns in for the night, he admits:

There were good days in it. Young days, long ago. Days coming in off the water, coming in with a woman in the kitchen, with youngsters in the garden. Days a man could call his own. Could take hold of, somehow, and never think of letting go. But long gone all that is now. (57)

Jake's sense of possession in this passage goes a long way towards explaining what compensated for the hardship and danger of his life. At the same time, despite Pittman's sympathy for all his characters, including the female ones, and his apparent subscription to the power-balance between the sexes noted by Russell and others, in *A Rope Against the Sun* the elusive outpost idyll seems attainable only by the heroic male fish-killer. Even then, the sense of satisfaction is fleeting. Pittman's villagers not only shoulder great physical burdens, they also reveal great chasms of spiritual doubt within themselves.

Rhonda Payne's play *Stars in the Sky Morning* (1978) presents an interesting alternative to this point of view in its exploration of the lives of women in remote outposts on the Great Northern Peninsula.⁵³ The daughter of divorced Newfoundland expatriates living in southern Ontario, Payne began to work with the Mummers Troupe in the mid-1970s. In 1976-77, she spent a year living on the Great Northern Peninsula where her family had originated. Trained in the documentary style of theatre for which the Mummers were already well-known, and making use of family connections, Payne listened and learned, collecting stories from a dozen individuals, which she later transcribed and then improvised with actor Jane Dingle to create story-lines. These stories, told in seventeen interwoven scenes by nine female characters, became *Stars in the Sky Morning*.⁵⁴ "The challenge with this project," she writes, "was to transfer the magic of the story telling art into living characters on stage and to reproduce, as nearly as possible, the authentic voices that inspired the work" (52). The emphasis upon storytelling is both the play's strength and its limitation. *Stars in the Sky Morning* presents five characters in some depth. Four of them are paired – Nora and Rach are sisters, five years apart, who grow older as the play proceeds; Mary and Peg are elderly relations, aunt and niece, who had been

close in youth but suffered a long separation from one another: Lilly interacts with a couple of other characters but is chiefly remarkable for four short monologues that reflect poetically and philosophically upon her life. The three major strands of the play are related by theme, not by action, resulting in an episodic structure. Nevertheless, *Stars in the Sky Morning* has thematic coherence and the voices ring true. Payne's success in meeting her limited challenge is affirmed by the positive reception the play achieved. Within the scope of what it sets out to do, the work is a small masterpiece.

Stars in the Sky Morning presents a complex and emotionally nuanced account of the lives of women on the Great Northern Peninsula in the era before there were any roads. Payne was impressed by the sheer toil and hardship of those lives but also by the buoyancy the women maintained in coping with incredible demands. References to hauling water, tending cows and gardens, and cooking and baking for large extended families give a strong sense of the burdens they shouldered daily. An account of one woman's winter journey in an open komatik to King's Cove from St. Anthony, where she had been hospitalized for five months, illustrates the ordeals which they cheerfully took for granted. Faced with these challenges, the women drew on remarkable reserves of strength from within themselves, their families and their communities. These included a stoical acceptance of fate, a positive attitude that things ultimately turn out for the best and a great sense of fun and camaraderie. Family is a central element in this equation. In a line that must have resonated strongly with the playwright, one of characters observes: "you don't know who you are 'til you knows your relations" (78). But it is important to keep in mind how family blurs into community in Newfoundland, where the ascription of the terms *uncle* and *aunt* to mature members of an outpost is done without any regard to blood lines. The use of these

terms as honorifics indicates the tendency of the culture to treat all those who act like family as though they were family. At the same time, the usage no doubt constitutes an invitation to behave in this way.

As in *A Rope Against the Sun*, the supernatural is a felt presence in *Stars in the Sky Morning*. There are a number of probable explanations for this – the isolation of the communities and the strong interdependence of the people, the absence of electric light and other technologies that reduce the mystery of nature, and the story-telling traditions that invited belief in ghosts and spirits. The women in *Stars in the Sky Morning*, however, are not so much given to the observation of rituals or practices designed to appease supernatural forces as is the case in *A Rope Against the Sun*.⁵⁵ Rather they experience premonitions or encounters that they are inclined to interpret as being beyond natural explanation. In one instance, Rach describes being grabbed by the wrist and swung round at the back of her house one dark night, and this leads her to fear the fate of her sister who was sick in the hospital (72-73). In another, Lilly gives an account of an inexplicable mood change in which she goes from being worn out to feeling suddenly energized and exhilarated. This comes over her when she goes out on a cold night to take in the washing from the clothes line, and looks up at the stars. Her children are convinced they see her talking with a neighbour, and when she comes in they remark on her altered mood as proof, but no such conversation has taken place. The next day Lilly's father dies and she is convinced her experience the night before is somehow related to this event (79-80). In the final scene of the play, Nora and Rach have hiked three miles to the abandoned community of King's Cove to spend the night in their old home, and they entertain and scare each other with accounts of tokens and ghosts. They also recall a saying their father had to the effect that ghosts were better than

people and that when places became crowded with people the ghosts left. The corollary is that a deserted outpost like King's Cove must be full of ghosts (82-84). Payne's accounts of non-ordinary reality have to do with supernatural communication and they are presented with ambiguity. The narrators profess not to believe in ghosts but are disturbed by an experience they cannot explain, or else they take some delight in the effects upon the listener. In this way, storytelling is highlighted among these people as a conscious device for probing the unknown.

Like *A Rope Against the Sun*, *Stars in the Sky Morning* shows men and women living in two different, albeit intersecting, worlds. This is most clearly expressed in the conversations between Aunt Mary and Peg about husbands and babies. The absence of their men at sea or in the woods is an outstanding feature of their lives. The men return home long enough to get their wives pregnant, then they are gone again, and the women have to fend for themselves. A kind of sorority is evident among the women. Men are dismissed as being under foot in the home and especially useless in childbirth. Peg prefers the mid-wife to the male doctor, and, although Aunt Mary has some good words to say about her experience with a doctor, she admits that a mid-wife, being a woman herself, would have a better understanding of the experience. The elderly women disapprove of the way modern women flaunt their pregnancies, recalling that in their day childbearing women hid themselves away. Nowadays, Peg regrets, women have got no shame: "I think you gotta have a bit of shame" (69). On the other hand, when the two old ladies question each other about whether they would have used birth control had it been available when they were young, Peg fantasizes for a moment about the fun she would have had but then concludes fatalistically that she was meant to have all her youngsters.

While Aunt Mary and Peg look back upon their lives, the sisters, Nora and Rach, go

through many changes and have divergent experiences as they grow older. Nora, married with two children at age nineteen, survives deprivation and adversity, and, at the end of the play, has achieved a measure of independence in the new Newfoundland with her own shop and a growing business. The fun-loving Rach marries later in life, but badly. Her good-for-nothing husband provides little support or companionship and her straitened circumstances and parental burdens are getting her down. The dissipation of her husband's life may itself be a result of social change in that the imperatives of survival in an earlier time did not provide much opportunity for it. And change is emphasized in the final scene when Nora and Rach return to the abandoned King's Cove to camp out. It is clear, however, that the enduring relationship between the two sisters is redemptive, offering them support and comfort against the vicissitudes and disappointments of their lives.

Lilly's thoughtful soliloquies reveal the limitations of the life led by the women in these communities. She depicts them as existing in a kind of Limbo. Reflecting on the stillness of a moonlit summer's night in King's Cove, she sees that in the outpost she had the time to watch things grow, and that this was a good thing. But it was a circumscribed idyll because "that and that alone, that's all you learn. You learn no evil, but you learn no good either" (54-55). Later Lilly returns to this idea: "growing up in a little community like that, you can't think because you have no experiences." An imaginative child, she retreated to the milkhouse as a refuge from the crowding in her home and spent hours there daydreaming. As she grew older, she found King's Cove lonely with no children her own age to play with. Looking back, she points out that there were no real educational opportunities, and no jobs for women outside of teaching school or running the post office. Marriage was thought to be the only thing in life. And the only thing

available to men was to saw lumber or go fishing: "There was no jobs. That didn't belong to our world. That belonged to people of a different world that I would never know about or could never know about. And you know people thought things would never change. They thought we would always live in King's Cove and nothing would ever be any different" (74).

Stars in the Sky Morning does not gloss over the limitations or hardships of life in these west coast outport communities. Yet what stands out is the triumph of the women, and the people in general, over the daunting challenges they faced. The last word is given to Peg who remarks in the Epilogue that although things are easier now, people are not happier:

There's too much now to be happy. To think back, now, to the way we lived. I s'pose you could say people was poor off. But people didn't know they were poor off. I mean everyone was living on the one standard. . . . It was all hard work just to survive. How hard did people work. My heavens, you couldn't believe it this day and age. If people today had to go back to what we did, it would kill them. Yes, it would, it would kill them. Because, my dear, we didn't work we slaved. There was no such things as any hours of the day's work, it was just from the stars in the sky morning 'til the stars in the sky night. And then you didn't have it all done. Wait for daylight to come, start all over again. But, my dear, 'twas only fun. We were really living then. Every day our work come to us and we done it and we wasn't tired or nothing. You don't know how good your life is. (84)

David French's play, *Salt-Water Moon* (1984), less well fits the category of works whose motivation in recovering the past was to build a foundation for the future.⁵⁶ French, the son of Newfoundland parents living in Toronto, began his career as a playwright painfully exploring the

expatriate experience in *Leaving Home* (1972) and *Of the Fields, Lately* (1973). Although *Salt-Water Moon* is set in Newfoundland, providing a charming romantic account of the courtship of Jacob Mercer and Mary Snow before they leave the country, the play is more focused on the reasons for their exile than on the enduring virtues of the society they have left behind. Jacob Mercer's abrupt departure, which nearly costs him the girl he loves, is motivated by shame and anger at the humiliation his father experienced at the hands of the local merchant, Will McKenzie. The over-riding romance of the play is strongly under-layered with a bitter class analysis. Furthermore, the play invokes the heroic myth in Jacob's story about his father's experience of the Battle of Beaumont Hamel and the November Storm in Gallipoli (28-30).⁵⁷ The fact that his father is a war hero makes his degradation all the more outrageous. The effects of the war touch Mary Snow's family as well in that her father was killed at Beaumont Hamel and her mother was so upset by the loss that she was unable to care for her children. Mary's sister is put in a home and Mary herself is put out into service. The romantic attraction between Jacob Mercer and Mary Snow is paralleled by latent class solidarity. Just as Jacob rages at his father's humiliation by Will McKenzie, and his own exploitation fishing the Labrador on board a schooner owned by the same man, so Mary is driven by a determination never again to be browbeaten, chastised, or ordered about (39). A strong picture of the ordinary Newfoundlander as underdog emerges in this play.

Salt-Water Moon does not foreground the texture of outport life the way *A Rope Against the Sun* and *Stars in the Sky Morning* do. Instead, by examining the love conflict between the characters, the play raises issues of class oppression and child abuse in Newfoundland society, indicting a social system that institutionalized the exploitation of the downtrodden and the

infringement of fundamental human rights. It is Jacob's inability to countenance these ills that leads to his departure. Contemplating his father and mother, he remarks: "The broken look on those faces made me turn and walk to the bow of the boat that was pointed for another country" (48). And it is Mary's gradual recognition of their common grievances that leads her to follow him. When she addresses the ill-treatment of her sister, Dot, in the Home in St. John's, she borrows strength from the mild-mannered war hero, Tommy Ricketts, the youngest soldier to win the Victoria Cross in the Great War.⁵⁸ She brings Dot into the drug store on Water Street where Ricketts then worked and points him out: "He had the shyest smile and the kindest eyes, and him so brave in the War Once outside I told Dot who he was, and how she had to be like him. Brave like him and Father, only brave in a different way" (67). Once again the heroic myth and the proletarian hero are invoked. After this speech Mary puts Jacob to the final test of his love and makes her decision to break off her engagement to Jerome McKenzie.

At the same time, in the directness and idiom of their speech, Jacob Mercer and Mary Snow are credible outport Newfoundlanders and their shared outport culture is seen to be a source of their strength. Their bantering dialogue also underscores and elaborates the distinct gender roles noted in the work of Pittman and Payne. The exaggeration and flirtatiousness of Jacob Mercer's storytelling, and the leg-pulling quality of his romancing, have a resonance with narrative techniques in the Newfoundland vernacular tradition associated especially with male characters. Mary Snow's scepticism and mockery in response to these stories demonstrate a no-nonsense assertiveness in courtship, an appetite for puncturing inflated male egos and a delight in torment that has become an archetypal attitude of Newfoundland female characters in their relations with men. Although softened somewhat in *Salt-Water Moon*, French is tapping into a

courtship tradition that is not for the faint of heart. The roles, though clearly differentiated, are balanced one against the other like carefully placed ballast in a boat.

Salt-Water Moon also evokes the central place of the supernatural and the superstitious in outport culture. Jacob teases Mary about her belief in ghosts but Mary is defiant, re-telling the story of how the day her father died on the battlefield in Europe her mother saw him at the foot of her bed in Hickman's Harbour (5). Jacob also scoffs at old Bob Foote who would not go into the woods without a piece of bread wrapped up in a red hanky to ward off the fairies and who believed that on Christmas Eve the horses in the barn fell on their knees and worshiped the Saviour (15). Undeterred, Mary claims that she has seen a "Jackie Lantern" (17). But despite his superior attitude towards such credulity, Jacob himself seeks out Billy Parsons, the tooth charmer, and later claims to have had his toothache cured at Billy's touch (14). In the Coley's Point of *Salt-Water Moon*, most people at least half believe that the world is animated by spirits and supernatural forces that should be approached carefully according to protocols well-established in the traditional lore of the community.

The primacy of the ideological imperative probably accounts for two or three elements in French's play that do not ring true or seem likely.⁵⁹ On the level of plot, it is unclear what possesses Jacob to leave his beloved Mary without saying goodbye or getting in touch for one whole year. The reason urged – his upset by his father's humiliation at the hands of the merchant, Will McKenzie – is hardly an adequate explanation. And the humiliation itself – being required by the merchant to rock an empty cradle for two months until he was "out of collar" – seems contrived.⁶⁰ The notorious truck system did not give illiterate fishermen much protection against the rapaciousness of dishonest merchants, and they could be maddeningly meek when confronted

with their “betters.” but they were not that meek. Mutinies and revolts were not unknown when the conditions or the injustices were extreme. Furthermore, during this period the Fisherman’s Protective Union, led by the charismatic Sir William Coaker, exercised considerable influence in most outports on the east and northeast coast of Newfoundland.⁶¹ This is not to deny that such an outrage could have occurred, but it seems artificially constructed to make a point about the class system – a point that, in general, contains some truth. Nevertheless, like *A Rope Against the Sun* and *Stars in the Sky Morning, Salt-Water Moon* represents a serious attempt to re-capture the old outport in a way that respects the culture that sustained it.

Random Passage

With Bernice Morgan’s novels, *Random Passage* (1992) and *Waiting for Time* (1994), the reconstruction of the old outport enters a new phase.⁶² Morgan analyses outport life more incisively and more comprehensively than any of the writers previously discussed. She achieves this partly through a multi-perspective narrative technique. *Random Passage* gives an account, from at least two viewpoints, of a tiny outharbour located somewhere on the north shore of Bonavista Bay during the 1820s and 1830s. *Waiting for Time* gives a third viewpoint on the same set of events from a moment in time approximately 70-80 years after they occurred. But Morgan is not content simply to present the goings-on in a small outport community, she explores the origins of the major characters among the settlers of Cape Random, delving into their personal histories before they came to Newfoundland. The result is a sweeping historical narrative that probes beneath the surface of the social and economic forces that shaped the settlement of the Newfoundland outports and resulted in the emergence of a distinct culture. Morgan shows the

influence of the cultures of the west country of England and the southeast counties of Ireland but she also shows that the realities of living on the coast of Newfoundland required the development of communal strategies and techniques that went beyond what the settlers had brought with them.⁶³ This means that the old outpost described in these novels is a very old outpost indeed, one imaginatively reconstructed to depict life in these communities 120-130 years before Newfoundland's confederation with Canada.

Morgan's analysis might also be categorized as Marxist, not in a strict classical sense but in terms of the emphasis she gives to social class, economic disparity, and the power imbalances that derive from control over the means of production through monopolies of supply and the currency of the truck system. The critique of the Newfoundland class system, evident in Cassie Brown's *Death on the Ice*, Norman Duncan's "The Strength of Men," and David French's *Salt-Water Moon*, is much more extensively developed in *Random Passage* and *Waiting for Time*. It is not so much that Morgan's portrayal of Newfoundland settlement is conceptually distinctive. In fact, it is very much a retelling of the myth of the tribe that originated with John Reeves, and was cultivated by Carson, Morris and others throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century, of the Newfoundlander as outlaw.⁶⁴ But Morgan's rendering of this myth is a remarkable feat of the historical imagination. Although the wealth of detail sometimes overwhelms the flow of the narrative, in the end it makes the story convincing and powerful. As well, Morgan's presentation of the world-view of the community – in the settlers' interactions with one another, their "betters," and the aboriginal inhabitants – is penetrating and persuasive.

Nearly all the settlers who separately find their ways to Cape Random between 1818 and 1820 are fugitives in one form or another. The Andrews family leave Weymouth, Dorset, because

Ned Andrews has fallen afoul the local merchant for bringing back from Newfoundland a few barrels of salt fish to sell, thus challenging the monopoly exercised by his employer. Threatened with the law, and the noose, Ned takes the extended Andrews family to Newfoundland where he had experience in the summer fishery. Thomas Heywood, who minds the Cape Random premises of the St. John's merchant, Caleb Gosse, has escaped from Borriswater, Ireland, following an altercation with some wealthy landowners in which four or five men die. Heywood, an ordained Roman Catholic priest naively trying to negotiate land reform with the landowners, kills a man while defending his compatriots and is smuggled to Newfoundland with the assistance of his sympathetic superior. Mary Bundle comes to Newfoundland to escape the workhouse at Christchurch, Dorset, but the family with whom she and her sister are put into service is headed by a sexual predator. After robbing the house of the man who rapes her sister and causes her death, she lives underground in St. John's for two years as a petty thief before fleeing to Cape Random with infant daughter in tow. In this social context, it is not surprising that there is an unspoken rule among the livyers that one does not inquire too closely into a person's past. "In all my years on the Cape," Thomas Hutchings notes, "not one soul ever asked me about my past – and I asked no one about theirs" (*Random* 228).⁶⁵

The law is seen to be no friend to these early Newfoundlanders. When Josh Vincent's brother, Ezra, visits Cape Random, he shocks the small community with news of the eleven people from nearby Shambler's Cove who were put out into the middle of a snow storm after their stores were pillaged and their houses burnt by the crew of a brigantine. Significantly, no one knows whether the ship was English or American (*Random* 72-77). For some time after this, the Cape Random settlers live in fear of being seen by vessels passing by and they develop

contingency plans in case of attack. Their sense of vulnerability to assault by any and all arises from their situation. Until recent times in the country where they live, settlement was actually prohibited; the normal judicial institutions did not exist because the place was regarded as a possession, not a colony; justice was overseen by a naval governor and was traditionally dispensed by the first fishing captain to enter a port during the spring; and many of the settlers had no rights anyway because they were living outside the law. But while the apprehension of the settlers of Cape Random is real, the depth of their alienation from the civilized world galvanizes their defiance. "Bugger 'em!" Mary Bundle says, and Ned Andrews improvises a song:

Bugger 'em all. bugger 'em all,

Bugger the British,

Bugger the French.

Bugger the Yankees,

and bugger the rest!

The bravado of the livyers is fueled by their desperation. They daily struggle to live with hardly any external support in an extreme and unforgiving environment. The ordeal of crossing the Atlantic is not relieved by less hardship when they reach their destination. The Andrews family arrive in Cape Random without any shelter or food. That first winter all twelve are housed by Thomas Hutchings, perhaps because he is a Christian man, but also because the right to succour has already been established as an unwritten rule of the country. The Andrews are told they can share his supplies until they run out, which they nearly do. Disaster is only forestalled by a sudden break in the weather and the arrival of seals in early March. The reckless greed with which the men and boys of the village attack the seals is a measure of how close they have all

come to starvation. For them, the seals mean survival. Nevertheless, less than two months later, Hazel, the wife of Ned's brother, Ben, is dead, never having recovered her strength after giving birth to a stillborn child on the voyage out.

The harrowing first winter the Andrews spend on the Cape is followed by incredible toil. In the spring, the men must build a shelter for the family before the fish come onshore and the women must prepare a garden. After the fish strike, the labour is ceaseless and backbreaking. The men are out on the water three or four times a day.⁶⁶ The women make fish – gutting, splitting, salting, and curing it on the flakes. Often men and women work far into the night, and sometimes through the night, by the light of torches soaked in cod oil, feverishly preparing the fish before it spoils. “With their slow, deliberate movements, their red rimmed eyes, their hair caked with dirt, they look like trolls newly come into the light from some underground cave. Days pass without husbands and wives exchanging a word, and mothers barely notice the existence of their children” (*Random* 62).

Morgan paints a vivid picture of the realities of outport living in the early nineteenth century. Miscarriages and infant deaths are commonplace. The seal fishery threatens the health of the men or kills them outright. Infectious disease leaves the community helpless. When an epidemic strikes one January, one third of them are struck down, three die and one little girl is left blind for life (*Random* 160-162). That spring, a polar bear drifting southward on a slab of ice comes ashore and kills Ned Andrews and his young son Isaac. In spite of such hardships and tragedies, Sarah Vincent reminds the Andrews family that it was much worse years ago: “’Tis only the last few years it’s been fit to live along this coast. We got things easy now compared to them times” (*Random* 59).

The livyers are dwarfed by an environment that is vast, implacable and inhospitable. They are few in number, the technology at their disposal is primitive, and they are cut off from the outside world for months at a time. In these circumstances, they bond. Boundaries between different households become less pronounced, values of community become more important, and the people of Cape Random begin to act like one large extended family. They recognise that interdependence is necessary for survival and they embrace it as though it were a law of nature. Not only does Thomas Hutchings share space and supplies with the Andrews family, the Vincents as well help them out in every way possible. In the spring of their first year on the Cape, under the direction of Thomas Hutchings, who quietly assumes the role of patriarch, the families divide the work of the village according to individual abilities and all pitch in, including the children:

Thomas Hutchings has ordained that the house must be closed in before the fish come. A garden must be cleared too, more wood cut, repairs made to the wharf, boats caulked, and nets mended and barked.⁶⁷ There are not enough hands to go around and any child venturing within shouting distance of an adult will immediately be given a job. Even a small child can fill a brin bag with wood chips, hold a tool, pass nails, gather grils from the beach, watch the fire or keep an eye on one of the babies. (*Random* 56)

Eighty years later, when Mary Bundle is an old lady in her ninety-seventh year, the values of community support still prevail. The young men get together to tar her roof and regularly bring her wild game or fish. The young women look after her garden and bring her bread and milk and soup (*Time* 79).

Although this tenet of the culture represents an admirable adaptation to the circumstances of the natural environment, it is less useful in helping the livyers of Cape Random to deal with the depredations of the socio-economic order. The major determinants of that order are the cashless economy and the truck system. The Andrews family are given shelter and supplies by Thomas Heywood, who allows them all to live in Caleb Gosse's store. But when Ned's mother Jennie tries to buy breakfast for the family, she is taken aback by his reply: "There is no food for you to buy, Mrs. Andrews. . . . There is no food to sell. The only food here is my winter supplies – and they are not really mine. Everything here, including this store and, I'm told, the fish in the sea, belongs to Caleb Gosse, a merchant in St. John's. I am only his storekeeper. I work for him – in a way we all do" (*Random* 34). Eight months later, Jennie smiles at the memory of this encounter: "She has learned that the food they will have next winter will depend . . . upon the credit they can build with Caleb Gosse, upon how much fish the men catch and how much the women make. It is a formula she now understands completely" (*Random* 61). When Thomas Hutchings does his tally in the fall of that year, the implications of the system become clear to everyone, especially to the ambitious Mary Bundle, who is disgruntled to see the value of her work associated with Josh Vincent because she lives with the Vincents. The unit of work is the household, and the head of the household, for tallying purposes, is the male. When she grasps this, Mary immediately resolves to marry Thomas Hutchings because he at least controls the distribution of credit, if not money (*Random* 66). Later, even the dreamer, Lavinia, remarks upon the unfairness of the system: "Her labour on the flakes is credited to [her brother] Ben" (*Random* 109). Although she lacks Mary Bundle's ambition, Lavinia is depressed by the fact that her labour is able to buy her nothing.

Morgan's critique of the truck system has a feminist slant. If the cashless economy enslaves all of the inhabitants of Cape Random, the position of women in that system is even weaker than that of the men because the value of their work is not credited to them. Mary Bundle is the character who rebels against this regime. She is the one among them who has the strongest sense of the right of individual ownership, and this is seen to be somewhat at odds with the defining value of interdependence, as is made clear in the episode in which Mary fences off a parcel of fertile land that she has found unbeknownst to the others. She secretly plants potatoes on this land, and, at harvest time, when the other women discover what she has done, they believe that she has betrayed them. Sarah Vincent defiantly pushes over the posts that mark the land Mary has cultivated and the normally acquiescent Jennie Andrews, matriarch of the Andrews clan, delivers herself of a tirade that clarifies the terms of the transgression. Sarah had shared everything that was hers with the newcomers and kept them from starving or freezing to death a dozen times, and now Mary has gone behind her back and fenced a garden. But Mary's offense is not only against Sarah Vincent. The upper garden had been cleared by all the women working together. Mary's claim to her own patch of land is a betrayal of the spirit of community and this cannot be tolerated. Over Mary's objections, the new garden is divided among all the households in the community (*Random* 95-99).

Mary's independence is interpreted as a threat to the community, but it is clear that her motivation is to achieve equality with the men of Cape Random. Having kept a close watch on the complicated financial arrangements of the village, Mary reasons "that if she can grow enough potatoes, and maybe other vegetables, they will not have to bring so many in from St. John's and she too will get fish credited to her name" (*Random* 97). A decade later, when Thomas Hutchings

leaves the Cape for St. John's, Mary negotiates an arrangement whereby she will act as Caleb Gosse's representative. Her leadership abilities during the three years of Thomas Hutchings's absence are evident not only in that Cape Random prospers but also in that she initiates the practice of having the community construct their own barrels, thus improving the price they get for fish and berries by adding value to the product (*Time* 158-159 and 173). This innovation helps the whole community gain greater control over their economic circumstances. Yet, when Thomas Hutchings returns, Mary is chagrined to discover that her efforts are still not valued by her peers. As though by divine right, Hutchings resumes his former position without any questions asked. In the end, however, it is Mary's fighting spirit and entrepreneurial flair that save Cape Random. When Caleb Gosse sells his business to the former pickpocket-made-good, Tim Toop, the new owner, who changes his name to Timothy Drew, decides to abandon the Cape Random premises. As luck would have it, Drew/Toop is Mary's former lover. Armed with the power to damage his new-found respectability, Mary parlays this advantage into a deal whereby she becomes owner of the Cape Random premises and Drew agrees to continue to supply the station and buy its fish (*Time* 172-179).

A contrast is thus established between the benevolent, paternalistic leadership of Thomas Hutchings and the aggressive, individualistic leadership of Mary Bundle. Hutchings, as befits a former man of the cloth, takes a pastoral approach to his responsibilities. He assumes a position of authority in the community not because he is ambitious but because he feels it is his duty to use his education for the benefit of others. His one moment of rebellion in Ireland having ended in disaster, he blames himself for having presumed too much in trying to change the lot of the poor. In Newfoundland, he has learned his lesson. He never rocks the boat and his actions,

though well-intended, are ineffectual. The livyers' comfort with Hutchings's leadership is a symptom of their passivity. When Timothy Drew threatens to withdraw from Cape Random, Thomas counsels his followers to accept the inevitable. Mary, however, is outraged:

That was the way of it – they weren't even going to fight this man Drew! Mary had seen it again and again, the stubbornness, the determination to ignore certain doom – as if by bearing everything, by never hitting back, they proved something. Oh, they would work like dogs and some would pray, everyone would worry and some might curse quietly to wives or husbands – but in the long run nothing would be done. They would just endure – like Sarah said, “What can't be cured must be endured.” (*Time* 172)

When she discovers the real identity of Timothy Drew, Mary presses home her advantage, bargaining with amoral finesse. After they have concluded their negotiations, Drew observes: “A sheep-like bunch you fell in with.” Mary responds: “They're not half so sheep-like as they looks.” But the comment is pure bluster. In fact, Mary secretly agrees with Timothy Drew's assessment.

Although the struggle for her rights mirrors the struggle of women in general for economic and political equality with men in the old Newfoundland outport, Mary is hardly a feminist. Lavinia Andrews is still less so. Nevertheless, she also complains from time to time about the domination of men. She is ambivalent, for example, about the daring of the men who rush out on the ice to kill seals their first spring on the Cape, thereby ending a dangerous fast. Although she is thankful for her full stomach, Lavinia resents the foolhardy bravado the men assume. “Men, Lavinia concludes, lack imagination. They see only ice and the seals, whereas

women see the fathoms of black water below, visualize the frozen seaweed swirling and clutching" (*Random* 41). This statement, however, is perhaps more an expression of Lavinia's fear of attachment and loss than her feminism. In a later scene, her sentiments are less ambiguous. As she becomes more literate herself while teaching the youngsters of Cape Random under Thomas Hutchings's direction, she marvels at the fact that the poems and ballads he recites are all about men: "Men, always men. Lavinia wonders why" (*Random* 147). Although she does not know it, Lavinia is herself a writer. Her journal will be the first record of life on Cape Random, and the basis of the complete story. In challenging the prevalence of the male hero, she is subconsciously asserting her identity as a writer.

A feminist outlook is evident elsewhere in Morgan's rendering of the old outpost. For example, Chapter Eight of *Random Passage* addresses that male-dominated symbol of heroic Newfoundland, the seal hunt. But Morgan describes not the hunt itself, but the return of the men to the community. Physically and emotionally wasted from the ordeal at the ice and the long walk back to their home community, they are greeted with a mixture of horror, pity, anger and joy. The women take over and begin the process of attempting to restore the men to their former selves. The sharp differentiation of gender roles is again obvious in this scene. The men, their job done, are treated almost like children by the women. Albeit affectionately, they are ordered about and scolded as they are stripped of their clothing and bathed. Naked and vulnerable, they certainly do not have the upper hand in this situation. Family and partnership are stressed rather than heroism. At the same time, there is an undercurrent of eroticism in the activity that is made clear when Mary eventually drives the children from the room, bolting the door behind them (*Random* 105).

A second reference to the seal hunt towards the end of *Random Passage* similarly re-

frames this emblem of heroic Newfoundland from a woman's perspective. In this scene, Thomas Hutchings and Emma Andrews await the arrival of her husband, Peter Vincent, and other men of the Cape Random community at one of the coves on the waterfront of St. John's Harbour.⁶⁸

When the frozen bodies of Peter Vincent and his brother Joe – enemies all their lives – are lifted onto the wharf in a classic deathly embrace, Morgan has the reader view the scene through the eyes of a wife and her child. Thomas, cast in the role of father to Emma, feels inadequate in the situation. Reflecting on the sustaining role of women in such situations, he longs for the presence of Mary Bundle or Meg Andrews,

one of the women who always removed the things we could not bear to see, who took them away to wash, to soothe, to cover with useless salve and, when all else failed, to wrap in fanciful cut-out shrouds before calling the men to perform the necessary rituals. How I wished for those women who could make the unendurable minutes pass. (*Random* 262)

Although it is not as pronounced a determinant as the natural environment and the socio-economic system, religion is a major factor in the lives of the Cape Random settlers. Morgan's portrayal of religion is very broad, encompassing the worldly but idealistic involvement of Thomas Hutchings in the struggle for land reform in Ireland, the worldly but not so idealistic grand scheme of the Roman Catholic Bishop, Michael Anthony Fleming, to build a huge cathedral in St. John's, and the fiery evangelicism of the Reverent Ninian Eldridge, who, with his "wonderful distillation of Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity, only accidentally related to the teachings of John Wesley," converts of most of the livyers of Cape Random to Methodism inside a week (*Random* 117).⁶⁹

The conversion of the community leads to a heightened sense of the unknown. Lavinia Andrews finds herself “living in a world of signs and wonders.” plagued with “the Old Hag.”⁷⁰ She is not alone. Everyone seems more susceptible to being spooked. Frank Norris struggles to free his boat from the clutches of a sea monster and, days later, young Joe Vincent comes ashore because he experienced an unearthly quiet and a strange green light come down upon the water. Meg Andrews, an early disciple of the Reverend Eldridge, believes that, because they have been saved, Lucifer is among them, “seeking whom he may devour.” Daily the children spread stories of bizarre happenings: “they have seen elves, pirates, Indians, rings around the sun, daytime moons, two-headed dogs and strangers – always strangers. The stranger is their most persistent fear” (*Random* 121-122). The livyers’ sensitization to the world beyond knows no bounds. Religion melds into superstition; fear of the Lord becomes fear of the unknown.

The susceptibility of the settlers to these apprehensions is not only to be understood in terms of their lack of learning, although that is certainly a factor at play. Their collective mental state can also be grasped by imagining what it would have been like to live in such an extreme and isolated environment in the 1820s without any of the supports of modern technology. The folk culture they bring with them from England and Ireland provides a vocabulary and a belief system that lends itself to the expression of their wild imaginings. Sarah Vincent believes that Mary Bundle’s daughter, Fanny, with her elf’s face, is a changeling (*Random* 103). Sarah herself claims half-seriously to be a witch, like her mother and grandmother before her, and Mary, who is not inclined to such notions, believes her (*Random* 55). Mary, in turn, pretends to be a witch at a critical moment in her struggle with Tim Toop (*Time* 119) . Later, she tells her great granddaughter Rachel that her own mother had inherited “second sight” from ancient British

forebears (*Time* 156). Superstitious practices, such as putting bread in one's pockets to ward off the fairies when traveling in the woods, are common (*Random* 129). The elf-like Fanny is constantly telling Lavinia that she has seen a stranger watching them. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that when Lavinia finally sees the stranger, her panic is fueled by sheer terror. The stranger, it turns out, is a Red Indian, one of the last of the Beothuks. The understandable psychological predisposition of the settlers to fear the unknown establishes a convincing context for the tragic relations between themselves and the aboriginal inhabitants.

This context is established in the Prologue to *Random Passage*, which describes the spring migration of a small number of Beothuk Indians to the Cape Random site a few years before the arrival of the white settlers. The Beothuk have seen better days. Their numbers are depleted and they are near starvation. They have been forced to take a more circuitous and more arduous route to the cape in order to avoid the Widdun, the men without souls, as they call white people. While this route is safer, it has not provided them with the usual opportunity to hunt whale, and, by the time they reach the cape, they have run out of caribou meat and are chewing the bark of var trees for nourishment.⁷¹ The children are "thin as spirits with sunken cheeks and eyes made large by hunger" (*Random* 7).⁷² But fortunately the men manage to kill two seals and the community is saved for another year. The near starvation of the Indians and their salvation through the hunting of seals establish a parallel with the plight of the white settlers of Cape Random a few years later. This emphasizes the underlying humanity they hold in common, a fact that is tragically obscured by their lack of understanding of one another.

The struggle to find understanding around shared humanity is an important theme in Morgan's exploration of the old outpost. That it is not just an issue between aboriginals and

white settlers is made evident in the Prologue of *Random Passage* when Toma's grandmother Ejew recalls the tribal legends of "the others" – ancient strangers who had fought her people for control over the Cape many generations ago.⁷³ Then these strangers vanished. The Beothuk elders concluded that their time on earth had ended. With her people now facing their own extremity, Ejew wonders whether there is an end to the time of all creatures on earth, but her real nightmare is that the others have come back as Widdun to reclaim the world (*Random 9*). This foreshadows not only the extinction of the Beothuk but also their conflict with another group of humans attempting to survive on the Cape, and it construes these events in all too human terms – desperation, misunderstanding and fear.

The relationship between the Beothuk and the white settlers is characterized by a volatile mixture of suspicion and curiosity. Sometimes it verges on success but ultimately it ends in disaster. The symbol that acts as the focal point of this dynamic is the iron rod that is discovered in the Prologue by the Indian boy Toma. The abandoned barrel of a musket, the iron rod is a thing of fascination to Toma because it is made of unfamiliar material with properties previously unknown to the Indians. When they strike it off rocks, it does not break, and when they throw it into the fire, it glows bright red. Toma's father recognises it as a "fire stick" used by the Widdun to kill his wife, and Ejew, declaring it evil, orders Toma to throw it away.

The iron rod reappears again and again in the story of Cape Random, moving back and forth between the two competing races. A few years after Toma throws it in the sea, it is brought ashore tangled up in Josh Vincent's fishing nets (*Random 57*).⁷⁴ It is then used by the women of the community as a tool to help them clear land for a garden. For a few years, it is a familiar implement around the village. Then, one day Thomas Hutchings comes upon the stranger in the

form of the grown-up Toma, who stumbles and breaks his ankle trying to escape. Hutchings sets the Indian's leg and braces it with a splint. He gives Toma the iron rod for support (*Random* 229-230). Later, Toma descends on the community to assert his relationship with the pregnant Fanny Bundle. The encounter goes badly. A jealous Peter Vincent, who loved Fanny, wrestles the iron rod from Toma and uses it to slay the Indian (*Random* 191-192). The uproar leads Fanny to go into labour and she dies in childbirth.

To sum up, as a weapon of the white settlers, the iron rod is first a symbol of destruction. But then it is used by the women in an activity that recalls the figure of turning swords into ploughshares, a metaphor implying the renunciation of violence. Next, it is used by Thomas Hutchings as a token of solidarity between the races. Finally, it is employed once again as a murder weapon. By the time it returns to the white settlers, the iron rod represents both the efforts to achieve peaceful co-existence among the whites and the Indians and the breakdown of those efforts. Eventually, it ends up in the half-finished church, and Meg Andrews suggests that it should be incorporated into the structure of the building as a way of turning evil to good (*Time* 170).

Morgan is realistic in her portrayal of the protagonists' differing levels of moral understanding. What Meg means by evil, for example, does not refer to the killing of Toma but rather to the blame that had been mistakenly assigned to Thomas Hutchings for Fanny's pregnancy. When Toma tries to take Fanny away – and she puts up no resistance – the others understand that Thomas has been wrongly blamed in the affair. Meg is troubled and remarks to Lavinia: "I allow, Vinnie, between us we done some wicked things these last few weeks" (*Random* 194). Nevertheless, she shows no remorse for the slaying of Toma and indeed opposes

burying him in consecrated ground in the community graveyard. She yields her position on this only because of her guilt at the treatment of Thomas Hutchings who insists that Toma should be laid to rest alongside of Fanny. Similarly, Josh Vincent, one of the kindest men Thomas Hutchings ever met, did not consider Indians to be humans. He is the product of his upbringing and his family's experience: "Accordin' to me Pap, they're dirty stinkin' things, what would steal the eyes right out of your head" (*Random* 226).

Morgan's refusal to oversimplify the relationships between the races is evident in the irony that it is Peter Vincent who murders Toma. An outsider in his own community, forever wandering alone in the woods, Peter had secretly befriended the Indian. He and Toma had been companions since boyhood, he confides to Mary (*Time* 156). He had even traveled into the interior one winter and met the last survivors of Toma's tribe. Peter is crazed by jealousy, however, when he realises that Fanny is carrying Toma's child. His slaying of the Indian is not an act of racial hatred but a crime of passion.

The confusion around the pregnancy of Fanny Bundle also demonstrates the way in which the characters are blinded by their prejudices, anxieties and disappointments. Lavinia Andrews, soured by Thomas Hutchings's sudden turning away from her, convinces herself and Mary Bundle that he is having an affair with Fanny (*Random* 179). Actually, Thomas has become preoccupied with Fanny after having concluded that she and his friend, Ned Andrews, are lovers (*Random* 235). The event that leads Thomas to this conclusion, however, arises from a misunderstanding that originates in Ned's discovery of the truth – that Fanny is sexually involved with the Indian. Significantly, these multiple misapprehensions have a powerful effect upon the lives of the characters while the disturbing reality is concealed. At first, the facts of Fanny's

relationship with the Indian seem to be accepted by the livyers. Fanny's child, who survives, is named Toma after his father and the villagers grudgingly agree to bury his father alongside his mother. Later, however, Mary conceals the truth from her great grand-daughter, Rachel, pretending that Thomas Hutchings was the father of Fanny's child, and denying that there was Indian blood in the Andrews family (*Time* 155-157). Through ability, drive and cunning, Mary climbed her way up from orphan in the workhouse in Christchurch, Dorset, to prosperous merchant in Cape Random, Newfoundland. Even in her ninety-seventh year respectability is more important to her than the truth. The truth is, however, that the blood of the last of the Beothuk flows in the Andrews's veins and the benighted intercourse between the two struggling peoples is still being denied.

The meeting of these peoples and, indeed, the arrival of the white settlers themselves at this location on the northeast coast of Newfoundland is depicted as an accident of fate, a notion reinforced by the name of the site, Cape Random, and the title of the novel, *Random Passage*.⁷⁵ In a sense, they are all either outside of, or refugees from, the dominant European culture, and their shared plight struggling for survival in an extreme and isolated environment is an unplanned occurrence that represents an opportunity for overcoming differences and discovering a common bond. While this occurs among the white livyers, however, the cultural gap between themselves and the aboriginal inhabitants proves too great to be bridged and the opportunity is lost.

Meanwhile, the bond that has emerged among the white settlers is still pre-national and pre-political. The livyers of Cape Random are remote from the embryonic development of governmental institutions in Newfoundland. Ships arrive bringing news from St. John's that the government is bankrupting itself importing stone masons from England to build a stately home

for the governor. but the settlers can hardly imagine what this means (*Random* 56). Twelve years later, when Skipper Alex Brennan tells them about the attempt to create representative government, they wonder how a government for the island can be formed when people like themselves are tucked away in parts of the country essentially unknown to those living in the capital. But even this question is raised only out of politeness. Thomas Hutchings, who asks it, considers such events “unreal, unrelated to anything that happens on the Cape” (*Random* 119). Nevertheless, a sense of country is gradually developing. By the time Mary reaches the end of her life in the fall of 1900, the livyers of Cape Random are sufficiently interested in politics to engage in a lively discussion about the negotiations between A.B. Morine and R.G. Reid over the contract to build the Newfoundland railway. Toma Hutchings, son of the Beothuk Indian and Fanny Bundle, declares that the great patriot Sir Robert Bond will be their salvation.⁷⁶ This prompts Mary to recall arguments sixty years earlier among Ned, Thomas and Alex Brennan about what could be done to save the country. For some time, then, the inhabitants of Cape Random have considered themselves as part of a larger political entity, albeit one, as Mary scornfully remarks, that is constantly down on its luck: “Always in need of savin’ and never saved, this place is. Waitin’ for time. Ned used to call it – ‘we’um just waitin’ for time, maid. Just waitin’ ‘til our ship comes in.’ he’d say. Well, I allow our ship got sunk off the Funks!” (*Time* 83-84)⁷⁷

Despite the incredible hardships of living on the coast of Newfoundland, the settlers of Cape Random gradually come to realize a sense of liberty, ownership and community they had not experienced before. This represents a significant reversal from their original impressions of the place. The despair of the Andrews family upon their arrival on the Cape is most keenly felt by

Lavinia as revealed in the first words she writes in her journal: "It's Ned's wickedness that's brought us to this terrible place and I'll never forgive him" (*Random* 16). Her dismay is shared by the rest of her family. Nevertheless, their Herculean efforts to survive bear fruit. In the spring, they experience exhilaration working in the garden and, as their house begins to take shape, their confidence grows:

The women smile at each other, and the children, their faces flushed with excitement, play hide and seek between the boxes and barrels. The warm and moonlit night comes softly through the open door, smelling of earth and woods and summer. Down on the shore the sea laps gently on the sand and the encompassing blackness seems safe, even protective. (*Random* 60)

Ned grandly christens their new home "Andrews House," revealing the cause of their happiness: a freedom to assert themselves that they are experiencing for the first time in their lives. Although the truck system makes them vulnerable to exploitation by unscrupulous fish merchants, the houses they build are unambiguously their own. They work without supervision and for themselves in an environment that belongs to no one. Although it is inhospitable and hostile, it is also vast and beautiful, and, by mastering it, they can lay claim to it. Their isolation from the rest of the world gives them a place they can call their own.

For Jennie Andrews, this sense of satisfaction with their new home reaches a climax in her second summer on the Cape just before her sudden death. In the midst of the confrontation over Mary's secret garden, Jennie has an epiphany in which she understands the value of the relationships they have established and strengthened in their struggle for survival. From an outcropping of rock above the village, she witnesses its life:

Down beyond the pond, near the houses, she can see Ben plane a door to be fitted on a goat shed, sees young Annie Vincent spreading quilts out to dry. Down the beach she can see her son Ned who, with Thomas Hutchings, is scraping the bottom of Thomas's boat. She cannot see Josh Vincent and his oldest son, Joe, but knows they are hand-jigging along the shoals, knows that on the other side of the neck Peter Vincent and Frank Norris are hauling wood down the shore. The children are somewhere around with Vinnie. Jennie thinks she can catch the echo of their voices from the trees behind her: from the trees also she can hear the bleating of a goat they will have to find before dark.

Seeing all this, and "smelling the sea and the woods, hearing the sounds of children, of animals and birds," she is overtaken by a great rush of happiness (*Random* 98). This revelation leads directly to her condemnation of Mary for threatening the life that they have begun to build together. In the end, even Mary becomes reconciled to life on the Cape, so that when she is finally given the opportunity of returning to England, she declines the offer (*Time* 177).

Lavinia's conversion takes a long time largely because her personal circumstances keep her isolated from the adult life of the community for years. Tending to live in her imagination like her brother Ned, but lacking his success in love, she finds herself relegated to the role of babysitter/teacher, and increasingly she feels thwarted. But Vinnie "begins to make peace with the place" when she senses the stirring of romance between herself and Thomas Hutchings (*Random* 134). That summer, Lavinia is "marvellously, unreasonably, happy" and, when fall comes, she is able to appreciate the feeling of abundance and contentment that pervades the community after a particularly successful fishing season, and joins in the celebrations with

unprecedented enthusiasm, concluding that they are “in the promised land” (*Random* 135-151). Although this sense of benediction is subsequently shattered when the community is struck down by an epidemic of some unnamed disease, Lavinia is now committed to life on the Cape for better or worse.

Perhaps the clearest insight into the value this life holds for the livyers comes from Thomas Hutchings’s first encounter with Josh Vincent. Having lived alone throughout his first winter as Caleb Gosse’s agent at Cape Random, Heywood is delighted to see the Vincents arrive but, at the same time, he is taken aback by Josh’s assumption that he has the right to settle anywhere he pleases. He is all the more impressed by the quiet insistence that characterizes Josh’s speech: “No matter what Caleb Gosse’s agent said, this man had made up his mind to live on the Cape. His request came from an innate sense of politeness, not from any doubt about his right to settle wherever he wanted along this coast. I looked down at him and marvelled: here at last was a peasant not held in bondage to the land!” (*Random* 222)

In *Random Passage* and *Waiting for Time*, Morgan depicts the development of a distinct sense of cultural identity among English and Irish settlers who are transformed by the challenges and opportunities inherent in living in a remote Newfoundland fishing station. Among the skills and strategies they have to learn, the most important is the acceptance of the necessity for interdependence, and thus they cultivate above all else a sense of community. But they also find freedom and ownership, things that were mostly lacking in their former lives. The extremity of their investment in overcoming such daunting obstacles to survival, and their former lack of enfranchisement, combine to determine the magnitude and depth of the value they assign to the life they build together. These things also ensure that the freedom and ownership they experience

are communal rather than individual. The livyers develop a cultural cohesiveness that emerges from the imperatives of human survival in an unforgiving coastal environment, and this cohesiveness ultimately defeats differences in origin and religion they carried with them from the old country.

Gaff Topsails

Patrick Kavanagh's novel, *Gaff Topsails* (1996), extends and deepens Morgan's exploration of outport life, on the one hand bringing it into modern times, on the other hand more consciously delineating the historical development of its mythological identity.⁷⁸ The novel describes a day in the life of an Irish Newfoundland village at a precise and significant moment in history – 24 June 1948, the feast of St. John the Baptist, a day known as Discovery Day in Newfoundland because it celebrates the so-called discovery of the island in 1497. In 1948, this day fell between the two fateful referenda on Confederation with Canada, the first resulting in a close minority vote in favour of the restoration of Responsible Government, the second in a close majority vote in favour of Confederation. The chosen time of the narrative therefore merges two mythologically significant occasions – the one recalling the origins of modern Newfoundland society in its settlement by white Europeans, the other marking a momentous change in that society's sense of itself. Although bearing specific details that mark it as modern, Irish and somewhat connected to the outside world, the village is, for the most part, presented as a mythological rather than real community, representing the distilled essence of Newfoundland outport life at a moment when it was poised between the old and the new. As the villagers go about their lives on this day, however, they are completely oblivious to its historical import. Lost

in time, absorbed in the personal struggles of their individual lives, they seem as timeless as the inhabitants of Pittman's Merasheen, and it is only the reader who sees in retrospect that, on the contrary, they occupy a moment that is fraught with change for their society and themselves.

The villagers understand and manage their lives according to visions, symbols and signs, their world-view a web of magical narratives, their cosmology radically at odds with modernism. More in the foreground, as far as they are concerned, is the mythological significance of the day. The time of the summer solstice is associated with fertility rites and, in local lore, this takes the form of various rituals pertaining to Sweetheart's Day. One of the main characters, sixteen-year-old Mary Dwyer, conspires with her mother and her friends to discover by divination the identity of her true love. Guided by her mother, Mary tries to read the clues provided by an egg-white suspended overnight in water, undertakes the baking of a dumb-cake with her friends, and seeks the name of her intended in the dew on a scarf left outside for that purpose (18, 48-49, 52 and 62).⁷⁹ As well, late June is the time of the caplin scull, which betokens the fertility and the bounty of nature and signals the start of the cod-fishery.⁸⁰ According to a village tradition that is supposed to have originated with its founder, the feast day of St. John the Baptist is also marked by the lighting of bonfires. The founder, Tomas Croft, the renegade son of an Irish monk, in an act reminiscent of the Promethean myth, stole fire from the British, and ever after marked each Midsummer's Night by setting ablaze the hills and headlands surrounding the village. The people of the community, never knowing who started the fires, associated them with the Masterless Men, the Boo Darby and other bogeyman figures including the Mummer and the Janney.⁸¹ Hoping to ward off evil, they gathered on the beach to light their own giant fire, and this custom persists down to the present-day events of the novel (124 and 133).

In *Gaff Topsails*, light symbolizes salvation – literal, spiritual or romantic. The old lighthouse keeper, known by his trade as Johnny the Light, not only represents the profession of life-saver, his whole being is shaped by his blind heroism in the famous sealing disaster of 1914 in the course of which he kept alive a group of lost men by persuading them that he knew the location of their ship. In fact, he did not know where it was but he sustained their hopes and kept them moving until eventually they found their vessel after all, spotting “the St.Elmo’s lights blazing in the gaff topsails . . . like a crucifix on fire.” Like Edgar’s spiritual rescue of Gloucester in *King Lear*, the “salvation was by deceit” (348). At the end of the novel, Johnny performs another deliverance, saving the new priest, Father MacMurrough, from his despair by substituting and sacrificing himself, Christ-like, as a scapegoat. Naked, Johnny rows out to sea to meet his maker and encounters the ice-field he had escaped many years before. It is a final return to the event that defined his life. When Father MacMurrough rejoins the community and assumes his ceremonial role in lighting the bonfire, his eyes are “engorged with light and temporarily he is blinded” (425). He staggers to the edge of the cliff and symbolically renounces his suicidal intent. Earlier in the day, Father MacMurrough had composed (but did not deliver) a homily for the boys and girls of the village, reminding them that Christ bore witness to the Light and that “the light of our souls is God Himself.” Tellingly, he extended this salvation of light to human love – the cause of his despair being his separation from his fellow humans (216-219).

Light promises exactly this kind of salvation in the case of the young lovers, Michael Barron and Mary Dwyer. Thus far, they have yearned for one another but not given utterance to their feelings. On Sweetheart’s Day, exploring a grounded iceberg with his mates, Michael observes Mary making her way home from school, and he sees her as “a pillar of white light”

(221). The “tiny spark of her [white] dress . . . swells and fills his head with light” (229). Later, onshore, she is “no longer a spark, no longer a candle-flame far across a mile of cold lonely water, but a torch” (378). For a time she disappears, then she re-emerges as a “light that swells from behind him” and “at his back he feels the heat it delivers.” Finally, she is personified as the light: “The light is here, at his shoulder” (386-387). Although the sexual banter among Michael and his friends is coarse and obscene, Michael’s secret love is reverential and idealistic. From the iceberg where the boys test their manhood, he takes an icicle as a token of his love for Mary, a shaft of glacial ice that is pure and sexual both at the same time. The raillery among Mary and her friends is hardly less raunchy than the conversations of the boys. Like Michael, Mary’s inner self understands her longing in terms of her impending womanhood, but this carries a less ambiguous sexual connotation in her case. As she walks symbolically out of her youth and into her adulthood, the lighthouse beckons: “Never has she seen the pillar so close, so clear and sharp” (255). On Gallows Beach, she feels the heat of the sand against her thighs and thinks of “the masculine sun penetrating the feminine earth.” Earlier, she had felt the hard core of her emerging womanhood evoked in imagery from the forge of Mr. Fewer, the blacksmith when he slams the head of his hammer hard against the iron: “Sparks cascade across the floor, splendidly, like fireworks” (251). Now, sitting directly across from the iceberg – itself an image of light – Mary explores her sexuality, and as she climaxes, she sees through half-closed eyes the same cascading sparks, and a black centaur perched on the summit of the berg (301).⁸²

The imagery and symbolism of light in *Gaff Topsails* is embedded in a richly textured narrative. Small details are interconnected to emphasize significance and effect, and this is done to such an extent and with such care that it is impossible to isolate the different elements without

misrepresenting the complexity of the verbal structure, which is frequently as dense as poetry.

Light for Michael Barron and Mary Dwyer is related to a quest that is appropriate for youth – the discovery of sexuality and its relationship to adult life. In their case, light is often connected to sexual images and motifs, some of them of ancient and classical origin, others that are reminiscent of the vocabulary of dreams and the unconscious that we associate especially with the work of Sigmund Freud. Although this symbolism is part of the currency of western thought, the ordinary activities and pastimes of this Newfoundland village are powerful vehicles of these ideas, evoking their primitive origin.

The forge of Mr. Fewer is the site of a number of these images and motifs. Mary Dwyer's rapt observation of the blacksmith at work has already been cited. As she watches the half-naked man breathing life to the coals in his hearth, the eroticism this activity has for her is unmistakable:

Mr. Fewer stirs a long poker among the coals. He lifts the poker clear of the cinders and the point is frosty white. Mary daydreams that the forgerman is a centaur and that with his spear he slays the fire-breathing dragon. (250)

Not only is the poker in this scene a phallic symbol in itself, it also anticipates Michael Barron's gift to Mary of the icicle from the iceberg, which is both phallic and romantic, conjuring up not only sexual images but ones of knights in shining armour. But when Mary notices scattered haphazardly on the floor Mr. Fewer's "rasp and pliers and hammers and nails," her excitement becomes sado-masochistic: "a curious pleasure, almost sinful, agitates her." She watches the sparks from the hammer cascade across the floor and "[w]ith each ringing hammer-smash Mary blinks" (251).

Earlier, Michael's younger brother Kevin struggles with his emerging sexuality when he

witnesses the strapping of his buxom classmate, Kitt Hughes. Kevin is a pious and withdrawn altar boy, confused and frightened by the eroticism that increasingly overwhelms him. When the Mother Superior calls Kitt forward, “[a] shiver runs up Kevin Barron’s spine. He thrills at the thought of what will surely happen. Shamed by his own tremor, he turns front and lowers his eyes and fixes them upon his hands wrapped with the rosary, fingertips joined in the priestly style” (154). When the nun brings the leather down with a sharp report, Kevin blinks involuntarily: “It is the same blink that happens to him in the forge when Mr. Fewer smashes the big hammer down onto the anvil and makes the sparks fly up” (251). Thus, the blacksmith’s forge, the association of violence and pain with sex, the involuntary act of blinking, and the cascading sparks serve to connect Mary Dwyer’s erotic life with Kevin Barron’s.

In a similar juxtaposition, Mr. Fewer’s rasp, pliers, hammers and nails are foreshadowed when Johnny the Light enters the church and comes upon the image of Christ being nailed to the cross. Strewn nearby are “the robes, pliers, nails and rasp,” and one of the soldiers is poised to spike Christ’s hands with a hammer (245). Parallel with this connection of religion and sex is Mary’s fantasy at the forge. When Mr. Fewer plunges a red-hot horseshoe into the trough and then raises it with his tongs above his head, it brings to Mary’s mind the priest lifting the monstrance, elevating the Blessed Sacrament in Benediction (251). A third religion/sex parallel is the image of hands folded in prayer that inexplicably troubles Kevin Barron in the same way as the shaft of the stained glass window in the church that “levitates skyward and narrows to a soft gentle point.” That Kevin is being terrorized by images of the vagina becomes clear even to him when he superimposes them one upon the other: “He remembers his unease during the Rosary, his unease at the sight of his own joined hands. He recalls finally the contours of the pitcher plant, the lips

curling purple round the gaping maw to come together. to touch. softly. at the tip” (401).⁸³

If one’s sensitivity to the phallic and vaginal imagery in *Gaff Topsails* owes much to Freud, the symbolism of the forge has a provenance in the mythology of Greece and Rome. The Greek god Hephaestus was the cuckolded husband of Aphrodite, goddess of love, and also was said to have been responsible for the creation of the first woman, whom he called Pandora. Hephaestus and his forge are appropriate symbols for young people seeking to create their identity in experience. Similarly, the centaur is from the classical world. Mary Dwyer comes upon the painting of “a huge black centaur” in a book she is reading in school, and “[a] nun’s voice inside her head tells her that she should look away” but she doesn’t (213). Later, lying languidly on the lych-gate outside the cemetery, she dreams of black centaurs. Still later, when she sees smoke arising from behind the iceberg, where Michael Barron and his friends are cooking up a scoff of seal meat, she imagines “around the back end of the berg, a roaring furnace, and a centaur swinging a big hammer, forging his own set of shoes upon an anvil of ice” (256-257).⁸⁴ While Mary is positively energized by her sexual urges, Kevin Barron feels that he is being stalked by something sinister and dangerous: “Some beast is hunting him, a centaur perhaps, with a huge thing hanging down, like the one that dangles from the Pothole Man’s stallion”(323-324).

Another erotic image in *Gaff Topsails* is the mermaid. Mary had seen a picture of one in the same book in which she had come upon the centaur at school, and thought that the creature’s lack of nipples was even stranger than her fins and scales (213). But Johnny the Light was said to have seen a real mermaid sunning her naked self at Gallows Beach, and, according to Moira, one of Mary’s friends, Johnny’s claim had prompted the lecherous storekeeper, Mr. Casey, to take down his spyglass and train it on the location of the supposed sighting (47). Later, when Mary

arrives at Gallows Beach, she tries to guess where Johnny had seen the mermaid (300). Gallows Beach is so called because it was supposed to be where a mad nun was hanged in years gone by. The place thus associates sex with life and the denial of sex with death. It is the site not only of Mary's solitary sexual experience but also of her encounter, later that day, with Michael Barron (419).

As for the goat that Mary glimpses observing her from an outcrop as she pauses between her past and her future, no doubt it is a token of her transition from innocence to experience but, "yokeless and sinister," it creates a sense of foreboding (256 and 258). Several times on her walk from the village to Gallows Beach, a journey from childhood to adulthood, Mary has the uncomfortable sense that she is being watched not only by the goat but by other eyes as well. The "cat's eyes" painted on the barn door inhibit her as she daydreams lying on the lych-gate (255 and 256). The tar-black boat that brings Mike Landrigan from the village of Gelden to fetch the priest to visit his dying mother also has eyes like those on the barn (257). Later, when she is by herself on Gallows Beach, Mary scurries out of sight when "[t]he black punt with the eyes" whirrs around the point (299). Perhaps the boat subconsciously reminds her of her mortality and the fallen world, creating a sense of shame or fright that she does not really comprehend and that has its analogue in the Book of Genesis.

All of these symbols – the crucifixion, the blacksmith and his forge, the centaur, the mermaid and the goat – arise naturally out of the world inhabited by the characters. Indeed, their imaginative engagement with these elements is a distinguishing feature of their world-view. At the same time, these symbols have a universal resonance for the literate observer. Once again, an unspoken contrast is established between the perspective of the villagers and that of the readers.

For the villagers, the symbolism is experienced on a primitive level, directly and meaningfully as having real implications for their lives. For the readers, it is grasped on much more of a conceptual level. The effect of this is to emphasize the universality of the experiences of the villagers while differentiating the ways in which they experience them.

The fallen world is the one inhabited by most of the adult characters in *Gaff Topsails* – Mr. Casey, the Mother Superior, the former priest, Father Conroy, and especially the new priest, Father MacMurrough. Johnny the Light is also a citizen of that world. So is Mary's mother, Hestia, who spends her days sitting in her "Pegasus chair" on the roof of her house waiting for her lost husband to come home although his bloated body was hauled from the deep a year ago.⁸⁵ But Johnny and Hestia, deformed by experience, rise above their life-defeating trials by faith and hope that deny reality. In the end, Father MacMurrough also rises above his despair in coming to understand that it is not too late to forgive himself as well as his parishioners. *Gaff Topsails* encompasses a broad range of human experiences, from the life-affirming to the life-denying, and Kavanagh depicts these in terms of a struggle for the kind of acceptance Father MacMurrough finally achieves and the kind of faith and hope Johnny the Light and Hestia Dwyer maintain against all odds and even against reason. Kavanagh's primary focus, like Pittman's in *A Rope Against the Sun*, is upon the humanity of his characters.

Nevertheless, they are characters from a particular time and place and they are marked by a distinctive culture that has arisen from the peculiar historical circumstances that created their society. Described as the refuse of God's labours, the place they inhabit is tossed at the end of the sixth day "into a rubbish heap . . . far from the remainder of His creation" (25). The ice ages do not improve its appeal, scouring the land until it is "grotesque and frightful" (28). "All nakedness

and wind-blown barrens, it is a barebones of a territory – a penitential place” (29).

Understandably, this penitential place is embraced first not by prosperous citizens wishing to set up state-sanctioned settlements but rather by outcasts and refugees – the dispossessed of England and Ireland – who arrive by stealth and survive by stealth. They are represented by the patriarch, Tomas Croft, and for the first one or two centuries, isolated in remote settlements, they adopt a kind of paganism that arises very much out of the extreme natural world they inhabit. When missionaries bring religion to the country, the people succumb to its authority, but over the years this erodes like the thin layer of soil on the land itself until the bedrock paganism of the place, ever present, emerges once again.

Much of this is conveyed in a long chapter ironically entitled “The Kingdom of God.” Tomas Croft, the son of an Irish monk, fleeing famine in Ireland, arrives in Newfoundland ten years before Columbus discovers America. According to Prowse, there is evidence of voyages out of Bristol in the direction of North America as early as 1480, but the results of these explorations are unknown.⁸⁶ Tomas Croft is a stowaway on board a fishing vessel that is drawn off course by a mysterious current and, when he reaches Newfoundland, he abandons the ship, which is never heard of again. His discovery, therefore, is historically plausible but outside of history. In this, he is a fitting patriarch of his people.

For Tomas Croft, knowing nothing but the inside of a monastery and in flight from the horrors of late medieval Ireland, the new country is blessed. In his eyes, it is not a barren rock but rather a land and a sea teeming with life. He marvels at the variety and abundance of the place. And because he apparently has it entirely to himself, this man who has previously owned nothing suddenly has an overwhelming sense of possession. A survivor of unspeakable trauma in Europe,

he thrives all by himself in this new world.

Not only is Tomas Croft a patriarch, he is also an archetype. This becomes obvious by the way in which centuries of history are collapsed into his lifetime. Almost simultaneously, he witnesses Cabot's landing (1497) and Gilbert's taking possession (1583), he rescues the legendary Irish princess, Sheila nGira (said to have flourished between 1602 and 1620), has ten daughters by her and lives to see them all married. He is apparently still around for the arrival of the Irish immigrants during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when, again according to Prowse, some of them did "crawl across the sea ice to shore" just as described in *Gaff Topsails* (129).⁸⁷ It is even hinted that he is in some sense alive when the national flag (1843) and the national ode (1902) are proposed.⁸⁸ Tomas Croft is the spirit of the place. His dwelling is a tilt fashioned out of three spruce trees that harmonizes so thoroughly with the landscape that "it deceives the eye and becomes invisible."⁸⁹ He not only speaks to his dogs, he converses with "every rock and tree and wave . . . in his mind the island is as alive as he himself is alive" (119).

Other devices are used to emphasize the essential connection between the world of Tomas Croft and that of the latter-day inhabitants of his village. The iceberg, a central image in the novel, is introduced systematically in the summary accounts of early explorations of Newfoundland. In the fifth-century voyage of St. Brendan, Irish monks follow "crystal basilicas" across the ocean (92). Five centuries later, the Norsemen make their way to Newfoundland chasing "towering crystal castles" (94). Five centuries after that, Tomas Croft arrives, encountering "cliffs of ice" on the way (102). Later, rowing northward in his quest to explore the limits of the new land, he marvels at the sight of "a tall galleon of an iceberg" (117). Similar to the recurrent iceberg imagery is the employment of a blueberry motif. In their time, the Norsemen discover a profusion

of blue grapes which they make into wine (95). Later, Tomas Croft is amazed at the fields of robins egg blue. When, stirred to distraction by the overwhelming magnificence of the landscape, he masturbates on the headland overlooking the site of the future village – a scene that anticipates Mary Dwyer on Gallows Beach – his seed is “scattered in a pearly steaming mist . . . across a field of voluptuous blue” (113). Centuries later, when Mary Dwyer leads Michael Baron to their appointment with fate, their encounter takes place “amid the aroma of swelling blueberries” (419). At the same time, offshore on his final journey to the ice, Johnny the Light catches “a succulent blueberry fragrance” wafting off the slopes of the graveyard, feels under the hull of his punt “a sweet lifting and swelling.” and detects “a heavy odour, saltier even than the smell of the sea.” releasing from the depths of his memory “the smell of his own sperm” (420).

The features of the landscape Tomas Croft explores – the small womb-like harbour with its two headlands, one beetling, the other low; the sandy beach; the monstrous grey boulder atop the rounded ridge that marks the lookout; the peatland filled with hummocks – are exactly the ones familiar to Michael and Kevin Barron, Mary Dwyer, Johnny the Light and other members of the mid-twentieth century community. In addition to these enduring natural elements, things personally associated with Tomas Croft are still present in the lives of the villagers. The custom of lighting bonfires on midsummer’s night, which he initiated, persists to the present day. And his blackthorn cudgel, which he took from a church in Ireland and left behind in a church in Newfoundland, is now being used by Father MacMurrough as a walking stick. Although the founder has long since been forgotten, and this historical perspective is therefore missing in the lives of the present-day inhabitants, it is brought to the forefront of the reader’s attention by the superimposition of physical details from one part of the narrative upon another. Once again a

critical ingredient of the reader's point of view is given emphasis by its absence in the world-view of the characters in the novel.

This world-view is characterized by spirituality, work, heroism and community. The spirituality of the villagers is complex, a mixture of Catholicism indoctrinated by missionaries and paganism imbibed from the place. For generations, it is paganism that holds sway. Tomas Croft establishes a renegade clan from his relationship with Sheila nGira. His ten "russet daughters" marry "feral men, scoundrels and knaves and reprobates all" (127). They live apart from and prey on the officially sanctioned plantations. They become wreckers, pirates and alcoholics. A cult of the Masterless Men and the Boo Darby grows up around them. The legitimate settlers develop a fear of the country because of them and limit their activities to the coast. Tomas Croft's clan of outlaws is eventually civilized, however, by the arrival of nuns and priests who awaken an atavistic fear of God in the patriarch. Everyday life in the cove soon becomes "timed to the rhythms of prayer," of the mass, confession, benediction, Stations of the Cross, the Rosary, the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, the Angelus. And when the people are not praying, they are working:

The men and the boys sea-work. They jig squid and trap lobsters and seine capelin and herd whales. In spring they take up gaffs and venture leagues oceanward on the pack-ice and club seals. In summer they launch forth in open boats and shoot bullbirds. The women and the girls shore-work. They keep the gardens and the chickens and sheep and goats and pigs and cows and even the horses. On rare sunny days, all hands mow the meadows and make hay. Up the country – where no one dares go without a companion or a gun – the men shoot partridge and trap fox and arctic hare and cast for trout and salmon, and the women and children pick

chuckleypears and partridge-berries and whorts and blueberries. In the darkness of winter there is wood-cutting and cooperage and fencing and boat-building and sail-making and net-mending and ironmongering and masonry and quarrying, and wool-carding and spinning and knitting.

This outpost is a beehive of activity. The villagers rest on Sundays but, during the other six days of the week, "work and worship enlase so harmoniously that labour itself comes to be sanctified" and the "whole back-breaking routine" of catching and making fish – the most pious labour of all – "becomes an ardent prayer, a kind of litany" (136-137).

By the mid-twentieth century, these spiritual forces – the primitive and the medieval – are precariously balanced, and the uncertainty of modernism is just around the corner. The rituals of Catholicism still prevail in the village but the villagers believe as strongly in fairies and bogeymen as they do in the saints, and their priest is privately in despair over a life devoted to God and lost to love. Yet the ordinary people of the village are animated by this hybrid spirituality. At this critical moment of history, it is still a vital power in their lives. In fact, it has become perfectly adapted to the requirements of their lives – the imperatives of heroism and community that must be obeyed in order to survive in their environment. The young people of the village learn what they must know from the received wisdom of the tribe embedded in customs and rituals passed down from one generation to another. Thus, Mary is schooled by her mother in the charms that are used to divine the identity of her true love. Similarly, Michael Barron and his buddies playing hookey on the last day of school, fishing in a punt offshore and exploring the grounded iceberg in the cove, are engaged in childhood play that seriously mimics their incipient adult life.

Already their skills in handling a boat, in moving about on ice, in gutting a fish, in

shooting and bludgeoning a seal are well developed. Their attitude appears to be casual but this is youthful bravado. Wish Butt and Gus Gallant self-consciously assert their manhood through the violence and coarseness of their actions and language but this masquerades inner unease in them both, especially Gus, which becomes evident back on shore when, surrounded by the young men and women of the village, they come to blows amid insults concerning sexual orientation and prowess. In the meantime, Michael Barron holds himself apart from his friends. Mute and bookish, he is disgusted by the slaughter of the seal and nauseated by the animal's half-cooked heart he is given to eat. He struggles to partake of the ritual repast. His aspirations are more idealistic than those of his friends, and he protects them by hiding them.

Although different from one another, all three boys are engaged in an exploration of personal identity within the cultural context of their community. They recall stories of their village and of outport Newfoundland: the discovery of Lukey Dwyer's body (38-39), the battle of Michael's Pop with a sea monster (40), the body of the boy sealer that washed up on Fogo encased in ice after the 1914 "Newfoundland" disaster (207), the big sea of 1929 (220), the exploits of Captain William Jackman (232 and 234), and so on.⁹⁰ When Gus kills and butchers the seal, he declares: "Goddamn swilers! Goddamn MEN! That's us!" Later, when the boys ease their punt into the passage that leads to the heart of the iceberg, their quest reaches its climax in terms of symbolism and danger. They have penetrated a vagina, returned to the womb, recalled one of the defining stories of the heroic myth, and confronted one of the quintessential fears of their culture – death on the ice. Their actions are spurred on by the recklessness of youth. Fortunately, they escape and make it to shore just ahead of a sudden snow squall. That night the berg turns over and disintegrates in a thunderous explosion. Although this is child-play, it is also education.

They have not yet acquired the judgement to avoid unnecessary risks but Michael and his friends have already learned many of the skills they will need as adults in their world. They are practicing the profession of making a living from the sea and they evoke the real-life heroics of Johnny the Light who saved the watch of sealers in the 1914 disaster. Like their elders, they understand this life and this work to be sacramental. When Wish Butt and Gus Gallant butcher the seal, they “move with a liturgical solemnity, as might a priest and his acolyte celebrating the Mass” (220). All this serves to reveal to what extent the lives of the villagers are still governed by ancient rituals and legends reflecting the cycles of nature.

The vocabulary and grammar of this culture are known by heart to all in the community except the new priest, Father MacMurrough. Although he is Irish, he has little in common with these Irish Newfoundlanders. This is partially because Father MacMurrough is an exile by nature as well as by choice. But it is also because the Newfoundlanders are pre-famine Irish and, although they retain much of the language and the lore of the old country, they have evolved their own culture over the generations in response to their New World coastal experience. They therefore seem as foreign to Father MacMurrough as the parishioners in his previous mission – the natives of Borneo.⁹¹ For their part, the villagers regard the priest as the outsider he is, although his role as priest within the community gains him acceptance in respect to his office, if not his person. When he walks amidst the graves of the ancestors of the present-day villagers, he does so with the detached curiosity of an anthropologist. And Hestia Dwyer, who sees everything and comments upon everything, understands his loneliness living all by himself in a big empty house with no one to talk to (292). Father MacMurrough’s acceptance into the community coincides with his acceptance of himself as a human being. This enables him to play the role of master of

the ceremony of lighting the bonfire on midsummer's eve, a pagan ritual that was given over to the priest in the early days of the people's reconversion to Christianity. In the end, the missionary is saved by the people he has come to save.

Father MacMurrough's incorporation into the life of the community speaks to the concept of "the other" in *Gaff Topsails*.⁹² It would be understandable, given the isolation and cultural homogeneity of the village, if the experience of *unheimliche* – *l'inquiétante étrangeté*, the uncanny – were associated primarily with the stranger. Certainly a suspicion, if not fear, of strangers still prevails, a relic of a dangerous past and token of a remote present. Except for the new priest, Kevin Barron has never in his life come into contact with a stranger (322). The stranger exists powerfully in the imagination, however, as the Boo Darby, the Janney Boo, the Black Stranger, the Masterless Man and a host of other bogeyman names. Father MacMurrough himself realises that he is regarded by his parishioners as the Black Stranger (77). But two things are striking about the concept as it is developed in *Gaff Topsails*. First, the saving of Father MacMurrough demonstrates that the community has a capacity for embracing "the other," at least under the right circumstances. Second, the community has created and to some extent harbours "the other" within its very core.

To the extent to which "the other" is human sexuality, this is interesting but it does not distinguish the villagers of *Gaff Topsails* from human beings anywhere else. In fact, their encounters with the uncertainties inherent in sex have the effect of humanizing and universalizing them. Although Mary Dwyer's management of her sexual energy is depicted in a positive light, there are symbols of foreboding in the goat who follows her to Gallows Beach and in the eyes painted on the barn and on Mike Landrigan's boat. These have the effect of dislocating Mary's

sense of well-being, although her optimism is such that the impact is minimal and momentary. Kevin Barron, on the other hand, is engulfed with feelings of pursuit and stalking that arise directly from his discomfort with sex, and his fears are so strong that he personifies them as an enemy "other" or "others." Kevin displays a high degree of alienation from himself that causes a strong sense of separation from his fellow humans. To some extent, he is struggling with the same demon that hounds Father MacMurrough, although in Father MacMurrough's case it no longer manifests itself in sexual terms. But the notion that human sexuality and human life are properly approached like a voyage to an unknown continent is made clear in two symmetrically balanced statements. As Mary Dwyer stands poised on a line in the road that divides her past from her future, she imagines that "Cabot must have felt like this when his ship passed over the horizon, when he looked sternward and saw his land, his home, sinking into the sea" (258). As Michael Barron is led hand in hand by Mary Dwyer towards Gallows Beach, he feels "like Cabot, or the Vikings, or Saint Brendan, sailing over the horizon, into the unknown, into mysterious waters where anything might happen" (413).

But perhaps the most compelling manifestation of "the other" in *Gaff Topsails* is the place that Cabot found – Newfoundland itself, never fully tamed or civilized, never quite fitting into imperialist interpretations of history, never understood – perhaps never understandable. The underlying savagery of the place is represented in human terms by Tomas Croft and his children. There is a kind of innocence in this at first. But the innocence is lost when Tomas Croft encounters a fellow savage – a red Indian – and slays him impulsively, out of a sudden fear that arises when the Indian grabs his red hair. In reflection, the gesture was probably motivated by curiosity and not intended to be menacing. But suddenly the Indian is dead on the ground with his

brains spilling out onto the snow. From that day, Tomas Croft begins to feel lonely: "No longer is he one with his new world. Somehow, he is broken and incomplete" (120). The incident clearly evokes the Fall.

By the time the religious missionaries arrive re-introducing the civilizing effects of Christianity, Tomas Croft and his children have given free rein to their savage impulses. They spread terror among the legitimate settlers, become pirates, thieves, murderers and alcoholics, raid the well-provisioned stations of the coast, and light "false beacons to lure fully laden merchantmen to wreckage and plunder on the cliffs" (130). Hestia Dwyer's "*Pegasus* chair" is a relic of such practices (347) and the annual ritual of the bonfire on midsummer's night is a symbol of the terrorism perpetrated by Tomas Croft, although the significance of this has been lost to memory and present-day villagers are unaware of its meaning. The priest takes over the mastery of the ceremony and the civilizing effects of Christianity take hold. But in the middle of the twentieth century, the essential paganism is still evident. The joyful bloodletting of the early days has now been limited to the hunt for fish and animals, and violence is sublimated to the language of threats rarely enacted, but "the other" is still uneasily present.

This is perhaps most clearly represented by the crone, the dry old witch named Martha. Mary Dwyer has a memory of her dating from when she was four and Martha snatched her tricycle: "Martha straddled the toy with her sticks of legs. She sat in the saddle and her knees stuck up high and she wheeled circles around the child, like some grotesque grasshopper. At first, Mary was too surprised to cry. But when she saw the thing raw and red between the old woman's legs, the child ran screeching to Father" (201). Kevin Barron recalls a similar experience in which, on his way to Benediction, he passed her shack and he saw her "squatting in her doorway – no,

actually settling her haunches on the step – her skirts hiked, and a thick hose-like stream flowing from deep in the shadows between her legs and splashing so heavily on the road that it stirred the dust” (319). Martha, like Tomas Croft, is an archetypal figure – an ancient representation in modern times of Sheila nGira – who represents the primitive spirit of the place. Martha is not a stranger but she is “the other” – in Kristeva’s terms, perhaps the stranger within. As such, she is both familiar and fear-inspiring. She symbolizes a core element of recalcitrance, some unresolvable defining characteristic of the country and the culture that cannot be fully understood or reconciled even by Newfoundlanders themselves, but that must be accepted nevertheless.

The solstice bonfire represents the community’s attempt to achieve acceptance on a number of levels. The ritual gives evidence of this function in the way in which the Christian man of God has become the celebrant of a pagan ceremony. The catalogue of objects thrown on the fire includes items that challenge individual propriety – “articles of ladies underwear with lines and pegs attached” – and others that represent closure to grief – the coffin-like dory of the drowned Lukey Dwyer. (415-416, 425-426). Father MacMurrough solemnly consigns to the flames the ragged old coat and boots of Johnny the Light. The rites of sexual initiation, the drinking, dancing and singing around the fire evoke ancient tribal ceremonies. Just before the last stragglers wander off to bed, a lone voice sings a verse of the “Ode to Newfoundland,” one of a small number of strategically placed references connecting community to country. As the fire goes out, the people “crouch close within the cocoon of light and heat” as they sense something cold lurking behind them in the dark (428). The union that imposes itself upon an uneasy mixture of heterogeneous convictions and aspirations is motivated by the need to deny the monster outside the human circle they have formed. The primacy of this creed, derived from the place itself, is made clear in the

Epilogue, which is given over to Martha. The morning after the bonfire, she pokes among its ashes and stirs up wisps of smoke: "Like ghosts they swirl about her shawl before the wind carries them out to sea" (431). Then she gazes out upon the water searching for some unnamed thing to drift ashore. It is an archetypal pose of the old outport – women waiting for lost men to return from the sea. The community, pulling together, is the only response to such a fate.

Endnotes

1. See Noel 262-285; Richard Gwyn, *Smallwood: The Unlikely Revolutionary*, 2nd ed. [1972] (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1999), 149-203; and Ralph Matthews, "The Smallwood Legacy: The Development of Underdevelopment in Newfoundland 1949-1972." *Through a Mirror Dimly: Essays in Newfoundland Society and Culture*, ed. Maura Hanrahan (St. John's: Breakwater, 1993), 203-244.
2. *Ayatollahs and Turkey Trots: Political Rhetoric in the New Newfoundland* (St. John's: Breakwater, 1981), 4.
3. Gwyn observes the paradox that Smallwood's "passion for his island has never encompassed the sea around it." His "lack of affection for things maritime" and scant admiration for the seasonal and subsistence nature of the inshore fishery led to an analysis that although the sea had created Newfoundland, the sea had also kept it poor. His inclination, as he put it in one election campaign, was "'to take the boys out of the boats' and put them in year-round jobs rather than to improve the boats for the boys" (205).
4. James Overton, "Towards a Critical Analysis of Neo-Nationalism in Newfoundland." *Underdevelopment and Social Movements in Atlantic Canada*, ed. Robert J. Brym and R. James Sacouman (Toronto: New Hogtown, 1979), 223.
5. "Survival in St. John's: Passion, Politics, and Oil." *Saturday Night* (November 1979): 6.
6. "The Newfoundland Renaissance." *Saturday Night* (April 1976): 38-45.
7. Cabot Martin, "Newfoundland's Case on Offshore Minerals: A Brief Outline." *Ottawa Law Review* 7:1 (Winter 1975): 34-61. At the time, Martin, educated at Memorial University and Queen's University, was the legal advisor to Newfoundland's Minister of Mines and Energy.
8. Donella H. Meadows *et al.*, *The Limits to Growth* [1972] (London: Pan, 1974).
9. E.F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful* (London, 1994) and Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).
10. André Gunder Frank, *Latin America: Underdevelopment or Revolution* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969). See also the brief discussions by Anthony D. Smith in *Theories of Nationalism* [1971] 2nd ed. (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1983), xiv-xviii, and Overton 232-234, which address the limitations of dependency theory.
11. Duley's Newfoundland novels are *The Eyes of the Gull* [1936] (Toronto: Griffin House, 1976), *Cold Pastoral* [1939] (Toronto: Griffin House, 1977), and *Highway to Valour* [1941] (Toronto: Griffin House, 1977). Her fourth novel, *Novelty on Earth* (New York: Macmillan, 1942), is set "in any colony." For critical commentary, see Alison Feder, *Margaret Duley: Newfoundland Novelist* (St. John's: Harry Cuff, 1983); G.M. Story, "Margaret Duley: 1894-

1968," *Newfoundland Quarterly* 71.3 (1975): 15-16; Linda Whalen, "Margaret Duley: A Critical Analysis," *Newfoundland Quarterly* 71.3 (1975): 27-29; O'Flaherty, *The Rock Observed*, 127-143; Adrian Fowler, "The Literature of Newfoundland: A Roundabout Return to Elemental Matters," 120-124; Joan Strong, *Acts of Brief Authority: A Critical Assessment of Selected Twentieth-Century Newfoundland Novels* (St. John's: Breakwater, 1994), 41-62; and Byrne, *Folk Tradition, Literature and a Society in Transition*, 265-281.

12. *Tomorrow Will Be Sunday* (New York: Doubleday, 1966). For critical commentary, see O'Flaherty, *The Rock Observed*, 166-168; Fowler, "A Roundabout Return to Elemental Matters," 125-128; and Byrne, *Folk Tradition, Literature and a Society in Transition*, 364-375.

13. See *Folk Tradition, Literature and a Society in Transition* 282-321.

14. *mumming*: "The practice of visiting houses disguised as a mummer at Christmas." *mummer*: "An elaborately costumed and disguised person who participates in various group activities at Christmas." *hoist-your-sails-and-run*: "cry by player in children's game of hide-an-peek before going to find the other players hiding; the game itself." [DNE]

15. *landwash*: "The sea-shore between high and low tide marks, washed by the sea." *tom cod*: 1. "A small immature cod-fish." *flake*: 1. "A platform built on poles and spread with boughs for drying cod-fish on the foreshore; FISH-FLAKE." *squid squall*: "A variety of small jelly-fish or *Medusa*." [DNE]

16. *brewis*: 1. "Sea-biscuit or 'hard tack' soaked in water and then boiled; such a dish cooked with salt water and fat pork." [DNE]

17. *splitting table*: "table in a fishing stage where cod or salmon are processed before salting and drying." [DNE]

18. For a detailed examination of the symbolic imagery in this story, see John Kivlichan, "Theme and Image in Norman Duncan's 'A Beat t' Harbour,'" *Newfoundland Studies* 7 (1991): 40-47.

19. "Rachel" has a more symmetrical plot than "Michael": the main character loses her father, her husband and her son in the same way. In addition, there are other interesting contrasts. The central bereft parent in "Michael" is a man; in "Rachel" it is a woman. In "Michael," the parent is abandoned, the child stolen by the denatured city; in "Rachel," the parent has her child stolen from her by nature (a storm at sea). "Michael" is a tragedy of moral corruption caused by living apart from nature; "Rachel" is a tragedy of human striving in the midst of a pitiless nature. In "Michael," honourable toil and steadfast faith are undone by faithlessness and dissolution; in "Rachel," they remain strong but are not enough. Finally, in "Michael," the loss is moral and contingent; in "Rachel," it is physical and final: in "Michael," "there is a comfort in the strength of love; / 'Twill make a thing enduring, which else / Would break the heart;" in "Rachel," there is no such comfort – loss leads to mental breakdown and death. See William Wordsworth, *Selected Poems*, ed. H.M. Margoliouth (London: Collins, 1959), 320-332.

20. See Byrne's comments on these and other anomalies in *Folk Tradition, Literature and a Society in Transition* 227-229.
21. "Gulf of Labrador" is a slip. There is no such place.
22. As indicated before, a strong sense of connection with the Mother Country was not universal in Newfoundland, being more usually a characteristic of communities settled by English Protestants rather than Irish Catholics.
23. See the accounts of swimming exploits of outport boys by Scammell and Pollett, which are not at odds with Pratt's presentation. [A.R. Scammell, "'Home Thoughts from Abroad.'" *Collected Works* (St. John's: Harry Cuff, 1990), 12, and Ron Pollett, "The Bridge." *The Outport Millionaire* (St. John's: Flanker Press, 1998), 25.]
24. "[N]o matter where the family temporarily pitched its tent . . . nor how warmly if deferentially the family was greeted by each new flock, the boy was always an outsider. Having no blood ties with the local clan, bearing an unfamiliar name, speaking a different tongue, wearing even a different dress, he could never have been accepted fully into the small, close-knit, and clannish community that the old outport was, even had his father encouraged his assimilation, which he did not." [Pitt, *The Truant Years* 20.]
25. "[D]etachment is the operative word when the relationship between E.J. Pratt and Newfoundland is being assessed." [Byrne, *Folk Tradition, Literature and a Society in Transition* 233.]
26. As Byrne points out, the kitchen, not the living room, would have been the one heated refuge in a fisherman's home. See *Folk Tradition, Literature and a Society in Transition* 228.
27. See *Collected Works*. All references are to this edition.
28. *slinge* v also *slindge*: "To avoid one's share of work; to idle, loaf; to play truant from school." [DNE]
29. The considerable variation in Newfoundland English from one bay (and even one community) to another can be largely subsumed under two dominant systems of grammar and pronunciation – Anglo-Irish and West Country English. See DNE, "Introduction," xi-xxxiii.
30. Pollett, "Memories of Didder Hill," *The Outport Millionaire*, 33.
31. See Byrne, *Folk Tradition, Literature and a Society in Transition* 291-301. Pollett's stories were published in a collected edition entitled *The Ocean at My Door and Other Newfoundland Stories* (St. John's: Guardian Associates, 1956). They have recently been reissued in two volumes: *The Outport Millionaire* (*op. cit.*) and *The Ocean at My Door* (St. John's: Flanker Press, 1999). Further references are to the latter collections (*Millionaire* and *Ocean*) and appear in the text.

32. *salmon peel*: "OUANANICHE; a variety of trout." *ouananiche*: "Landlocked Atlantic salmon." *tom cod*: 1. "A small immature cod-fish." *tansy*: "Rock gunnel, a small eel-like salt-water fish." [DNE]

33. *stage head*: 1. "End of a fishing stage which extends over the water where fish is landed." [DNE]

34. The following of Pollett's observations may serve to reinforce the caution against easy generalization about the similarity of the outports: "In this part of Trinity Bay the fishing industry, so characteristic of the Newfoundland coast, never amounted to much anyway but was pursued as a sort of tradition more than anything else." He goes on to say that it was only because the livyers were "good lumbermen" and kept cattle and gardens that they were able to afford so many "water-hauls" ("The Village Goes to Town," *Ocean* 54). *water haul*: "the pulling of a fish-net or trap to the surface with no fish enclosed in the device; any fruitless trip or enterprise." [DNE]

35. Ironically these innovations have now come to be popularly regarded as staples of Newfoundland culture.

36. *stanchion*: 2. "The rib or frame on the inside of a dory." [DNE]

37. Pollett's dilemma is the classic one of the returning ex-patriot, eloquently examined in a generic sense by the sociologist Alfred Schuetz in his article "The Homecomer," *American Journal of Sociology* 50.5 (March 1945): 369-376. Even if the homecomer "does not find that substantial changes have occurred in the life of the home group or in its relations to him . . . the home to which he returns is by no means the home he left or the home which he recalled and longed for during his absence. And, for the same reason, the homecomer is not the same man who left. He is neither the same for himself nor for those who await his return" (375).

38. See Elizabeth Russell Miller, *The Life and Times of Ted Russell* (St. John's: Jespersion Press, 1981).

39. *cuffer*: 1. "A tale or yarn." [DNE]

40. Pollett's recollected community is early twentieth century, close in time, if not in isolation, to Norman Duncan's Ragged Harbour. His re-visited outport, like Russell's, is mid-century. Miller indicates that, in his own mind, Russell had Pigeon Inlet more precisely located on "the White Bay side of the Northern Peninsula . . . near Conche, or Englee" but the information given in the chronicles is more general (*The Life and Times of Ted Russell* 160).

41. One hundred and thirty-nine of Russell's chronicles and tales have been published in five volumes: *The Chronicles of Uncle Mose.*, ed. Elizabeth Russell Miller (St. John's: Breakwater, 1975), *Tales from Pigeon Inlet.*, ed. Elizabeth Russell Miller (St. John's: Breakwater, 1977), *The Best of Ted Russell, Number 1*, ed. Elizabeth Russell Miller (St. John's: Harry Cuff, 1982), *Stories from Uncle Mose: The Best of Ted Russell, Number 2*, ed. Elizabeth Russell Miller (St.

John's: Harry Cuff, 1983), and *A Fresh Breeze from Pigeon Inlet: The Best of Ted Russell, No 3*. ed. Elizabeth Russell Miller (St. John's: Harry Cuff, 1988). Further references to these collections (*Chronicles, Tales, Best 1, Best 2 and Best 3*) appear in the text.

42. *sleeveen*: "A sly, deceitful man; a mean fellow; rascal; a mischievous child." *angishore, hangashore*: 2. "A man regarded as too lazy to fish; a worthless fellow, a sluggard; a rascal." [DNE]

43. Ted Russell, *The Holdin' Ground* [1954] (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972).

44. See Byrne's discussion of Russell's use of the tall tale in his article. "'Tall Are the Tales that Fishermen Tell': Manifestations of the Tall Tale Impulse in Selected Examples of Contemporary Newfoundland Writing."

45. *whort, hurt*: 1. "Any of a variety of low bushes, producing blue or blue-black berries; the fruit of these bushes harvested commercially or for domestic use; bilberry, blueberry, huckleberry." [DNE].

46. Byrne points out that the use of folklore (especially the tall tale) by writers emerges early in the popular literature of the American West and has been noted as well in mainstream writers such as Hawthorne, Irving and Melville. Furthermore, the phenomenon is not limited to the United States, as can be seen from *La Nouvelle Fabrique des Excellents Traits de Vérité* by Philippe d'Alcriste (1579) and *Baron Munchhausen's Narrative of His Marvellous Travels and Campaigns in Russia* (1785). [Byrne, "'Tall Are the Tales That Fishermen Tell.'" 310-311 and 323.] If the category is broadened to include dialect, Mark Twain and Robert Burns immediately come to mind. In Newfoundland, in addition to Scammell, Pollett and Russell, works by the following are important for an analysis of this issue: Otto Tucker, Cyril F. Poole, George H. Earle, and especially Ray Guy.

47. *making*: 1. "The process of preserving fish by salting and drying; CURING." [DNE]

48. *A Rope Against the Sun* was first produced at the Eastport Summer Festival in 1970. The first edition of the play was entitled *A Rope Against the Sun: A Play for Voices* (Portugal Cove: Breakwater, 1974). The sub-title was dropped in the second edition (St. John's: Breakwater, 1980). All references are to the 1980 edition.

49. The clearest indication of time is the reference to the mass being said in English rather than in Latin, which locates the action as post-Vatican II (45). Other time references are the disparaging comments of the schoolteacher, Michael Kennedy, about the girls of the community having "rollers in their hair," and his longing for his home town where he could "go for a beer with the boys," or take in a movie, or eat hamburgers (38). Yet another is the reference to Jake Connors's radio (39).

50. See Adrian Fowler, "Several Writers Named Al Pittman," *Poetry Canada Review* 7:1 (Autumn 1985): 36.

51. For Russell's observations, see above. Mowat's reflections are found in "Within These Walls," *This Rock Within the Sea: A Heritage Lost* (Toronto: Little, Brown, 1968). See also the analysis of the anthropologist Cato Wadel, "I've Had A Good Woman." *Now, Whose Fault is That? The Struggle for Self-Esteem in the Face of Chronic Unemployment* (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland/Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1973), 51-58.
52. Herb Follett's fate illustrates the limitations of orthodox religion, as represented by Roman Catholicism, in comparison to the powers of time and nature in commanding the allegiance of the outport people. Because he committed the unforgivable sin, the Church decrees that Herb must be buried outside the consecrated soil. But years later, when Father Power, newly arrived and full of ambition, declares that the graveyard must be expanded, Herb's remains come to be included within the holy ground after all. Since no one bothered to tell Father Power about this, it can be assumed that Jake Connors's sense of just retribution concerning it is shared by the community as a whole.
53. *Stars in the Sky Morning* was first produced by Molly Grub Productions at the LSPU Hall in St. John's in 1978, toured the West Coast of Newfoundland that same year, and was re-staged by the Mummies in 1981 at the LSPU Hall, after which it toured Nova Scotia. It was produced by Kam Theatre in Thunder Bay in 1981 and 1985, and in the second of these productions it toured Northern Ontario. The play was published for the first time in the anthology edited by Helen Peters: *Stars in the Sky Morning: Collective Plays of Newfoundland and Labrador* (St. John's: Killick, 1995), 49-84.
54. Of these, there are seven individualized characters and two generic "gossips" although the audience only gets to know five of the characters in depth.
55. There is one example in the play of the number seven being presented in the context of a charm when Aunt Mary recalls the time her husband was dying: "I sat with him for seven days and seven nights, and I had seven cups of tea and seven sips from one cup" (79).
56. *Salt-water Moon* (Toronto: Playwrights Canada, 1985). The play was first produced at the Tarragon Theatre, Toronto, in October 1984. See also "David French," *Encyclopedia of Post-Colonial Literatures in English*, ed. Eugene Benson and L.W. Conolly, 2 vols. (London: Routledge, 1994).
57. The November Storm began with a fierce four-hour "electrical storm," followed by flooding, which destroyed Allied trenches and drenched the men. The trenches of the Newfoundland Regiment suffered the worst damage, being located on the lowest ground. Next the wind shifted to the north, the rain turning to sleet and then to snow, and the soldiers, exhausted and wet, fell victim to the intense cold. Two hundred of the Allied forces either drowned or froze to death. Perhaps it is a testimony to their hardiness that no Newfoundlanders died, although one-hundred-and-fifty men were hospitalized (Nicholson 181-184).
58. Private Tommy Ricketts of Middle Arm, White Bay, had joined the Newfoundland Regiment at age fifteen, having given his age as eighteen. In October of 1918, at the Battle of Drie-Masten,

sizing up a deteriorating situation, Ricketts single-handedly retrieved fresh ammunition under heavy machine gun fire, recovered his position behind a Lewis gun and drove the enemy back, enabling his platoon to advance without casualties. He was seventeen years old at the time. After the war, Ricketts studied pharmacy and opened his own drug store in the west end of Water Street in St. John's. [Nicholson 491-492; *ENL*, Vol 4, 596.]

59. One of these is simply an anachronism. The Right Honourable Henry Dawe could not have been a Member of Parliament. In 1926, the time of the action, the government representative could only have been a Member of the House of Assembly.

60. *go in collar, come to collar*, etc: "to sign on or 'ship' as member of a fishing or sealing crew; esp to engage in the kinds of work preparatory to a 'voyage.' Also *break collar*: "to come to the end of one's period of employment." [DNE]

61. See Ian McDonald, "*To Each His Own*": *William Coaker and the Fishermen's Protective Union in Newfoundland Politics, 1908-1925* (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland/Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1987).

62. *Random Passage* (St. John's: Breakwater, 1992); *Waiting for Time* (St. John's: Breakwater, 1994). Parts 1 and 3 of *Waiting for Time* carry the story of the Andrews family into contemporary Newfoundland. At this point, I am concerned only with the middle section of the novel, entitled "Mary Bundle," which is an account of events already described in *Random Passage*. Further references to these novels (*Random* and *Time*) appear in the text.

63. Ned Andrews is an example. Even though he is a seaman who had worked in the Newfoundland migratory fishery, he is unprepared for life on the coast. Josh Vincent is baffled by the ignorance of Ned and his brother, Ben, and mildly exasperated by the way they have to be shown the same thing again and again (*Random* 36).

64. See "Heroic Newfoundland" 1-3.

65. See as well a similar remark by Lavinia Andrews in relation to the discretion of Josh Vincent (*Random* 36), and a second observation by Thomas Heywood when he introduces himself to the Vincents: "Beyond telling them that I represented Caleb Gosse, I offered no information, and, although they must have been curious about my past, they asked no questions" (*Random* 223).

66. *water*: 1. "The sea, esp that adjacent to the land, where the fishery is prosecuted; fishing grounds; freq in the phr *on the water*; SALT WATER." [DNE]

67. *bark*: "To immerse a fish-net, sail, etc, in the liquid formed by boiling the bark and buds of a conifer, as a preservative." [DNE]

68. *cove*: 2. "In a seaport town, esp St. John's, a short side street, built on the site of a filled in stream or cove, running from the main business street towards the harbour; usu in place-names." [DNE]

69. Thomas Hutchings, the fugitive priest, and Mary Hutchings, the fugitive agnostic, are the only hold-outs.

70. *hag*: 1. "The nightmare; freq in form **old hag**." [DNE]

71. *var*: "The balsam-fir; the wood of the balsam-fir; freq with defining word SNOTTY. SPRING." [DNE]

72. The pages in the Prologue are not numbered. I have counted back from the start of Chapter 1.

73. This refers to the late Palaeo-Eskimo (or Middle Dorset) people who inhabited Newfoundland at the same time as the Indian precursors of the Beothuk and whose tradition peaked between 250 and 550 AD. There is no evidence of their culture after 950 AD. See Ingeborg Marshall, *A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 255-257.

74. In an apparent slip, the narrator later says that the iron rod turned up in Thomas Hutchings's nets (*Random* 192).

75. Morgan conflated two real communities in naming Cape Random. *Random Passage* is dedicated to her mother, Sadie Vincent, of Cape Island, Bonavista Bay, and her father, William Vardy, of Random Island, Trinity Bay. The location of Cape Random, however, is identical with that of Cape Island.

76. Bond was Newfoundland's great statesman. A brilliant diplomat, he was also a man of honour and principle. After the bank crash of 1894, Bond, as Colonial Secretary of Newfoundland, re-opened negotiations for Confederation with Canada. When these failed, he pledged his personal fortune to secure a loan to stave off the bankruptcy of the country. See *ENL*, Vol. 1, 220.

77. If Ned was part of these discussions, however, they must have occurred more than sixty years ago. Thomas Vincent came to the Cape in the fall of 1820 and left fifteen years later in the summer of 1835. By that time, Ned Andrews was dead.

78. *Gaff Topsails* (Dunvegan, ON: Cormorant, 1996). See reviews by Joan Clark, *Tickleace* 32 (Fall/Winter, 1996): 110-12, and Adrian Fowler, *Newfoundland Studies* 13:2 (Spring, 1997): 102-06.

79. *dumb cake*: "cake mixed, baked and eaten in silence by young unmarried women wishing for a vision of future husbands." [DNE]

80. *caplin scull*: 1. "The migration of the caplin from the deep sea to inshore waters to spawn alongside the beaches." 3. "The shoals of cod-fish which appear in coastal waters in pursuit of the migrating caplin." [DNE]

81. The Society of Masterless Men is a legendary band of deserters from the British navy and escapees from legitimate plantations, led by Peter Kerrivan, who lived by their wits in the Butterpot wilderness, near Ferryland, in the late eighteenth century. They were pursued by the navy and four were hanged aboard a British frigate but most eluded capture. In the 1800s, as the civil law became less harsh, the group is supposed to have disbanded and its members married women from the coastal villages. [ENL, Vol 3, 480.] *boo-darby*: "Imaginary figure used to terrify children into good behaviour." *janney*: "Elaborately costumed person who participates in various group activities at Christmas; FOOL, MUMMER." [DNE]

82. The scene is reminiscent of the Gerty MacDowell episode in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, which also takes place on a beach and utilizes the imagery of cascading sparks – in Gerty's case a Roman candle bursting in the sky. See *Ulysses* (London: Penguin, 1992), 475-479. Kavanagh is said to have assisted in the translation of *Ulysses* into Chinese and he shows a knowledge and appreciation of Joyce's work. The diurnal structure of *Gaff Topsails* and its use of stream of consciousness narration indicate the influence of *Ulysses*. Other episodes in *Gaff Topsails* – the strapping of Kitt Hughes and Mary Dwyer wading on Gallows Beach – may be compared with scenes in Joyce's earlier novel – the pandying of Stephen Dedalus and the bird-like girl wading in the stream in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1962), 50-51 and 171-172.

83. *pitcher plant*: "Bronze or green perennial of boggy areas with a single tall capsuled stem growing out of a cluster of curved pitcher-shaped leaves which trap water and insects, the floral emblem of Newfoundland (*Sarracenia purpurea*); INDIAN CUP." [DNE] See Kevin Barron's earlier encounters with the pitcher plant: "the swollen purplish lips that form the rim of the bowl. The lips curve gently round the chamber and meet delicately at the tip" (317); ". . . he sees the delicate curving folds of the pitcher plant, purple and swollen" (327).

84. *scoff*: "A cooked meal at sea or ashore, esp at night and often part of an impromptu party." [DNE]

85. The chair came from an old wreck, the *Pegasus*, that went aground in 1777. The prevalence of shipwreck and its bounty for the community is apparent in Mrs. Dwyer's comment: "Every kitchen in the parish has got odds and ends off of some old wreck that brought up there" (347).

86. Prowse 8.

87. *Ibid.* 416.

88. Although never officially adopted as Newfoundland's flag, the pink, white and green "Tricolor" was widely accepted as such from its appearance in 1843, and is still the choice of Newfoundlanders with nationalist sentiments. [ENL, Vol. 2, 197-198.] The "Ode to Newfoundland" was composed by Governor Cavandish Boyle in 1902 and quickly became accepted as Newfoundland's national (now provincial) anthem. [ENL, Vol. 4, 150-151.]

89. *tilt*: 1. "(a) A temporary shelter, covered with canvas, skins, bark or boughs; LEAN-TO: (b) a small single-roomed hut constructed of vertically placed logs, used seasonally by fishermen, furriers and woodsmen." [DNE]

90. The big sea of 18 November 1929 was caused by an offshore earthquake about 250 km south of the Burin Peninsula that registered 7.2 on the Richter scale. This created first a trough and then a tidal wave between 5 and 15 metres that reached the Peninsula traveling at a speed of 105 km/h. Twenty-seven deaths were reported in connection with the event. [ENL, Vol. 1, 663.] Captain William Jackman saved the lives of twenty-seven persons on board the schooner *Sea Clipper* which ran aground at Spotted Islands, Labrador, in 1867. Jackman swam to the vessel twenty-seven times returning to shore each time with a survivor. [ENL, Vol. 3, 88-89.]

91. Even so, Father MacMurrough does perceive at least one telling similarity between the villagers and his fellow countrymen – their ferocious generosity: "Like his own Irish, these Irish use courtesy as a weapon, to ward off the enemy foreigner" (77).

92. "The other leaves us separate, incoherent; even more so, he can make us feel that we are not in touch with our own feelings, that we reject them or, on the contrary, that we refuse to judge them – we feel 'stupid,' we have 'been had'" (Kristeva 187).

Chapter Three

The New Newfoundland

Fall and Apocalypse

The community life of the old outpost was the prevailing myth of Newfoundland literature during the 1970s and 1980s. The reasons for this development are complex, and, as suggested in the last chapter, to some extent the phenomenon was a reflection of global trends in the theory and philosophy of growth that placed new value on the virtues of small-scale, traditional societies. The elements of this perspective were well-developed in some earlier Newfoundland writers, notably Ron Pollett, Arthur Scammell and Ted Russell, but the writer who was most influential in the re-valuation of the old outpost was Ray Guy, a feisty and fearless columnist for the *St. John's Evening Telegram*.¹ Guy proved to be a gifted political satirist and, by the late 1960s, he had become the most effective opponent to the government of Joseph R. Smallwood outside or inside the Provincial House of Assembly. Guy's effectiveness was due not only to his talent for ridicule but also to his political and cultural analysis of government policy and his ability to articulate the outrage felt by many Newfoundlanders at the dismissal of their traditional way of life. More than anyone else, Guy was credited with the demise of the Smallwood government in 1972, and the diagnosis of Newfoundland's ills that he represented became for a while the predominant stance adopted by politicians, public servants, journalists, academics, the professional classes and many members of the general public. The reaction that set in to the relentless industrialization of Newfoundland and the systematic dismantling of its traditional culture assumed political expression in the rural development policies of the government of Premier Frank Moores in the immediate post-Smallwood years. The resettlement

programme was abandoned and strategies for the community and economic development of rural Newfoundland were proposed.² As discussed in "The Old Outport," one manifestation of this perspective among Newfoundland writers was an attempt to recover imaginatively the stuff of outport life. Other writers, however, addressed the challenges of the evolving society and their implications for the future.

Ray Guy did both. In many columns, especially his earlier ones, his intent was to recapture the language and lore of the traditional outport somewhat in the manner of Scammell, Pollett and Russell. He did this from personal memory and his purpose was to restore respect for those that went before and for their way of life: "Praise God and all honour to our forefathers through generations who did never forsake this dear and fine Country" ("This Dear and Fine Country – Spina Sanctus," *Urchins*, 170). Guy was particularly effective in his recollection of the outport as seen through the eyes of a child. The authenticity of his view has as much to do with his joyous exploitation of the ironic nature of Newfoundland English as it does with his knowledge of the details of outport living. Some of his most vivid evocations come from excerpts from an imaginary work, "Guy's Encyclopaedia of Juvenile Outharbour Delights," which he unflinchingly introduces by adopting a mock professorial tone and writing in a formal, exaggeratedly learned style. He also exhibits an eloquent appreciation for the rough beauty of Newfoundland and claims a sense of ownership derived from the sacrifices made by previous generations in order to live there. This honouring of landscape and climate in association with ancestral struggles leads naturally to his use of the term "country" when talking about Newfoundland, a word he prefers to the more politically charged "nation."³ Guy's use of irony in these pieces creates a conspiratorial relationship with the reader and acts as an inoculation

against sentimentality. Sincerity and passion underlie the irony, however, and these traits, combined with a sure sense of the mood of Newfoundland in the 1960s and 1970s, enabled him to claim an extraordinary allegiance among his readers.

Because Guy was a bitter opponent of centralization, he was accused on at least one occasion of viewing the traditional outport through rose-coloured glasses. He was indeed galvanized by government policies that denigrated the past achievements of Newfoundlanders and undermined the pride and initiative of the present generation. He posed a contrast between a past in which Newfoundlanders eked out a challenging subsistence living through hard work, ingenuity and knowledge, developed and passed down over generations, and a present that rewarded cunning in accessing meaningless government make-work programmes designed to enable workers to qualify for Unemployment Insurance. For the sake of emphasis, he sometimes exaggerates to make his point, though he is too much the satirist to romanticize the past. This is clear from his recollection of the horrors of the one-room school, nicknamed Buchenwald Elementary, in which underpaid and underqualified teachers took their frustrations out on their students through ingenious acts of sadism ("A Spirit of Wisdom and Grace," *Bay*, 1-6). As for the present, Guy's view is decidedly post-lapsarian. He writes about post-Confederation Newfoundland, and the innocence of the world of Grandma and Grandpa Walcott has been blown.

In the fictional community of Bung Hole Tickle, for example, "three parts of the population past the age of puberty were troubled with bad backs and, in consequence, had to heave themselves on the government." But the fishing has picked up and, according to a local observer, "with fish the price it is now 'tis hardly worth a person's while to HAVE a bad back"

(“Mr. Sylvester Codpiece Senior,” *Vapors*, 82). The values and the skills that made survival possible in the old outport had been declared obsolete and thrown overboard. But the new socio-economic system was not designed for the traditional culture, and it did not work as it was intended. The combined effect of the Canadian social welfare system and the resettlement programmes funded by the provincial and federal governments often went tragically awry: “many families went from productive (if low paying) employment to unemployment insurance and welfare.”⁴ Loss of pride soon led to a debilitating dependence upon social assistance. Guy lampoons this demoralizing outcome in “Getting Out and Around,” in which he pretends to overhear the following conversation in a St. John’s restaurant:

“. . . sure they been shackled up for only these two weeks now. He’s left his wife up in Bung Hole Tickle. He took to the bottle and she took to the Bingo.

“So she took to her scrapers and come down here with her sister. He took the car, she took the furniture, the finance company took the house and the government took the youngsters.

“She met buddy up at the Legion and they took to one another right away.

“That took the wind out of her sister’s sails and she chucked her out. Her sister is took up with religion, see, and didn’t want that kind of stuff going on.

Buddy belongs to a different church.” (“Getting Out and Around.” *Vapors*, 14-15)

The breakdown of the traditional social structure could hardly be more succinctly or more amusingly summed up. But for Guy this is no laughing matter. He blames one man, Joseph Smallwood, and social planners at both levels of government, for the damage done to the old outports.⁵ At the same time, he challenges Newfoundlanders to put aside the poisoned chalice of

dependency upon the public purse: "We must see what our own Country can give us without being perennial parasites on someone else" ("Naked to Laughter When Leaves Fall." *Bay*, 146).

In such exhortations, Guy typically cites examples from the past: "We're none of us angels but the people who came before us here in Newfoundland put a lot in the bank for us. They gave us something to try to live up to. They were wronged and they suffered hardship in centuries past and still they managed to stay decent" ("From Thy Nest Every Rafter Shall Rot." *Bay*, 127) At the same time, he goes out of his way, in the 1970s back-to-the-earth era, to disabuse the naive that they can return to the old ways. In a brief recounting of all they would have to learn in order to do this, Guy makes it abundantly clear that the traditional life required enormous skill and knowledge that have since been lost: "Even persons in the outharbours would be left just as helpless and floundering as town folk if the bottom dropped out" ("Just a Punt and a Jigger." *Urchins*, 31). Nevertheless, after the Smallwood government is defeated, Guy writes optimistically about a new day dawning. The following passage reflects the blend of landscape, climate and culture referred to above:

It is dawning, and what the day's weather will be like remains to be seen.

But we can take a stiff breeze or two.

And one morning early, sometime soon, the sun will rise in a cloudless and deep blue sky on grass so green it seems to be afire: its heat will soon bring out the smell of the earth, there'll be hardly a breeze on the water and all the long day until nearly ten o'clock in the evening the sun will shine and it will be fresh and warm and clear.

And we will have our souls back. (*Bay* 147)

His later collection, *This Dear and Fine Country* (1985), is not so hopeful. The Newfoundland of Skipper Abraham Boggs is filled with the insanity of open line shows, political scams and cultural chaos. The disconnection between people and government seems irreparable. Guy portrays Newfoundlanders as having been so long without good government that they think bad government is normal. They are case-hardened now: "I'd say three parts of Newfoundland wouldn't bother getting out of bed on resurrection morning" ("Rock Bottom is Top Notch." *Country*, 119). An obstinate vitality remains evident in the people but it is exercised in ways that are almost vengefully anarchistic. The parson down in Bung Hole Tickle, for example, gets a government gear replacement loan "to string marker buoys on the Ten Commandments." That is, he figures out a way to use a gear replacement loan to repair the belfry of the church. But the men of the community use only half of the lumber to build the new belfry and sell the other half for 100% profit in Tickle Cove East. As Uncle Abe puts it: "Ottawa may be too slow for the Reverend Gentleman but the Reverend Gentleman is too slow for us" ("The Sea-Going Belfry," *Country*, 30-31).

Other writers enlarge the concept of Newfoundland society by introducing communities that were not traditionally associated with the place. In 1970, for the first time, the company town becomes the setting of a significant work of Newfoundland literature in Percy Janes's *House of Hate*.⁶ Although the focus of this harrowing novel is trained on the personal antagonism and anguish of the Stone family, a strong sense still emerges of the paper town in which members of the family live and work. Furthermore, at the beginning and at the end of the novel, an attempt is made to ascribe the dysfunctional behaviour of the family patriarch, Saul Stone, more broadly to the impoverished Newfoundland society in which he grew up. The Stone family tragedy,

appalling in its dimensions, is compelling probably because of the story's admittedly autobiographical nature, and the novel derives strength not only from the quality of the writing, which is up to the task at hand, but also from the unflinching honesty of the narrative.⁷ Whether the diagnosis of the causes of the tragedy is believable is another matter. The narrator himself is not convinced though he wants to believe that it is so.⁸

"Hate is the child of fear," we are told in the opening lines of the novel. "and Saul Stone had been afraid of one thing or another all his life" (9). From the experiences of his father and grandfather during the days of the potato famine in Ireland to his own experiences growing up in Newfoundland. Saul had known nothing but poverty, insecurity and ceaseless toil. Shipwrecked on the coast of Newfoundland while bound for Boston, only he and his mother surviving, he is marked for life because of this accidental landing: "While millions of emigrants went on safely to the waiting riches of the United States, and thousands to the fertile plains of Canada, a dark and vicious fate brought this woman and her child to the shores of this great wedge of rock, tip-tilted against a continent" (11). In the aptly named Raggedy Cove, Conception Bay, "a ragged V cut into the coastline of solid rock," with its "few shelterless houses" backed by a "grey rocky barrens sparsely dotted with fir trees and blueberry bushes," he knows only one thing: work. At age thirteen, he ships aboard a schooner to fish the Labrador. At fifteen, he goes to the ice. For a while, he works as the driver of a baker's cart in St. John's until he travels across the island to seek work in the new paper mill. There he gets a job in the blacksmith's shop and marries Gertrude Yeovil from Haystack, Placentia Bay.

Gertrude herself has had similar experiences as the daughter of a fisherman growing up in a community that, despite its name, is barren of grass or hay but near good fishing grounds. As a

child, she is fed bread and molasses to keep hunger at bay. She wears a dress made out of a dyed flour sack. She is plucked out of school to work in the lobster canning factory when she is eleven, and her hands are forever torn and bleeding from the jagged pieces of lobster shell and the edges of the cans. Desperate to escape from Haystack, Gertrude stows away on a vessel bound for St. John's where she gets work at Government House. Then she too boards the train for greener pastures on the west coast of the island where she is hired as a kitchen maid in the Company Inn in Milltown.

In these brief descriptions of Raggedy Cove and Haystack, a consistent picture is created of the Newfoundland outpost in terms of a barren, rocky landscape, never-ending labour shouldered from childhood, and a dreary, stifling community life. Escape to the "grim" and "gloomy" old city of St. John's is an improvement for both Saul and Gertrude, and their move to "clanging, thriving" Milltown is even better (17-18).⁹ In Milltown, there is plenty of work, better wages for labourers, and, as it turns out, job security. Even in the midst of the depression, despite down time and a wage cut, the mill continues to produce paper for the world's newsprint markets. This is at a time when many Newfoundlanders in the outports and St. John's were living off "the dole" on six cents a day.¹⁰ Nevertheless, Saul Stone, respected in the community, develops into a tyrant within the home, physically and psychologically abusing his family to such an extent that the hatred he perpetrates reverberates even after he is dead, crippling most of his children for life.

Relatively prosperous, Milltown is also pretty. Set in the "ruggedly beautiful haven of the Bay of Islands, a spot where every prospect pleases," the town has a great oval harbour at its feet, the Humber River flashing and thundering down a deep valley to its doorstep, and is "ringed and

cradled by an unbroken range of blunted sierras, fir-clothed on their inner slopes, turning the air at their summits into a misty indigo haze in the afternoon light.” Socially, however, the town is stratified – comprising a small upper class of management and professional personnel who live in a planned community of architecturally designed houses built by the paper company on the only level land in sight, and a large working class of migrant workers from the outports, like Saul and Gertrude, who build their own houses according to no particular plan on Humber Heights and the West Side. On the edge of the West Side, in Shacktown, live the very poor and, beyond that, in Crow Gulch, the outcasts – bums, bootleggers and prostitutes. The focal point of all is the mill, “a vast amorphous pile covering acres and acres, from the peninsula of bark that kept creeping out into the harbour back to the enormous pyramids of pulpwood that lay on the landward side.” The conveyors feeding these mountains of wood are described in phallic terms, dropping their “sperm of logs” and giving life to the whole town. The mill works ceaselessly, day and night, seven days a week, always from that immensely sprawling paper factory emanating “a hiss of steam and a belch of smoke and hum of power, plus periodic waves of the nose-tickling, throat-clutching sulfur dioxide gas” (32-33).

These images are far removed from the ones readers had come to expect of Newfoundland. Milltown is like a frontier community, a contrast to the settled out harbours or the old seaport of St. John’s that evolved over hundreds of years. The town was created almost overnight. A vivid sense of what that may have been like is provided by Harold Horwood who reports that in the early days the town was “a sea of mud”(33). When the narrator, Juju, returns in 1961 after an absence of thirteen years, he is struck by the asphalt paving and concrete that had replaced “the old wobbling plank sidewalks of my earlier years” (186). There is violence not only

in the Stone family but in the town itself. Saul Stone nearly kills a man in the mill with a shovel, and he himself is brutally attacked, hit in the stomach with a sledgehammer, for uttering unflattering sentiments about the Pope and the Blessed Virgin Mary. Reference is made to more than one murder in Crow Gulch. The working class townspeople are recognisable Newfoundlanders – their dialect gives them away – but this is industrial Newfoundland. It is not an entirely new phenomenon – there were other company towns – paper towns and mining towns – dating from the early years of the twentieth century, and the dream of industrialization was dreamt long before Joseph Smallwood by his mentor, the notorious Sir Richard Squires in the 1920s, and by other leaders before Squires. But the company town does not enter into the mythology of Newfoundland until *House of Hate*.

The searing family portrait of the Stones is Janes's great achievement. Although Juju tries to account for his father's pathological behaviour by referring to poverty "and its Siamese twin ignorance" and the "endless humiliations of spirit" he suffered in youth, one has to look no farther than Gertrude Yeovil to see that this was not the cause (319). While far from perfect herself, Gertrude does not become a monster like Saul Stone despite a similar upbringing to his and despite his brutal treatment of her in marriage. She is a strong, sometimes pitiable, but ultimately compassionate person. Juju's effort to generalize Saul Stone's paranoia, self-loathing and insecurity to "an island-wide inferiority complex" is a desperate attempt to find meaning where there is none. It says more about Juju than it does about Newfoundland society. He is his father's son, damaged to a lesser extent and in a different way, but bearing the marks of "a secret coldness and a savage misanthropy" that can be traced to an abusive family situation (318). What is authentic is Juju's own pathological negativity or depression that saddles him with such a

jaundiced view of the world.

On the other hand, the portrait of the company town, although it is a relatively small part of *House of Hate*, is a significant contribution in the literature of Newfoundland to the presentation of modern Newfoundland society. While industrialization was a fact of life in Newfoundland since the first decade of the twentieth century, the company town represented a departure from the traditional society. The old outport and the old seaport – St. John's – had existed in an uneasy, quarrelsome, but symbiotic relationship for centuries, and this socio-economic pattern, for better or worse, was distinctive, perhaps unique, to Newfoundland. The company town is, in contrast, an international phenomenon, introducing a generic social structure and value system dictated by the corporate imperatives of enterprises like paper-making, mining, or for that matter, military defence. The idealistically planned Townsite area of Milltown, based on the Garden City movement, is imported into Newfoundland, but it is not designed for Newfoundlanders – they are overwhelmingly the labourers who flock to the new town for the prosperity and progress that it offers but they are not welcome in Townsite.¹¹ The outport culture they bring with them endures but over time it undergoes a change in response to the new socio-economic order. Janes does not explore this in depth, but he is the first Newfoundland writer to acknowledge the phenomenon.

The working class society of industrial Newfoundland is also the subject of Al Pittman's collection of short stories, *The Boughwollen and Other Stories* (1984), and the setting, Corner Brook, is the same as *House of Hate*.¹² Buckingham Road, a fictitious name for a real street on the West Side, is populated almost entirely by Protestant families whose men "knew little but labour all their lives, to whom back-breaking shift-work in the barking and grinding rooms of the

pulp and paper mill was a blessing bestowed upon them by God" ("The Day of Judgement" 74). The first-person narrator of the title story acknowledges that it "was tough being a Catholic on Buckingham Road," knowing that his Protestant friends "never had to say the rosary after supper and they could commit all the sins they wanted without ever a thought of purgatory or hell" ("The Boughwofen" 4). As the quotation reveals, the stories are told mostly from the viewpoint of an adolescent. Often with redeeming humour, but sometimes with a sharp edge, they recount the exploits of young and old alike on Buckingham Road, exploring conflicts over sexual awakening, first love, delinquency, madness, intolerance and betrayal. The confused yearning of the young and the world weariness of the adults are depicted always with sympathy but also with an uncompromising refusal to explain away tragedy. In the meantime, the reader gets a vivid sense of a gritty 1950s neighbourhood with its semi-rural landscape: Mr. Penney's field, where baseball is played with the same intensity as at Brooklyn's better known Ebbett's Field; Rideout's woods, where, in the mind of a lonely, father-bereft boy, a mysterious "thing" lurks, somehow associated with his loss; Mr. Blake's barn, the site of an enterprising and disastrous striptease show; the falls above the brook where an estranged young girl is discovered bathing naked and is driven like a witch screaming down the road; the Burnt Hills, where blueberry picking sometimes gives way to more passionate outdoor pursuits within the bushes, and where, for a time, a small herd of vagrant horses roams until they are tormented eventually to death; South Brook Beach, where the Dionysian annual Labour Day Picnic takes place, the one day in the year when the men on the street, all restrained by a Protestant unease with alcohol, can get "roary-eyed drunk" and even their wives forgive them.

"Everybody on the road," we are told, "has someone in the san dying of T.B.," and in

other ways too the family life of Mr. Blake is representative of the neighbourhood ("Mr. Blake" 11). Mrs. Blake, wearying of her husband's refusal to die, turns to screen magazines and dreams of movie stars. One of the boys breaks into his father's shop and goes to jail. Another dies retrieving a foul ball from the top of the backstop when he touches a live wire and falls to his death. One of the girls marries a Catholic, and Mr. Blake decides the world is coming to a bad end. As if that were not enough, his only unmarried daughter is pregnant with no one to marry. The mores of Buckingham Road, by and large, are severe and repressive. Although it boasts no monsters to challenge Saul Stone, he would not have been out of place there. As in *House of Hate*, the dialect of the characters, their delight in ribaldry, and their taste for torment and teasing mark them recognisably as Newfoundlanders, though they inhabit a cultural environment that is far removed from the traditional outport.

Michael Cook deals with the contemporary and emerging outport but in each case he depicts a fallen world. In *The Head, Guts and Soundbone Dance* (1973) and *Jacob's Wake* (1975), Cook highlights cultural change in Newfoundland by projecting the outport into the future.¹³ The first of these plays is set presciently at a time that has now come to pass, when the cod fishery – the main foundation of the outport way of life – has collapsed. The two main characters, Skipper Pete and Uncle John, spend their days in the stage and splitting room acting as though nothing has happened, repairing nets, making killicks, waiting for the fish to come back.¹⁴ Skipper Pete is an old tyrant and Uncle John, his son-in-law, is both under his sway and resentful of this fact. Change is everywhere and the old man simply does not accept it. This is illustrated early in Act One in a conversation about the visit of the bishop. In the old days, the bishop would come by boat and the community would build bough arches to celebrate his arrival.

Nowadays, this custom, symbolic of the seriousness and significance of the occasion, has fallen into disuse, and Skipper Pete does not bother to go and see the bishop because the visits no longer have meaning for him. Similarly, he refuses to attend the funeral of Aunt Alice, even though she was kin, because she was “a Pentecost”: “Never been to a Pentecostal service in me life an I’m too old to start that foolishness now” (25). This is not simple sectarianism.

Pentecostalism, although introduced to Newfoundland as early as 1910, was regarded with some suspicion by adherents of mainstream Newfoundland denominations – Church of England.

Roman Catholic and Methodist/United Church – and portrayed as an interloper preying off the vulnerable and associated with the breakdown of the traditional culture.¹⁵

Skipper Pete stands for a fierce and pitiless ethic of self-reliance. Taxed by Uncle John with a reminder of his cruel treatment of his son Absalom, he defends himself by referring to the times: “Alright for ye to talk now John. But ye knows ye had to bring ‘em up ‘ard else they wouldn’t survive” (11). Now he rails against the new order which has allowed the fishery to be destroyed by foreign overfishing and created dependency on government in place of initiative and hard work: “them damn politicians, and their stupid industries; and that damned Ottawa letting every bloody foreigner in the world drag the beds clean . . . Relief . . . Welfare. Education. What was wrong with these, eh? (*Holds up hands*) What was wrong with these?” (45) He also espouses a relationship with the codfish that goes beyond seeing them as a resource to be exploited:

They’s waiting for the old days like we is. When the trap and the handline and the jigger was something they understood and we understood. We took what we could get. They knew us, and we knew they, and they bred faster than we could take them. They bred enemies too, theirs and ours . . . We can’t give up on ‘em. We

can't give up on ourselves. (46)

But Skipper Pete's voice, though compelling, is not a privileged voice in the play. When Uncle John wonders whether the good old days really were good, Skipper Pete does not answer him but looks down at the net in his hands and changes the subject. Another dissenting voice, even stronger, is the Woman (Skipper Pete's daughter and Uncle John's wife). The old man does not want her in his stage. Partly this is because Pete is a traditionalist and women were not welcome there (just as men were not welcome in the kitchen once the work day had begun). But Pete also knows that the Woman poses a threat to his fantasies. The Woman ridicules them because she senses that they represent a hold that Skipper Pete still has over her husband. Uncle John is aware of this, and he is torn both ways. He even admits that Skipper Pete came between him and his wife in the bedroom in his insistence upon being presented with a grandson. The Woman says that the two men are making fools of themselves living a dream of times that are gone forever: "Talking about things that once were and will never be again. Thank God" (*sic*. 26) Later, the desperate adherence of Skipper Pete to his fantasy and the hold he has over Uncle John are shown to have tragic consequences when little Jimmy Fogarty falls off the wharf and drowns because the two men are so caught up in their dream of the past that they do not go to his assistance. Although this is a rather improbable event in a play written in the realistic mode, the symbolism and the irony are unambiguous.

The female voice in this play does, however, represent a commonly accepted difference in the traditional outport values emphasized by men and women. This reflects the difference between the stoic values of heroic Newfoundland and the community values of the old outport. It is illustrated by the argument over whether Uncle John will attend the funeral of Aunt Alice.

Skipper Pete declares his intransigence based upon Aunt Alice's untraditional Pentecostal beliefs. But the Woman, his daughter, remonstrates with him: "She was kin, father. Ye should be ashamed of yerself" (25). The heroic myth is much less accepting of change. The community values of the old outport are more capable of translation into new social structures. Outport men, revering the deeds of their fathers, find themselves diminished in the present. Outport women, concentrating on the welfare of their children, are more inclined to take a chance on the future. Women are often portrayed, therefore, as being more inclined, however regretfully, to support both Confederation and resettlement. An example is Mel, in Tom Cahill's play about Confederation, *As Loved Our Fathers* (1974), who ultimately votes against Responsible government and her patriarchal colleague Con, suggesting a feminist rejection of a male-dominated concept of Newfoundland.¹⁶

The proletarian perspective on outport Newfoundland is also evident in this play in the exchange between Skipper Pete and Uncle John concerning the hunting of gulls. The gulls are now protected, of course, and Uncle John observes: "Seems the law's agin anything a man might do to help hisself to a good meal" (12). This conjures up the outport society that lived outside the reach of the laws of government, and in which people obeyed unwritten and even unspoken codes of behaviour that emerged naturally from the necessity to co-operate for purposes of survival and that were enforced by peer pressure in small communities within which and from which there was no escape. But this Newfoundland is just a wrenching memory in *The Head, Guts and Soundbone Dance*.

Although *Jacob's Wake* is nearer the present, it ends with a collapse of apocalyptic proportions. Here there are three generations: another old tyrant, the Skipper, a former sealing

captain who has been bedridden for thirty years; his son, Winston, who has devoted his life to becoming an expert on making moonshine and cheating the Welfare; and Winston's three damaged sons – Wayne, a crooked politician and rising star in government, Alonzo, a small-town party organizer on the take, and Brad, a fanatical religious fundamentalist with a shady past. The female characters are Mary, repressed spinster school teacher and sister of Winston, who always wanted something better for her favourite nephew, Wayne; and Rosie, the salt-of-the-earth wife of Winston, who struggles heroically to keep the family together.

In *Jacob's Wake*, Cook turns Russell's concept of the holding ground on its head.

Through the metaphor of the house (home) as ship, the family and the culture are depicted as being at sea. "Is the house secure?" the Skipper demands of his son, Winston, and although the response – "Aye, Skipper. Mooring fast fore and aft." – is meant to humour the old man, it is abundantly evident that it is not true (60). In fact, to please his Aunt Mary, Wayne is conspiring to put his grandfather in an insane asylum. He offers Alonzo a government contract as payment for forging his father's signature on the necessary document. And the sinew and fibre of the culture have weakened with the generations. The Skipper, still a hard case though an invalid, has suffered but he is not insane. He has an elemental strength that is admirable in comparison with the booze-sodden impotence of his son, the prissiness and hypocrisy of his sister, and the conniving and cheating of his grandsons. A noteworthy feature of his world-view is an identification with nature that has been lost in the new Newfoundland. When the Skipper tells Winston about sealing, it is evident that he sees humans as a part of a complex web of interdependence in nature. He is filled with unsentimental admiration for his prey and its marvellous adaptation to its environment. He sees the seals and the sealers as alike in both

having enemies in nature:

Swiles is bred and killed in Hell, boy. Dis is their starm! The starm fer the young swiles! Oh, they'll love it. Swimming up in their t'ousands, looking for the pack ice to breed on. Fierce mothers, boy. Fierce and proud, I tell ye . . . And the young, helpless, floundering. But we be the same, boys, plunging and stumbling on the floes.

He starts to get excited.

It's their element, boy. Not ours. Our gaffs is their enemy. The nor'easter and the ice is our enemy. (60)

This view recalls both Skipper Pete's attitude towards the codfish in *Head, Guts and Soundbone Dance* and the identification of seals and sealers in Pratt's *The Ice-Floes*. Its loss is associated in the moral sphere with hypocrisy, pretentiousness and lack of empathy and in the management of natural resources with a kind of *hubris* concerning the superiority of human science and technology that allows greed and rapaciousness free rein, leading inevitably to the depletion of the resource.

Many years ago the Skipper sent a party, led by his son Jacob out into a storm on the ice and lost them all in an episode reminiscent of so many Newfoundland sealing disasters. He relives this nightmare constantly, defending himself outwardly but blaming himself within. When he has Rosie read from the ship's log for the day Jacob was lost, however, it emerges that he was not as much to blame as he thinks. The day dawned a bit mauzy and the glass was dropping but there was nothing to indicate really bad weather.¹⁷ Later, when the Skipper looked back at the retreating watch, he could see "a weak sun spilling t'rough a scad of snow" (86). The sealers

seemed to form a thin black cross on the ice. Then the ground drift swallowed them up.

This archetypal storm, harking back to the warrior days of heroic Newfoundland, dominates *Jacob's Wake*. It re-enters transformed in the story of Mildred Tobin, a promiscuous young woman who was driven by her father out into a storm just an hour after giving birth, both mother and baby perishing pathetically under Winston's dory where they tried to take shelter.¹⁸ This particular rendering implies a violation of the ethic of kinship and community that underlies the myth of the old outpost. And a storm in the present constitutes the climax of the play, as a state of emergency is declared, communications to the mainland are disrupted, and the government resigns. At the end, *Jacob's Wake* shifts from realism into the mode of epic theatre, and the symbolic significance of the storm is enlarged to encompass the whole of Newfoundland society, an expansion that is appropriate given that the culture itself extended kinship beyond blood lines to include all members of the community.¹⁹ In the process, Cook includes the two earlier myths of Newfoundland society in his portrayal of a besieged and dislocated present.

The Mildred Tobin story illustrates complexities and tensions that Cook sees in the older myths as well as in the death of these myths. A harsh, fatalistic religion is interwoven within the world-view of men like the Skipper. In expressing his contempt for his grandsons, he says: "Not one of ye a man. Not one of ye like Jacob. Ye've no God. And ye've no guts. Ye're nothin', the lot of ye" (76). Perhaps this patriarchal religion enables these men to cope with unbelievable horrors on the ice and on the sea but it also leads Uncle Jim Tobin to drive his daughter and her child out into the storm. Thus intolerance for sexual misbehaviour is seen to represent a double standard for men and women. When Mary and Rosie argue the case, Mary defends Uncle Jim as being "morally right," but Rosie points out that, although what Mildred did was wicked, "the

fellers she done it wit' is alive and well enough to sing the Lord's praise on the Sabbath and nobody minds dat." While Mary argues that Mildred got her "just deserts." Rosie pronounces: "t'were a terrible way to die in a place where we're all kin" (95-96).

Among the second generation children, Winston and Mary are in contrast. Whereas Winston is lost between the old and the new values, Mary looks to a future that will eliminate a shameful past. The production notes reveal that, along with Brad and Wayne, she has successfully suppressed her native speech, except for the occasional slip when under pressure, and she works obsessively to impose the rules of standard English upon her charges at school. This represents her vision of a better world. Winston, on the other hand, despises Mary's prissiness and savagely mocks her puritanism, darkly hinting that it has warped her, emerging in sadistic behaviour in the classroom. There is even a suggestion that Mary's relationship with Wayne has incestuous overtones – she gave him his weekly bath until he was thirteen. It is clear, at least, that she became a surrogate mother for Wayne, displacing Rosie as a model and mentor. The suppression of animal nature is associated in the play with religion and upward mobility and it results in cruelty, perversion and sterility.

On the other hand, Winston staggers towards enlightenment. While sitting with the old man, he recognises that a house is a ship and that this one is adrift. Then, when Mary accuses Rosie of "moral ignorance," Winston angrily springs to his wife's defence and experiences an epiphany in which he reveals the anguish of his ruined life, sedated and destroyed by alcohol, but also a casualty of cultural disintegration symbolized by the storm that threatens to rip the house asunder at the end of the play:

Seems as the times was wrong. Everything changed afore I knew what to do. The

old ones so damned sure . . . And they . . .

Nodding towards WAYNE and ALONZO.

So certain. Though what about, the Lord knows. And us, Rosie. us . . . Like rats in a trap, with the Welfare as bait. I didn't know what to do, so I didn't try. (125)

Shortly after this, Winston discovers the document with his forged signature designed to send his father to "the Mental." For the first time in his life he takes action, reaching for his shotgun and shooting unsuccessfully at his sons (128-130).

By now, the audience has been led to believe that the Skipper has expired in his upstairs room. but, as the storm reaches its peak, he strides in the front door with the vigour of man in his prime. Dressed in his Master's uniform and barking orders left and right, he takes over the "ship," commanding Winston to take the wheel and hold it steady. "Comes a time," he declares, "when things has to be brought together as best they kin. When ye has to steer into the starm and face up to what ye are" (136). As the women are ordered below and the men take up their positions as though manning a sealing vessel trying to find a "lead" in through the ice, the sound of a seal cry is distinctly heard above the fury of the storm, and it is clear in the Skipper's last speech that the survival not only of the Blackburn family but of Newfoundland itself is on the line.²⁰

Blood and fire and ice. A swile. A swile. I wor right, boys. They've come back.

The swiles is back. Newfoundland is alive and well and roaring down the ice pack. A swile. A swile. (138)

The message is clear. In order to survive as a culture, Newfoundland has got to recover the old values and find a way of translating them into the present. It is a sentiment that recalls Ray Guy's

declaration: “we will have our souls back.” But in *Jacob’s Wake* the outcome is left uncertain.

In contrast with *The Head, Guts and Soundbone Dance* and *Jacob’s Wake*, which are futuristic accounts of the fate of the Newfoundland outport, Cook’s one-woman monologue, *Theresa’s Creed* (1977), is a reminiscence and a lament.²¹ ‘Therese’ Moriarity is a widow, “a largish woman in her mid forties” (*sic*), who has struggled to raise a family of eight, five of whom are still at home (85). Her monologue reveals the incredible changes she has witnessed in her life and the incredible resilience she has demonstrated in coping with them. In her own time, she has experienced outport life when there were no choices. Boys were thrown into manhood before they were wet behind the ears. Girls more often than not got pregnant and then got married to the boy they had slept with. This was an inflexible rule for courting couples that betokened some tolerance for pre-marital sex but no latitude whatsoever once pregnancy occurred. At that point, it “wor between famblies . . . got nothing to do with ye or he at all and whether ye wanted to or no”: “Ye’ve made yer bed and now ye must lie on it” (88). For this reason, Therese says, most girls of her generation were careful in their choice of sexual partners. Now she worries that if her daughter, Bernice, gets pregnant, there will be no marriage and the pressure will be upon Therese to rear the youngster.²²

Similarly, her generation had very little in the way of worldly possessions when they were growing up. But it didn’t “seem to matter den dat we got nothing. We was all together den.” All members of the community were on the same footing and regarded each other almost as family. Now that close socializing – the visiting, the singing, the pranks and tomfoolery – are things of the past. Her eldest son’s accordion has not been played in five years. Therese is on welfare and cannot afford to replace the “blower” on her stove. Her children, however, live in a consumer

society and they naturally want what other children have got: "All the youngsters wants is skidoos and cars and I can't say as 'ow I blame 'em, fer everyone else has got one or t'other or both, though God knows how they pays fer 'em at all" (95).

But although Therese has weathered the storms of social and cultural change, it is evident that her late husband Pat did not fare so well. He was beaten down not so much by the responsibilities of having to raise a large family on a fisherman's income or by the fact that the fish were getting scarce, but by a denigration of the occupation of fisherman and a loss of the old fatalistic acceptance that was an integral part of the world-view of the generations that went before. These things undermined his confidence in the value of his struggle – "all them people living off'n, putting ye down, scorning ye fer what ye was" (93). The older generation coped with the hardship and tragedies of their lives by asking no questions of anyone. "If dere men died 'twas the will o' God. If dey was no fish, 'twas the will o' God. If dey was no doctor this fifty mile and much o' that across water, they'd wait for'n to die and dat was the will o' God." The loss of this faith is illustrated by the story Therese tells of Joe Green and his brother who walk out on the ice pack hunting seals. When they do not return towards evening, Pat and his eldest son Jack go to look for them even though it is now dark and the seas outside are fierce. Therese pleads with him not to go, fearing for his life and that of her son, but he replies, "Dey's kin . . . And if dey weren't I'd go anyways." In this respect, Pat and his son belong to heroic Newfoundland. In his attitude towards the result, however, Pat reveals himself to be of a different generation. He and his son succeed in recovering one of the bodies before the weather drives them back to shore. But when, at the wake, the priest invokes trust in God in the face of such losses, Pat angrily rejects this view, saying that God has nothing to do with it. "It was dem," he

says, "and the way it is here. an' who knows but dey didn't want to go dat way, fer there's damn all to keep us" (98). Therese senses Pat's own despair in this speech and suddenly feels that the man she loves is a stranger.

The source of this hopelessness is cultural disintegration and the resulting loss of meaning that was embedded in the traditional culture, evident even in the cause of the tragedy. Joe Green and his brother were not working when they were lost. Therese says they had no business being on the ice because it was breaking up. Their recklessness was caused by their drinking: "[D]ey was wild, dem two, an' wild fer the taste o' seal meat" [*ibid.*]. Although the older generation of fishermen could drink with the best of them, it was not customary or acceptable behaviour to drink while working in the woods, on the ice, or on the water. This became more common with Pat's generation, reflecting an increasing sense that the traditional life was no longer real and that in following it Newfoundlanders were going through the motions trying to keep alive a way of life that was doomed. Although that life was still extraordinarily challenging, the deep resources that the culture had once provided to help people cope no longer seemed available.

Therese ends her monologue with a vivid memory of the last time the whole community went to Duck Island to celebrate mass in the old church. When they were reciting the Apostles' Creed, Therese realised that Pat was crying. Later, a picnic atmosphere prevailed on the island, and at the time Therese thought that it was the beginning of something, but now she realises that it was the end. They never celebrated mass on Duck Island again, her husband is now gone, and Therese must "live off the welfare." Welfare is not only demeaning in itself but it is doubly galling because, while the Welfare Officer is making life hard for her, he is facilitating the claim

of a less needy woman in the community in return for sexual favours. Not only the socio-economic integrity but also the moral integrity of the traditional life has been destroyed.

In spite of this, Therese survives, working day and night to rear her children, maintaining her moral integrity and her sense of humour. Although her husband may have lost his stoical faith, Therese has not lost hers, perhaps indicating how outport women coped with social upheaval compared to men. Earlier, when Therese's fifteen-year-old son Walter got into trouble with the law for shooting a moose without a licence, it was his mother not his father who accompanied him to his court appearance. Although Pat would "[s]peak to the Divil in his own house" and "on the water he wor like a lion," outside these two places he was meek and mild (91). Therese not only speaks up for her son in court, she also boldly stands up for her social class, maintaining that laws that punish the poor for taking action to feed their families are unjust laws. Cook portrays the outport woman, less dependent upon the heroic life, as being better able to translate the virtues of the traditional culture into new modes of organization and discourse.

If *Theresa's Creed* is a lament for the old outport, Al Pittman's *West Moon* (1980, 1995) is its full-blown elegy.²⁵ The play takes place in the re-settled village of St. Kevin's, Placentia Bay, on All Soul's Night when, according to a well-known superstition, the dead temporarily regain their powers of speech. Those buried in the cemetery comprise a representative sample of the community. One by one they awaken to consciousness, resurrecting the joys and hopes, conflicts and disappointments of their lives. Although the characters are strongly identifiable as Newfoundlanders by their speech and their story telling, it is their humanity that makes them memorable and sympathetic. In the opening speech of the play, "A Voice" effectively evokes a physical landscape that is suddenly and strangely bereft of human activity. In St. Kevin's this

November All Soul's Night

there are no human eyes alive and shining where once, not too dark a time ago, fishermen returning from their dreams upon the sea could see with blazing eyes the firebrands waving the way for livyers moving from house to house upon the hills, their bright kitchen visits over for the night, as they blinked their way, with caution, curses and prayers, home to their wide-awake beds. (6)

Now the only fires that can be seen are in the eyes of the animals who "go about their animal business in the dead dark, in a wilderness of ruins." The otter, the rabbit and the fox explore the abandoned community at will. The arrogant frogs croak their solemn sermons to the night. Crabs crawl over the rocks below the skeletons of stages and stores.²⁴ Mice run among the headstones in the graveyard beneath the waterfall of Ladore. The village, once alive with human effort and aspiration, is being reclaimed by nature.

Although the audience is immediately confronted with this forlorn emblem of the vanity of human wishes, the dead of St. Kevin's are not yet aware that they have been abandoned. It is not until the second half of the play when one of the recently buried characters mentions the controversy and conflict over resettlement that the others become aware that something unthinkable has overtaken their community. Suddenly they hear that a way of life that seemed timeless is being questioned. The government is proclaiming that it can not afford to keep the small settlements going. It will be too expensive to provide modern services like electric lights and a hospital clinic and anyway the fishery is finished. There is a lot of talk "[p]uttin' down the place." The local "member" has made a speech saying that Newfoundland is nothing but a nation of squid jiggers, that it is a disgrace that people have nothing better than trunk-holes for toilets,

that these remote communities are too cut off to be a part of “the new age.” the “age of industry” (34-35).²⁵ The priest chimes in, saying that he can no longer get teachers to come to the village, that they can afford to keep up the school no longer, and that from now on no one will have the slightest chance of finding a job without a high school education. The community is now divided against itself and this seals its fate. As the dead discuss these developments, Nish Rogers speaks up, and they are faced with the terrible realization that their loved ones have moved away. Nish, who in life had not been able to talk, finds his voice in death. He says nothing for the longest time because he is not aware that he can. But the debate over resettlement loosens his tongue, and he relates how on the day the community was to leave St. Kevin’s forever, he was asked by the priest to lock up the church. Suddenly Nish was overcome by despair. He was understood in St. Kevin’s. People accepted him for who he was. Unable to face the puzzlement and perhaps scorn of strangers, he hangs himself from the choir loft.

On one level, the argument behind *West Moon* is illogical. Is the abandonment of forbears intolerable, a crime against nature? Must the living always stay close to the graves of their parents and loved ones? In human terms, leaving home is difficult, but often necessary and liberating. The fact is that four or five generations back, these forbears left their own forbears behind in England and Ireland never to visit their grave sites again. Leaving loved ones behind was the condition that made Newfoundland outports possible in the first place. On the other hand, the outports developed a sense of ownership within themselves that was directly proportional to the communal contribution made by the villagers in enabling these communities to survive and prosper. In these small communities, this was not an abstraction. The contribution was unmistakable and real. The sense of ownership was therefore unusually high, probably much

higher than it was in the villages and towns these Newfoundlanders left behind in the old country, and the sense of loss when this was gone must have been correspondingly more profound.²⁶

More to the point, however, is the extent to which Pittman succeeds in getting the audience to identify with these characters not as outport Newfoundlanders but as human beings. While the characters feel bereft of their loved ones and of the village of St. Kevin's, what they really mourn is the removal of any tangible sign that gives meaning to their lives. In the case of three of them, this idea is imaginatively formulated in terms of losing touch with the world they have known. As long as everything above ground remained the same, Ned Shea could remember his shop, Jack Leonard could remember his wife, and his son Aaron could remember his fiancée. With nothing to hang these memories on, the memories themselves are undermined and the connection between living and dead is broken. In the case of Rose Hepditch and Bill Sullivan, the loss is more straightforwardly expressed. Rose's garden, which was so much a reflection of herself, will disappear amidst the weeds and wild flowers it was her mission to resist, and Bill Sullivan's grave will no longer inspire stories of the master mariner, "the only man anyone knows who rode out *The August Gale* . . . there'll be no way now that they'll even know that I was alive. A tombstone standin' in the middle of the woods don't serve to remind nobody of nothin'" (44-45). When the passionate engagement of ordinary lives is fully appreciated, their disappearance without a trace is a point of enduring and universal existential significance.

A Culture Fights Back

These plays by Cook and Pittman constitute a highly crafted literary response to the issues

of cultural dislocation that became the preoccupation of many Newfoundland writers, artists and intellectuals during the 1970s and 1980s. With the première of *Cod on a Stick* at Theatre Passe Muraille in October 1973, an irreverent, politically charged analysis of these issues suddenly emerged.²⁷ Originally a twenty-minute collection of skits by a group of young Newfoundland actors working in Toronto, the show was an instant success. It was quickly expanded to forty-five minutes for a second run at Passe Muraille in December 1973 and January 1974, and, on the basis of this encouragement, the group adopted the name CODCO, further developed the show into a full-length play, and brought it back to Newfoundland where it opened at the Basement Theatre of the Arts and Culture Centre in St. John's in February 1974. In April, it toured the province, playing to an estimated 5,271 people in twenty-three towns and villages. *Cod on a Stick* galvanized Newfoundland audiences. Ray Guy lauded the troupe for creating theatre from a fresh and unpretentious tapping of Newfoundland culture, suggesting that other writers should take note:

The lesson is there. What was looked down on as too obvious or common or 'uncultchahed' has taken the lead in the end. . . . Instead of trying to hammer out great lead zeppelins of stage plays and books that come across like a bunch of Viking gods holding a slanging match in a herring factory, we might do better to take long bus rides with our ears cocked.²⁸

Guy contrasted the imported and imitated art and entertainment favoured by the commissars of official culture in Newfoundland with the local skits, songs and plays that had prevailed in earlier days, personified by the witty and wicked St. John's balladeer, Johnny Burke, known as the bard of Prescott Street.²⁹ Predicting a return to the vernacular tradition, Guy pronounced: "The cat is

out of the bag. The children of Johnny Burke have landed and they are wise and clever far beyond their years.”

Cod on a Stick was inspired by alienation and exasperation caused by a rendering of Newfoundland that was largely created by that master propagandist, Joseph R. Smallwood, and swallowed hook, line and sinker by a well-meaning but complacent national media. This was the image of Newfoundland as “the happy province,” a slogan that actually appeared on Newfoundland licence plates during the 1960s. The opening stage directions signal a representation of outport life that is quaint and stereotypical, with references to National Film Board Newfoundland-film sounds and mock Memorial University of Newfoundland Extension Choir voices singing a traditional Newfoundland song. The first lines of the play, spoken by the old fisherman Ned Ivany, parody this romanticized portrayal of Newfoundland: “I’ve been fishin’ here in the cove nigh on to fifty-four years. Oh, I love the simple life.” Ned’s speech is directed at the audience who are addressed and drawn into the play as mainland visitors. But every step of the way, this sentimental depiction of Newfoundland is relentlessly undermined. Ned introduces the guests to his mother-in-law, all the while wiping the drool from her mouth with his sleeve and acknowledging – “Mudder’s been like dat fer nearly forty years now.” Then he rhapsodizes about how wonderful it is to sit down in his kitchen and pass the time of day with his wife at the very moment his wife Sarey is heard offstage yelling warnings and imprecations about tracking mud all over her shag rug and hitting the bottle before tea. Next, Ned speaks movingly about the comfort of children just as his son Phonse enquires offstage – “Dad, what are ya after doin’ with the keys to that God-damn car?” – and the sound of a face slap is heard amidst a shouting match between mother and daughter (6-7). The characters do a complete about-face when they notice

the mainland visitors, falling effortlessly into the well-practised act of the colourful and hospitable outpost Newfoundlander, getting out the good china and pointing out the “antique” furniture. Although they are hoping to entice the mainlanders to stay with them, the guests become increasingly uneasy and flee the scene, at which point Ned and the others go after them with the net.

The way this scene shifts from manipulation to menace – careering wildly off the rails in the direction of fantasized violence – became a characteristic CODCO device to express the frustration of a people expected to fall into the role of the stage Newfoundlander upon command or subjected to enquiries for which the answers were already scripted. At the same time, the device is empowering because the Newfoundlanders cynically play this role, nevertheless, since it is the only one available to them, and gain the upper hand on the gullible mainlander in the process. The verbal agility and low cunning of CODCO’s Newfoundlanders were liberating for audiences because it showed Newfoundlanders using wit and craft to maintain some kind of control and integrity even though the deck seemed stacked against them. This was not only a welcome alternative to grief and despair, it also framed the issues in a way that suggested remedies.

This is clear in a series of scenes in the middle of *Cod on a Stick*. The Newfie puppet is given over to Assistant Captain Canada by the Queen of England (Captain Canada being too busy to concern himself with such an unimportant task). Exuding the false geniality of a carnival hustler and referring to Newfoundland as “Number Ten,” Assistant Captain Canada offers the province a free ticket to success and clean living. After showing no interest at all in what is done in Newfoundland – hunting, farming and fishing – he offers a tourist industry, offshore oil, and a

huge federal government building in St. John's that contains the elevator to success. But Newfoundlanders riding the elevator to success are subjected to a relentless mispronunciation of the name of the province – *Newfoundland* – and a succession of Newfie jokes. They also find that among the hundreds of federal grants – DREE, DREDGE, DRODGE, DUD, FAT, FARB, FOOB, FRY, FLIP, FLOP, FLOOP, PLIP, PLOP AND POOP – there are none, unfortunately, for FISH. This prompts the query: “Mr. Pink, have you ever thought that breaking your back in an open dory is not a viable source of income?” (40)

Three scenes illustrate the way in which world-view is embedded in language and communications technology. In one, a Canadian Jesuit enthusiastically corrects the speech of his young Newfoundland charges, setting one of them straight even on the pronunciation of his own name. In a second, the spokesperson for the Newfoundland delegation to Ottawa speaks in plain Newfoundland English about the grievances of the people but the simultaneous translation into bureaucratese reveals a yawning gap between the discourse of the metropole and the hinterland. In a third, this disjunction in discourse is illuminated in terms of a disjunction in media as Mr. Morris Power is put under the scrutiny of the television cameras to explain his way of life for the benefit of viewers. The scene begins with the intimidating paraphernalia of modern communications technology threatening to overwhelm the uneducated lighthouse keeper but in the end the monosyllabic Mr. Power prevails over the glib television interviewer because he wisely refuses to play the game according to rules he does not understand. This theme is taken up again at the end of the play when Joan Watson and George Finstad bring the CBC programme *Marketplace* to Newfoundland for some token coverage of local issues so that the programme can not be criticised for being too preoccupied with Upper Canada. They are seeking the quaint,

picture-postcard Newfoundland, but they run up against the reality of Mrs. Hickey, eight of whose thirteen children have been taken from her and put into foster homes. When they try to stifle this story and move in on someone who looks folksy – a guy with a toque and not a tooth in his head – he turns out to be from Toronto.

These messages are not only funny, they are also very clear. If the national media want to really understand Newfoundland, they can begin by showing sufficient respect for the province to learn to pronounce its name properly, and look beyond the stereotyped images of the place to the real issues. The implied prescriptions, however, were not only for mainlanders but also for Newfoundlanders. CODCO demanded that Newfoundland leaders, whether in politics, the media or the arts, stop peddling phoney images of the province. The fine balance CODCO struck in making this point is illustrated in Scene 13 in *Cod on a Stick*, “The Dance.” The strong accents, rough banter, and laconic come-ons of these outport teenagers give them away. The courting rituals are distinctive to the culture – “Want a few scuffs?” is the elegant invitation to the dance. But, at the same time, these are modern teenagers listening to rock and roll and smoking dope. The song sung by the local band – pretentiously and incongruously titled “Cerebrum” – is called “Hurt Me Incredibly,” and it is a mindless celebration of masochistic sex. This hard-edged material completely undermines the sentimental view of the outport whether held by patronizing outsiders or hypocritical insiders. At the same time, it validates the locals, showing them to be tough and shrewd and not that different, at bottom, from teenagers anywhere – except perhaps they are less coddled and more worldly-wise.

Cod on a Stick also conveys political messages with exquisite irony. The characters enthusiastically and chauvinistically attest to their happiness in spite of the high cost of food and

clothing and the absence of sewerage. They comment on the remarkable happiness of Newfoundland politicians. They cite the great blessing of the wonderful "DREE" road that went through Maggie Cheeseman's vegetable garden, relieving her of the burden of "foolin' with the dirty vegetables anymore."³⁰ Now the truck can come right from St. John's to her back door bringing her "tinned fancy peas and niblets and frozen beans" (27-28). A similar point is made in the song sung by Stompin' Tom Connors in the "Marketplace" scene:

Our fish all go to Norway,

Come back in little cans,

They retail at four fifty.

So we stick to Klik and Kam. (65)

Newfoundland's abundant natural resources are exploited in such a way that the lucrative processing jobs are located outside the province and the returning product cannot be afforded by the people who originally harvested it. The result is that in some ways post-Confederation Newfoundlanders do not live as well as they did under the old system. Another issue is the fear that the renewable resource of the fishery will be sacrificed for the fast fix of oil development. The following lines, reportedly found among the graffiti on a wall of the women's washroom in the Imperial Tavern on Dundas Street in Toronto, became the central message of the song of the "Wild Cod":

The wild cod lie dead in the ocean,

The wild cod lie dead in the sea,

They all died of water pollution,

Caused by the oil companies.³¹

Although it was not pollution but overfishing that resulted in the catastrophic collapse of the Newfoundland cod fishery, the apprehension that the resource would not be properly managed proved to be true.

Of CODCO's four other plays, *Sickness, Death and Beyond the Grave* (1974), *Would You Like to Smell My . . . Pocket Crumbs* (1975) and *The Tale Ends* (1976) raise issues that certainly indicate that Newfoundland was riding out some very contemporary storms – physical disability, child abuse, family dysfunction, feminism and homosexuality – but these plays are all less directly political than *Cod on a Stick. Das Capital* (1975), on the other hand, zeroes in with even greater clarity on issues of cultural identity, cultural commodification and cultural breakdown. The play also breaks ground in shifting the focus of an exploration of these issues to the capital city of St. John's. Cultural identity in Newfoundland has almost always been formulated in terms of outport communities. *Das Capital* contests this notion, conjuring up the rough street culture of St. John's, with its own distinctive language and lore, and representing it as threatened in the same way Newfoundland as a whole is threatened. The play suggests a symbiotic connection between urban and rural Newfoundland although it also examines ingredients historically present in the relationship – bigotry and greed – that threaten its viability.

If *Cod on a Stick* challenges Canadian audiences and institutions to get past the stereotypes about Newfoundland and to make an honest effort to understand the realities and aspirations of the province, *Das Capital* challenges Newfoundland audiences and institutions not to peddle those stereotypes. In other words, the play makes it clear that there is an enemy within. This is most evident in the scenes that depict "The House of Budgell," a boarding house in downtown St. John's in which the redoubtable Mr. and Mrs. Budgell rent out squalid rooms to

desperate tenants at exorbitant rates. The description of their house as a “debased downtown house with small vinyl slider windows and wide clapboard” not only conjures up a poor working class neighbourhood but also references a trend in the modernization of downtown St. John’s that underestimated the aesthetic value of its distinctive vernacular architecture (140). In the opening scene of the play, Mr. Macarelle, a naive accountant from Brig Bay, remarks that the room he is being offered is very small, but Mrs. Budgell points out that it is “an efficiency apartment. You can stand in the middle of the apartment and touch everything in the apartment” (142). When Mrs. Budgell tries to pressure Mr. Macarelle into signing the twenty-year lease, he attempts to escape, but at this point her messianic husband enters and Mr. Macarelle is lost.

As Mr. Budgell expounds his vision for St. John’s, he tells Mr. Macarelle how lucky he is to be living in the city. It might be a little crowded and the traffic has gotten a lot worse, but he has been to New York and there you walk down the street and you look up and “there’s some old nigger lookin’ out at ya. All the black and the sweat pourin’ off him. By God, he just as soon spit in your eye as say ‘Hello’ to ya he would.” In St. John’s, on the other hand, “[y]a got none of that *hatred*, that *hatred* that goes on between the rich and the poor in the big cities.” On the contrary, Mrs. Budgell adds, “[t]he poor are very happy here.” Warming to his theme, Mr. Budgell points out that he is “not a bigoted individual” – in fact, “a liberal thinker if the truth were known” – but in St. John’s, he is glad to say, “ya don’t have any of your *God-damned (Speaking almost under his breath.) blacks!*” (160-162)

Moving from racism to progress, Mr. Budgell outlines a future built on the assets of the present. He explains that with the clean air and the friendly people, you’ve got “a picture postcard existence.” His scheme calls for the building of big buildings to make the mainlanders

feel at home. Then “they go down the street in the morning and the Newfoundlander is friendly to ‘em. We’ll pay the God-damned Newfoundlander to be friendly to ‘em. We’ll give ‘em a voucher. . . . if you’re friendly, you get the voucher. No friendliness. no voucher.” Mr. Macarelle adds that it will be important to “train the Newfoundlander to react only off the voucher.”

Translating Mr. Budgell’s insights into the language of business, he points out that they are talking about marketable resources and “Newfoundland’s only resource is friendliness” (164-166). Elated by a future in which his “accounting genius” and Mr. Budgell’s “natural cunning” can be combined, Mr. Macarelle decides to rent the efficiency apartment.

A restaurant scene enables the audience to witness the implementation of Mr. Budgell’s plan. Two waitresses cynically put on friendly faces and thick Newfoundland accents to go to work. Friendliness vouchers have become the currency of the day, and the waitresses seem to have adapted perfectly to the system. They don’t always find it easy, especially with some of the mainlanders coming on to them, but their attitude is philosophical: “Now, when they starts handing out the familiar vouchers, there won’t be no stop signs on me. I’m as liberated as the next girl . . . but you can’t expect me to be familiar when I only gets paid to be friendly” (169). As in *Cod on a Stick*, however, the behaviour required in marketing Newfoundland culture as a commodity takes a hidden toll, eventually emerging in violence. The scene shifts from manipulation of the off-guard and increasingly anxious tourists to escalating menace and finally to mayhem as the cook goes berserk, does “a bizarre series of gyrations reminiscent of traditional step dancing.” and mows down the customers with a mock machine gun.

A similar escalation into violence occurs later when Mr. Budgell delivers a visionary speech describing the changes in store for downtown St. John’s. Whole neighbourhoods will be

guttled to make way for the multi-lane roads and glass towers necessary to convert the city into Mr. Budgell's dream, which reaches a climax with an observation that "all the big executives can get up in the skyscrapers and control the whole area." This sends Mr. Macarelle into a fantasy in which people can climb these towers with spyglasses and high-powered rifles and shoot the poor people: "Yes!" he says. "They do it in Texas, it's called sniping!" (174-175) Peters comments thus on the transformation of the meek outport accountant into a would-be mass murderer:

The timid accountant's initial revulsion towards the Budgells and their accommodation is overcome by Mr. Budgell's bludgeoning address, which forces Mr. Macarelle to share his view that Newfoundland life is perfect, that the poor are to be exploited, that foreigners are undesirable and that every opportunity for financial gain must be seized. (xxv)

Given that Mr. Budgell and Mr. Macarelle are character types, this is really a description in miniature of the evolution of fascist values. At the same time, it anticipates the violence of an impersonal and alienated society that replaces a disintegrating or destroyed traditional culture in which violence was effectively contained and averted.

The Budgells and Mr. Macarelle represent one threat, among the *petit bourgeoisie*, to the ability of the traditional culture to absorb and manage change in a healthy way. A second threat is found among the upper classes. The *nouveau riche* of St. John's reveal their grasping ambitions and their tasteless plans for the future of the city. At first, like Mr. Budgell, they plan to turn it into a concrete jungle in imitation of the big cities they think are superior but a flash-forward indicates that eventually they will try to re-instate its historic charm. A group of nasty, money-grubbing status seekers, not very smart but bloated with self-regard, they have bratty children,

eliminate all traces of their native accents, especially if they are from the bay, and no longer have any empathy with their fellow humans. A central piece of dialogue has the men at the window remarking upon the difficulties of an old man outside trying to push his car out of the snow. When he falls to the ground clutching his chest, they lose interest and change the subject. This is the perfect reversal of the imperative to render assistance that is a central value of the traditional culture.

The commodification and gentrification of the traditional culture are satirized in a spoof of a CBC Newfoundland television variety show popular at the time. References to gay liberation, a song about “gobby hawkers” and a stilted and sanitized portrayal of the female star of the show are all designed to challenge the complacent and respectable depiction of Newfoundland culture. The church is seen to be implicated in the maintenance of repressive and exploitative social structures in a scene in which Father Dinn strives heroically to convince children of their inherent sinfulness, and in another scene in which the Archbishop blesses Trizec Corporation’s Trinity Towers development, comprising “the God the Father Office Tower, the Holy Ghost Shopping Plaza, and the Son of God Saloon” (191). And Rex Murphy’s interview with Premier Frank Moores, contrary to the Premier’s intentions, exposes the extent to which a new downtown development is designed to benefit only the rich and powerful. The development will provide “hundreds of jobs for thousands of Newfoundlanders for the next three years.” (189).

Not surprisingly, given that the title refers not only to the capital city but also to the famous work by Karl Marx, *Das Capital* describes a Newfoundland society in which wealthy capitalists and would-be capitalists (like the Budgells) exploit the poor and needy. This analysis

extends beyond issues of power imbalances between metropole and hinterland as reflected in discourse, stereotyping and media attention that are so much the focus of *Cod on a Stick*. Nevertheless, in *Das Capital* this Marxist critique is placed, as in *Cod on a Stick*, within a social context that locates Newfoundland's sense of identity in the culture of its working class. The entrepreneurial and capitalist classes, like parasites, exploit this sense of identity, commodifying it and distorting it to suit their own purposes. It is, however, the only thing the working class has left, the only instrument remaining that might create sufficient awareness and solidarity to enable corrective political action to occur. The unvarnished depiction of the working classes in *Cod on a Stick* and *Das Capital* is extreme because its intent is to destroy the romantic and sentimental renderings of Newfoundland that are seen to perpetuate their exploitation. The characterization created a shock of recognition in Newfoundland audiences, however, and, beneath its rough exterior, it is an affectionate and empowering portrayal.

Two scenes in *Das Capital* focus on the working classes. The first is set in a St. John's corner store which has just been the site of a break-in. The two women who own the store carry on, serving young urchins who step over the broken glass to request cigarettes and adults who shop there as much to pass the time of day as to acquire needed goods. Although they complain bitterly about the break-in while waiting for the police to turn up, they have it in perspective. The cops, who burst into the store with guns drawn, do not. This is petty thievery, no one has been hurt and no one is in danger, at least until the police arrive. The overreaction of the police is portrayed as a laughable imitation of American cop shows on television. In fact, at the time of this show, the Newfoundland Constabulary did not carry guns. Although they enjoyed considerable support within the community, Newfoundlanders were generally opposed to the

lobbying of the police association to carry sidearms. This seems based on a predisposition to believe that incipient violence was better managed through negotiation and/or physical and psychological intimidation by members of the community rather than through force exercised by professionals.

The second working class scene is the only one in *Das Capital* that is located outside St. John's, and it is the final scene in the play. Two young townie women enter a club somewhere 'out around the bay.' They have a government youth grant to tag birds, which creates great merriment among the locals, and a degree of flirtation and good-natured bantering takes place. In the end, however, the women leave without reciprocating for the beer they were brought, and this confirms the notion that "[t]hey're too stuck up in St. John's to break wind" (198). This is the final line in this play about the town by a group of townie theatre artists. The cultural divide between town and bay is emphasized in this scene for the purpose of underscoring the need to bridge it.³²

Ray Guy's advice that Newfoundland writers would be well-advised to follow CODCO's example and "take long bus rides with our ears cocked" is a testimonial to the troupe's ability to recover and represent a theatrical and rhetorical style that is part of the popular oral culture of Newfoundland. This is why his reference to Johnny Burke is so telling. One example of CODCO's success in doing this is in the language of threats. In *Cod on a Stick*, when Ned Ivany's teenaged daughter Theresa enters into a bantering dialogue about the merits of various kinds of alcohol with the observation, "I'll take the Dipper," his fatherly retort is: "You saucy slut . . . I'll break your arm" (14).³³ Two similar examples can be found in *Das Capital*, both involving Mrs. Costello. While introducing herself to Mr. Macarelle, she exercises parental

responsibilities by “[s]creeching upstairs” to her children: “Boyd, Kimmy, get away from that television and get down here or I’ll blind ya!” (141) Later, she delivers this un-Spocklike injunction: “Boyd! Get away from that television or I’ll cripple you my son. I’ll maim you!” (160) The extreme violence of the language is deceptive. Not the mildest action is taken to follow through on these warnings, and it is evident that the children know how seriously to take them, which is to say, not seriously at all. Verbal violence reflects a general delight in hyperbole common in the vernacular speech tradition of Newfoundland but it may also constitute a learned process of sublimating violent thoughts, in effect defusing them by such exaggerated expression that the distinction between reality and fantasy is made clear.³⁴

A more directly political response to cultural and economic neo-colonialism is found in the work of the other major theatrical collective of the 1970s, the Mummers Troupe. Under the direction of Chris Brookes, the Mummers revived the traditional Christmas Mummers Play, in which they rightly detected elements of subversion and rebellion.³⁵ The play emerged out of English peasant culture during the middle ages, and, transplanted to Newfoundland, thrived for generations in the outports and among the working classes of St. John’s into the late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries.³⁶ The Mummers chose to make this ancient play the annual centre piece of their work because they regarded it as an authentic proletarian alternative to the imported middle and upper class theatrical traditions that prevailed in St. John’s and the larger towns of Newfoundland in the first decades following Confederation. Brookes argued that the suppression of mummering among Newfoundland’s white settlers was part of the pattern that also required the suppression of aboriginal cultures: “Destruction of indigenous culture is the best insurance against militant resistance” (*A Public Nuisance* 14). As a counterpoint to the revived Mummers

Play, the troupe evolved an aggressive style of contemporary collective creation that depended upon ethnographic and other forms of research and combined elements of Brechtian epic theatre, clowning, *agit-prop*, and straightforward documentary. The intention was to create politically empowering reflections of communities based upon the words and stories of the people themselves.³⁷ Between 1972 and 1982, the Mummers Troupe successfully created and performed such shows as *Gros Mourn* (1973), *Company Town* (1974), *East End Story* (1975), *Dying Hard* (1975), *IWA: The Newfoundland Loggers' Strike of 1959* (1975), *What's That Got to do with the Price of Fish?* (1976), *The Bard of Prescott Street* (1977), *They Club Seals, Don't They?* (1978), and *Some Slick* (1979). Under the direction of Jan Henderson, Rhonda Payne, and Mary Walsh, the company also mounted the first performances of Payne's own piece, *Stars in the Sky Morning* (1978), Al Pittman's *West Moon* (1980), and the collective *Makin' Time with the Yanks* (1981), but it was the plays produced under the direction of Brookes that contained the sharp-edged political satire that was the Mummers' trademark.

Unfortunately, only one of the Brookes-directed plays has been published, *They Club Seals, Don't They?*³⁸ In some ways, it was a difficult play for a politically radical troupe to mount in that it supported government policy and clashed with the views of protest groups who in other circumstances might have been their natural allies. But the radicalism of the Mummers had a strong cultural dimension. Brookes was trained in theatre at Yale and the University of Michigan and liked to quote Marcuse and Brecht, but his analysis depicted the plight of the fishermen, miners, and other members of the working class in Newfoundland in terms of the dependency theory of André Gunder Frank. The Reevesian myth of the Newfoundlander as outlaw and underdog is reiterated in the first scene of *They Club Seals, Don't They?* Two characters, George

and Maggie, are introduced, and they stay with the action through the centuries, clearly identifying themselves as representing the typical outport Newfoundland man and woman. It is interesting to note that Maggie is shown to be the manager of the family while George does the fishing. Maggie is the one who negotiates with Charles II so that they are permitted to settle in Newfoundland, stands up to the merchant while George has the wool pulled over his eyes, and tells off the reporter who tries to make her sealer-husband look like a murderer and a savage. She has the stronger and shrewder sense of their rights and grievances and is more confident and capable in articulating them. Maggie is also independent-minded. While George votes against Confederation, she votes in favour. She soon becomes disillusioned, however, when she meets Johnny Canuck and he explains that the reason Canada doesn't have a fisheries policy is because the government does not want to offend its trading partners.

In the past, state-sanctioned harassment by English and French is complemented with exploitation by the merchant classes. In the present, the protest over the seal hunt has become a circus (emphasised by the set and the use of clown action) in which science is distorted, the media are manipulated and a middle-class urban world-view is thoughtlessly imposed on primary producers in the hinterland. The seal hunt is condemned, even though the herd appears to be thriving, while the perilous state of the cod stocks is ignored. Comparisons are made between outport Newfoundlanders and rural and native citizens in other parts of Canada who live by hunting, trapping or farming. The hatred stirred up by the protesters against the sealers is depicted in song and in an anonymous letter received by George expressing outrage, disgust and anger, and threatening violence. *They Club Seals, Don't They?* is a skilfully constructed piece of propaganda designed to counteract the propaganda being disseminated by opponents of the seal

hunt. The play has some powerful effects, like the film footage of the slaughter of pigs in a modern abattoir, which makes the point that urbanites eat meat and wear leather shoes but do not take responsibility for the killing of animals that is necessary to support these choices. It also uses the fast-paced wit of the zany to lighten the message and provoke questioning (rather than outright contradiction) of the politically correct point of view.

Waiting for Time

Sixteen years later, Bernice Morgan's *Waiting for Time* takes a more fatalistic perspective on the realities that threaten the new Newfoundland. Parts One and Three of the novel bring the saga of the Andrews family into the late twentieth century. By now, the outports have been ravaged by time, by design and by neglect. New road transportation systems have ended the extreme isolation of the old days and social security programmes have undermined the absolute requirement of self-reliance. Aggressive resettlement policies have caused the deaths of many outports and timid fisheries policies have eroded the economic foundation of outport life. The novel opens in Ottawa where seven-year old Lav Andrews, a direct descendent of the Andrewses of Cape Random, is preparing for the second marriage of her British-born mother to Saul Rosenberg who owns the book and stationery store where she works. Lav is brought up by her war-bride mother and kindly Jewish step-father believing that her Newfoundland father was killed during the war. Lav's mother does not have good memories of the short time she spent in Newfoundland and Lav has never been there.

A peculiar set of circumstances draws her back to the land of her ancestors. In her late thirties, she is a marine biologist working for the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans

when her long-time lover and mentor unexpectedly departs. A senior colleague recommends a short stint in Newfoundland where a new report on the state of the cod stocks is being planned. Lav's journey to Newfoundland becomes both an escape from her present life and an exploration of her roots. Enervated by the mid-life doldrums and politically naive, Lav soon finds herself caught in a high-stakes battle over the report she is supposed to author. Her radical Newfoundland research assistant produces a shocking preliminary draft that emphasizes the negative indicators of biomass reproduction, catalogues the underfunding of fisheries science and deficiencies of fisheries management, and predicts an imminent ecological disaster. Immediately the project is taken out of Lav's hands while a team is brought in from Ottawa to undo this analysis and put the desired spin on the data. In the meantime, Lav has discovered the journal written by her namesake, Lavinia Andrews, chronicling the early history of the Cape Random settlement.

As Lav becomes more and more aware of the remarkable past experienced and shaped by her forebears, the reader becomes more and more aware of the deadly combination of political expediency, moral cowardice, and power brokering that threaten the future of fishing – not just the primary renewable resource of Newfoundland but, more important, the foundation of its identity and reason for being. Some of the culprits are Newfoundlanders. The federal fisheries minister is none other than Timothy Drew, descendent of Timothy Drew, the pickpocket friend of Mary Bundle, who became a wealthy St. John's merchant, and his executive assistant Wayne Drover is an ambitious young Newfoundlander whose father was an impoverished fisherman. But as powerful and as culpable as they are, Drew and Drover are merely cogs in a complex system that fails to understand or accept the importance of the fishery because it belongs to a part

of the country that is remote from Canada's own sense of identity. Among the people of Newfoundland, however, Lav finds that the anger over the destruction of this invaluable resource is corrosive. When the cod moratorium is eventually announced, her distant cousin Alf Andrews remarks bitterly: "We brought the world's biggest reserve of protein into Confederation and now look at us!" (209)

The reading of the Ellsworth Journal is the catalyst Lav needs to change her life.³⁹ At the press conference announcing the publication of the sanitized Oceans 2000 Report, she hurls accusations at Timothy Drew and Wayne Drover and distributes copies of her research assistant's suppressed report. Within a week, she is on her way to Davisporte, Bonavista Bay, having stolen the Ellsworth Journal from the Maritime History Archive. To complicate things even more, she is pregnant from a one-night stand with Wayne Drover. No one now lives on the Cape, but Lav arrives in Davisporte in time to attend the funeral of Rachel Andrews, the favoured great granddaughter of Mary Bundle, who had helped the aged woman write her own version of events that occurred in the 1820s and 1830s. There Lav also meets Alf Andrews and, after an unpromising start and a long courtship, they eventually fall in love and marry.

The signs of contemporary Newfoundland are evident not only in the crisis over the state of the cod stocks but also in the description of Davisporte. The community is a typical modern outpost with a grotty motel and teenagers who wear the latest fashions and listen to rock music. There is a lot of heavy-duty swearing and drinking by men and women alike. When Lav drives to the Cape, the road ends in a parking lot that is nothing more than "a torn up patch of mud that is littered with beer bottles, Kentucky Fried chicken packages, condoms and a layer of filthy carpet" (202). When she sets up camp on the Cape, the experience of the light, air and salt water is

powerful and intoxicating, but the spell is broken during the middle of the night when she is harassed by drunken young people on ATVs. Lav is rescued by Alf, although he is unsympathetic, defending the terrorizing teenagers:

Look, lady! You chose to come out here – this is their place. They were only playin', havin' a little party before bein' shipped off to Ontario where they'll be locked up in factories for the summer. They're the country's great reserve labour pool – Canada's Okies. Why, if it wasn't for them we couldn't have free trade. couldn't compete with the third world for cheap labour! So don't begrudge the poor little buggers their last fling! (208)

Thus, the idleness and bad manners of the young are excused. While indulgence of children is a commonly cited trait of the culture, and the ranting and roaring Newfoundlander a traditionally invoked character, this kind of behaviour would not have been acceptable in the past. Its present acceptability, at least for the Alf Andrewses of the world, indicates both a breakdown of the traditional culture and a despairing spitefulness, a helpless rage, at what has been lost. As suggested earlier, this attitude is evident in the later writing of Ray Guy. It represents a generalized diffusion of the anger that emerged from specific real-life occurrences like the news of the cod moratorium in 1992, an event that is faithfully replicated in *Waiting for Time*. Lav Andrews is not only challenged by culture shock. The Newfoundland she encounters in the late 1980s and early 1990s is not just different; it is difficult, quarrelsome, embittered and cynical.

Yet Lav stays on. Or rather, she returns, after leaving, and when she returns she returns for good. She settles in Davisporte, eventually discovering the same support within the community and the same tenacity within herself that her ancestors had found. The last pages of

Waiting for Time take the long view, predicting a bleak future but ending on a note of hope. A long period of deprivation sets in. The older people hold on but many families move away and their houses are boarded up. The young leave in droves even though some of them eventually find their way back. From Rachel's daughter-in-law, Selina, Lav learns how to knit, to hook mats, to make jam and make a garden. From Alf she learns how to keep books, to brew beer, to drive nails and to trout. She raises her son a Newfoundlander knowing that he, like most of his peers, will go away because there is not enough work. She goes through some bad patches, especially when her son leaves and her husband dies, but the friendship of older and younger women sustains her. And in the year 2024, standing beside her father's grave, Lav becomes the first person in decades to see caplin roll up on the beach, a sign the fish have returned. The kind of political activism exercised by her former research assistant does not have any significant result. The conclusion suggests that Newfoundland's survival, as always, is a matter of endurance and waiting for time.

The Colony of Unrequited Dreams

In his novel *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* (1998) and his memoir *Baltimore's Mansion* (1999), Wayne Johnston addresses the issue of cultural identity in Newfoundland from the perspective of nationalism. These books are a departure from his earlier works which, though set in Newfoundland, are focussed primarily on conflicts within families and the quest to achieve personal integrity and freedom in the face of a repressive and rigid regime of Irish Catholicism. This is particularly true of *The Story of Bobby O'Malley* (1985) and *The Divine Ryans* (1990). The language and landscape in these novels are faithful to the Newfoundland setting but the

characters are highly individualistic, indeed eccentric, and the immediate and impinging cultural environment is more influenced by a trans-national variety of Catholicism than the mores of Newfoundland. Johnston's second novel, *The Time of Their Lives* (1987), is a somewhat different case.⁴⁰ Although it is essentially a portrait of a family, the social background is also a significant part of the picture, much as is the case in Janes's *House of Hate*.⁴¹ In fact, Johnson's novel resembles *House of Hate* in other ways. Just as Janes's novel enlarges the literary perception of Newfoundland communities to include the company town, Johnston's depicts another kind of community that was not normally associated with Newfoundland, the small agricultural village. As well, *The Time of Their Lives* is an exploration of the ecology of hatred, bitterness and spite within a family. Grandfather Dunne, known as Dad throughout the narration, is a tyrant worthy of Saul Stone, and some of his children have learned to indulge the Newfoundland proclivity for "tormenting" to the point where it has become pathological, inflicting real and lasting hurt.⁴²

The Time of Their Lives describes a farming community that comes about through a government incentive in which good agricultural land is made available for ownership provided it is cleared and cultivated within twenty-five years.⁴³ A group of fishermen from the nearby outport of Harbour Deep see this as an opportunity to better their lot during a glut in the fishery after World War I. About one hundred of them move a few miles inland to develop the land at the Meadows.⁴⁴ This abandonment of the traditional way of life is interpreted as a sort of betrayal: "The settlers, as far as the people who stayed in Harbour Deep were concerned, had repudiated everything – their way of life, their families, their friends" (6). This local tension is dwarfed, however, by the sweeping changes that are overtaking Newfoundland during the

immediate post-Confederation years, and which unfold with exquisite irony. Raymond, one of the sons of the misogynist patriarch Andrew Dunne, abandons the family farm and marries into a Harbour Deep family, returning there to fish. The brother of the woman he marries, Tom Foley, has left fishing to become a marine technologist. The two men envy each other's lives. Raymond, a chip off the old block at least in his attitude towards women, is convinced that he was made for work indoors, "bendin' secretaries over desks" (56). Tom, on the other hand, regrets his decision to work in a lab. With his two-year course in fisheries biology from a Nova Scotia technical college, he is doomed to a dead-end job in the civil service, but he is also cut off from the members of his social class who consider him over-educated and impractical. Raymond, increasingly disillusioned with his career as a fisherman, takes out his unhappiness on his brother-in-law, tormenting him mercilessly. Raymond descends steadily into alcoholism and Tom eventually has a nervous breakdown. Although Tom recovers to achieve a degree of reconciliation with his fate, the hopes that Confederation would bring fresh opportunities and possibilities for growth for the rising generation do not come to pass for these two Newfoundlanders. They experience wrenching displacement but do not find a new life to compensate for the loss they sustain.

The Time of Their Lives is so much an account of individual, and perhaps not very typical, families that generalizations about the society as a whole should be considered with caution. Nevertheless, in expressing the sense of disgrace and blame arising out of Newfoundland's catastrophic default in 1934, the narrator invites the reader to believe that the attitudes described are representative of the populace:

Many people felt it as a personal humiliation that Britain dissolved our parliament

and appointed . . . a British Commission of Government. There were those who, like Dad, went about with a chip on their shoulders, those who were bent on proving that, even if their country was a failure, they as individuals were not. And there were those who, like Mom, thought that our "failure" was our come-uppance, went around saying things like "How the mighty are fallen," as if we had been vain to try to make it on our own. But whether, like Dad, they thought it was our laziness, or whether, like Mom, they thought that it was our vanity that brought us down, people united in thinking that we were to blame. (12)

There is no doubt that the collective self-esteem of Newfoundlanders as a people was dealt a devastating blow when the pride that accompanied the country's tragic sacrifice in World War I was replaced by blame for its economic collapse during the worldwide depression of the 1930s.

The divergent expressions of this assumed guilt, expressed within the Dunne family, are recapitulated in the debates over Confederation. Not since the one hundred fishermen left Harbour Deep in the 1920s, we are told, had a community been so divided as the Meadows was over this issue. Dad, like many, believed that Confederation with its transfer payments, baby-bonus cheques, and unemployment insurance would be like going on the dole. Mom, on the other hand, believed that the failure of Responsible Government proved that Newfoundlanders were unfit to govern themselves as a country and needed the support of some outside agency, be it Canada, Britain or the United States. On the night of the second referendum, the men are in one room listening to the returns come in on the radio, and the women are in the other. When the vote goes in favour of Confederation, Dad blames the women. Although the narrator stresses that the family did not actually vote uniformly along gender lines, the suggestion remains that the

Responsible Government option promised the prospect of little positive change for women.

The issue of Confederation is addressed in *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* through a fictional rendering of the man who was most responsible for bringing it about. The Joey Smallwood depicted therein is based on the figure who emerges in Richard Gwyn's biography. Two removes from the man himself, he is perhaps a pale imitation of the real thing.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the fictional Smallwood and the historical one resemble one another in at least two striking features. They are both imagining change all the time, and at the same time dreaming about being its instrument not only to better the lot of the dispossessed but also to make their mark on history. While serving his apprenticeship as a socialist organizer in New York City in the early 1920s, Smallwood brags to his comrades that Newfoundland will one day be "one of the great small nations of the earth" and that he will be its Prime Minister. Already Smallwood considers his associates too theoretical in advancing the cause of a worldwide movement. He is interested in how socialism can benefit Newfoundland, a view they dismiss as "too parochial" (165).

Smallwood's pragmatism takes precedence over his idealism when he returns to Newfoundland and, after working for some time as a union organizer and newspaperman, becomes involved with the notorious Sir Richard Squires, twice Newfoundland's Prime Minister in the 1920s. Squires, like Smallwood, is a visionary, but also, by the time Smallwood comes to know him, a cynic, a shyster and perhaps a crook.⁴⁶ He scoffs at Smallwood's attempt to blend ambition with altruism, insisting that he wants power like all politicians. He contends that Smallwood has chosen socialism because, being poor, most doors are closed to him and he considers "the politics of poverty" to be the best way of getting ahead (270). Through his

association with Squires, Smallwood learns to sacrifice personal loyalty to political ambition when he betrays his erstwhile girl friend, Sheilah Fielding. With the institution of Commission of Government in 1934, his political career appears to be over, but when preparations for a return to self-rule are announced in 1945, he sees his opportunity. He has found a version of socialism that Newfoundlanders might accept – confederation with a country that some consider a social welfare state. It is unclear whether Smallwood represses an awareness of the extent to which his idealism has become eroded, or whether his idealism had the virtue of vagueness, and therefore malleability, all along. But his secret alliance with the British Governor Gordon MacDonald, brought about by his arch-rival and nemesis Prowse, demonstrates how shrewdly he has learned from his mentor Squires how to play politics.

The relationship between Smallwood and Fielding, entirely a fictional creation, deepens and broadens the moral dimension of the novel. It humanizes Smallwood and it is the lens through which the reader views the struggles of the country to become whatever it was intended to be. Fielding is Smallwood's foil and conscience. Although he loves her, his inability to commit himself to her, not to mention his betrayal of her, become the measure of his ambition. Politics, it turns out, is an even more attractive mistress than Fielding. Nevertheless, he suffers pangs of conscience because of his treatment of her and bouts of jealousy because of her relationships, real or imagined, with other men. More important, Fielding provides a merciless intellectual critique of Smallwood's career, and Newfoundland politics generally, publicly in her newspaper column, "Field Day," and privately in her journal, which she addresses variously to her former lover Prowse and to her would-be lover Smallwood. She also writes a kind of anti-history of Newfoundland, *Fielding's Condensed History*, a brilliantly satirical commentary

mostly on the great work of her lover's grandfather, Judge D.W. Prowse.

The tension between Smallwood and Fielding extends to the different perspectives they take on issues of cultural identity and nationhood in the context of twentieth-century Newfoundland history. Although Smallwood is thoughtful, intelligent, well-read, curious about the world at large, and a visionary, he is primarily a man of action. As Squires correctly perceives, his penchant for socialism has its origins in his family background. The Smallwoods run a boot factory and retail store on Water Street, but Joe's father Charlie is the black sheep of the family. An intelligent but disappointed man, he finds a menial job outside the family business and squanders his wages on cheap West Indian rum. Although he grows up in the poorest part of the city, "the Brow," on the crest of the Southside Hill, Joe is sent to a good school in St. John's through the generosity of his grandfather. There he is neither fish nor fowl. The only townie among boarders from the outports, he is patronized by sons of St. John's merchants and belittled by snobbish British masters. Although he does well academically, he leaves school after having been maliciously streamed into a "commercial" class for those considered unsuited for university.

Smallwood's experiences give him a sympathy for the underdog but his ambition is shaped by the Empire. At Bishop Field College he is told that Newfoundlanders are descended from "people who couldn't even make the grade in Ireland," that his so-called country has no culture, and that a history of Newfoundland cannot be great "because there is no greatness in Newfoundland" (36). There Smallwood learns to draw the map of England from memory, a powerful metaphor for the cognitive imprinting of the colonial mentality. In an effort to overcome this, the first thing he does, when setting out on his own, is buy a second-hand oilcloth

map of Newfoundland and commit himself to the task of learning to draw it from memory. But he finds that he cannot supplant the map of England in his mind as the primary impression, and he never learns to draw Newfoundland as well as he can England. This episode implies a source for the grandiosity of his aspirations and, as well, foreshadows their ultimate failure.

Growing up in St. John's, Smallwood comes to know Newfoundland in various ways. The first is through the famous history written by Prowse's grandfather, a book cherished by his father. The second is by leaving the country. He travels across Newfoundland by train on his way to New York City and, at first, is impressed by the expanse of bog and barrens. Then he nears the coast and passes the logging town of Gambo where he was born, and he is humiliated. He looks out the train window at old men who have never travelled any more than fifty miles from home. Even though he envies them "their apparent self-contentment and dilemma-less existence," he finds "the very sight of them oppressive" and lives "in horror of ending up that way myself." When he enters into the forests of central Newfoundland, however, he is struck by the fact that virtually the whole population of Newfoundland lives on the coast, "as if ready to abandon ship at a moment's notice":

The shore was nothing but a place to fish from, a place to moor a boat and sleep between days spent on the sea. Of the land, the great tract of possibility that lay behind them, beyond their own backyards, over the farthest hill that they could see from the windows of their houses, most Newfoundlanders knew next to nothing.

(139-140)

Not only do Newfoundlanders not know about the land, they fear it: "I knew of grown men who hurried home from trouting or berry-picking in a panic as the sun was going down, for fear of

being caught out after dark and led astray by fairies.” What Smallwood sees in this is ignorance. Although he admires the courage of “these same fairy-feeble men [who] would go out on the sea at night in the worst weather to rescue a neighbour whose boat was going down.” he is astounded that they would rather risk their lives on an ocean that would never be theirs than claim one inch of a great land that could be tamed and controlled.

Smallwood’s enthusiasm for the land is matched only by his hatred for the sea. “I could not stand the sea,” he admits. That “vast, endless, life-excluding stretch of water” reminds him of “Melville’s God, inscrutable, featureless, indifferent, as unimaginable as an eternity of time or an infinity of space, in comparison with which I was nothing. The sight of some little fishing boat heading out to sea like some void-bound soul made me, literally, sea-sick” (131-132). As he travels across Newfoundland that first time, Smallwood tells himself that it is “not an island” but “a country hemmed in and cored by wilderness.” This is a muddled concept but he concludes that it is “this core . . . the unfoundland that will make us great someday” (141). Although in this flight of fancy he denies that Newfoundland is an island, Smallwood acknowledges that he is an islander. He remembers his father returning destitute from his own youthful flight to Boston, and wonders whether, like him, he will discover the “limits of a leash” that tied one unknowingly to Newfoundland. Would he become so “bewildered by the sheer unknowable, unencompassable size of the world” that he also would have to come back home?

How could you say for certain where you were, where home left off and away began, if the earth that you were standing on went on forever, as it must have seemed to him, in all directions? For an islander, there had to be natural limits, gaps, demarcations, not just artificial ones on a map. Between us and them and

here and there, there had to be a gulf. (132)

By the time Smallwood departs Newfoundland in 1920, he is already a convinced socialist. The decisive event in converting him to leftist ideology is his experience covering the seal hunt in 1914 as a newspaper reporter. He convinces his publisher to secure him a berth on Captain Westbury Kean's vessel the *Newfoundland* in order to file stories about what life is like aboard a sealing ship.⁴⁷ At the ice, Smallwood sits on the gunnels of the *Newfoundland*, one hand clutching the rigging, "a puny bespectacled spectator" conscious that his status as literate observer separates him from the crew (102). The sealers regard him with a kind of "shy awe" when they hear what he is doing (98). He is amazed by the back-breaking work and the wretched conditions in which they are expected to live. Later, he is a first-hand witness when one-hundred-and-thirty-two men of the *Newfoundland* are lost in a storm for three days and seventy-seven of them perish. Smallwood does not see heroism in these events. He is stunned into silence by his exposure to the "strange statuary of the dead" when the vessel eventually comes upon a party of frozen sealers (107). He is haunted by their compliance in turning back into the storm on the orders of Captain Abram Kean, by the timidity of their leader George Tuff, who dares not question these orders, and, most of all, by the miserliness of the old man who sends the sealers back to their own ship rather than have them "eating his provisions and using up his oil and coal" (113-114). Immediately after this, Smallwood encounters the eccentric left-wing propagandist George Grimes, who instructs him in the rudiments of socialism.

Smallwood's trip to the front is one of a number of formative experiences that arise out of contacts with the ordinary Newfoundlanders he wishes to champion. Another one comes about upon his return from New York. He lingers in Corner Brook on his way across the island long

enough to organize a union in the local paper mill and becomes aware of an opportunity to organize the railway sectionmen who have been threatened with a pay cut. Smallwood decides that the only way to do this is by walking the entire length of the railway from Port-aux-Basques to St. John's, branch lines included, gathering the signatures needed. This trek once again takes him through the interior of the island for much of the way. He is shown unfailing hospitality by the families of the sectionmen who give up their beds to him, feed him a constant diet of trout, and attend to his blistered and swollen feet with a bewildering variety of homemade cures. They live a lonely and meagre existence with their wives and children in shacks spaced one mile apart along the length of the track. Smallwood signs them all up but one. Nearly perishing in a storm on the Bonavista branch line, he is rescued by a sectionman who turns out to be Fielding. She saves his life but refuses to join the union. At the Avondale Station, thirty-six miles from St. John's. Smallwood is met by the director of the railway who offers him a settlement for the sectionmen.

It is on his journey across the south coast of the island during the thirties that Smallwood has an epiphany that eventually leads not only to his abandonment of the dream of the Newfoundland nation but also to an understanding of how the unpopular idea of Confederation with Canada can be sold to Newfoundlanders. At first, he is discouraged when he sees how difficult it is to organize a people who lead such "a solitary atomized existence. . . . Most of them did not understand or even have a word for the concept of government. . . . Had only the most rudimentary understanding of what a country was. And at the same time were destitute beyond anything I imagined when I first set out." Welcomed into every household as though he were a member of the family, he sees that he is a deluded townie "who without [these people] would not

have made it through one night.” He feels foolish for having presumed to know the answer to their problems and powerless to help them: “It would take more than unions, and more than anything the commission of Government might be inclined to do, to save these people” (355). But although his attempt to unionize the fishermen has failed, he is on the verge of an insight that later proves crucial in devising a strategy to sell Confederation: the remote outports, while unique to Newfoundland, do not have a strong concept of the Newfoundland nation.

Smallwood’s patriotism had first been shaken when he travelled the great landmass of eastern North America on his journey to New York City. Crossing an invisible, arbitrary border between Massachusetts and Connecticut, he wonders whether Newfoundlanders had been fooled by their geography into thinking they could be a country:

perhaps we believed that by nothing short of achieving nationhood could we live up to the land itself, the sheer size of it. It seemed so nation-like in its discreteness, an island set apart from the main like the island-nations our ancestors had left behind. Perhaps it was not patriotism that drove us on, so much as a kind of guilt-ridden sense of obligation. (154)

During the time of the Amulree Commission’s investigation into the reasons for Newfoundland’s economic crisis in 1933, he is ashamed of the “contagion of self-debasement [that] swept the land” (338).⁴⁸ Embarrassed by the eagerness of many to accept the negative stereotypes that were expediently being fashioned for them to adopt, Smallwood is scathing in his condemnation of Amulree’s predisposition to believe the worst of Newfoundlanders. But in 1945, on the verge of the National Convention that would decide the process leading to the restitution of self-rule, and reflecting upon his journey across the south coast, he once again wonders “if independence really

was a luxury that Newfoundland could not afford, a prideful dream, a vain delusion impossible to sustain if you lived anywhere in Newfoundland except St. John's" (433).

Smallwood's decision to embrace the Confederate cause arises out of a mixture of motives but by his own account primary among them is the fact that, "far-fetched and unlikely to succeed, [it] had no champion." His vision of greatness for Newfoundland is inextricably bound up with his vision of greatness for himself. A consistent element of this vision had always been the development of the potential of the land and a personal disdain for the heritage of the sea. Events in 1945 produce an extraordinarily propitious confluence of circumstances as far as he is concerned. Hardly any of the experienced politicians from the pre-Commission era are any longer on the scene. The decision of the Government to insist on a residency requirement for election to the National Convention works in his favour. For the past few years, naturally enough for one who values the exploitation of the land, he has been living in Gander managing his own pig farm. This enables him to run in the district of Bonavista where he has a chance of being elected. Then, too, Confederation with Canada is not only a cause in opposition to the merchant and professional classes from which he has always been an outcast, it also represents a means of directly benefiting the people with whom he has always felt a genuine sense of solidarity. Smallwood concludes: "Here was the something commensurate with the greatness of the land itself, which I had so often felt was just beyond my understanding. The paradox of this permanent imminence was solved at last" (*ibid.*). Although he succeeds in his campaign to bring about Newfoundland's Confederation with Canada, at the end of his career Johnston's Smallwood admits that he did not "solve the paradox of Newfoundland or fathom the effect on me of its peculiar beauty. It stirred in me, as all great things did, a longing to accomplish or

create something commensurate with it. I thought Confederation might be it, but I was wrong” (552). He does not explain this ultimate failure.

Fielding’s view is more complex. It is through her public satire and her private ruminations as much as through Smallwood’s inner reflections on events that the reader comes to understand the intricacies of the issues relating to Newfoundland’s collapse in 1934 and its merger with Canada in 1949. If Smallwood is the quintessential man of action, Fielding is the observer – the artist and the critic – her perspective freed from the necessity of action. The depth of her engagement with life is revealed in her journal, which is written to people “as if I am bidding them goodbye, as if they are asleep in the next room and will read what I have written in the morning when I am gone,” and this gives evidence of human integrity behind the ironic mask (8). Her counterbalancing interpretation of public issues, however, is found mainly in her satirical writings – her *Condensed History of Newfoundland* and her newspaper column, “Field Day.”

Excerpts from Fielding’s *Condensed History* are distributed throughout *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*. Although the work appears to be finished, Fielding reveals in her column of 6 June 1959 that it still has not been published. The tone of the narrative is announced by Fielding’s choice of patron: the commendatory Preface is supposedly written by Smallwood’s mentor, the universally maligned Sir Richard Squires. The early chapters of the *History* sardonically summarize Cabot’s landfall, Cartier’s explorations, and Gilbert’s claim so as to convey the absurd exaggeration of their accomplishments.⁴⁹ The account of the first attempts at colonization of Newfoundland in the early sixteenth century likewise emphasizes false reports of the country’s charms, mostly attributed to William Vaughan who owned a large tract of land that he was trying desperately to sell. To give this some spice, Fielding invents an original manuscript

of Robert Hayman's miscellany *Quodlibets* (1628), which she claims gave an unvarnished report of the bitter reality of life in Newfoundland but which was bowdlerized in its published form by Vaughan to extol, on the contrary, the colony's virtues. The scene is set early in Fielding's *History* of aristocrat adventurers, whose rapacity is equalled only by their incompetence, eagerly seeking to increase their wealth by any means through the exploitation of opportunities in the new world. To this end, they hoodwink some of the more wretched of Britain's poorer classes into shipping out as colonists to Newfoundland, where they are eventually abandoned on what is, in reality, a barren rock.

Fielding's *History* satirically defends the rights of the rich and powerful. An example of this is Chapter Seven, "Treworgie's Reign of Terror," which describes the tenure of John Treworgie, appointed by the Cromwellian Government and lauded by Prowse as "the first real Governor" of Newfoundland, who made it his business not only to ensure that "good order was maintained" but also that "the poor Newfoundland planters were protected in their possessions" (Prowse 163). Fielding ironically champions the "honest eloquence" of Treworgie's opponent, Joshua Childs, who convinces Charles II that "the only way to stop the exploitation of the merchants by the settlers is to depopulate the island" (*Colony* 149). In a similar vein, in Chapter Twenty-Four, "A Delegation of Grovelling Indigents," Fielding derides Newfoundland's negotiators in the Confederation talks of 1894 for not realising that the fact that the country's banks had failed and unemployment was at an all time high actually strengthened their bargaining position because it was well-known that Canadians, when faced with an abject opponent, become "concession-happy and will accede to almost anything" (392). And in Chapter Twenty-Six, "Wintering the Reids," the derivation of the Newfoundland verb, "to Winter," is

explained by recounting how Prime Minister James S. Winter took advantage of the Scots-Canadian railway magnate, Robert G. Reid, to complete the trans-island railway in 1898. Orthodox history suggests the complete reverse of this, but Fielding maintains that Newfoundlanders' disgraceful practice of bilking and duping foreign promoters and then awarding them knighthoods afterwards by way of compensation was celebrated in local lore by the use of such expressions as "We Wintered them" or "We gave them a good Wintering":

Only if one imagines them all on a single ship – cramming the decks, lining the rails, hunched figures in overcoats and bowler hats, clutching their scrolls of knighthood in their hands, their florid moustaches belying their despair – can one even begin to appreciate the enormity of our crime. (427)

Fielding pretends to be writing a revisionist history in which the outrageous slanders and misinterpretations of nineteenth century Newfoundland historians are finally corrected. She particularly calls into question the judgement of Prowse who praises the history of Newfoundland's first Chief Justice, John Reeves, in 1793. Reeves's objectivity is suspect, according to Fielding, when he sets forth the thesis that for three hundred years England had been exploiting Newfoundland. In fact, the man who has been called Newfoundland's Herodotus was "a peevisish crank" who had it in for the West Country merchants who, he claimed, were "so miserly that, were I to allow it, they would be constantly contesting in my court some Newfoundlander's right to breathe their air." Fielding regrets that Reeves's successors – Anspach, Pedley, Harvey and Prowse – all "repeat in their histories this heinous lie of his as though it were the gospel truth" (210). In her *Condensed History*, using the time-honoured method of taking the argument to the extreme, Fielding ridicules revisionist interpretations of

Newfoundland history that purport to dispel the traditional mythology of the Newfoundlander as outlaw and underdog. In doing this, she re-asserts the moral argument that lay behind the struggle for Newfoundlanders' right to civil justice and liberty, democratic governance and self-determination.

Embedded in the satire, however, are elements that invite a more ambiguous reading. In Chapter Twenty-Two, "The Isaac Mercer Mummer Murder," the practice of mummering is described from the point of view of the middle- or upper-class observer who feels threatened by the anarchy implicit in the genre. As a child, this person was frightened by the fearsome masks and lewd costumes, by the aggressive behaviour of a character who would beat spectators with a bladder full of peas if they were judged to be lacking Christmas spirit, and by "the Horsechops" who chased members of the audience, snapping its movable jaws with nails for teeth. Pursued under a bed, this person recalls "the horrible accordion, the spoons and some sort of dreadful drum." On the one hand, beyond the bourgeois anxiety concerning unseemly conduct and the snobbish disdain for the accordion, the spoons and "the dreadful drum," one can appreciate the rough comedy and boisterous fun of the working classes. On the other hand, there is traditionally a subversive and menacing aspect to mummering. It has a long history back to the middle ages as a manifestation of the *carnavalesque*, which symbolically overturns the accepted social order and grants licence, within the limits of the celebration, to take liberties that are normally not permitted. The reality is that mummering was not always harmless, being sometimes used as a disguise to facilitate criminal activity. The murder of Isaac Mercer actually resulted in the banning of mummering in 1861.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the threat inherent in mummering was frequently construed in terms of the class struggle, so that it represented a hazard not just to certain

individuals but to social order.

A second example of this ambiguity can be seen in the chapter on the composing of “The Ode to Newfoundland” by Governor Sir Cavendish Boyle. Fielding recounts the fact that there were six different musical settings composed to accompany Boyle’s four quatrains. The version by the famous British composer, Hubert.C. Barry, was chosen over three local versions. Tradition has it that the setting by Alfred Allen, one of the Newfoundlanders, was superior to all others. But this is typical, sniffs Fielding, “in a country where the animating myth is that the true king is always in exile or in rags while some pretender holds the throne” (443). On the one hand, Fielding’s put-down of local sentiments parodies the condescending colonial attitude of the British. On the other hand, there is something about this formulation of the perpetual underdog mentality that suggests the mind-trap it might be – an alibi, an evasion of responsibility, a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The newspaper column, “Field Day,” channels Fielding’s satiric energies into commentary on contemporary issues. Early on, she is quick to expose Smallwood’s willingness to compromise his principles when she reports on his association with Sir Richard Squires, terming the relationship an alliance between the dirt poor and the filthy rich. Fielding maintains this uncompromising critical stance in her observations on Smallwood’s career, ridiculing his radio programme, “The Barrelman,” and his stint as a pig farmer in Gander. When he comes out in favour of Confederation, she claims that he has done this because he believes it is the best way of ensuring its defeat: “He is our truest patriot” (442). Later, when Smallwood becomes Premier and appoints the Latvian economist, Alfred Valdmanis, as Director of Economic Development, Fielding travels to Europe with them to report on their efforts to attract new industries to

Newfoundland. Her accounts of their hijinks are fanciful and frivolous, intended to make the Premier and his sycophantic adviser look completely out of their depth.⁵¹

It is Fielding's comments on the demise of Newfoundland as a country, however, that constitute her most eloquent writing. She is as scathing as Smallwood about the findings of the Amulree Commission. She welcomes the British commissioners, advising them to ignore "the nay-saying churls . . . who think you should not have made it a condition of lending us financial assistance that we relinquish to you our right of self-government":

we are in your opinion unable to properly conduct our own affairs, and you more than proved yourselves qualified to make such a judgment at the Battle of Beaumont Hamel, where one out of every four Newfoundlanders you sent against the Germans came back neither dead nor wounded.⁵² As if that was not enough, so judiciously did you employ the Newfoundland Regiment at the Battle of Arras ten months later that when it was over, fully half of them were still standing. In other words, in the space of ten months, you doubled your efficiency. (341)

Fielding effectively leaves unstated the fact that a large part of Newfoundland's debt in 1934 was caused by loans raised to pay for the war effort.

In her journal entry for 31 March 1949 and her column of 6 June 1959, Fielding addresses the loss of the nation. On 31 March 1949, she waits out the final moments of Newfoundland's independence in Twelve Mile House, the shack on the Bonavista Branch line where she had worked as a sectionman during the 1920s. Alone with her reflections, she is startled to hear a lone bagpiper somewhere in the middle of the barrens playing "The Ode to Newfoundland." She remembers the verdict of the Independence leader, Peter Cashin, pronouncing that "[i]t was

patriotism versus pragmatism and, God help us, pragmatism won.” And she acknowledges that she could not bring herself to vote one way or the other. Her reason appears to be founded in a sense of the inevitability of the outcome, as though the political battle was beside the point. Newfoundlanders had been in limbo, neither a country nor a province, during the long nine-month wait between the second referendum and the formal induction of Newfoundland into Canada, but, Fielding reckons, Newfoundland has always been in limbo and perhaps always will: “Nationality, for Newfoundlanders a nebulous attribute at best, will become obsolete, and the word *country* will be even more meaningless than it was before. The question that has been there from the start, unasked, unanswered, unacknowledged, will still be there. We have lost something we would have lost no matter which side won” (493-494).

This rather obscure comment becomes clearer in “Field Day, June 6, 1959.” The column is unusually personal, more like one of the entries in Fielding’s journal. It describes – at first, one might think, with doubtful relevance – the story of the Beothuks of Newfoundland, the aboriginal tribe that became extinct in 1829 with the death of Shawnadithit of tuberculosis in St. John’s. Fielding makes a personal connection between herself and Shawnadithit through the disease they shared, their experience as mothers separated from their children, and their apparent abandonment by men who were supposed to have loved them. She, at least, has been re-united with her daughter, to whom she has given a copy of Prowse’s *History*. She notes that he considered Confederation with Canada “a consummation devoutly to be wished.” But Fielding says: “We have joined a nation that we do not know, a nation that does not know us. The river of what might have been still runs and there will never come a time when we do not hear it” (560).

Then she remembers the night at Twelve Mile House when she listened to radio reports

of the results of the second referendum. After it was clear that the matter had been decided, she heard a train coming down the track blowing its whistle incessantly, celebrating the victory for union with Canada. The conductor, as the train went by, mouthed the words *We won*. "I have often thought of that train hurtling down the Bonavista like the victory express. And all around it the northern night, the barrens, the bogs, the rocks and ponds and hills of Newfoundland." *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* ends with an attempted reconciliation to the fact that peoples and cultures sometimes die out. The image of the "victory" train conveys the impermanence of culture compared to the abiding presence of the land. The final lines of the novel are consistent with this image but more open-ended, perhaps more hopeful. The land survives, and, if the people are defined in their relationship to the land, then the people also survive:

We are a people on whose minds these images have been imprinted.

We are a people in whose bodies old sea-seeking rivers roar with blood. (562)

This is, however, a culture-emptied concept of what it is to be a Newfoundlander, and it might be considered attenuated in one other way – the images to which Fielding refers are of the land rather than of the sea.

Johnston's memoir *Baltimore's Mansion* provides an enlightening perspective on the treatment of issues raised in *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*. It is the story of Johnston's father and grandfather who belonged to a family of dyed-in-the-wool Newfoundland nationalists. His grandfather Charlie was a fisherman and village blacksmith in Ferryland. His father Arthur fished as a boy, then left home to become an agriculturalist technologist, settled in the Goulds, a farming area on the outskirts of St. John's, and eventually ended up working for the Federal Department of Fisheries as an itinerant inspector and lab technician. As Johnston points out, the

Avalon Peninsula voted two to one in favour of Responsible Government and the rest of Newfoundland two to one against. But Ferryland polled the highest percentage of votes in favour of Responsible Government of any district in the country – 90.5% in the first referendum and 84.6% in the second.⁵³ It was the most nationalistic district in all of Newfoundland. The memoir is about Arthur Johnston's life-long struggle to come to terms with the results of the vote. It lingers on like a "grievous wound" that is especially sharp because of a secret he carries around with him concerning a falling out he had with his father the last time they said goodbye. The author concludes that it arose from the revelation that Charlie Johnston voted for Confederation.

Baltimore's Mansion is patriarchal in the literal sense that is it is mostly about fathers and sons but also in the sense that nationalist sentiment, the subject of the book, seems to be the obsession of men rather than women. Although the author suggests that the Johnston females are just as opposed to Confederation and the changes it entails, the portrayal of women in the book does not bear this out. It is Aunt Freda, for example, who encourages Arthur Johnston to broaden his horizons beyond the traditional career of fisherman in a Newfoundland outpost. "The whole world is not like Newfoundland," she tells him. "There are other places you can go. Not everybody stays" (39). The other women may support the men in their nationalist reveries but they do not appear so driven and so uncompromising in their commitment. Two relationships dominate the book, that of Charlie and Arthur Johnston and that of Arthur Johnston and the author. Charlie's wife May, known to everyone as Nan, is sympathetically depicted, as is Arthur's wife, Genevieve, and the author's aunts on both sides of the family are mentioned, but women are very much in the background.

Nevertheless, it is evident that Genevieve's life was no bed of roses. She is often pictured

ministering to her husband's deep-seated, alcohol-fuelled sorrow, and it is clear that she had sorrows of her own. Some of these stemmed from the loneliness and anxiety she experienced when Arthur was on one of his trips along the south coast in his job as a fisheries inspector. It was a job he hated because he feared the sea and because it often brought him into conflict with fishermen. And even on these trips, he continued to brood about the vote. Once, telephoning home on ship-to-shore radio, his voice breaks as he says, "My God, Wayne, [w]hat a country we could have been. What a country we were one time" (166). His wife has to take the receiver from her son and sooth her husband's heartache. Genevieve fretted whenever Arthur was away and a storm was on, and she looked to her father and her sons for support. In one especially memorable scene on the beach in Petty Harbour, the boys become "solemnly well behaved" when they realise that she has been crying, and they hug her with relief when she invites them: "Snuggle up, boys" (172-175). It is a moving but archetypal image: the man away at sea romantically clinging to the animating myth of the nation – "that the king was always in exile or in rags while some pretender held the throne" – and the woman at home on shore summoning up comfort for the grief of his vision and his life.⁵⁴

The nationalism espoused by the Johnston family has an Irish flavour, as befits this Irish part of Newfoundland. In the Johnston family's Come Home Year party in 1966, there is a succession of speeches, recitations and songs all related in some way to the cause of independence, all of them historically based. The evening begins with an invocation to a speech made by the leader for Irish independence, Charles Parnell, at Cork in 1885, and proceeds with reminiscences of Major Peter Cashin, the champion of Responsible Government, stories about the campaign, declamations of "Fling Out the Flag," a litany of rhetorical questions and their

ritual responses, a satirical catechism performed by Arthur Johnston and his son, and, finally, “The Ode to Newfoundland.”⁵⁵ By now all are in tears, and “all enjoying themselves immensely.” It seems to the author, aged eight at the time. His father is the exception. Johnston observes a moment of intense emotion between Arthur and his brother Harold in the backyard. Although he does not understand this at the time, Arthur appears to be recapitulating the final farewell between himself and Charlie Johnston.

Paradoxically, Arthur’s nationalism resembles the anti-nationalism of his antagonist, Joey Smallwood, insofar as it is based on a rejection of the sea (and the culture that arose around it) and on an exaltation of the land. Arthur turned his back on the sea, training to work in what he thinks will be a developing agricultural sector and marrying into a family who “took pride in the fact that from nowhere in the Goulds could you see the town of Petty Harbour or the ocean” (45).⁵⁶ Although he had fished with his father, he did not take to the water, and it is a great hardship to him as an adult when he is sent to sea as a fisheries inspector. On their train trip across Newfoundland, Arthur emphasises to his son the importance of what he calls “the core” of Newfoundland, the unexplored interior mass of land that, in his view, really constitutes the country:

How many outporters who had voted for Confederation, my father asked me, had any sense of the land, the scope and shape of it, the massive fact of it? . . . [Fishermen] had conceived of Newfoundland as a ribbon of rock, a coast without a core, a rim with water outside and nothing, a void, inside. And stranded on this rim they lived, the Terra Incognita at their backs and the sea before them. For many of them, Newfoundland had not even been a coast but a discrete shard of

rock, their own little cove or bay, inlet or island. They had no idea when they cast their votes what they were voting for or what they were renouncing. They had not known there was a country, for they had never seen it or even spoken to anyone who had.

Arthur Johnston goes on to say that what was true for space was true also of time: "In how many homes or even classrooms was there a copy of Prowse's *History of Newfoundland*? Time was local, personal and even less enduring than their experience of space, the circumscribed geography of 'home'" (89). Although this statement may be exaggerated, it is an insightful analysis. While Smallwood saw this constricted world-view of outport Newfoundlanders as an advantage in his campaign, the other side did not appear to have an equivalent understanding of the extent to which it represented a weakness in their national dream.

Johnston grows up, in fact, with a certain scorn for "baymen," inferring from his father's stories that they were "hopelessly set in their ways, hopelessly old-fashioned and opposed to change" (212-213).⁵⁷ Beyond the Isthmus of Avalon, he felt, lay "the Arthurian equivalent of hell," the "lair of 'the Baymen,' a tribe by which . . . our independence was undone, an inscrutably sinister domain" (12). It may be that this contemptuous attitude towards the outports was born of bitterness as a result of the outports' widespread support of Confederation, but it is equally possible that this attitude poisoned attempts of the nationalists to win the outport vote. Certainly, it is an attitude that pre-dated Confederation. And it was alive and well in 1966 when Johnston's father characterized a new kind of music invented by homesick Newfoundlanders as "the green-arsed baymen blues" which spoke to "the homesick, city-sick, pal-pining, mother-missing, sweetheart-yearning, mainland stranded baymen" (51). A similar remark in *The Colony*

of Unrequited Dreams, attributed to Fielding, includes all Newfoundlanders, and therefore can be interpreted as roughly affectionate, but Arthur's statement reflects a long legacy of bigotry between townies and baymen and points to an issue that is not directly confronted in either book.

In truth, Arthur Johnston carries the conflict within himself. The distance that had opened up between the place his father had come from and the person he had become is painfully explored in his attempts to impress the fishermen (and his sons) with his knowledge of fish. "where he tried to be both things at once and could not completely pledge himself to either, the lab man of the 'New Newfoundland' and the fisherman he used to be." Johnston records that the drive back home from these outings "was always made in silence" (136). It is sadly ironic that, having rejected the life of a fisherman, he finds himself forced to go back to the sea as a fisheries inspector. Every time they put out to sea for the first time, he gets sick. The Captain is competent in his seamanship but often too drunk to be trusted with command, and, being the only other person on the vessel with any experience of the sea, Arthur sometimes has to take charge. It is doubly ironic that, an ardent anti-Confederate, he is working for the Federal Government and sometimes has to make decisions that the fishermen, most of whom supported Confederation, strenuously reject. In one particularly unpleasant incident, his father and his colleagues have to close down a fish plant. As they leave the community, they are pelted with fish and jeered with the most derogatory terms the fishermen can summon up: "townies," "traitors," and "Canadians" (155). Among other things, this scene illustrates the traditional alienation of outport Newfoundlanders from formal laws beyond the codes of behaviour they developed within their own communities. Of course, the people of the community are naturally upset to have their fish plant closed down. It is a catastrophe. But they fundamentally do not accept the need for outside

regulation. This is a deep-seated attitude, centuries old, that developed when many outport Newfoundlanders lived either outside the law or at such a distance from it that it was all but irrelevant. To them, the imposition of regulations is an unwarranted assault on their livelihood, not a requirement without which real success in the fishery is impossible. As for Arthur Johnston, it is evident that he is caught in the middle. He feels unsettled because he abandoned the archetypal way of life, and embittered because it didn't lead to anything grander.

These conflicts come to a head on the trip Arthur and his son take across the island on the old railway. The train was a symbol of national identity in Newfoundland. The decision to phase out the service, therefore, was met with more than the usual opposition from people who regard railway travel as romantic. As Johnston indicates, the so-called "trial period," in which the train would run side-by-side with the new buses to see which one would attract the most customers, became a slow-motion re-play of the battle over Confederation: "It was as if some feeble ghost of the referendum of 1948 had been revived. There was once again to be a kind of referendum. Patriotism would tackle pragmatism, the old Newfoundland the new Newfoundland, one last time" (72). The train was the vehicle of legends and a legend in itself. In particular, occasions when it had been stalled in snow on the Gaff Topsails for weeks on end were the inspiration of many a story. On one memorable crossing, the train had been stranded for twenty-six days and Johnston observes that "[a]bout a hundred times as many Newfoundlanders as it was possible for the train to hold claimed to have been on that run' (74).

On their way across the island with his son in tow, Arthur Johnston gets into a nasty dispute with one of the passengers about the merits of the bus versus the train. The antagonist, sitting several seats in front, does not turn around to face them during the argument. All they can

see of him is the back of his head, a starched shirt collar and an impeccable black suit. He claims he does not love the bus, but it is faster and cheaper than the train, and they might as well face facts: “We’re a country of fact-facing bus-boomers,” Arthur Johnston observes tauntingly, to which the bus-boomer replies, “We’re a province now, not a country. Never were a country, really. If you know your history” (79). Arthur Johnson responds in kind and the insults steadily escalate until the other man’s wife prevails upon him to abandon the observation car before they come to blows. On the way back across the island, this incident resurfaces in an extremely sinister way. A group of mummers come into the observation car. One of them, particularly aggressive, sports an obscene middle leg stuffed with socks that drags along the ground. Speaking ingressively in the mummers’ style, he or she demands a dance with Arthur Johnston who politely declines.⁵⁸ The mummer insists, saying, “What’s the matter? Townies don’t dance?” Arthur again refuses, wondering whether they are planning to keep up the hijinks all the way to the other side of the country. At which point, the mummer puts his face within inches of Arthur’s and says, “It’s not a country, it’s a province. It never was a country. If you know your history” (101). This time Arthur makes a lunge at the man, but the other mummers hustle him out of the observation car before a fight breaks out.

Three aspects of this encounter – that the man twice does not show his face, that he professes not to love the bus but believes they must “face facts,” and that he baits Arthur Johnston with being a townie – suggest a lot about how Johnston construes the lost battle for independence. The hiding of identity parallels the betrayal of the closet Confederates who pretended to love their country but voted against it. The remark about having to face facts recalls the formulation that the issue was “patriotism versus pragmatism” and pragmatism won (58).

And, although it is not clear that Johnston sees the implications of this, the townie taunt evokes the bigotry between townie and bayman that bedevilled Newfoundland and perhaps prevented the country from being collectively imagined by the critical mass necessary to make the national dream come true.

Several incidents or observations, however, differentiate the author's view from his father's. In the powerful passages that recover the working of his grandfather's forge as it must have been in the 1930s and 1940s, something of the old outpost is evoked, especially the old outpost of the Southern Shore where horses were ubiquitous. And in the account of the desperate overnight trip to St. John's by his grandfather and his father to find a new anvil for the forge, an almost equally powerful evocation of the old city is achieved. But Johnston's grandfather realises that all of this is passing. "There'll be no more need for blacksmiths soon," he says (36). Soon there will be no more horses. A similar sense of the mutability of all things pervades the author's view and it seems to feed a perspective, similar to that expressed by Fielding in *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*, that the demise of Newfoundland as a culturally distinctive society was inevitable.

Johnston also reveals a scepticism concerning the legitimacy of generalizing from relatively small categories of allegiance like individual outposts to categories as abstract and as broad as the nation. This latter point becomes clear when he himself is leaving Newfoundland and he reflects upon the image of the receding island of Newfoundland from the ferry as it heads out into the Gulf of St. Lawrence towards Canada. Thinking of the people who were resettled from the remote islands, he realises that this is the image many of them would have seen when they looked out their windows from offshore islands, "this horizon-obscuring chunk of rock on

which they had never set foot and vowed they never would” (210). He describes going to see his great uncle and his family, resettled from Woody Island, landing “like immigrants on the shore of Newfoundland” (211). For these people, Newfoundland was the mainland. If this is true, it is cultural identity at a different level of magnification, one which does not easily translate into an identification with a Newfoundland nation, although, at different orders of generalization and magnitude, the two are analogous. The cultural identity referred to here does not include the town or even the larger outports. People from the remote outports find life in these places alienating because they are people who fled large communities, a relative term that in Newfoundland could mean communities as small as five hundred. Historically such communities may be the essence of Newfoundland in the sense that they most faithfully replicate the settlements that evolved the culture thought to be distinctive to the place, but, according to this view, the remote outports are also at odds with the concept of Newfoundland as a self-governing political entity making its way as a nation in the world at large.

Although it has a grain of truth, this view is based upon a number of common misconceptions about the outports. The first is that they were static and did not change over time. In fact, although the pace of change was relatively slow, and the methods of fishing did not evolve much until the 1950s, outports experienced significant change from one generation to the next, a fact that is amply illustrated in the writing of Ron Pollett. A second misconception is that outport Newfoundlanders were completely isolated not only from the outside world but from one another. Story contests this conventional view:

Despite the almost complete absence of roads until the twentieth century, the population had a quite remarkable degree of mobility. Men travelled by sea. Nor

was this mobility exercised only within Newfoundland waters. South-coast Newfoundlanders both commanded and manned a substantial part of the Nova Scotian and New England deep-sea fishing fleets. And the great fleet of locally built “foreign-going” schooners which, from the early nineteenth century to the second decade of the twentieth, carried Newfoundland salt-fish to the West Indies, the “Brazils,” and the countries of the Mediterranean, brought together Newfoundlanders from all parts of the Island, and made them familiar with the ports of three continents.⁵⁹

In addition, during the twentieth century, the world wars, the railway, the seal hunt, and the woods industry had a similar effect in promoting social intercourse among Newfoundlanders from diverse regions of the country. In other words, cultural identity was not as “atomized” as Johnston’s view would suggest. Even in the remote outports, people were aware of goings-on in other parts of their coast, and knew themselves to be Newfoundlanders. It is true, however, that the dream of the Newfoundland *nation* did not command allegiance with equal fervour throughout the island. And the national dream was not only more intensely cherished in the communities of the Avalon Peninsula – in the outports as well as the town – but also more ardently advocated by Catholics than by Protestants.

Reflecting upon those who never left the remote islands, or who settled them after they were abandoned, Johnston seems to regard these decisions as a kind of Quixotic gesture: “Like their fellows on the main island, they are the hard-core holdouts. They keep vigil for a destiny that will never be resumed, commemorate a life they know is lost. I am not one of them. I cannot hold that vigil with them” (227). This perhaps reflects the impossibility of being faithful to his

father's uncompromising identification of cultural distinctiveness with nationalism. The logic of this formulation insisted that, if the national dream was lost, then so was cultural identity. It would be a painful vigil, and ultimately a self-destructive watch, to spend a lifetime holding aloft a lamp for the inevitable wasting away of a culture. Unable to face this, Johnston takes refuge in his father's final consolation concerning the primacy of the land: "'The land,' he once told me, 'is more important than the country. The land is there before you when you close your eyes at night and still there in the morning when you wake. No one can make off with the land the way they made off with the country in 1949'" (227). The song of the exile is often a lament. But for those whose sense of themselves was drawn neither from the land nor from the sea but from the way of life they had created in order to survive them both, and who believed that their culture had taught them how to "take a stiff breeze or two," the new Newfoundland was neither a wake nor a funeral but a voyage that more than ever demanded their age-old ability to steer into the storm.⁶⁰

Endnotes

1. Guy wrote for the *St. John's Evening Telegram* between 1963 and 1974. A selection of this work was published in three successive volumes: *You May Know Them as Sea Urchins*, ed. Eric Norman (Portugal Cove, NF: Breakwater, 1975), *That Far Greater Bay*, ed. Eric Norman (Portugal Cove, NF: Breakwater, 1976), and *Beneficial Vapors*, ed. Eric Norman (St. John's: Jespersen, 1981). A fourth volume, *This Dear and Fine Country* (St. John's: Breakwater, 1985), consists of commentaries aired on CBC Radio under the guise of Skipper Abraham Boggs of Bung Hole Tickle. These collections are hereafter cited respectively as *Urchins*, *Bay*, *Vapors* and *Country*. For critical commentary, see Patrick O'Flaherty, "Newfoundland Writing, 1949-74: A Comment," *Canadian Forum* (March 1974): 29-30; Adrian Fowler, "The Literature of Newfoundland: A Roundabout Return to Elemental Matters," 131-134; and Byrne, *Folk Tradition, Literature and a Society in Transition*, 382-397. *That Far Greater Bay* won the 1977 Stephen Leacock Medal for Humour.
2. Robert Paine points out, however, that although Moores's rhetoric was often "Arcadian" in its evocation of the 'small is beautiful' philosophy, he actually placed industrial enterprises high on his government's agenda and did not invest significantly in fisheries, agriculture, forestry and rural development. On the contrary, his government "slid away from its publicized post-Smallwood political philosophy, lapsing into 'neo-Smallwoodism.'" [*Ayatollahs and Turkey Trots* 15.] For an insider's account of the Moores government, see John C. Crosbie, *No Holds Barred: My Life in Politics* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1997), 134-146. A more sincere and more determined effort was made to implement an outport-friendly model of economic and social development during the early years of the Peckford government in the 1980s. Peckford's strategy was to use the non-renewable resources of oil and gas to shrink the debt, improve infrastructure, and reduce taxation while revitalizing the fishery and forest industries on which "the very survival of rural Newfoundland depend." [A. Brian Peckford, *The Past in the Present* (St. John's: Harry Cuff, 1983), 79.] In the end, however, this came to naught and Peckford fell prey to Smallwood's susceptibility to the fast-talking promoter and the allure of the quick fix when he supported the notorious Sprung Greenhouse which made improbable and unsustainable claims for hydroponic technology in the growth and harvesting of cucumbers. In 1992, rural Newfoundland was dealt what many consider to be a fatal blow with the collapse of the cod fishery.
3. An exception to this is his statement to the Task Force on Canadian Unity in 1977: "We are an old and certain Nation." ["Clewing in M. Pepin," *Vapors*, 131.]
4. "Resettlement," *ENL*, Vol. 4, 589.
5. See Guy's answer to the question: "How could the total destruction of our outports become the policy of government?" ["We Shall Overcome," *Bay*, 49.]
6. *House of Hate* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, [1970] 1976). See O'Flaherty, *The Rock Observed*, 171-176; Adrian Fowler, "Percy Janes," *Encyclopedia of Post-colonial Literatures in*

English, ed. Eugene Benson and L.W. Conolly, Vol. 1 (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 729-730; and Byrne, *Folk Tradition, Literature and a Society in Transition*, 373-382.

7. In her Introduction to the New Canadian Library edition of *House of Hate* (1976), Margaret Laurence quotes Janes's statement that the novel is "semi-autobiographical," although he insists that he also "added, subtracted, altered, arranged and invented" (ix-x).

8. "I hoped there was some truth in my idea, for then I could see a brighter side to the picture" (319-320).

9. Milltown is a pseudonym for Corner Brook where a large pulp and paper mill was constructed by the British arms manufacturers, Armstrong, Whitworth and Company, in 1923-1925. See Harold Horwood, *Corner Brook: A Social History of a Paper Town* (St. John's: Breakwater, 1986).

10. "By the end of the winter of 1938 there were no fewer than 85,000, out of a total population of 290,000, on relief – that is, they were receiving a dole at the rate of six cents per day" (Noel, *Politics in Newfoundland*, 242).

11. "The one major flaw in the design of Townsite was . . . a function of the socially stratified, industrial society which made the development possible. The town was intended from the outset to house only middle and upper class employees, with the remainder of people who made up the majority left to house themselves. No roads were built, nor were municipal services, such as water and sewer, offered to these squatters; and they were not permitted to build too close to the Townsite." [Richard Symonds, "The Architecture and Planning of the Townsite Development, Corner Brook, 1923-25" (St. John's: Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2001), 6.]

12. *The Boughwölfen and Other Stories* (St. John's: Breakwater, 1984). *Boughwölfen* is a local name for *bough whiffen* or *bough house*: "a small, temporary shelter in the woods, constructed of conifer branches woven into a frame." [DNE]

13. *The Head, Guts and Soundbone Dance* (Portugal Cove, NF: Breakwater, 1973) and *Jacob's Wake* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1975). *The Head, Guts and Soundbone Dance* was first performed in 1973, *Jacob's Wake* in 1975.

14. *killick*: "An anchor made up of an elongated stone encased in pliable sticks bound at the top and fixed in two curved cross-pieces, used in mooring nets and small boats; GRANNY 2." [DNE]

15. An evangelical denomination whose roots lie in the United States, Pentecostalism was introduced into Newfoundland by Alice B. Garrigus, a schoolteacher from a rural New England working class family. Appealing to Methodists "disaffected with their denomination's loss of revivalistic enthusiasm," it became popular at first mainly in western and central Newfoundland pulpwood and logging communities: Corner Brook, Windsor, Grand Falls and Botwood. Later, it

made some inroads in the outports. Although the movement underwent “a slow but uniform acculturation towards the values of mainstream Protestantism,” as late as the 1960s “Pentecostalism in rural Newfoundland was still associated with the lower end of the socioeconomic scale.” See *ENL*, Vol 4, 251-255.

16. Tom Cahill. *As Loved Our Fathers* (Portugal Cove, NF: Breakwater, 1974). For a production of the play directed by Edmund Maclean for the Stephenville Festival in 1999. Cahill added a piece of dialogue that emphasizes the feminist dimension even more by suggesting that Mel and Con were formerly lovers.

17. *mauzy*: “Of the weather, damp, foggy, misty or close, sometimes with very light rain or condensation on objects and a cool, gentle wind off the sea.” [DNE]

18. Later in the play this scene is replicated in the present. After an altercation in which it is revealed that Brad was the father of Mildred Tobin’s child, Winston orders him out of the house and into the storm: “Let’n go and crawl out under me ould punt. Might be some justice in that” (113). Later still, a connection is made between this episode and the one many years before when Jacob was lost at the front. Mary and Wayne, driving back from church, see Brad stumbling through the snow and Wayne uses the same phrase to describe what happens next as was used by the Skipper when describing the disappearance of Jacob and his watch. Wayne rolled down the car window but before he was able to say a word to Brad, “the ground drift swallowed him up” (121). *watch*: “One of the groups of men on a sealing vessel organized to hunt seals on the ice-floes; GANG.” [DNE]

19. While the metaphor of the house and ship and the symbolism of the storm are both effectively deployed, the symbolism of the crucifixion pushes the aspiring significance of the play over the top. The present action of the play takes place at Easter and the storm reaches its climax at 3:00 p.m. on Good Friday. This claim for cosmic significance is excessive but it is not a fatal flaw because it can be easily suppressed in production.

20. *lead*: 1. “A channel or lane of open water (for a vessel) in an ice-field.” [DNE]

21. Michael Cook, *Three Plays: On the Rim of the Curve, The Head, Guts and Soundbone Dance, Theresa’s Creed* (Portugal Cove, NF: Breakwater, 1977).

22. Abortion in mid-seventies Newfoundland would not be an option in a Catholic family.

23. *West Moon* (St. John’s: Breakwater, 1995). *West Moon* was first performed by the Mummer’s Troupe in 1980, though Pittman continued to work on the play for fifteen years before he was prepared to publish it. In October and November 2001, in a professional production directed by Ken Livingstone, it became the first Canadian play to tour Ireland.

24. *store*: “A building forming part of a merchant’s, planter’s or fisherman’s waterfront premises or ‘room’ where supplies and gear are stored for use or trade; esp place where dried and salted codfish are held for shipment; FISH STORE.” [DNE]

25. *trunk hole*: "opening in the floor of a fishing stage through which offal and waste are thrown and salt water drawn up." [DNE]

26. Nevertheless, the depopulation of rural Newfoundland through the resettlement programme and later through the collapse of the cod fishery has parallels with the depopulation of rural England in the eighteenth century as lamented in such works as Oliver Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village" (1770). There too a perspective that valued the simple virtues of village life was being urged: "Teach erring man to spurn the rage of gain; / Teach him, that states of native strength possessed, / Though very poor, may still be very blessed." [Louis I. Bredvold *et al.*, *Eighteenth Century Poetry and Verse* (New York: Ronald. 1956), 816.]

27. *The Plays of CODCO*, ed. Helen Peters (New York: Peter Lang, 1992). See also the "Introduction" by Helen Peters, xi-xxxii.

28. *St. John's Evening Telegram* (12 Feb 1974): 3.

29. For more on the work of Johnny Burke (1851-1930) and other representatives of the vernacular tradition, see G.M. Story, "The St. John's Balladeers" (1971), *People of the Landwash: Essays on Newfoundland and Labrador*, ed. Melvin Baker, Helen Peters and Shannon Ryan (St. John's: Harry Cuff, 1997), 66-76; Paul Mercer, ed., "The Ballads of Johnny Burke: A Short Anthology" (St. John's: Newfoundland Historical Society Pamphlet, 1974); and *ENL*, Vol 1, 295.

30. DREE, the federal Department of Regional Economic Expansion, was established in 1968 to promote economic activity in the "have-not" regions of Canada. DREE underwrote much of the funding for the latter stages of the resettlement programme in Newfoundland but the department was attacked almost from the start as a patronage trough. In 1982, the federal government abandoned direct efforts at regional development and DREE was merged with the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce. [*ENL*, Vol. 4, 561.]

31. Peters, *The Plays of CODCO*, xii.

32. See Peters's comment on this scene. *The Plays of CODCO*, xxv-xxvi.

33. The reference is to "Big Dipper" rum, a popular drink in Newfoundland, but there may also be a bawdy allusion to *dipper* meaning *penis*.

34. The delight in hyperbole is evident in Johnny Burke's masterpiece, "The Kelligrews Soiree": "There was birch rine, tar twine, / Cherry wine and turpentine, / Jowls and cavalances, / Ginger beer and tea; / Pig's feet, cat's meat, / Dumplings boiled in a sheet, / Dandelion and crackies' teeth, / At the Kelligrews' Soiree" ("The Ballads of Johnny Burke"). *cavalance* (also *calavance*, *callivance*): Type of small bean used esp for soup (*Dolichos barbadensis*, *D. sinensis*)." *cracky*: "A small, noisy mongrel dog; freq in phr *saucy as a cracky*." [DNE] For an ethnographic study of urban Newfoundlanders talking *about* violence (as opposed to talking violently), see Nigel Rapport, *Talking Violence: An Anthropological Interpretation of Conversation in the City* (St.

John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland/Institute of Social and Economic Research. 1987).

35. See Chris Brookes, *A Public Nuisance: A History of the Mummers Troupe* (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland / Institute of Social and Economic Research. 1988), 12-30. For a scholarly account of the traditional mummers play in Newfoundland, see G.M. Story and Herbert Halpert, eds., *Christmas Mumming in Newfoundland: Essays in Anthropology, Folklore and History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969).

36. The most recent versions of the Mummers Play given by Story and Halpert date from c. 1900. [*Christmas Mumming in Newfoundland* 193, 197, 202.] The practice of mummering – minus the old drama of King George and the Turkish Knight – persists to this day in outport communities at Christmas.

37. Brookes's approach was theatrically analogous to the so-called "Fogo Process," a community development tool pioneered by the National Film Board of Canada and the Memorial University Extension Service in the late 1960s. A project to create a traditional documentary film of a community development initiative on Fogo Island evolved into several films in which the members of the community were given considerable control over the editing and development of the final product. Film went from being the record of the process to becoming its instrument, a means for the various outports of Fogo Island to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of their communities together, and present their aspirations to the outside world. Championed by Donald Snowdon, the Fogo Process became known around the world as a model for the development of social awareness and community action. See *ENL*, Vol 2, 71.

38. Helen Peters, ed., *Stars in the Sky Morning: Collective Plays of Newfoundland and Labrador* (St. John's: Killick, 1995), 1-47.

39. In the novel, the journal is called "the Ellsworth Journal" because the book is actually an accounting ledger that the Andrewses brought with them when they emigrated to Newfoundland. It belonged to the Ellsworth brothers, fish merchants in Weymouth, whose monopoly Ned Andrews thoughtlessly challenged. Embossed on its cover is the title *Ellsworth Brothers – Record of Shipping 1810 to* [Time 47 & 189.]

40. *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* (Toronto: Alfred Knopf, 1998), cited hereafter as *Colony*; *Baltimore's Mansion* (Toronto: Knopf, 1999), cited hereafter as *Mansion*; *The Story of Bobby O'Malley* (Ottawa: Oberon, 1985); *The Divine Ryans* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990); *The Time of Their Lives* (Ottawa: Oberon, 1987), cited hereafter as *Time of Their Lives*. Johnston has also written a novel set in Toronto entitled *Human Amusements* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1994).

41. This point is made by Strong, *Acts of Brief Authority*, 171. See pp. 157-178 of this study for critical commentary on Johnston's first three novels.

42. Although it is almost obscured by his predilection and talent for comedy, pervading darkness, or sadness, beneath the surface hilarity is a characteristic of Johnston's writing. In both *The Story of Bobby O'Malley* and *The Divine Ryans*, the narrator's father is so defeated by life that he commits suicide.

43. Efforts to promote agriculture in order to decrease dependence upon the fishery can be traced back at least to the tenure of Governor Thomas Cochrane in the 1820s and the strategy became a priority of the Commission of Government that ruled Newfoundland from 1934 until 1949. During the latter period, several communities were established by the government in areas of arable land specifically for the purpose of reducing the numbers on able-bodied relief by developing an agricultural sector. Despite considerable enthusiasm at times for this strategy, attempts to create a vibrant agricultural sector in Newfoundland have met with very limited success. See Prowse 427; Neary, *Newfoundland in the North Atlantic World*, 64-65.

44. The Meadows resembles the community located on the outskirts of St. John's where Johnston grew up named the Goulds. See *ENL*, Vol 2, 580. *The Story of Bobby O'Malley* takes place mostly in a community called Kellies which is located in the same general area of Kilbride / The Goulds, south of St. John's. Although there is a community called Harbour Deep in Newfoundland, it is located on the east coast of the Great Northern Peninsula and in 2002, still unconnected by road, was scheduled for re-settlement. The Harbour Deep of *The Time of Their Lives* may be based on Petty Harbour, a small outport a few miles from the Goulds.

45. This is suggested by Rex Murphy in an interview with Peter Mansbridge on CBC's "Mansbridge One on One," aired 16 January 2002. It is also substantially the point made by Richard Gwyn in the "Afterward" of the most recent edition of his biography of Smallwood (436-437).

46. For accounts of Squires's controversial, scandal-ridden career during the 1920s, see Noel, *Politics in Newfoundland*, 186-203; R.M. Elliott, "Newfoundland Politics in the 1920s: The Genesis and Significance of the Hollis-Walker Enquiry," *Newfoundland in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. James Hiller and Peter Neary (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 181-204; and *ENL*, Vol. 5, 287-288.

47. This is one of many parts of the narrative where Johnston fictionalizes events. Smallwood did not go to the ice, and the *Newfoundland* did not have wireless – if it had, the tragedy would likely have been averted.

48. For accounts of the Amulree Commission, see Noel, *Politics in Newfoundland*, 210-214; Neary, *Newfoundland in the North Atlantic World*, 15-43; and Long, *Suspended State*, 75-131. The three-man Commission, which did not include any Newfoundland representatives, recommended a suspension of democratic political institutions in Newfoundland and their replacement with a Commission of Government.

49. Chapter One. "Landfall," describes John Cabot's discovery of Newfoundland on 24 June 1497, Jacques Cartier's circumnavigation of the island in 1534, and Sir Humphrey Gilbert's claiming of Newfoundland in the name of Queen Elizabeth I in 1583 (43-44).

50. See Brookes, *A Public Nuisance*, 29.

51. In reality, it was Smallwood who was out of his depth. Valdmanis was comfortably and smoothly making deals that involved significant kickbacks to him personally under the guise of contributions to the Newfoundland Liberal Party. He was later charged and convicted of fraud. See Gwyn 168-203 and Gerhard P Basler, *Alfred Valdmanis and the Politics of Survival* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 310-367.

52. In fact, the ratio (91 of 801) was closer to one in nine. See *ENL*, Vol. 4, 555.

53. Extrapolated from figures given in *ENL*, Vol. 1, 722-723.

54. As discussed above, the formulation of the animating myth is used by Fielding in *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* (443). It is repeated in a different context in *Baltimore's Mansion*. Johnston challenges his father to be less evasive on the question as to whether he knew any closet Confederates. "I told him that this was the animating myth of many Newfoundlanders . . ." (178). The negative implication is much clearer in the second case.

55. The episode is reminiscent of the scene in Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, in which Stephen's father and Mr. Casey sing the praises of Parnell while he is vociferously denounced by Stephen's aunt, Dante. The incident ends with Mr. Casey sobbing loudly, "Poor Parnell! My dead king!" and Stephen's father has tears in his eyes. [See *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: 1967), 36-40.] Johnston reveals his familiarity with Joyce's work when he imagines himself like Stephen Dedalus on the verge of exile. [*Mansion* 210.] "Fling Out the Flag" was an anthem to the unofficial flag of Newfoundland, "the Pink, White and Green," written by the Catholic Archbishop Howley in 1888.

56. The similarity between the story of the author's father, Arthur Johnston, and Tom Foley in *The Time of Their Lives* is striking.

57. This statement may appear myopic since it was the outport Newfoundlanders who voted overwhelmingly for change.

58. Ingressive speech denotes the utterance of words and phrases on the intake of breath. In mumming it is used as a method of disguising the voice. See Melvin M. Firestone, "Mummers and Strangers in Northern Newfoundland," *Christmas Mumming in Newfoundland*, 66.

59. "Newfoundland: Fishermen, Hunters, Planters, and Merchants," *Christmas Mumming in Newfoundland*, 2.

60. See Ray Guy, "Naked to Laughter When Leaves Fall," *Bay*, 147, and Michael Cook, *Jacob's Wake*, 136.

Conclusion

Throughout the twentieth century, cultural identity has been a major preoccupation of writers choosing to write about Newfoundland. In pursuing this theme, they adopted and refined a concept of an imagined community that had been developed at first for political purposes to advance the cause of home rule, civil liberty and sovereignty. The annual ritual of the spring seal harvest and the singular event of Newfoundland's sacrifices in the First World War extended the heroism inherent in the everyday life of the Newfoundland fisherman into communal action representing the country as a whole in a way that encouraged the national dream. Writers such as Duncan, Pratt and England focussed upon this heroism as a primary distinguishing element of a people, depicting a male warrior narrative whose protagonists were typically anonymous and whose outcomes were usually tragic. The proletarian background of these heroes, and the exploitative social and political structure of their colony and country, evident in Duncan's writing, were explored further in the work of Cook and Brown later in the century, while Macfarlane, writing towards the century's end, was moved by the failure of this distinctive society to establish itself as a nation.

The 1970s in Newfoundland witnessed a powerful reaction to the enormous changes that had taken place in Newfoundland society since Confederation. The policy of industrialization energetically pursued by the Smallwood government had not only failed from an economic point of view, it had also created great social upheaval and projected a future for Newfoundland premised upon a wholesale rejection of the past. Although the heroic myth had predominated throughout the earlier part of the century, the community life of the old outport was also of interest to Duncan and Pratt. During the 1940s and 1950s, this subject was explored much more

extensively by Scammell, Pollett and Russell. In the 1970s, however, the outport way of life became symbolic of the culture of Newfoundland and that culture was in the process of being rehabilitated, at least in the creative imagination of its writers. A global trend to revalue the worth of small-scale societies supplied an external theoretical framework for a critique of the strategies of industrialization and resettlement. Writers such as Pittman and Payne attempted to recover and enshrine the lives of those who had lived the traditional way while French tapped the richness of this life but also condemned the repressive class system that had marred and maimed the lives of many. At century's end, Morgan and Kavanagh, through the medium of the novel, attempted in-depth renderings of historical outport communities. Morgan's representation emphasized the renegade existence of the early Newfoundlanders, the freedom and hardship that characterized their lives, and the struggle of women to achieve recognition for their contribution to the survival of outport communities. Kavanagh's portrayal highlighted the moment of change from the old to the new.

While some writers responded to change by exploring the meaning of the traditional outport life, others addressed those changes more directly in their work. Guy, who was foremost among the writers who insisted upon the value of the old ways, was also among the first to acknowledge and criticise the impact of the changes that had taken place. Guy the romantic was balanced by Guy the satirist. Other writers, such as Janes, Pittman and Johnston, depicted Newfoundlanders in non-traditional settings like company towns and agricultural communities, thereby challenging the stereotypical image of Newfoundland communities and emphasising that modernism and change had been at work in the province for decades. In the realist / epic plays of Cook, this sense of change was depicted as overpowering and full of menace as cultural

disintegration was predicted to follow the destruction of the province's traditional fisheries resource. In plays by CODCO and the Mummers Troupe, issues of cultural and economic imperialism were satirically challenged within the context of a left-wing political agenda. At the end of the century, Morgan updated her saga of old-time outport life to acknowledge the dreary realities of life after the cod moratorium and Johnston lamented the loss of the Newfoundland nation, indicating that with it was inevitably lost Newfoundland's sense of cultural identity.

The literature of Newfoundland during the twentieth century illustrates how writers can enrich and intensify the imagining of a community, refining the meaning of a culture, challenging its stereotypes, and enabling a productive critique to nourish a collective country of the mind. Despite the pessimism of some writers at the end of the century, their very success in engaging the interest of a national and international audience in issues of Newfoundland's cultural identity suggests that reports of its demise are premature.¹

Endnotes

1. The acclaim accorded Wayne Johnston's *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* and *Baltimore's Mansion* is one example of this. The CODCO-inspired *This Hour Has Twenty-two Minutes* is another. The idea for the latter came from Mary Walsh. Of the four writer-performers in the original show, Walsh and Cathy Jones were former members of CODCO and Greg Thomey and Rick Mercer started their careers under the influence of these and other members of the troupe at the LSPU Hall in St. John's. Although the programme addresses national and international issues, the style of humour has a strong Newfoundland flavour.

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