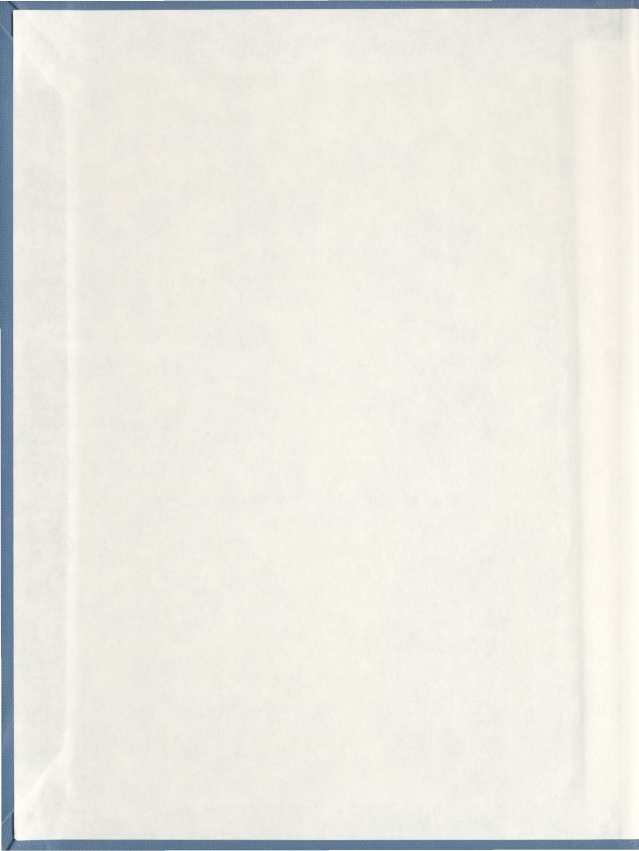


"THERE WAS MORE STRENGTH IN SINGING"
COMMUNITY, IDENTITY, AND THE PERFORMANCE
OF MEMORY IN THE FOLK OF THE SEA CHOIR,
1994-2000

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“There was more strength in singing”: Community, Identity, and the Performance of
Memory in the Folk of the Sea Choir, 1994-2000

by

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“There was more strength in singing”: Community, Identity, and the Performance of Memory in the Folk of the Sea Choir, 1994-2000

Abstract

This thesis examines the vernacular choral response to the cod moratorium created by the choral group Folk of the Sea and its memory construction more than a decade later, providing insights into Newfoundland's cultural reactions to sudden changes of identity and way of life. The ethnography upon which this study rests was collected through personal and telephone interviews during the summer of 2010 and the winter of 2011. First, the thesis introduces the reader to the beginnings of the choir and the seventeen informants who were interviewed for this study. A history of the Newfoundland cod fishery leading up to the moratorium is recounted as well as a history of singing, both solo and choral in Newfoundland. Chapter Three recounts the first ever concert by Folk of the Sea and analyzes the meaning and relationships revealed in the performance. In Chapter Four, the concept of the performance of the memory of performance is examined and some of the narratives collected from the informants for this thesis are included to demonstrate the vividness of emotional memory. The influence of place on identity is the topic of the Chapter Five and the persuasive uses of regional folklore are discussed. Finally, Chapter Six shows how a Folk of the Sea performance combats the stereotypes commonly placed upon the Newfoundland fisher.

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Introduction

The cod fishery was gone [. . .]. Our livelihood was gone. And you know, you were walking around, that year of the moratorium and [pause] you were lost [. . .]. And nothing you could do about it. Not a thing [. . .] There was the feeling as if you were looking for something. And I found it in Folk of the Sea. (Dunne 2010)

On July 1, 1992, Canada celebrated its 125th birthday as a nation. Crowds all over the country were gathering to sing “O Canada” and enjoy the festivities. In Bay Bulls, Newfoundland, a crowd was gathering too, but its 350 strong had no inclinations to sing. John Crosbie, then Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and guest of honour at the Canada Day celebrations in the small coastal town, was greeted with outrage in reaction to rumours from Ottawa that a moratorium would be called on cod fishing. Overwhelmed with the hostile reception, Crosbie retaliated with a harsh statement that has since become infamous in Newfoundland: “I didn’t take the fish from the goddamn water.” No one sang “Ode to Newfoundland” along with Crosbie that day. Instead the crowd stood in deep shock, placards held limply, heads bowed in anger (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 1992).

The next day, a moratorium was called on the fishing of northern cod, a species that made up 40% of Newfoundland’s then 700 million dollar fishing industry and supplied 30,000 jobs to its citizens (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 1992). The cod moratorium has been labeled “the biggest layoff in Canadian history” (Gorham, *Whitehorse Star*, 1992a), and described as driving “a stake through the heart of Newfoundland culture” (Moore 2011, 23).

Not only were jobs lost, but traditions were also seen to be threatened. Knowledge of the sea would no longer be passed on if it was no longer useful. Families, especially young people, would move away to find work, leaving outports to age and decay. A way

of life that had never stopped evolving but was a reliable constant to those living in outport Newfoundland was halted abruptly. It was from this precarious political and social climate that Folk of the Sea, a choir made up of over one hundred fishers and fish plant workers from all over the island of Newfoundland, was born. In this thesis I explore why Folk of the Sea appeared when it did and what that choir hoped to achieve. I was curious to see why, in the bitter environment demonstrated to Crosbie on Canada Day, there were still people, unemployed and dejected (or so I thought), who could muster up the courage and spirit to sing and perform. Singing became one of the most powerful weapons against not poverty or unemployment but the two things fishers saw as most fragile during the years following the moratorium: division within families, communities, and the province, and the tarnished image of the Newfoundland fisher as viewed by outsiders both within Newfoundland and on the mainland.

The first chapter of this thesis briefly outlines the inception of the Folk of the Sea and includes notes on my fieldwork process in which I met with and interviewed members of the choir from all over the island. Folk of the Sea was conceived of by two minds, basically, but it spread to include over one hundred people. I believe the story of how Folk of the Sea began is important to my readers' understanding of the traditions, both musical and folkloric, from which the choir came.

Chapter Two gives background to the two seemingly disparate topics upon which the choir is formed: fishing and singing. I outline the history of the cod moratorium and show the measures taken by the national government that were seen as too little too late by most of the fishers affected by the moratorium. I then switch gears and describe the history of the tradition of singing, solo and group, that has been in Newfoundland for as

long as its people. As technologies have changed and the rhythm of sea shanties is no longer a mainstay on board a fishing boat, we see the uses of song changing as well. In this chapter I wanted to demonstrate how folksong has been used as a tool of persuasion and as an identity marker in Newfoundland.

Chapter Three describes the first performance of Folk of the Sea that took place at the Arts and Culture Centre in St. John's in 1994. Through description and analysis, I show how important everything – from the venue, the songs, the uniforms, and the choice of emcees – was to the presentation of image and the feeling of unity generated by the performance. I delve into greater depth with the song “Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary’s” to explore how a song’s purpose can change depending on the climate and context in which it is sung. I then go on to demonstrate the many intricacies that can be found within one performance. Folk of the Sea consisted of fishers and fish plant workers who, directly following the cod moratorium, might have considered each other adversaries and competitors. The performance demonstrates the leveling power of music and the possibility of performing community and exploring social bonds that do not exist in the world outside of performance. On the stage, relationships and identities can be tested both between members of the choir and the choir and the audience.

In Chapter Four, I discuss the possibility of the act of performance being a reciprocal exchange between the audience and the performer. I look at the ways in which the audience directly affects the performance they experience. One cannot accurately verbally translate a performance and instead it must be invoked. My informants invoked their memory of the performance of Folk of the Sea through physical as well as verbal description. Through the narrative fieldwork I conducted, I argue that not only was the

remembered meaning of a performance conveyed to me, but so was the remembered emotion, and the memories containing emotion were far more vivid than those that did not.

Chapter Five describes the importance of place in the folklore of a people, especially folklore that is meant to persuade. I discuss the commons (Cadigan 1999; Hardin 1998; Hufford 1998, 2002; Pocius 2000) in the context of a Newfoundland fishing outport and examine songs written in direct response to the moratorium for evidence of what is believed to be lost by the end of the cod fishery. I write about the wilderness of Newfoundland as a “proving ground” crucial for the formation of male identity and how the loss of an occupational routine means a loss of identity. I conclude Chapter Five with a discussion of the potential for essentialization that may result from regionalized lore that can push Newfoundlanders into stereotypes of themselves. How *Folk of the Sea* broke out of these stereotypes is the topic of Chapter Six.

Chapter Six discusses image and the construction of identity, exploring the “freeloader” and the “pioneer” dichotomy Newfoundlander fishers are often placed within and how these stereotypes are overcome in a *Folk of the Sea* performance. While the occupational uniform of the Newfoundland fisher is rubber clothing, the choir opts for a uniform that contains no references to their occupation. This uniform and the image it conveys turns on its head and complicates the stereotype of the traditional Newfoundland fisher.

The performance of choral music as a political response to job loss offers an unusual angle through which to view how unions and their individual members guard and regain control of their identity (Turino 2008). Members of a choir can act as a social

support system for the greater community, giving purpose and meaning to the acts of the choir beyond its political front (Barz 2006b).

Despite these strengths, the study of community choral responses to threatened livelihood has been given little attention. According to Bailey and Davidson (2002), whose research demonstrates the social benefits of group singing among homeless men, there is minimal research concerning amateur choirs and the effect of their systems on the greater community (Finnegan 1989). My research adds to the few case studies of individual choirs recently brought together, in the “first ever collection” (Ahlquist 2006, 7) of its kind, under the title *Chorus and Community*. My thesis builds directly on existing studies of choirs formed by unions, such as Kenneth C. Wolensky’s work on the International Ladies Garment Worker’s Union’s (ILGWU) chorus in Pennsylvania (Wolensky 2006), or minorities, like Benita Wolters-Fredlund’s research on identities illustrated in the Toronto Jewish Folk Choir (Wolters-Fredlund 2002), Helen Metzelaar’s writing on the Fisk Jubilee Singers tour of Holland in 1877 in which she describes the way singing was used by ex-slaves to confront the Dutch audiences “with their own role in slavery” (2006, 165), and Jill Strachan’s work on the politically empowering nature of group singing for the GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered) population (Strachan 2006) to affirm their identities in the face of loss of tradition or cultural insensitivity from the majority.

Musicologist Karen Ahlquist poses the questions, “Why have groups with political agendas often chosen choruses as public bearers of their messages? How have they shaped their organization, activities, and music to fit their mission to the broader community?” (2006, 8) As anthropologist and political scientist James C. Scott notes,

folklore can often act as a “weapon of the weak” (1985) in its ability to allow voices to speak that might otherwise be silenced. This thesis examines the Newfoundland choral reaction to the cod moratorium and demonstrates why group singing was chosen and how it effectively passed on its message of unity and identity-reconstruction to the broader community through performance.

Chapter One

Folk of the Sea and Fieldwork

My research with Folk of the Sea began when I encountered an article by Peter Narváez entitled "‘She’s Gone Boys’: Vernacular Song Responses to the Atlantic Fisheries Crisis," in which he discusses the proliferation of songwriting that took place following the cod moratorium in Newfoundland in 1992. While Narváez focuses on what he calls "moratorium songs," those with lyrics explicitly about the moratorium, he writes:

Not included in this survey are older songs which have been used as vehicles of social protest in performance contexts within the crisis. However, this is not to deny their importance. The most significant and popular of these in Newfoundland is undoubtedly Otto Kelland's "Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary's" [. . .]. When sung by the huge fisher chorus, "Folk of the Sea," in synch with their commercial recording, and 6,000 emotional demonstrators, the obvious lyrical sentiment of the song provided a poignant greeting for the arrested Spanish trawler *Estai*, as it was escorted by two Canadian patrol ships into St. John's harbour on March 12, 1995. (1997, 4)¹

A fisher chorus? I wondered what that might sound like. I mentioned Folk of the Sea to my supervisor, Philip Hiscock, and received an email from him not long after reading the article informing me that one of his students had told him that her father was (or had been) a member of Folk of the Sea. I got in contact with this man, Mac Critchley and, from our one phone conversation, I knew this was something I wanted to learn more about.

Folk of the Sea was a fisher choir that formed after the cod moratorium in 1992. Members of the choir were from communities all over the island. Allan Fotheringham, in an article written for *Maclean's* after seeing the choir in Toronto, was obviously taken with the sometimes whimsical place names of Newfoundland outports. (Somehow just by

¹ Please refer to my note on transcribing on page 16 and 17 in which I explain my use of ellipses.

listing them the reader gets the impression that these performers really are just regular people like you and me.) Fotheringham wrote:

[T]here is Francis Littlejohn from Harbour Grace and Kevin Fitzgerald from Gooseberry Cove. Hubert Rideout is from Valley Pond, Charlotte Story from Portugal Cove. They are from Quirpon, Carbonear, Petty Harbour and Conche. Plate Cove, Coomb's Cove and Admiral's Beach. Men with great beer bellies and shaggy sideburns. There are women from fish plants and from the fish boats. From Little Catalina, Twillingate, Port de Grave, Bird Cove and Bonavista. (Fotheringham 1994, 104)

How did this happen? How did they come together? Why did they come together?

A man named Francis Littlejohn is credited with having the original idea for the choir. Francis was working for the Fish, Food, and Allied Workers Union (FFAW), coordinating a project called Lifeline after the moratorium. Lifeline was an introduction for fishers into other full-time training courses that they could take through the Marine Institute. Through his work, Francis was meeting hundreds of freshly out-of-work fishers. He recalled to me what the mood at the time had been like:

Francis Littlejohn: Money was being thrown at the problem. It wasn't really being dealt with properly in my mind. It wasn't that fishermen lost their career, they lost a way of life. They lost a sense of knowing who they were. I remember one gentleman saying to me, 'Jesus b'y, I'm in a fog.' That's how he described his own dilemma. Because he was used to getting up in the morning and just walking naturally aboard the boat to go fishing. And now he couldn't do that. Even his finances were different. He was used to getting his lump sum of money at the end of the week. Now he was receiving this check in the mail. And I remember fishermen telling me that they wouldn't go to the post office during the daytime. They were embarrassed. They would wait until it was dark. And I remember stories about fishermen telling me that they wouldn't go to the Legion anymore to have a beer. Again, because of embarrassment [. . .]. Money was thrown about and in some cases it was given to people who didn't deserve it or shouldn't have received it, and in other cases there were people who never got it that should have. And that caused some problems within families. It caused problems within communities. And you know, we were seeing and hearing a lot of negativity at the time. (Littlejohn 2010)

At the graduation ceremony (“for lack of a better phrase”) for Lifeline, Francis noticed that some of the fishers brought out their accordions and guitars and made music together. Observing this “camaraderie” and obvious joy expressed by the fishers, Francis witnessed a transformation. Francis’ wife Rose describes what he had explained to her so excitedly all those years ago:

Rose Littlejohn: The fishermen would be bickering about this and bickering about that. They’d bicker with one another but still after the meeting was over they’d put that bickering away and take out their guitars and their accordions and their spoons and they sang. They sang as brothers. They got together and their [pause], their hurt feelings were healed. With music. (Littlejohn 2010)



Figure 1: Folk of the Sea members during an informal jam while on tour (Used with permission – Charlie and Sharon Kane’s personal collection)

Francis saw this and was reminded of his school days singing in the choir when Ged Blackmore was his principal and director of the all-male glee club in Harbour Grace. Francis remembered that no matter if there were bad feelings amongst his classmates during the day, when they got together to sing, there was a release of tension and problems were forgotten. Not only was this music being made by the fishers “healing,” it was also quite good. Francis described it as “raw talent,” and remembers thinking that “people should see them now – just ordinary Newfoundlanders performing, you know,

celebrating our heritage” (2010). Watching the fishers playing music together was an enormous contrast from what Francis had been used to seeing while working for the FFAW. No depressing stories were recounted, and bitter arguments were set aside while the music lasted.

Francis was concerned with the image of the fishers of Newfoundland, feeling it was unfortunate that “people only saw one side of it. They saw the handout from the government. They didn’t see the livelihoods that had been taken. They didn’t see the family and the social pressures that were now increasing” (Francis Littlejohn 2010). In order to continue to receive the severance package from the government, the fishers had to go back to school or take training courses. While from the outside, this might have seemed to be a very sensible plan, Francis was meeting with many of these men and women, many of whom had never gone very far in school, and realizing that this solution brought problems of its own. “Keep in mind, a lot of the fishermen at the time weren’t really literate. And for them the word ‘school’ meant failure” (Francis Littlejohn 2010).

Francis contacted Ged Blackmore and the two began to brainstorm what could be done. The initial idea was to do a play called *Bound in Shallows*, written by Ged, in which all the actors, the stagehands, the carpenters who would build the props, and everyone involved, would be fishers or fish plant workers. This idea fell by the wayside, deemed too expensive by the union, and the creation of a fisher choir rose to the forefront of Francis and Ged’s planning.

As part of his work with the union, Francis traveled to communities all over the island of Newfoundland to meet with the fishers’ committees to discuss their training needs. Ged began to accompany Francis on these trips, bringing with him a keyboard and

sheets of song lyrics. After the meeting, Francis would call Ged up to the front to discuss the idea of Folk of the Sea. Ged Blackmore is blessed with an eloquent and energetic voice that demands attention and it seems that his oration lent strength to his listeners. Francis described the feeling in the room when Ged would speak to the fishers: "You could hear a pin drop. He spoke about our culture and about our heritage and it was very moving" (2010). Francis even remembered one man coming up to him afterwards saying, "My God, there were tears in my eyes" (2010). While Ged can be a very convincing man, not everyone was persuaded right away. One man who was sitting at the back of the room put up his hand "right in the middle of this really serious part. And Ged said, 'yes, sir?' He said, 'Buddy, uh, does that mean we gotta learn off all these fucking words?'" (Francis Littlejohn 2010). Although many were skeptical and "a lot of people thought [Ged and Francis] were cracked" (Eugene Kane 2010), people continued to attend the FFAW meetings and stay afterwards to listen to Ged and Francis; and the numbers of interested individuals grew.

Ged and Francis visited communities all over the island, spreading word about the choir and giving out cassette tapes with the songs on them so that everyone could practice. And people did practice. It was taken very seriously. Whether in an old closed-up store, a town hall, or in someone's kitchen, people gathered together in small groups to practice singing. Eugene Kane remembers going for drives with the cassette tape just to practice. Did he ever bring anyone along with him? I wondered. "No, nobody wanted to hear me sing!" (2010) Good voices were not a requirement to be in Folk of the Sea. Being a fisher or a fish plant worker was the only prerequisite. Many could not sing at all but still wanted to be involved. This was not seen as a problem, and those individuals

were merely directed to move their mouths when they were onstage as if they were singing so no one would be able to tell the difference.

The first time the choir got together as an entire group was the night before their first concert at the Arts and Culture Centre in St. John's. Depending on the source, there were between 104 to 120 members. Many had never been on a stage before, let alone the largest venue in the province. They practiced once all together before they performed for the first time on Friday, April 15, 1994. The concert was filled with tears and laughter, comedy and sorrow. The next day they performed in St. John's again to a sold-out audience and continued on to perform five more sold-out shows in Arts and Culture Centres across the island ending in Plum Point. A CD (Folk of the Sea 1994b) was made of the St. John's concerts and the proceeds were meant to be put towards a fund for the building of a monument honouring those lost at sea. This monument has not yet been realized.

This was meant to be the short run of Folk of the Sea, but over the following years the choir continued to be asked to perform at events and festivals around the island. They traveled to Ontario to perform at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa and the Roy Thomson Hall in Toronto. Both concerts were sold out. Folk of the Sea did another tour in Newfoundland, hitting communities they had skipped over the first time. In many cases, locals would come up onstage and perform with Folk of the Sea or perform their own songs. The play, *Bound in Shallows*, was enacted by some of the members of the choir during its six-year run. The final performance of Folk of the Sea was in 2000.

Folk of the Sea members never gather as a group anymore. Many members are still close friends and visit each other despite sometimes great distances. John Hewitt

explained to me that even eleven years after their last performance, Folk of the Sea would be the main topic of conversation with the friends he made in the choir: "If I met Mac Critchley, probably over a cup of tea or a bottle of beer or something like that, and we had a chance to chat for an hour, chances are we'd talk about the Folk of the Sea for about 50 minutes of that hour" (2011).

A few members of Folk of the Sea, or those close to them, have passed away since the choir's last performance and their funerals have been attended by members in Folk of the Sea uniforms. Eugene Kane told me how one man who had not been in the choir but had fished all his life had requested that Folk of the Sea sing at his funeral:

Eugene Kane: This guy, he wasn't in the Folk of the Sea, but that was his last request. That was what he wanted. If it could be done he wanted Folk of the Sea to sing at his funeral.

Annie: Was he a fisherman himself?

Eugene: Yes he was. And we did. (2010)

Fieldwork

I pursued my informants with a sort of 'come what may' attitude, trusting the snowball method. It worked well but there were a few drawbacks. Men were mostly recommended to me and they were much easier to locate because, unlike women, they were under their own names in the phonebook. Because of this I have very few women's voices in my thesis. I see this as a hole in my work and regret not making more of an effort to track them down. Nonetheless, I have brought together a representative voice of the majority as most of the members of Folk of the Sea were men. According to their program handed out on the night of their first performance, 14 out of the 116 members were women (Folk of the Sea 1994a).

Most of the interviews I conducted were done in the homes of my informants, nearly always at the kitchen table laden with tea and a plethora of other kindnesses. I brought along with me a list of general questions to look at and mutter about if there was ever an extended pause. Sadly, I never did become fully comfortable with silence, always, as Gilda O'Neill reflects about her own fieldwork, "act[ing] like a hostess at a dinner party by filling any gaps with trite chatter" (1990, 142). The questions I did ask were something like those listed below:

- How closely is your family tied to the cod fishing industry?
- How has your life changed since the moratorium?
- How large a role did music play in your life growing up?
- Why a choir? Why not some other mode of performance?
- Why was Folk of the Sea formed?
- Why did you decide to join?
- At whom were the performances aimed? Who were you singing to? Who were you singing for?
- What kind of message was Folk of the Sea sending to the rest of Newfoundland and Labrador? To the rest of Canada?
- How important was the choir to you during the time directly following the moratorium?
- How important is Folk of the Sea to your life today?

I was much happier when my informant took the interview where he or she wanted it to go. This happened quite often as Folk of the Sea was a topic of great passion for many of them.

As a mainlander who was seven years old when the cod moratorium was imposed, I felt unprepared when I began my fieldwork. Fishing is something I had done off a dock in Eastern Ontario using a homemade rod with wieners for bait. Nineteen years later my basic understanding of the act remains much the same. Singing is something I am slightly more familiar with, and I saw in Folk of the Sea something I have known innately all my life – you feel better when you sing. I saw Folk of the Sea as a bright and shining moment

in an otherwise dark time, like the silver flash of a minnow beneath the shadow of a boat. I was drawn to Folk of the Sea because I understood the choir to be joy born out of despair and depression. Looking back, I see that I was a romantic, which is often my way. However, this romance yet lingers and was reflected in the reports by the people I interviewed, and I still feel today very similar. The people I met through my interviews were all generous, opening their doors to me, sitting down with me at their kitchen tables and patiently allowing me to stutter out my questions with my recorder by the sugar bowl. My chief worry with this thesis is that I will not do justice to those who have helped me, those who hope my work will amount to a reunion concert, those whose lives I picked away at and then brought home with me to sit as inert WAV and MP3 files on my laptop – such a strange, faceless form for a conversation to take.

With this thesis, I am not attempting to draw up a full history of the choir. I spoke with less than 20% of its members and could never claim to know everything about why people joined or what it was believed that the choir achieved by all. Gilda O'Neill, quoting Alessandra Portelli, reminds me that “[oral sources] tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, what they now think they did” (1990, 147). How have the past nineteen years shaped their memories of the cod moratorium? How have the newspaper and magazine articles written about them shaped their feelings of the purpose and effect the choir once had? Our memories are sculpted by how we feel in the present.

Hiscock writes about the concept of the “‘past’ as constructed in the present” (2005, 229) when describing the crystallization of folksongs. Those verses of a folksong that reflected “the late-twentieth century view” (Hiscock 2005, 229) of the past were the

ones that survived and were remembered. The moratorium allowed for a crystallization of the past because it can now be seen to have distinct borders – pre and post cod moratorium. Everything meaningful and good (employment, familiarity) was in the past and the moratorium made the past much easier to distinguish, giving it an outline – there was suddenly a before and an after, and instead of something they did, fishing became something they used to do. Even though the fishery was always changing, this sudden pause was startling, framing the past as the years pulled ahead, devoid of fishing, devoid of familiarity. Memories of how fishing used to be are visions of the past framed in the context of the present, just as memories of being in the choir are shaped by present conditions. The cod fishing and the time spent with the choir are crystallized in the memories of my informants.

O'Neill writes, "[t]he act of interpretation always carried the burden of selection and of claiming expertise, no matter how embarrassing or discomfiting that thought might be" (1990, 150-151). It is reassuring to me that I am not the only interpreter to ever feel this way. Often, throughout my fieldwork, I would stare across the table at the lively informant with whom I was having tea and find myself wishing I had chosen something else to study, something less animated, less friendly – like fruit flies or copper mines. How could I squish this person, this friend, into a compact little quote or two that would fit on a page in black-and-white twelve-point font? How could I ever hope to do justice to the throbbing lyrical voice of Charlie Rogers, or the breathless rhythms of Doug Dunne's speech?

A note about transcribing: I decided that I would only include verbatim transcriptions of my informant's pronunciations and dictions if I deemed them

worthwhile to the meaning of the words. Mine is not a linguistic study and the spoken word, *everyone's* spoken word, looks clumsy on paper. I have therefore lightly edited my informants' speech – for instance, removing false starts and hesitations for readability. If I ever cut out certain parts of a transcribed quote from an interview, they are replaced with ellipses in brackets, like this: [. . .]. I also frequently do this when quoting text to indicate a sentence or a word I deemed irrelevant to my argument and decided to leave out.

A note about italics: Throughout the entirety of the thesis, I use italics to identify quotes at the beginnings of chapters and headings, and to distinguish songs from regular text. In Chapter Three specifically, I use italics to describe the archival photographs displayed in a Folk of the Sea concert and to identify direct transcriptions from the Folk of the Sea video.

A note about the terms *fisher*, and *fishermen/man*: I struggled with these two terms during the writing of this thesis. My informants generally would use the term *fishermen*, although sometimes they said *fisherwomen* as well or even *fisherpeople*. Most recent publications about the fishery use the term *fisher* and although this sounds like a children's toy company or a large, brown marten, it seems to be the most politically correct. This term was never used by my informants, nor was it used during Folk of the Sea's performance. I did meet several fisherwomen during my fieldwork, but the vast majority of Newfoundlanders who spend their days pulling fish from the water are men. Most women in the fishing industry work in the fish plants. I opted for the term *fisher* and use it rather awkwardly throughout this thesis.

What do I do about the overly positive memories? When looking back on something that began fifteen years ago, it is only natural to recount the good and downplay the bad. O'Neill finds the same situation in her oral history of women hop pickers from London, of which she was once one:

In our memories, hopping has become part of a pastoral golden age, a utopian past when 'we was all one.' An unspoken conspiracy might as well exist which disallows versions that might spoil this idyll, which might show another reality. (1990, 154)

There was disappointment. For instance, the monument commemorating the lives of fishers lost at sea has not yet been built and feelings are sensitive on the subject. However, largely the memories are warm.

One informant I pursued without any help from the snowball method was Norm Cull from Great Breat, near the Northern tip of the Great Northern Peninsula. I first heard Norm's voice through headphones in the CBC archives. I was listening to a past episode of *The Fisheries Broadcast*, the daily network program on CBC Newfoundland, and Norm was on speaking about possible conspiracies within Folk of the Sea. He believed money had been made that should have gone towards building the monument and that that money had never been brought forth. No one I had yet spoken with had mentioned any of this and I realized that within one choral unit, there could be a multitude of opinions concerning the choir's goals and purposes.

There are inconsistencies in the narrative of what actually happened, when and whose idea brought about which detail. Listening to members of Folk of the Sea speak, I realized that the purpose of the choir was discussed a great deal when the choir was active. Folk of the Sea acted with purpose. There were objectives right from the beginning. It was a self-conscious, self-reflexive group that saw purpose to its

performance beyond the performance itself. In my brief reconstruction of what 'happened,' I pull together the most popular versions.

O'Neill links memory with identity, writing that "we are right to fear the amnesia that can come with old age; it means the loss of identity" (1990, 4). Without our memories of the past, whether 'accurate' or otherwise, we lose who we are. The performances of Folk of the Sea were memory-boosts for those Newfoundlanders who had forgotten, or believed they had lost, the link between the history of the fishery and their own history. Through a conjuring up of the history of the island, Folk of the Sea reset the memories of those in the audience. Al Stacey, a writer for the St. John's *Evening Telegram* recalls his childhood with warmth and nostalgia after attending a Folk of the Sea performance:

In a very brief time the playing and singing had me thinking back to the days of my youth on the strand in Lords Cove. There I blubbered the sticks, tended table, helped wash out the salt cod, and witnessed the work of my grandparents on the flakes. (Stacey, *Evening Telegram*, 1995)

Remembering the past is to remember who we are. Francis Littlejohn told me that

one of the reasons we were so successful in what we did without looking for the success was the fact that people could recall. They knew. You know, I remember one gentleman saying to us, "when I saw those gentlemen on stage I saw my father and my father's brothers." (Littlejohn 2011)

Folk of the Sea became part of the identities of its members, and while speaking to me and remembering the performances and the friends they had made, this seemed to be reaffirmed and strengthened.

Sketches of My Informants

After my phone call with Mac Critchley, I set to work seeking out members of Folk of the Sea. I ended up interviewing seventeen members of the choir.

Francis and Rose Littlejohn, June 13, 2010, St. John's: Francis Littlejohn was the first person I spoke with. He and his wife Rose picked me up and brought me to their house in St. John's. I spent over two hours interviewing Francis, with Rose coming in and out of the recording. Francis would often call out to Rose in support of his narrative: "Wasn't it, Rose?" We sat at their kitchen table. Rose made tea, gave me an angel food cake muffin, cherries, and yogurt, and wished after that I had eaten more. Francis got red around the eyes a few times describing some of his experiences, his vision, how it all came together, and I nearly welled up too. They are passionate and positive people. Rose drove me home and gave me a hug when she dropped me off. Francis works for the FFAW and Rose is a retired clerk at Health Services.



Figure 2: Rose and Francis Littlejohn in their home in St. John's (Photo by A.McE.)

The next day, Eugene Kane picked me up from my home in St. John's in a white pickup and drove me down to Renew's where I spent the next couple of days interviewing Eugene Kane, Charlie and Sharon Kane, and Doug Dunne.

Eugene Kane, June 14, 2010, Renew's: I interviewed Eugene at his home near the old convent. Eugene is an everything man, a fisherman and a skilled carpenter. When I went to interview him he was working on a beautiful crib for his granddaughter. He served me pea soup with a dough bread ball soaking in it, homemade rhubarb wine, and fresh crab. We went out for a drive in the middle of the interview because he got a call that Doug and Jim Dunne were in trouble out on the water. Something had broken on their boat, but it turned out they were being towed in and they were fine. He showed me amazing things found preserved in the bogs around town, like a spiked ball on a chain with a long wooden handle. He also showed me an old ship's log found in the wall of a house in Renew's – Pilley & Co. Manufacturers, Birmingham. Eugene showed me how to split a cod, giving me the "cod's ears," little bones that look like angel wings and even got me invited to a party in Renew's in which we stayed up all night singing and reciting poetry.

Charlie and Sharon Kane, June 15, 2010, Renew's: Charlie works for the FFAW and is also a fisherman and Sharon works in retail. Much like Rose, Sharon Kane was often looked to by her husband for specific details. She would remember exact dates for Charlie by how old their children had been at that time. Charlie brought out an album of photos of Folk of the Sea, some of which have been included in this thesis. We sat at the kitchen table looking through the album, their narratives gaining shape and definition

with the accompanying photos. As I was not to visit without being fed, Charlie set out a mountain of treats on the table, and of course, served me tea with Carnation milk.

Doug Dunne, June 15, 2010, Renew's: Doug Dunne is a fisherman and a family man who has lived in Renew's all his life. The interview was conducted in the house of his friend who was away. In the recording you can hear the clicking of the toenails of a large white dog pacing about the kitchen. Doug is passionate and well-spoken and I thoroughly enjoyed our interview. His father got polio in his arm at age ten but never let it stop him from supporting a large family and playing the mouth organ as well. Doug has evidently adopted such strength of character from his father.

Eugene Kane drove me back to St. John's the next night and we watched for moose the whole way.

Sandy Morris, June 22, 2010, St. John's: The next person I interviewed was Sandy Morris, a multi-talented St. John's musician who had played with Folk of the Sea in Ontario. He bounced into my apartment in St. John's, the only interview I conducted in my own home for this thesis, and I was ready to offer the Newfoundland hospitalities I had experienced in Renew's but Sandy declined any food or drink. Sandy is the only professional musician I interviewed for this thesis. The pace of the interview was a lot different than the ones I had conducted in Renew's. Sandy was quick and full of energy, professing, to my disbelief, that he never drank coffee. The interviews I had conducted in Renew's had been slower, with pauses and halts, clocks ticking quietly in the background as we sat and thought. I realized the difference was one of character, but also, probably

because Sandy is used to being interviewed and because of this, is able to anticipate questions and recycle answers.

For the next three informants, Charlie Rogers, Stan Fiander, and Ged Blackmore, I rented a car to travel to their respective homes, or in Ged's case, temporary office.

Charlie Rogers, July 1, 2010, Harbour Grace: I met Charlie Rogers in his house in Harbour Grace on Canada Day and he kindly missed the local parade in order to speak with me at length about his experience with Folk of the Sea. Charlie works at a retirement residence in Harbour Grace, often using his rich singing voice to entertain the residents. While I stumbled through my questions, Charlie graciously kept my teacup full and insisted I eat at least two chocolate caramels. Near the end of the interview, Charlie sang me a song, a cappella, as he could not find his guitar. I write about this instance in detail in Chapter Four of this thesis.

Stan Fiander, July 3, 2010, Tors Cove: I was very late in arriving at Stan Fiander's home, having gotten lost on my way to Tors Cove three times. He did not seem to mind and was sunning himself on the deck reading a book when I arrived. We sat out in the sun and Stan told me about learning the accordion when he was sick in bed one winter as a child. Because he learned to play in bed, he never engaged the lower half of his body and to this day, unlike, according to Stan, most accordion players in Newfoundland, he does not tap his feet along while he plays. Stan has been a fisherman for most of his life but judging by his deep voice I think his true calling is a musician.

Ged Blackmore, July 14, 2010, Cupids: Ged Blackmore was difficult to get a hold of and I may have given up trying had I not been urged to interview him by every Folk of the Sea member I had met so far. I finally got the chance when he was directing a choir as part of the Cupids 400 celebration. Ged has an energy about him that is infectious. His was probably the easiest interview I conducted as he was able to talk with great eloquence and without break for a long time, as if he had memorized what he was going to say before I met with him. Ged had been teacher and later principal at St. Francis school in Harbour Grace when it was an all-boys school. It was there he formed relationships with Francis Littlejohn and Charlie Rogers. Ged and I sat at his desk in the Cupids 400 office and at the end I left with that feeling of inspiration that only a good teacher can give you.

These interviews took me a month, from June 13th, 2010 to July 14th, 2010, to conduct and I did not begin to conduct interviews again until January 18th, 2011.

In the new year, 2011, I went down to Renews again as Eugene Kane, the infinitely helpful informant, had arranged for me to interview two gentlemen down in Trepassey, Mickey Waddleton and John Hewitt. During this time I stayed with Eugene and his wife Bev in Renews.

Mickey Waddleton, January 18, 2011, Trepassey: Mickey Waddleton is as joyful a character as his name suggests. I met him in his home in Trepassey and he had prepared for the interview the night before by going through his own personal Folk of the Sea archive – a folder containing every newspaper scrap written about the choir and every message, no matter how trivial, sent by Ged and Francis out to the choir. Mickey used to

work in the fish plant in Trepassey but when the moratorium came along, he went back to school and trained as a cook and spent many happy years in his new occupation. Mickey was extremely proud of his involvement with Folk of the Sea and called me back to his house to show me a video he had found of himself singing his first solo ever to the audience at a Folk of the Sea show in Trepassey. Certainly one of the kindest men I've ever met, he desperately searched for something he could give me to eat on my way back to St. John's. I recall him calling out to me with a big smile on his face as I left – "Chocolates, Pepsi, Cheesies? Are you sure you don't want to take some peanuts with you? Whiskey? Baileys? Rum?"

John Hewitt, January 19, 2011, Trepassey: John Hewitt was the other man I interviewed while down in Trepassey. John has a frank and jovial way about him. We sat in his kitchen and over multiple cups of tea John told me about his experience as a cod fisherman at the time of the moratorium. John has Folk of the Sea posters on his walls and I took a photo of him standing beside a photo of the choir hung in a prominent place in his living room. I watched, amused, as he fed his perfectly healthy dog ("never been to the vet") granola bars covered in chocolate or "bars" as he called them. I was then lucky enough to get a part of a song out of him.

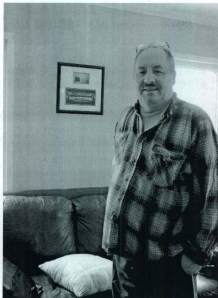


Figure 3: John Hewitt in his home in Trepassey standing next to a photo of Folk of the Sea (Photo by A.McE.)

As Folk of the Sea consisted of fishers and fishplant workers from all over the island, I felt that I had to make my way up north in order to gain some perspectives from the members up there.

In the early days of February, on a road white with snow squalls and thick with caribou herds I drove up the Great Northern Peninsula to interview Norm Cull in Great Brehat and Loomis Way from Green Island Cove.

Norm Cull, February 3, 2011, Great Brehat: Norm Cull, the man I felt I needed to contact because I had heard him on the radio, was extremely welcoming. We had a very long interview, about three and a half hours. In that time, I ate two pieces of partridgeberry pie, cheese, and a banana muffin, and drank copious amounts of tea, of course. Norm has held many positions in his life, working at “pretty much everything

from mining to carpentry to rig and steel, and construction work, like graters, tractors, you name it, I've been there" (Cull 2011). However, he identifies as a fisherman and has been involved in the fishery for fifty years. Norm spoke with emotion about Folk of the Sea and the three and a half hours felt like no time at all. I went to see Norm Cull play accordion with his band called The Pumper Boys play at the Legion in St. Anthony the next night.

Loomis Way, February 4, 2011, Green Island Cove: I interviewed Loomis Way in the afternoon, arriving late after getting the car stuck in a snow bank outside of a convenience store I had stopped at to ask directions. He and his wife Brenda were extremely entertaining. They had been together since quite a young age and worked side-by-side lobster fishing for years. Because of this time spent together, they had a close, teasing bond that was a joy to watch. Loomis would holler into the kitchen where Brenda was preparing supper to confirm his facts with her. Loomis sang and played me two or three songs on with his guitar and claimed that while lobster fishing had its advantages, what he really wanted to do was be in the music business.

Max Sexton, February 20, 2011, Goose Cove: Back in St. John's I interviewed Max Sexton from Goose Cove on the Northern Peninsula by telephone. Max is apparently a very tall fellow and I could feel his height in his voice booming down the line. An interview by telephone is not ideal, and it was difficult to not speak over one another or cut each other off. I realized speaking with Max how important body language and thoughtful pauses are in an interview and how on a telephone, neither can happen

naturally. Max performed for years with his band called The Moonshiners² and actually dropped off a number of cassette tapes (The Moonshiners 1988; 1989; 1991; 1993) at his hotel when next he came into St. John's for me to pick up.

Mike Symmonds, February 22, 2011, Conche: I met Mike Symmonds, from Conche, on the Northern Peninsula, at the Battery Hotel in St. John's. He had flown in for an FFAW meeting. Mike has been a fisher all his life, and taught himself to play the accordion as a twelve-year-old boy when there was nothing else to do. He expressed to me his love for music ("music is one of the best things you can do, brings people together, makes them happy") and regretted that he did not bring his accordion along with him to the FFAW meeting. It seems that the pattern of making music after talking about fish has not changed since the early days of Folk of the Sea.

Francis Littlejohn, March 4, 2011, St. John's: I interviewed Francis Littlejohn again in March of 2011 as he was accepted as the founder of the choir and never ran out of things to say about it. After hearing all the positive memories I had collected from other Folk of the Sea members and their wish for a reunion concert, Francis began to wonder if this was possible. There is still a hope by many that a reunion concert will happen but so far the logistics have been deemed too complicated.

Mac Critchley, March 7, 2011, Sandringham: My final interview with a Folk of the Sea member was on March 7th, 2011. I drove out to Sandringham and met with Mac

² See Julia Bishop's PhD dissertation on the relations between the texts and the tunes of variants of "The Moonshine Can," a folksong from Goose Cove, also known as "The Moonshine Song." The Moonshiners sing "Moonshine Song" on their 1989 album, *Good Days*.

Critchley, the very man with whom I first spoke in the fall of 2009. Like Mickey Waddleton, Mac had a collection of Folk of the Sea memorabilia and brought it all out to show me.

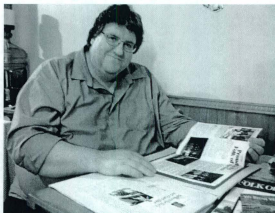


Figure 4: Mac Critchley in his home in Sandringham with his collection of Folk of the Sea memorabilia (Photo by A.McE.)

We watched a video of the choir's first concert together as well as a promotional tourist video about Folk of the Sea that is apparently shown on the ferries between Newfoundland and mainland Canada. It was interesting watching the concert with Mac as he kept up a running commentary the whole time and filled in information for me. Mac and his wife Brenda fed me multiple meals and allowed me to stay with them overnight.

All of my informants experienced change in their lives as a result of the cod moratorium. For some, like Sandy Morris and Ged Blackmore, it was indirect and perhaps something they first observed in others before feeling themselves. For others, it was a bewildering and shocking event that shook to the very core their personal identities. Folk of the Sea exists and matters to my informants because it worked to knit

together a community of individuals whose lives had been thrown into confusion by the cod moratorium.

J.D.A. Widdowson writes of the “reawakening of interest in our traditional heritage” that came about because of the “increasingly rapid pace of social change” (1981, 34). The cod moratorium and the resulting Folk of the Sea is an augmented, intensified instance of the same social impulse about which Widdowson writes. “As a people strongly rooted in tradition we find a sense of security and stability in our traditions, especially in times of stress and uncertainty” (Widdowson 1981, 34). Norm Cull described to me both fishing and singing as “roots” (2011) and while one of these options was not available and life was spinning out of control, there was an impulse to get back to making music together. The memories my informants have so graciously shared with me are shaped by the present but are deeply rooted in understandings of a shared cultural past of fishing and singing. In the next chapter I outline this shared cultural past.

Chapter Two

Fishing and Singing

Once the “largest and most productive cod fishery in the world” (Cadigan and Hutchings 2001, 31), the highest historical catch from the Newfoundland cod fishery was in 1968 with 810,000 tonnes of cod caught off the coast of Newfoundland. By the mid-’70s it was obvious that over-fishing was a large worry and the Canadian government declared a 200-mile Economic Exclusion Zone (EEZ) to cut back on foreign fishing off the coast of Newfoundland (Murray et al. 2005). In 1977, a year after the EEZ came into effect, a TAC (Total Allowable Catch) system was developed and from that point onwards the highest catch was in 1988 with 268,000 tonnes before the moratorium was set in motion in 1992 (Cadigan and Hutchings 2001). The imposition of the EEZ did not cut back on catches as hoped, as Canadian trawlers increased their fishing in place of the foreign vessels. Heavy over-fishing continued until it became evident that the cod stocks had dramatically declined (Murray et al. 2005, 6). According to Cadigan and Hutchings, “[i]n early 2003, northern cod have shown no signs of recovery, the population having been estimated to be less than 0.5% of its size in the early 1960s” (2001, 32).

The shellfish industry has exploded since the cod moratorium, tripling the “total landed value of all species [. . .] from \$160 million to \$500 million” (Murray et al. 2005, 8). This growth, however, has not led to more jobs (Haedrich and Hamilton 2000). “This reduction in employment is mainly the result of a shift to the more capital labour [*sic*] intensive ground fish industry, with significantly disproportionate decreases in the number of processing workers” (8). The growth does, however, cast a veil over the plight of the fisher or fish plant worker and many not involved in the fishery see the growing

numbers and assume that issues with unemployment are not acute, but rather, “they’re all getting rich on the crab these days.”

John Crosbie, with his infamous quote stinging in the ears of the fishers, summed up the overall question about the moratorium: Who is to blame? Who *did* take the fish? In a statement delivered by Crosbie on July 17, 1992, the “loss of half of the total biomass and about three quarters of the spawning biomass of the Northern cod stock” was said to be caused primarily by “severe oceanographic conditions” in 1991 (Crosbie 1992, 1). At the time, this was a safe announcement to make. If the temperature of the water was to blame, fingers could be pointed towards the faceless scapegoat of inefficient science.

The causes of the current destitute state of the Newfoundland cod fishery are multifarious. The most accepted factors include: the dragger method – a fishing technology as environmentally devastating as it is efficient; unheeded management issues accompanied by inaccurate scientific estimates; over-fishing by the foreign fishing community outside of Canada’s 200 mile zone; and capitalist fishing ventures with short-term unsustainable goals (Sinclair 2001, 166). Historically, the fishing communities of Newfoundland understood the region in which they live and fish as a commons for which they are morally responsible (Cadigan 1999; Sinclair 2001). However, traditional methods of resource management are ineffective against the giant offshore trawlers described by an older fisher watching the dark line of the ocean at night as “a city of lights, tearing the hell out of the fishing grounds” (Sullivan, *The Evening Telegram*, 1994).

The Northern Cod Adjustment and Recovery Program (NCARP), a \$484 million Federal reaction (Haedrich and Hamilton 2000, 359), gave fisher and fish plant workers

\$225 per week in compensation. Amendments were made weeks later when conditions were given in order to qualify for \$406 per week. This lasted until May 15, 1994, when The Atlantic Groundfish Strategy (TAGS), a \$1.9 billion project came into effect. It was clear by this point that the cod had not returned in the two years initially declared and strategies turned from paying fishers to wait, to training them to move on into other industries and occupations as well as an aim to professionalize the cod fishing industry (Murray et al. 2005). When TAGS terminated in 1998, "a further \$730 million package was announced to assist with retraining and restructuring adjustments for a 'permanently downsized' fishery. Pressure for continuing federal assistance reflects the fact that many people and places found no economic substitute for cod" (Haedrich and Hamilton 2000, 359).

Fishers knew the moratorium was coming. What they didn't know was how ill-prepared the government of Canada would be to come to their assistance. The reaction to the initial compensation package was one of absolute outrage. "This \$225 is not going to feed my family, cover my mortgage and pay my light bill," said a fisherman from Petty Harbour [. . .]. 'Let's get out and stand up for our rights. For God's sake, fight, fight, fight'" (Gorham, *Whitehorse Star*, 1992a). Much of the anger was aimed directly at John Crosbie, who, after several weeks, presented a statement outlining in greater detail what plans "the Government of Canada...in consultation with the union, processors and the Government of Newfoundland" had for fishers and fish plant workers (Crosbie 1992, 1). In the statement, made on July 17, 1992, Crosbie revised the \$225/week to up to \$406/week. The sum each person received would "be based on the individual average Unemployment Insurance benefit over the last three years" (Crosbie 1992, 1-2). The

\$406/week was not for everyone. Part of the deal was that a fisher or fish plant worker had to choose to take one of the following courses:

- i. Early retirement for those 50 years of age and over;
- ii. Licence retirement, especially of inactive licences and part-time licences;
- iii. Training outside the fishery, especially for younger fishermen and plant workers;
- iv. Professionalization within the fishery, to provide for a highly skilled, full-time workforce, matched to the opportunities of harvesting and processing Northern Cod; and
- v. Other approved fisheries-related activities, for example providing training under the professionalization program. (Crosbie 1992, 6)

The training programs did not work as well as planned. Headlines in *The St. John's Evening Telegram* during this period speak of the hopelessness and uselessness felt by the fishers and fish plant workers, even from those who did take the retraining programs with hopes to move on to other careers:

November 28, 1992. Burgeo gets compensation; Ramea still left out in cold
September 1, 1993. Training fishermen to be divers waste of money: No jobs for them, diving president says
September 15, 1993. Fishermen unhappy with projects
January 23, 1994. No answers for fishery workers: Outlook grim in Bonavista
March 26, 1994. Survey finds fishery workers feel powerless
December 11, 1994. Too old to retrain, too young to retire

There was little choice given to the out-of-work fishers and fish plant workers. Options that sounded satisfactory, such as the training outside of the fishery, were rife with complications. Some fishers or fish plant workers had never done anything other than fish or work in a fish plant and had no interest in learning new skills. Some had dropped out of high school to work in the fishery when they were quite young. Some were illiterate. There was also a strong doubt that there would be any jobs available to the newly trained workers once they completed their training (Stacey, *The Evening Telegram*, 1993). Crosbie admitted that the compensation measures were not adequate

and knew there were deeper problems than lack of money to anticipate: “‘There [is] a great deal of upset; there is a great deal of psychological trauma involved [with] the fishery – the reason for which Newfoundland was settled – suddenly being stopped,’ he said. ‘Perhaps we undercalculated the shock effect this would have’” (Cox, *The Globe and Mail*, 1992).

The fishery has always had its ups and downs. Norm Cull hates hearing about the golden years of the past:

I cringe sometimes when people talk about-, there was lots of fish years ago [. . .]. I’ve been involved in the fishing industry for 50 years, or longer. Probably 55 years. And out of those 55 years, I can only think about probably two or three good years, what we call a real good year, out of the 55. (2011)

According to Mac Critchley, from Sandringham, the year before the moratorium was one of the best for the fishery in his area. “We used to go out, load a boat, come back, never even clean it. Got to the point that you wouldn’t clean it cause there’s too much of it [. . .]. That year was phenomenal” (2011). The following spring there was nothing. When I went to visit Mac he showed me a home video of himself and his crew hauling in a cod trap in the spring of 1992. It was a sunny day and the water in the cove was calm and still. The men stood in a line at the side of the boat, pulling at the same speed to keep the cod trap even. There was no singing, but they kept up a constant stream of chatter and laughter. The enormous cod trap was nearly empty. Instead of the devastation and outcry I expected to see, the chatter continued as if nothing had happened. They even laughed. I realized that the lack of fish was not what really affected those whose lives were intimately connected with the fishery. They were used to the highs and lows of the industry. It was the halting altogether that hurt.

At the time the cod moratorium was called, John Hewitt, like most fishers, had just put his gear in the water to begin the 1992 fishing season. It takes the entire winter to fix and acquire fishing gear for the spring. "Jesus, we had a nice bit of expense, and not only us but just about everybody that went fishing, because it was the nature of the beast. You have it every year, right?" (Hewitt 2011). The expensive gear is supposed to be paid off with the fish it is anticipated to catch. While John agrees that fishing is a financial gamble, he professes an undying passion for the occupation:

John Hewitt: I loves me fishing. I loves me fishing. I dreams about it. Jesus.

Annie: What do you mean, you dream about it?

John: Well I used to dream about fishing.

Annie: Like, actually doing it?

John: Yeah, oh yeah. Like, dreaming in the nighttime about the big ones the next day. Oh yeah. I used to dream about it, b'y. I loves it. (Hewitt 2011)

John is equally passionate about the sea and the wharf: "You think now an old fool like me would stay clear of the wharf. Like, I goes down to the wharf like five times a day. Jeez, there's nothing down there to see. I'm after seeing it five thousand times, right? But I still do it" (Hewitt 2011). Mickey Waddleton worked at the fish plant in Trepassey and remembers the feeling of loss when it finally shut down:

It's hard for me to be able to tell you but, when I [pause], when the last load of fish went out of that plant, I tallied it on to the last [trip], and to go into an empty cold storage, you know, where there used to be millions of pounds of fish and that day to stand on the ramp and see the trailer moving away, it was just, something had died inside me. That's the way I felt, you know? The community was dying. (Waddleton 2011).

The death of community was what Francis saw in the eyes of the fishers with whom he spoke following the moratorium, and it was the revival of this community spirit he witnessed in the singing and playing of the fishers following an FFAW meeting. While cod fishing may have ceased in Newfoundland, the tradition of singing never faltered.

Singing

In 1949, the year Newfoundland and Labrador became a province of Canada, the carillon in Canada's parliament building's Peace Tower played "The Squid Jiggin' Ground" to mark the moment of confederation. With this act, "folk music was chosen to stand for the identity of the new province" (Rosenberg 1994, 55). Neil Rosenberg is careful to impress that folksong in Newfoundland has been "an important source of national identity" for over a century, collected and presented in various forms. More effective than mere speech in conveying this identity, folksong was once again employed for this office when performed by Folk of the Sea.

Elisabeth Greenleaf, in her Introduction to *Ballads and Sea Songs of Newfoundland*, describes a scene in which she returns from teaching evening school to the family she is staying with in the early 1920s in "an isolated fishing village on the West Coast of Northern Newfoundland" (Greenleaf and Mansfield 2004, xix). While she eats her supper, sitting with the family around the warmth and comfort of a woodstove, "Uncle Dan Endacott offered to sing [her] a song" (Greenleaf and Mansfield 2004, xix). This is a commonplace situation in Newfoundland rural homes. Even today, with televisions and other modern entertainment systems, singing around the home in the evening after supper is still very much a regular occurrence. I know this because during my fieldwork in Renewals, the transition from dinner table to song circle felt so smooth and natural that no one questioned what we would do next – singing was it.

Greenleaf describes what Uncle Dan was singing as "a real folk-song, one handed down by oral tradition" (Greenleaf and Mansfield 2004, xix). Peter Narváez prefers the term "vernacular song" as a more "encompassing" concept than folksong (1993, 215). He

writes, “[v]ernacular here refers both to those traits of culture that people actually make for themselves [. . .] and to its more conventional meaning of indigenous culture, culture that develops in a given locale” (Narváez 1993, 215). Where do these songs come from? Narváez writes, “the majority of vernacular songs in Newfoundland have been performed, created, re-created, and used by working-class people” (1993, 215). Most commonly, Newfoundland vernacular songs are “unaccompanied [. . .] largely of unknown composition, usually sung in solo performance by men (although there are some noted women singers), in relatively informal though highly structured contexts, usually called ‘parties’ or ‘times’” (Casey, Rosenberg and Wareham 1972, 398).

These ‘times’ can take place in a variety of locations. Anita Best, in the Introduction to *Come and I Will Sing You: A Newfoundland Songbook*, describes her childhood as one filled with music: “When I was growing up in Placentia Bay I often heard songs at weddings, soup suppers, and similar gatherings in people’s kitchens and parish halls” (Best 2003, xiv). Singing in Newfoundland is also common while away from the home community. Greenleaf writes of the recent (1933) spread of songs found in Newfoundland lumber camps: “[Lumber camps] attract men from every part of the island, and American and Canadian foremen have brought in the songs of their native lumber camps” (Greenleaf 2004, xxxvi). John Ashton has found that songs in lumber camps were generally sung during the leisure hours following a hard day of manual labour (1986). Edward D. Ives distinguishes the singing done in lumber camps from that done aboard a sea vessel:

[I]n the woods singing was simply one form of entertainment or pastime. It was not something used to time the blows of the axes or to keep men moving together while they were rolling or lifting logs on the drive or on the yards or landings. In this way the lumberman’s life contrasts rather sharply with what we read about

the sailor's life, where the shanties were work-songs and very distinct from the songs men sang for pleasure in the forecastle off watch [. . .]. Singing was an off-hours or leisure-time activity for woodsmen. (Ives 1977, 17-18)

Sea shanties, those occupational songs used to keep the rhythm of a crew working together, were used when "sailors had to work quickly and steadily to raise or lower the sails" (Fowke and Mills 1960, 12). Fowke and Mills present "Haul on the Bowline" as "[o]ne of the oldest of all sea shanties," and write that "the shanty continued to be sung whenever a short hard pull was needed" (1960, 12). "Haul on the Bowline" was even used on land when the heavy blocks used to build the Basillica in St. John's needed to be hauled into place (Fowke and Mills 1960).

*Haul on the bowline, our bully ship's a rollin',
Haul on the bowline, the bowline HAUL!*
(Fowke and Mills 1960, 13)

In contrast to the solo singing tradition in Newfoundland, singing together in this way was done when it was necessary for a group to work together toward a common goal. The singing unified their actions, their breath, and their effort and thus the task was completed.

Shanties have not been used in this way for years. Gordon Cox, during his fieldwork in Green's Harbour in the 1970s, was told that these "'old songs' are now only sung infrequently, if at all, and most people have forgotten them" (1980, 55), although a few years before, men had reportedly sung a shanty when a vessel was launched in the wrong place and the anchor had to be hauled again (Cox 1980). As technology changed the fishing industry, so did it change the way songs were sung: "With the advent of mechanization there is little need for work songs" (Cox 1980, 56). I asked Charlie Kane

about singing while working, and he explained to me that while music was always blaring from speakers aboard the boat, sea shanties belonged to the “old people”:

Annie: Did you ever do any singing or did you listen to music on the boats-, like do you listen to tape players and-, yeah?

Charlie Kane: Oh I always did. I mean, it'd blow your ears, the young fellas aboard the boat, speakers out on the deck. You know, fish away, work away, crab away, music going all day long.

Annie: Is that radio or specific music, like tapes?

Charlie: No, CDs.

Annie: What kinds of music was that?

Charlie: Most of the stuff is Newfoundland-Irish.

Annie: Is it? Ok. Country as well-?

Charlie: Yeah well, you'd listen to country. Certain songs you'd listen to.

Sometimes nowadays they all know rap songs right? So. [laugh]

Annie: Wow, times have changed a bit [laugh].

Sharon Kane: Yeah, yeah, the Squid-Jigging Ground-, not anymore, [laugh].

Annie: So would you be singing along with the songs?

Charlie: It's just the music I'll listen to. I mean, unless something comes on and we all know the one thing, right, and there's a certain part you like, so they all-, you'll hear them kicking in, right?

Annie: I've read of the older sea shanties where you'd have-, you'd get the rhythm and so everyone would be singing so they'd all be doing the same thing together and that was a tool they'd use, almost.

Charlie: Yes, yes. Sea shanties, yeah. “We'll Haul this Heavy Bugger.” That's one of them, yeah.

Annie: Did you ever use those?

Charlie: Oh gosh, well, years ago-, I used to hear the old people at it, but we never ever used it. No. (Charlie and Sharon Kane 2010)

Singing is no longer a tool used aboard the boat to coordinate the movements of the crew.

Singing together or “kicking in” during the chorus is now generally used only for entertainment.

Much like the lumber camp tradition in which singing was not used while the workers performed their occupation, but rather, in the few hours of leisure following the working day, Cox describes singing on boats while the fishers waited for the squid to strike:

One of the popular occasions for singing would be on the squid jigging grounds in Green's Harbour [. . .]. There might be up to twenty-five boats on the squid jigging ground. The men in the first boat to arrive would throw over the anchor, and then several others would tie up alongside. It was a social occasion, and the men would wander from boat to boat, chatting with friends. Generally, there would be a good singer amongst the crowd, and he would strike up a song and the rest would join in. The songs would include hymns and shanties, particularly popular were the 'down South' songs, like "Old Black Joe," "Seeing Nellie Home," and "Carry Me Back to Old Virginy." When the squid finally struck, someone would shout out "Squid-O," the singing stopped, and the men worked the jiggers. (1980, 53)

While singing seems to have been done together on this occasion, as soon as the work began, the singing would stop. Making music together was a leisure activity and no longer a tool of the occupation as it had been in the past.

Most accounts of singing in Newfoundland, however, describe one singer and a room full of listeners. Ashton writes of the "[s]olo, unaccompanied delivery" that was the norm in the logging bunkhouses and its similarity "to that which took place in a variety of contexts in the loggers' home communities" (Ashton 1986, 213). Grace Yarrow Mansfield noticed this trend during her time spent with Elisabeth Greenleaf transcribing Newfoundland songs, writing, "the Newfoundlanders we heard never harmonized any song" (Greenleaf and Mansfield 2004, xl). The absence of harmony itself does not signify a solo tradition. For example, a chorus of people can sing a monophonic song in which all notes are either sung in unison or are octaves apart. What is certain from Mansfield's quote is that she encountered no homophony – singing that contains two or more parts sung in harmony producing chords – in her travels. Singers in Newfoundland have managed to hold on to a solo or monophonic tradition of singing more than other communities across North America: "[S]inging of traditional folksongs [. . .] disappeared in favour of parlour singing around the organ or piano," while "[i]n Newfoundland [. . .]

community concert and kitchen 'times' endured and helped maintain the older song tradition" (Ashton 1986, 221).

While a child in Newfoundland might come home to a solo performance by their father in the kitchen, at school they are generally learning the different tradition of singing in harmony with one another³. Greenleaf sees the choral singing in schools as "far from aiding in the preservation of folk-song," while acknowledging that "the custom is to sing the Newfoundland ballads as solos, and long ones at that, and the schools need shorter songs arranged for group singing" (2004, xxxvi).

The first choral singing in Newfoundland was probably that of hymns. According to Paul Woodford, mention of religious music is found around Conception Bay North during the mid-eighteenth century, especially in relation to the Methodist church:

The Methodists accorded hymn singing an especially important place in their services and meetings and credited their hymns with arousing much of the popular appeal of the society. Hymns were considered an effective means of conveying doctrine but were also valued because they stirred the emotions and enhanced the spirit of devotion among worshippers, causing them to reflect on their faith and love of Christ. (Woodford 1988, 12-13)

³ The use of folksongs for educational purposes gained popularity in the 1950s, coinciding with the worldwide folk music revival that began in the United States (Kennedy 1953). In 1953 there was an international conference held by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization concerning the potential for folksong to be used as an educational tool. In a write up following the conference, Maud Karpeles and Steuart Wilson outlined the benefits of the use of folksong in the academic setting. It was proposed that folksongs were a simple enough art form for a child to understand and learn from, while still cultivating a refined taste, as they were thought to "exemplif[y] the principles of great art" (Karpeles and Wilson 1953, 2). Throughout Canada and Newfoundland, folksong became a popular educational school in the second half of the twentieth century. In 1954, Edith Fowke and Richard Johnston came out with *Folk Songs of Canada* (1954), a book used in schools across the country with copies still "found in virtually every school and library in Canada" (Rosenberg 1994, 62). Fowke and Johnston hoped that "because folk songs reflect the lives of the people who sing them, the alert teacher [would] find many ways of using them to emphasize various aspects of our history" (1954, 92).

Music in schools was first introduced to Newfoundland permanently by the Presentation Sisters of Ireland who, "in 1833, incorporated it into the daily school routine by way of hymn-singing" (Woodford 1988, 31). Church choirs were the norm in the latter half of the 19th century in St. John's and the St. John's Choral Society was formed in 1878, lasting for ten years with Charles Hutton as one of its accompanists in 1881 (Woodford 1988, 82).

Hutton, a man famous for bringing musicals to St. John's and credited with generating a certain esteem to the musical culture of the city (Woodford 1988), instructed Ignatius Rumboldt in music for seventeen years at Mount Cashel (Stanford 1982). Rumboldt, trained in the classical style and responsible for forming the "St. John's Extension Choir in 1960, the St. John's Extension Orchestra, (now the St. John's Symphony Orchestra) in 1961, arrang[ing] sponsorship under the Extension Service for the Calos Youth Orchestra in 1969, and in 1978 organiz[ing] and [becoming] director of the Silver Chord Singers (a senior citizen's group)" (Woodford 1988, 213), was also a man who cared very deeply for Newfoundland folksongs. During his time as concert manager and director of music activities at Memorial University, Rumboldt began to bring folk music into the choral environment. What Elisabeth Greenleaf saw as a practice that was "far from aiding in the preservation of folk-song" was seen by Rumboldt as doing the opposite. As he told an undergraduate researcher in 1982:

I was anxious to develop and devote a fair amount of my music career to the development of our folk music. I was anxious to bring it into choral settings which would be dramatic and effective without losing the beauty and the lusty singing or songs of pathos and sorrow of history of the sea, being sea fearing people. (Stanford 1982, 4)

In selecting the repertoire for his folk choirs, Rumboldt turned to the Gerald S. Doyle songsters in an attempt to present songs the audience would already know and with which they would readily clap their hands and stomp their feet (Stanford 1982). Presenting their own songs back to them in the choral form, Rumboldt hoped to reach a younger generation of Newfoundlanders, as, in his own words, “There is no better way of knowing the history and the stories of our people [than through folksong]” (Stanford 1982, 10).

During his business travels, sailing his yacht around to the various outports selling his products to local merchants (Guigné 2008), Doyle had the chance to “[keep] in touch with outport culture” (Rosenberg 1991, 45):

As a businessman Doyle regularly interacted with members of the community, visiting merchants and local community members. In the [*The Family Fireside*] [(Doyle’s monthly newspaper)] he once noted that such occasions afforded him the opportunity to participate in entertainment in the outports. (Guigné 2008, ix)

Entertainment in the outports meant music and song and Doyle began to publish those that he heard during his business travels in the *Fireside*. In 1927, these song publications grew into *Old-Time Songs and Poetry of Newfoundland*, “containing a mixture of 42 song texts and pieces of poetry, set opposite advertisements for his products” (Guigné 2008, ix). Doyle saw the preservation of Newfoundland folksongs in print as a way to “perpetuat[e] that which [he felt] was purely local and therefore truly national” (Rosenberg 1991, 47), seeing “the individual singer as a role model for young Newfoundlanders” (Rosenberg 1991, 52). Doyle also supported Newfoundland songs sung in chorus, enjoying “drinking and singing [with others] around the piano at social gatherings” (Rosenberg 1994, 56). “Communal singing” (1994, 56) was a middle-class urban disport while those living in outport Newfoundland “of the same era typically involved people drinking communally but singing individually” (1994, 56). The

translation of Newfoundland folksong, most often sung in solo performance, to ensemble was done by Doyle when he “arranged to have several songs recorded under the RCA (Radio Corporation of America) label by an all-male Canadian vocal group, the ‘Commodores Quartet’” (Guigné 2008, xiv). Songs sung in chorus were thought to appeal to urbanites like himself, and by presenting Newfoundland folksong in a different style, he hoped to spread their popularity. “By having these songs performed by a male quartet familiar to CBC [(Canadian Broadcasting Corporation)] audiences, [Doyle] sought to reach listeners who appreciated ‘cultured’ performances” (Rosenberg 1994, 58).

Doyle’s work in capturing those “pure” traditional songs he believed held within them the national identity of Newfoundland and arranging them into ensemble pieces holds nationalist and class implications. If, as Rosenberg writes (1994), folk music stands as the identity of the province of Newfoundland, the progression from the tradition of solo singing to that of singing in chorus and in this form airing on a Canadian radio station, demonstrates the tension between the traditional, outport population of Newfoundland and the urban, middle-class population who wished to participate in what they saw as cultured performances.

Just as there are countless songs created in Newfoundland about marine disasters and sinking vessels with all hands lost (Rosenberg 1991; Halley 1989), there are many songs of the Atlantic fisheries disaster as well. In “‘She’s Gone Boys’: Vernacular Song Responses to the Atlantic Fisheries’ Crisis,” Peter Narváez compiles forty-one vernacular songs created since the cod moratorium, most of them by members of the fishing community of Newfoundland who do not perform music professionally (Narváez 1997).

The “moratorium poetics” (Narváez 1997, 4), reacting to a crisis, “are poetics of persuasion that affect listeners in varying ways through the use of narrative, lyric, rhetorical, and polemical techniques, stressing story, emotional state, logical argument, and confrontation respectively” (4). Song was used to mark “the passing of an entire way of life” (Narváez 1997, 6) and the anger and despair that it brought, where speech and verbal argument were found lacking. Folk of the Sea, a choir of “moratorium poetics” formed of over one hundred fishers and fish plant workers, comes from beginnings in the same tradition as that set by Doyle, Greenleaf, and other prominent folksong collectors, and is guided by philosophies similar to Rumboldt’s.

Much like that of the lumbercamps and sung by the squid jigging fishers, the music Francis first heard soon-to-be members of Folk of the Sea make was played during a time of leisure following the FFAW training courses:

And we had a little bit of a celebration and some of the gentlemen took along their accordions and their guitars and I immediately focused in on, you know, the talent that was there. But yet, it was raw talent, it was kind of, you know, rough around the edges. And I did have a little bit of a background-, or an experience with music before in high school. And I was in a high school choir in St. Francis High School in Harbour Grace. And male choirs weren’t popular at that time, you know? Not in the province. We were probably one of the first in the province as a male choir. And our music teacher or choir director at the time was Ged Blackmore. And I could still recall, you know, the feeling of camaraderie and I guess a feeling of accomplishment as well, in terms of performing. And, when I saw these men, at the time, when I saw the talent that was there and I saw how raw it was – and that was good, it was excellent, but again, just needed a little polish – I reflected back to my own days in high school and I said, “My God if only Ged had these guys to work with what could be done?” (Littlejohn 2010)

Francis saw the casual performance of folksong and remembered his experience singing in a choir as a schoolboy. In a very similar thought pattern to that of Ignatius Rumboldt, Francis saw the formation of a choir not only for its peace-making qualities, but also as a way to present “the history and the stories of our people” (Stanford 1982, 10). Much like

the presentation of Doyle's song collections in the form of male quartets, the Folk of the Sea was envisioned to reach certain listeners in this alternate form. Francis saw this as an opportunity to put forth an identity of the fishers of Newfoundland, and Newfoundland as a whole, and folksong seemed to be the obvious course to take. Like the Peace Tower carillon playing "The Squid Jiggin' Ground" to represent a province, so would folksong again step in to perform the identity of Newfoundland. Folk of the Sea was an opportunity for sea shanties once again to be sung in order for everyone to pull together toward a common goal.

Chapter Three

The Concert

Guided by Christopher Small's analysis of a symphony concert (1998), in which he describes in detail all aspects of the performance, from the concert hall, to the audience, to when bows are taken, I recount the first concert ever performed by Folk of the Sea (Folk of the Sea 1994a) in an attempt to better understand the "set of relationships" established in performance and how they might "model, or stand as metaphor for, ideal relationships as the participants in the performance imagine them to be" (Small 1998, 13). A performance is a place "where aesthetics, sociology, and ideology meet" (Kapchan 2003, 131) and my aim is to "examine the meanings maintained, created, or modified in the event" (Stone 1982, 24).

Because the last performance of Folk of the Sea was ten years ago, and thus I have had no opportunity to see them live, my analysis of their first concert comes to me through a videotape given to me by Eugene Kane (Folk of the Sea 1994c). It is a pity that the audience is rarely (once) shown, but the video does allow for an audience member's perspective, minus the feeling of being a part of the evening that no doubt was experienced by those in attendance. I am certain of the audience's role in the evening because of the dancing in the aisles, the hooting and hollering, and the roar of applause following the final note of every song.

I watched this videotape, a recording made by GM Media Productions, at the library, as I have no VCR of my own. The room in which I watched the video was large and empty, with few windows and humming fluorescent lights. I sat wearing headphones much too large for me (an ancient pair that accompanied the ancient VCR), squinting up

at the old television. The context (in the library, with poor equipment) in which I view the video is important because it influences how I experience the performance and therefore the conclusions I draw about the performance. Using a video of a performance that took place seventeen years ago as the main source for gaining perspective of an event is not ideal. The audience is an invisible presence I can hear, but not perfectly, and certainly cannot see. The camera angles and edits choose for me what I can look at and for how long. The video is not an objective presentation of the performance, but is a creation of the editors and the producers and another performance in itself. What I am able to observe about the first performance of Folk of the Sea is that which someone else has already revised and improved.

Deborah Kapchan writes about this compulsion to collect and observe the performance:

As analysts, we want to seize performance, to make it stand still. We press to memorialize it, to document it for the record. In an act akin to murder, we transform performance into a text and display it as an object out of time. (2003, 122)

I am aware of this compulsion to capture a performance and pick it apart, as if it were an animal killed and dissected in order to learn about its bones and organs. This was a fear of mine when I began my research on Folk of the Sea and Ged Blackmore, the choir's director, echoed my concerns when he remarked that the choir was part of a particular moment in time and that there was a danger in pulling it out and viewing it in the cold light of the present: "You can't analyze it to death because then you kill it. I mean, it's like trying to define something. You know, define, literally, means to put in limits" (Blackmore 2010). With this knowledge I go forward, attempting, somewhat in vain, to preserve Folk of the Sea while still inspecting and defining it.

The first gathering of Folk of the Sea was captured on video as a somewhat blurry rendering. I, in turn, took this video, and placed it entirely out of context in the library, seventeen years later, on a screen, and listened to it through poor-quality headphones. How much interpretation can I really gain from this 'cold' performance? I must take what I can get from it with the consciousness that I am seeing only a fraction of what happened that night. Kapchan states that "[w]riting about performance is always a sort of fabrication, an attempt to recapture a presence forever lost" (2003, 123). What follows is a fabrication of what was preserved on film of a performance. What actually happened that night is certainly gone. Parts of it are held within the memories of those who were there, and recounts from Folk of the Sea members help to flesh out the picture. However, a full understanding is no longer achievable, and perhaps never was. Had I been present that evening, I would have had one perspective and one context to bring to what I was seeing and hearing and taking part in; watching the video simply gives the performance another perspective and another context.

The performance of Folk of the Sea was organized in three sections: A, B, and C. Section A had the group singing together in a traditional choral structure. Section B saw the choir in a more casual layout, with individuals and bands that existed before their involvement with Folk of the Sea stepping out from the group to perform their own music or, in some cases, covers as well as some recitations. Section C began with a member of the choir performing a speech by William Ford Coaker and was then brought back to the more formal structure of a choir to end the evening. The performance was opened and closed with the singing of the "Ode to Newfoundland."

In describing the performance I focus on "Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary's" as this song was seen to be one of the most important by the Folk of the Sea members I interviewed. I briefly give an account of other songs and recitations in order to give the reader an understanding of the entire performance.

The concert is held at the Arts and Culture Centre in St. John's, a large red brick building built in 1967. Its exterior appears modest and useful, and its main stage has been host to everything from local children's dance recitals to classical orchestras to the likes of Gordon Lightfoot and Hank Snow. Inside, one senses a coolness and the hushed energy often found in a house of the performing arts. There is a feeling of height and space in this building, with wide concrete steps leading to plush-carpeted floors. Entering the main stage auditorium, eyes are drawn upwards at the thousands of warm yellow lights winking down on the audience like so many stars. Their warmth is reflected by gleaming wood paneling and row upon row of plush seats of bright red. There are balconies and a level of boxes, each with their own red seats. A black stage with long black curtains yawns before the audience. This is a place designed for listening and observing. It does not encourage dancing, as the seats are the folding kind that are bolted to the floor and each other. Rather, this place encourages calm, respect, and awe for the world of performance. It is a magical cocoon where the outside world need not exist for the next ninety minutes. It coddles the audience into speaking in semi-hushed tones without being asked, and it presents what is onstage as a sumptuous feast to be devoured by those sitting in the soft seats.

The audience members take their places, a sold-out crowd, and wait for what exactly, they don't know. Many in the audience are friends and family of the performers,

about to see their father, mother, uncle, aunt, grandfather, grandmother, brother, sister, son, daughter, on a stage for the first time in their lives.

The warm yellow stars above dim and darkness is complete as sounds of the ocean fill this place so far removed from the world of fishing. Waves crashing against the shore and the scream of seagulls bring life to black and white archival photos that fill a giant screen:

-A rock sits coldly in the water, draped with loops of thick worn rope. A man's arm muscles tighten as oars are worked, heading out towards the open sea. Skiffs wait, patient in the harbour.

-A field of fish flakes drying in the sun. A man's back bent over in labour. A dirt lane winds its way along the shore. A man in oilskins sits on a wagon pulled by a sturdy brown pony.

-A gathering. Perhaps a church. A three-storey wooden house. A girl in a white hat and dress. A man sawing wood.

-A fisherman in oilskins focused on a knot in his net. It is damp and cold.

-Man wearing a cap and overalls, his nose nearly grazing the flank of the goat he milks. Sleeves rolled up, a very full udder. The expression on his face is unhurried but efficient.

-A woman standing in the sun with her back to the harbour. She shows off a plate adorned with a flower pattern for the camera. Her dress is well-worn with short puffy sleeves and an open, exhausted collar. Her expression is one of pride and hard work. Her short hair lifts in the light breeze. She squints in the sun.

-A man, wearing a cap and overalls, and a grimace of concentration, guts a fish. A young boy wearing a cap like the man stands with arms crossed, absorbed in what the man is doing.

-A young man, little more than a boy, stares at the camera from under his cap with an expression full of pride and strength. His full lips hold back a smile as he raises up a giant skewered fish for the camera. He is surrounded by the sea.

-An old man, wearing oilskins and a mustache, smirks at the camera. He holds a large lobster in each hand. He knows and likes the photographer.

-A man with a full white beard rests his arm on a stack of neatly piled lobster traps. He is confident, stern. Sharp eyes gleam.

-An older woman smiles at the camera, her strong teeth as white as the wisps of her hair picked up in the breeze. She stands with her elbows resting on a fence. She is tanned, with a strong nose and dark eyes. Her smile is at once uninhibited and modest.

-A man and woman sit near a wood stove. No cap is worn in the house but the oilskins remain. The man rests his hands on his knees. He is older, and stares at the camera with curiosity. The woman smiles sweetly, hands folded together on

her lap. Her bare legs show beneath the hem of her button-up dress. Natural light from a window makes the kettle on the stove gleam brightly.

These photographs and the sounds of the sea provide a stark contrast to the splendor and soft warmth of the room. Most of the members of Folk of the Sea are far from their hometowns. Many have never been to the Arts and Culture Centre in St. John's. The archival photographs summon the past, the glory and nostalgia of days gone by, and demonstrate the hard stock from which the members of the choir, and the members of the audience, came.

The last photograph fades and all is dark. Soft, ethereal piano music begins. Strong sustained major chords create a mood of anticipation, and as the chords begin to overlap with growing volume, the stage appears in a soft pink and purple glow. Risers set up in a semi-circle stand empty. There is motion in the dimness. Lines of people in uniform enter from the back of the theatre and walk down the aisles, through the audience, continuing up onstage. They walk up the four steps of the riser and file across to stage right, filling the back row. Their steps are soft. Some hold onto the railing to make sure they do not stumble in the dark. Some do not. Clapping and cheering from the audience mixes with the soft chords. The rows continue to fill, the dark lines of people filing in from stage right and left. As they reach their places, some of them turn to nod at the person coming in behind them. Some of them shift back and forth on their feet when they reach their spot, swaying like kelp in a current. Pale hands glow in the dimness as they reach up to wipe noses and eyes. The clapping continues, growing in volume. The last chord is sustained while the front row of singers walks onstage.

The chord ends and the lights go up. The audience sees, for the first time, a perfectly ordered number of individuals, around one hundred of them, all wearing green

sweaters with white collars and gray slacks or skirts. Each face is turned fully toward the audience. The visual image is one of absolute and stunning unity. All difference has melted away and the members have become a single, choral unit. Some continue to sway slightly on their feet. Hands go up to adjust hair and glasses.



Figure 5: Folk of the Sea's first performance at the Arts and Culture Centre in St. John's (Used with permission – Charlie and Sharon Kane's personal collection)

Section A: Folk of the Sea Chorus: “Where Once They Stood We Stand”

A loud strong chord from the piano. The choir begins to sing “Ode to Newfoundland.”

*When sunrays crown thy pine clad hills,
And summer spreads her hand,
When silvern voices tune thy rills,
We love thee, smiling land.*

The singing is in unison with only the piano to accompany them. On the screen appears colour, present-day footage of boats painted cheerful blues and reds bobbing under a cloudless sky. The video switches to another beautiful day on the ocean somewhere off the coast of Newfoundland. The wake of a boat cuts a line in the calm water. The choir

begins to hum the anthem and the piano continues. A ship's steering wheel appears with the sparkling ocean beyond. The boat gently rises and falls. An open boat skims across the glass-like surface, with a green shore beyond. While the archival photographs gave solemnity and permanence to the occupation and history of fishing in the province of Newfoundland, the colour videos show its present-day glory. There are no storms in these video clips, there are no rough waters or cloudy days. Shown during the singing of the Newfoundland anthem, the images of fishing are knitted together with the pride and oneness of nationalism. In this moment, Newfoundland is foremost a fishing nation.

The co-hosts for the performance, two men, both wearing tuxedos, suddenly appear at their podiums, one on either side of the choir. Their white shirts glow in the spotlights. On the video, I can only see that they have appeared but during an interview with Charlie Kane, I was told that the emcees walked to the centre of the stage, shook hands, and then walked back to their podiums (Charlie Kane 2010). The choir, still humming, is shrouded in darkness.

Allan Fotheringham, writing for *Maclean's*, described these two men as handsome and charismatic "and when they opened their mouths emitted an accent that you could cut with an oyster knife and could make you weep" (1994, 104). Trevor's accent is high and nasal, while Charlie's is lower and softer. The tuxes are another sharp contrast to the oilskinned depictions of fishers represented in the archival photos. There are no rubber boots, no sou'westers. Instead there are crisp uniforms and formal wear. The green sweaters, grey slacks, white collars and tartan ties give a warm, clean air to those wearing them, while the tuxes immediately turn on its head the well-worn concept

of the fisherman in rubber clothing. I write about the uniforms of Folk of the Sea in greater detail in Chapter Six.

[Charlie] *Good evening ladies and gentlemen. My name is Charlie Kane. I'm from Renew's on the Southern Shore. I'm a fisherman, and I'm your co-host for tonight's performance.*

[Trevor] *Good evening ladies and gentlemen. My name is Trevor Taylor. I'm from Gunners Cove on the Northern Peninsula. I'm a fisherman, and I'm your other co-host for tonight.*

Applause. The impression of the total unity of the island is further demonstrated by these two men, one from southern Newfoundland and one from northern Newfoundland, who represent the voice of the choir. Charlie and Trevor act as a balancing presence. At one end, the man from the south, and in between him and the man from the north stands a choir of over one hundred strong from all over the island. As they cross the stage to shake hands, a symbolic knot is tied around the evening, as if the two furthest corners of the island have bowed to one another in acknowledgement before the performance begins.

[Charlie] *As loved our fathers so we loved. Where once they stood we stand. Our forefathers and foremothers were people of song and story. In many ways their love of music and narrative is what made them survive and endure, what made them strong and resilient.*

[Trevor] *And so tonight we stand where once they stood, offering our gift of song and story. We are honoured and grateful that you have come this evening to join with us, fishermen and fisherwomen from bays and coves across this province, to be one as the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.*

[Charlie] *Perhaps that is why, even in the spring of our discontent, we can sing with some conviction and sincerity. We love thee, we love thee frozen land.*

[Trevor] *We love thee, we love thee windswept land.*

Full lights brighten the stage as the choir breaks out into song again, finishing the anthem. Piano and voices are loud and certain. Hands are held by sides, some loose, some

in fists. A video of a crew going out in a small red vessel under blue skies is shown. One man stands on the bow of the boat, completely at ease on the sea.

Applause breaks out again as the choir finishes the anthem. Members of the choir sway slightly on their feet, heads bobbing out of the orderly lines and then back into place. Hands go up to faces and are brought quickly back down to sides. In contrast to other concerts at Arts and Culture Centres, ones in which the performers are 'acting' and following a script that determines when and where you may break frame – like at the end of the night during the final bow – Folk of the Sea has no such pretenses. At the end of every song they break from their perfect formation, adjusting, shifting on their feet, and allowing themselves to react to the reactions of the audience. The audience is wholly involved in the performance, and much of what the choir does is tempered by their actions. I discuss this concept in further detail later on.

[Trevor] *The rugged coastline of the island has a series of capes reaching like so many flinty fingers into the ocean [font] of the Atlantic. And there is no more beautiful headland than Cape St. Mary's which inspired Otto Kelland to write one of our most beautiful folksongs. A fisherman longs to return again to the scene of his life's work and love. Take me back to my western boat, the fisherman sings, let me fish off Cape St. Mary's. A line more touching today than when the words of the song were first penned.*

In unison, the choir begins to sing "Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary's." From the darkness down in front of the stage, it is sometimes possible to see a pair of hands move dramatically, conducting the choir. The director of Folk of the Sea, Ged Blackmore, stays out of sight. The song is sung loudly with joy and feeling. The choir gleams in a soft blue light. Applause. Heads bob and bodies move as soon as the final note is sung. Refusing to be acknowledged as the frontman of the group, Ged's invisibility undermines the power structures typically seen in the choral structure – the choir director stands in front of the choir, separating the singers from the audience, but also assuming a leadership role in

which the choir has no agency of its own – giving the choir’s performance a united power and force. This is a powerful image, giving back to the fishers what they lost in the moratorium.

*Take me back to my Western boat.
Let me fish off Cape St. Mary’s,
Where the hagdowns sail and the foghorns wail,
With my friends the Browns and the Clearys,
Let me fish off Cape St. Mary’s.*

*Let me feel my dory lift
To the broad Atlantic combers,
Where the tide rips swirl and the wild ducks whirl,
Where old Neptune calls the numbers,
‘Neath the broad Atlantic combers.*

*Let me sail up Golden Bay
With my oilskins all a-streamin,’
From the thunder squall when I hauled my trawl,
And my old Cape Ann a-gleamin,’
With my oilskins all a-streamin.’*

*Let me view that rugged shore
Where the beach is all a-glisten
With the caplin spawn, where from dusk to dawn
You bait your trawl and listen
To the undertow a-hissin,’*

*When I reach that last big shoal
Where the ground swells break asunder,
Where the wild sands roll to the surges’ toll
Let me be a man and take it,
When my dory fails to make it.*

*Take me back to that snug green cove
Where the seas roll up their thunder,
There let me rest in the earth’s cool breast,
Where the stars shine out their wonder
And the seas roll up their thunder.
(Kelland 1960, 7-8)*

“Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary’s” summarizes the past for those who have never lived it, or for those who have forgotten it. It is reasonable to assume that we have Gerald

S. Doyle to thank for the popularity of “Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary’s.” Shortly after writing the song, Otto Kelland submitted it in answer to Doyle’s advertisement “for forty new songs for a new book he was planning to publish” (Sametz 1975, 5). According to Kelland, after Doyle had recorded the song with the help of St. John’s musician Bob McLeod in 1947, he had been “so excited he pounded his fist on the table at which he was sitting and broke a pot of flowers[, exclaiming] ‘[t]his will be one of the most popular Newfoundland folk-songs ever written’” (Sametz 1975, 6). Doyle went on to publish Kelland’s song in his free folksong booklets commonly referred to as “songsters” (Rosenberg 1994, 55). The songsters were spread all over mainland Canada and became the official, if somewhat over-stylized, guide for Newfoundland traditional cultural folksongs (Guigné 2008, xiv).

In Eric West’s introduction to *Catch ahold this one . . . : Songs of Newfoundland and Labrador Vol. 1*, he describes “Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary’s,” along with “I se the B’y” and “The Squid-Jiggin’ Ground,” as “the old songs” (2002, 2). He tells his readers that if they are “lucky,” they might hear some of these old songs when they visit “any Newfoundland or Labrador home” (West 2002, 2). These are contemporary sentiments, and show a marked contrast to an earlier publication of Newfoundland folksongs collected by Kenneth Peacock, who suggests that Doyle’s song booklets “completely ignore Newfoundland’s traditional folk songs” (1963, 238). “Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary’s” is not included in Peacock’s collection.

When I asked my informants about the songs sung by Folk of the Sea the first to come to their minds was always “Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary’s.”

Annie: What songs did you guys sing?

Mike Symmonds: My God, my dear. My memory's not that good. Well, I suppose, "Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary's" was one of them. (Symmonds 2011)

Norm Cull: The song that was most famous with Folk of the Sea was "Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary's."

Annie: Why was it so popular?

Norm: Because it was-, still is, one of the most popular songs in Newfoundland. It brings out all the things that brought Newfoundland together. You know? "Where the hagdawns sail, and the foghorns wail." It's all put together in that song. (Cull 2011)

[Talking about "Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary's" with Charlie Rogers:]

Charlie Rogers: Yeah. And it's, I guess it's a typical Newfoundland song. And we wanted to keep, you know, keep in touch with the people and let them-, do stuff that they know or they were familiar with. (Rogers 2010)

Szwed writes that "[t]he singing of songs must, in some manner or other, relate to the unfolding drama that is the human community" and that for a song to remain in the repertoire of the community it must "speak to individuals in terms of cultural constants" (1970, 150). Norm Cull and Charlie Rogers are aware of how fitting "Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary's" is in the context of the cod moratorium. Norm speaks of its constancy, "it was-, still is, one of the most popular songs in Newfoundland," and Charlie spoke of the importance of singing some songs that the audience knew in order to "keep in touch with the people," or Szwed's "human community." While Folk of the Sea sang many songs that the audience had never heard before, written either by Ged or the soloists and smaller musical groups within the choir that performed during Section B of the concert, it was important to sing several that everyone would know so they could take part in the performance:

Charlie Rogers: I believe it was in Grand Falls that we stopped singing one verse and the audience sang it. And then we came back in again on the next verse. That was "Cape St. Mary's." (Rogers 2010)

Audience participation was integral to a Folk of the Sea performance and this instance recounted by Charlie Rogers was not the only time the crowd sang along to "Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary's." This song became even more significant when it was used as a tool of protest.

On March 12, 1995, the Spanish fishing trawler *Estai* was escorted into the St. John's harbour by Canadian patrol ships (Narváez 1997) and greeted with "Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary's" sung by Folk of the Sea, accompanied by "6,000 emotional demonstrators" (Narváez 1997, 4). The *Estai* had been captured under the accusations of fishing with nets with below-regulation-sized holes. A net with small holes catches young fish as well as those that are mature, inhibiting stock renewal.

Casey, Rosenberg, and Wareham tell us, "[t]he 'good' singer is aware of the likes and dislikes of the groups and individuals for whom he performs. He manipulates his repertoire in response to perceived or anticipated performances, giving his constituents what he thinks they would like to hear" (1972, 397). Was this the case for Folk of the Sea when they chose to sing "Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary's"? The contents of the Gerald S. Doyle songbooks had traveled across Canada decades before to establish a canon of Newfoundland folksongs with which many mainland Canadians became familiar (Rosenberg 1994). A bitter gathering of fishers and non-fishers met the *Estai* (a scapegoat for the entire international fishing fleet dragging the nose and tail of the Grand Banks) with "Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary's" – a song whose "obvious lyrical sentiment [. . .] provided a poignant greeting" (Narváez 1997, 4) for the captured vessel.

This capture has been described by MP John Cummins as little more than "a hell of a media event" (Cox 1996). Did the Folk of the Sea sing "Let Me Fish Off Cape St.

Mary's" because it would perhaps be recognized by the rest of the country, a mainland of opinions that were uncertain of their support of the fishers (Penney 1994)? Or did the choir sing this song because, despite it having once been a song that was perhaps "too common" (Casey, Rosenberg, and Wareham 1972, 398) to sing in outports, it is now seen as the embodiment of Newfoundland traditional culture (West 2002)? This song has jumped from its initial written creation by Otto Kelland, to the pages of Doyle's songsters, to be shunned by those Newfoundlanders in the 1960s who "sought fresh traditional music of more acceptable authenticity" (Rosenberg 1994, 7), to become today a song that potentially represents the unique culture of Newfoundland (Rosenberg 1994; Hiscock 2002).

"Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary's" has become a symbol for the old days even though it was never embraced as a traditional folksong in "the old days." It harkens back to a time (whether real or mythologized it no longer matters) of in-shore fishing when neighbours would fish alongside one another and the dependence of the individual was interwoven with the dependence of the community on the sea.

Following "Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary's" the choir sings "Drunken Sailor," "Shenandoah," "Amazing Grace," with a solo by Charlie Rogers, and "A Great Big Sea Hove in Long Beach." Five men come down from the choir to the microphones at the front of the stage. The light focuses on them; the choir is dimmed. The man in the middle, with a pleasant high voice begins to sing "Petty Harbour Bait Skiff". Everyone sings with him but he is specifically miked. Another man sings the next verse alone. The piano continues, and two men recite the next verses. As the choir sings the last verse together, the men walk backwards and join the rest of the dimly-lit choir. Applause.

Earlier that week, as Mac Critchley told me, a vessel had gone down off the South-Eastern coast of Newfoundland and four young men had been lost at sea. This song takes on greater meaning when set within this context:

Mac Critchley: When we did this, the day that we were getting ready to do this song, a boat went down out off of the East coast there. And there were three fishermen that died.

Annie: What song is this?

Mac: That's Petty Harbour Bait Skiff. That's all about a boat that went down and the crew drowned.

Annie: So the day that you did this concert-

Mac: There was a boat that went down off the coast of Newfoundland and three fishermen died.

Annie: Which coast?

Mac: East coast.

Annie: Just off near here? (We are in Sandringham.)

Mac: I don't know if it was here, it was out off the South area out there somewhere. It was disturbing. (Critchley 2011)

When a song is linked to current events, it becomes more powerful. Mac Critchley was unspecific about exactly where the crew went down and I was unable to find any mention of such a happening in archived newspapers. This, however does not seem to matter. The fact that Mac was unable to tell me exactly where and when the incident happened makes it no less "disturbing." In fact, like the grave of an unknown soldier summarizing all the graves of those who have lost their lives in war and their bodies never recovered, the memory of a boat going down somewhere off the coast of the island and the singing of "Petty Harbour Bait Skiff" acts as a powerful summary of the universal pain of Newfoundland and the thousands lost along her coast.

Section B: A Time That Was: "Oh, This Is The Place Where The Fishermen Gather."

[Charlie]. *Welcome to our Newfoundland time, we know it's not as cozy as a kitchen, nor half as warm. And there's nobody serving you a hot cup of tea-*

[Trevor] –or rum, or beer, or partridgeberry wine. And it's gonna be hard for some of you to get up off your seat and have a scuff. Though if you want to feel perfectly free to do so [laughter]. Just be careful in the dark. You can certainly clap your hands and tap your feet and sing along if you know the tune.

[Charlie] Even if it's not a kitchen or a front room, or a church hall, the people are the same. Friendly, warm-hearted, fine as they come. Needing a time and a place to relax and be a part of a community, a kind of family, a spirit if you like.

While Charlie and Trevor have been speaking, we see that the choral unit has gone and members of the choir with instruments are standing on the risers. There are many accordions, guitars, an ugly stick, a fiddle, a bodhran, spoons, a mouth organ. The crowd is clapping and having a very good time. Some choir members are just clapping. A man and woman get down to dance, and another pair, and another. The setting onstage is very casual with the performers smiling, relaxed, having fun, providing a contrast to the initial choral structure of the performance. Many musicians and choir members are sitting down on the risers.

Section B is opened with The Sextons: Max, his brother Tony and cousin John, with Willis Wyatt. They play "Boil Them Cabbage Down." The video cuts to Stan Fiander singing "Make and Break Harbour." He accompanies himself on the guitar, sitting in front of the dimmed, casually organized choir. Some members of the choir can be seen swaying gently to Stan's beautiful drawling voice described by Sandy Morris as one of the best voices he had ever heard: "Stan Fiander, if I was a record executive I would have hired him right away. He sounds like Merle Haggard" (Morris 2010).

Stan is followed by the Dunne Brothers, Rick and Doug, from Renewals, accompanied by Gerard Hamilton. Doug explains his instrument to the audience:

A lot of you know what it is. It's an ugly stick. And you can see why. [laughter] Anyway, basically what it is is an old mop, or a new one if you're playing at the Arts and Culture Centre [prolonged laughter and clapping.] And it's an old juice

can with some black tape over it. A handful of three and a half inch nails. Some [feltins], beer stoppers, wherever they came from [laughter], and that's about it, and it's supposed to make some music.



Figure 6: Doug and Rick Dunne during a Folk of the Sea performance at the Arts and Culture Centre in St. John's (Used with permission – Charlie and Sharon Kane's personal collection)

With that they begin to play. The choir sitting in the background is clapping again. People get up to dance. Applause.

Bill Broderick gives a recitation next and is followed by "Come Home to Newfoundland," a song written by Ged Blackmore, in which various members of the choir walk up to the mic to sing verses. The second man to step up forgets the last of his lines, and shrugs it off. The audience laughs at this. Eugene Kane comes on in an Englishman's outfit and recites a short poem enunciating in a vaguely British accent. In the final line of the poem he slips into an exaggerated Newfoundland brogue: "But still I always talks me best back home in Newfoundland." The audience roars with laughter. The video cuts next to Gerard Hamilton singing "A Fisherman's Son," followed by Morris Pittman, his brother Melvin, and Sterling Wells singing "a little known folksong," "Sailor's Prayer." Danny Caroll and Mike Symmonds perform "Salt Water Joys," Hedley

Butler and Jim Hayward “The Hand that Rocks the Cradle,” and Robert Bowen sings “Sea People.”

Trevor, wearing a green sweater and grey pants instead of his tux, but still with bowtie and tux shirt introduces the next piece:

We're gonna step 'er up a bit now. And we mean step. Mike Dobbin from Admiral's Beach will show us how to step lightly, regardless of age. Mike is accompanied by Billy Furlong from Plate Cove, Bill McEvoy from Admiral's Beach, and John Sexton from Goose Cove and by whoever else joins in, playing or stepping.

The choir is sitting, some with instruments, some clapping. An older man step-dances very well off to the side of the choir. There are three men up at mics playing the accordion, guitar, and fiddle.

Tom Bradley sings another song by Ged, “They Call Me a Rye Man.” He has a soft, dramatic voice. Following the contemplative mood of Tom’s song, Reg Spurrell gives a remarkable yodeling performance of “Swiss Moonlight Lullaby.” Two men play guitar for him. He holds the mic and sings standing up. The audience claps along. While yodeling Reg sometimes jigs his feet. He is a talented yodeler and the audience roars with appreciation.

Section B ends with all those with instruments playing “I Rode up in A Dory” and “Mussels in the Corner” while the group re-organizes back into choral form. The video cuts to a glowing red background with the choir standing back on the risers.

Section A and C had members of Folk of the Sea singing in unison, with few harmonies, and dressed exactly alike. While crisp uniformity was important to the performance of Folk of the Sea, so was the demonstration of the enormous differences contained within the choral unit. Individual talent and style was also showcased during

the “Newfoundland Time” section (B) of the concert. Here, bands would play their own songs and many of the members of the choir would sit in the background in a casual way, talking, clapping, and visibly having a good time. I asked Max Sexton if his band, The Moonshiners, were unusual in playing one of their own original songs during the Kitchen Party part of the performance:

Max Sexton: Some other people did too, you know. Like, there was a group out there from Bird Cove, Plum Point area. They [came with their own music] too. And like, pretty well, like Conche, like Gerard Chaytor, Mick Symmonds, they had one there. Up in Bonavista, I think pretty well everyone that came from a different area filled in with something, you know? St. Mary’s Bay, there’s a nice bunch of players up around there too, and John Hewitt from Trepassey. (Sexton 2011)



Figure 7: A jam during Section B of a Folk of the Sea concert at the Arts and Culture Centre in St. John’s (Used with permission – Charlie and Sharon Kane’s personal collection)

By stepping forward to play a song and then stepping back into the casual arrangement of the choir on the risers, the musicians are at once separate from and part of the whole.

Describing this part of the performance, Charlie Kane assured me that members of Folk of the Sea would “never leave the stage” and if they were not performing at that moment, “everybody [would] just sit down or mill around the stage” (2010). Community support for the individual bands is clear during the performance. In Folk of the Sea, there existed

both cohesion and erasure of differences as well as the proud demonstration of individual talent and different styles of music capable of some of the members of the group.

Section C: Folk of the Sea Chorus: “Bound To Each Other With Ties That Keep Us Free.”

Section C opens with Charlie and Trevor introducing the resurrected William Ford Coaker:

[Charlie (and Trevor back in tuxes.)] *The fishermen’s early protest against the system and the awful conditions they faced in the spring seal hunt were quickly put down. The first organizations they formed possessed neither power nor political strength.*

[Trevor] *The first real attempt to mobilize fishermen began in 1908 at a meeting in Herring Neck in Notre Dame Bay, when William Ford Coaker persuaded nineteen fishermen to become members of the Fishermen’s Protective Union. Within five years, the brilliant and charismatic Coaker, often ridiculed by merchants as the Messiah of the North, had signed up 1500 fishermen and formed the political party which won eight of the nine seats contested in the 1913 election.*

[Charlie] *“I know of no other man in our island’s history,” wrote Joseph R. Smallwood in 1929, “who has his remarkable gift of oratory, of leadership, and of organizing ability, so far as [has] been brought to bear upon the fishermen of our coast. In my considered opinion, Sir William Coaker is in many ways the most remarkable man yet produced in Newfoundland.”*

Gerard Hamilton, dressed in period costume, enters the stage and orates the lengthy speech Coaker gave when he was elected to the Newfoundland House of Assembly in 1913. *“My friends. I am privileged to be before you tonight. And I am humbled by your presence . . .”* The choir acts almost as a Greek chorus, chanting *“We Are Coming Mr. Coaker and We’re 40,000 Strong.”* After Coaker walks offstage to the sound of marching piano chords, the video is edited to show to guest singer Phyllis Morrissey singing *“Ah, the Seal!”* another song written by Ged Blackmore. Phyllis is dressed in a long violet evening gown, her long blonde hair rippling down her back.

Phyllis remains onstage to sing a song written by Delores Hynes from Calvert, “a tribute to our mothers, to our wives” and then steps off to the side as the whole choir sings the song written by Ged Blackmore from which their name came: “We’re Folk of the Sea.” Trevor and Charlie introduce the final song of the performance:

[Trevor] *Ladies and gentlemen, we have come to the end of our evening together. We acknowledge again, as we have done in the official program, our deep gratitude for the assistance supported us by so many organizations, groups, and individuals.*

[Charlie] *We are thankful to you, the audience, for your presence here tonight. We are honoured that you have taken time out to be with us. Because of you, our brothers and sisters, in Newfoundland and Labrador, we are stronger, in hope, in pride, and in unity.*

[Trevor] *God bless you.*

Charlie Rogers steps out to sing accompanied by the piano with Phyllis singing backup. The choir sings too. “Who is my Brother?” At the end of the song, the choir steps towards audience with hands spread open in welcome, raising their hands above their heads for the finale. The choir stands back, and the keyboard plays while the audience claps. Phyllis leaves the choir to be clapped for on their own. The audience is invited to sing the first and last stanzas of “Ode to Newfoundland” with the choir. After the final note is sung, the choir members turn and walk off the stage to a roaring ovation.

These multiple styles and many different people joined together from around the island by their involvement in the cod fishing industry demonstrates to Newfoundland that even though there are differences, these differences should be celebrated. Even though the speaking voice of Mickey Waddleton from Trepassey is as different from Norm Cull’s from Great Breat as it is physically distant, they are both still Newfoundlanders, and it is possible to claim both of these accents as part of the greater

distinctive landscape of the island. Moreover, Newfoundlanders can work together, moving as one force, with many voices melding into one.

It's about the unity of our island again, cause we've been torn apart since 1992, since the moratorium came down and the music is part of our heritage. All of us had it. It's part of our industry, part of our profession. Even years ago when men manually hauled their boats up, they sang. There was more strength in singing. (Taylor 1994)

The Creation of Community

There never is a world for us except the one we sing and, singing, make.
(Ryden 1993, 58)

Clifford Geertz, describing Victor Turner's concept of social dramas, writes that they "arise out of conflict situations [. . .] and proceed to their denouements through publicly performed conventionalized behaviour" (1983, 28). Francis Littlejohn, while working for the FFAW in the years following the cod moratorium, noticed the peace-making qualities that playing music together seemed to have on fishers who were otherwise irate with one another. Having jams after meetings was "conventionalized behaviour." Loomis Way mentioned it as a given that "*of course*, [they would be] singing in the nighttime" (Way 2011), as if there was nothing more natural in the world than spending the evenings making music with others.



Figure 8: Loomis Way in his home in Green Island Cove (Photo by A.McE.)

When I interviewed Mike Symmonds, he had come into St. John's for a union meeting and lamented the absence of his accordion as there were always people willing to make music after the meetings (2011). I asked Doug Dunne about this tendency and he told me matter of factly that it was "the thing to do":

Annie: So people would just bring their instruments to the meetings?
Doug Dunne: Well if you're going to be there for the weekend, yeah, that's the thing to do. And then when the meetings are all over, like, instead of just sitting around to a bar or socializing, people sit around and have a bit of music. (Dunne 2010)

Francis brought the performance instinct that he saw in the fishers after the FFAW meetings to the platform of a large choir, changing people and their opinions at the provincial and national levels.

Writing of the performance dimensions of ritual, Geertz explains that they hold the power to "transmute not just opinions but [. . .] the people who hold them" (1983, 28).

Another performance analyst, Christopher Small, believes that within all musical performance, there lies the capacity for those participating to shape reality:

By bringing into existence relationships that are thought of as desirable, a musical performance not only reflects those relationships but also shapes them. It teaches

and inculcates the concept of those ideal relationships, or values, and allows those taking part to try them on, to see how they fit, to experience them without having to commit themselves to them at least for more than the duration of the performance. It is thus an instrument of *exploration*. In articulating those values it allows those taking part to say, to themselves, to one another and to anyone else who may be paying attention: these are our values, these are our concepts of ideal relationships, and consequently, this is who we are. It is thus an instrument of *affirmation*. (Small 1998, 183)

Despite, or perhaps because of, the common occupation the members shared, there were great differences in their opinions of what happened to cause the moratorium and who was most deserving of the money given out by the government. These differences were tearing families and communities apart (Francis and Rose Littlejohn 2010). However, when brought together in the configuration of a choir in which everyone could contribute and everyone had use (Blackmore 2010), a community began to knit itself together. In 1989, Ruth Finnegan published a study of the informal music-making that took place in the town of Milton Keynes, a suburb of London, England. Finnegan found that in “musical practices and experiences of ordinary people in their own locality” (1989, xii), there was little concern for what sort of life each participant led outside of the music-making sphere in which they were known. Occupational and educational boundaries would melt away and great friendships would form “between different ends of the social scale” (Finnegan 1989, 314). A similar pattern can be seen to have happened in the case of Folk of the Sea. Where there was bickering and resentment because of differences, came a unified community under the “level[ing]” (Finnegan 1989, 314) qualities of music.

By performing as a community, Folk of the Sea became one; through the “musical performance of community” (Barz 2006b, 21), the community became a reality. Gregory Barz’s study of a Tanzanian *kwaya* reveals how a group of people gathering primarily to

sing together can “function[] as a microcosm of an idealized social system” (2006b, 21). Christopher Small describes the act of musicking – a term he coined to mean “to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance [. . .] or by dancing” (1998, 9) – as establishing a “set of relationships” that “model, or stand as metaphor for, ideal relationships as the participants in the performance imagine them to be” (Small 1998, 13). From Barz and Small, we see the ideal surfacing in the act of performance. What is not a reality can be made so when one enters the realm of performance. Within this space, and perhaps only within this space, will one hundred Newfoundland fishers get along so well (Hewitt 2011). Ruth Stone sees this in her study of the Kpelle people from the Guinea Coast of West Africa:

Musical performance represents a cultural microcosm. But it is more than a presentation of culture on a miniature scale. Rather, it is an occasion for the confirmation or restructuring of relationships within a separate but related sphere of interaction. It is a sphere rich in ideas not only of the here and now, but of other places and times. (1982, 135)

John Miller Chernoff writes of music in Africa (he does not specify which part) as inseparable from community. For him, rather than music being a result of community, community is the result of music. “In the African context, performance in music and dance responds ultimately to a single aesthetic concern, the realization of community” (Chernoff 1979, 149). Chernoff’s theory rings true for Folk of the Sea. As Rose Littlejohn recounted, in the years following the moratorium, fishers who gathered together would spend most of their time “bickering” unless they were making music together (Francis and Rose Littlejohn 2010). Getting together as a choir and having little opportunity to get to know one another before their first performance, members of Folk

of the Sea were in the unique situation of acting in tandem and harmony before actually doing so off the stage. The sense of community initiated on the stage did continue after a performance, giving the choir a burning energy that propelled them through six more concerts with little sleep. After a performance, they would head back to their hotel or school gym floor or wherever they were staying that night and the performance would continue in the forms of recitations, tales, dances, and jams (Rogers 2010). Performing together gave fishers the opportunity to “confirm or restructure [their] relationships within a separate but related sphere of interaction” (Stone 1982, 135).

Audience

Where there is performance, there is audience (Kapchan 2003). This audience can be a crowd, a single person, or even a spirit or god (Tuan 1990). The connection between Folk of the Sea and their audience was very different than, say, the audience and the performance of a symphony orchestra described by Christopher Small (1998). An orchestra makes very little acknowledgement of the audience until the performance is over when the musicians stand and bow. The audience of a symphony orchestra is silent in return, until the finale, when it is acceptable to clap. In contrast, the audience of Folk of the Sea is a participant in the event from the outset. Before the choir has even sung a note or made its way up on stage, they receive a standing ovation from the audience. Throughout the event, the audience can be heard hooting, laughing, clapping, stomping, whistling, singing, shouting, and dancing in the aisles.

During “Who is My Brother?”, when Folk of the Sea stepped toward the audience with hands raised, they were symbolically inviting their audience to be a part of the community they were creating through performing together. Likewise, the emcees took

care to remind the audience that they were more than welcome to dance in the aisles and clap their hands and stomp their feet if they so desired. These gestures were ways of bringing the audience into the performance.

Francis Littlejohn: Our ending, our signature song was "Who is my Brother?" [. . .] And again, the idea with that was breaking the barrier between audience and performer, you know? In the last words of the song, it says, "You are my brothers, my sisters and my friends." You know? "We share a treasure, the peace that never ends." And we extended our arms to the audience as we said that. (Francis Littlejohn 2010)

Just as the individuals playing their own music in Section B of the performance would be enveloped back into the choir once they had finished, at this moment the audience is enveloped into the choir and the line between the performers and the audience is effectively broken with this embrace.

According to Yi-Fu Tuan, the barrier between audience and performer had been broken much earlier. Tuan writes of laughter (and I would push this to be any audible response from the audience), as "active participation" that "breach[es]" (1990, 242) the line between the two separate spaces of the performers and the spectators. This was furthered when after the performance Folk of the Sea went out to meet the audience in the foyer of the Arts and Culture Centre. The audience was filled with family members and neighbours as well as strangers. The choir mingling with the audience was another step towards the inclusivity and unity demonstrated in the performance. The audience and the choir were reciprocating reactions throughout the evening, the most obvious instances occurring when the audience started dancing when those in the choir stepped out and started to dance:

Mac Critchley: There were some songs into the B section where there were people getting up on the floor and dancing [. . .] even members of Folk of the Sea went down out of the choir and went down and danced with them on the floor. Up

in Ottawa and Toronto, that was the place-, especially Toronto, old women were getting out, were coming right out of the stands, cause, you're barred off right? [. . .] They were climbing over and getting out and starting [to] dance and everything. (Critchley 2011)

One of the goals of Folk of the Sea can be explored through what Thomas Turino calls participatory performance: an artistic display "in which there are no artist-audience distinctions, only participant and potential participants performing different roles" (2008, 26). Within Turino's definition, he states that the calibre of the performance is generally measured by how many people become involved and how those people feel about the performance rather than on the generated aesthetic effect (2008). During my interviews, how the music actually sounded was rarely discussed. (This was no doubt in part because of the enormous modesty I perceived among my informants when speaking of their musical skill.) What seemed more important was the sense of community fostered within the choir and how that spread, during the performances, to the members of the audience.

Rose Littlejohn: Even though it was called a choir we didn't want the formal feeling, you know? [. . .] We wanted it to be a fun concert-type environment.
Francis Littlejohn: It wasn't just a performance. It was, like, when we were young, a concert was you went to the hall and everybody got involved, you know? You'd get up and dance and somebody else'd sing and, you know, you'd have to take your turn to sing a song and there was always joining in. And that's, I suppose there's where it came from. There were so many people in the choir from small communities that were used to that way of having a concert, I suppose it automatically evolved into including the community in it. (Francis and Rose Littlejohn 2010)

On many occasions during their second tour through the province in which they played in some of the smaller towns, members of the community would be invited onstage to perform with the choir, further obscuring the division between audience and performer. A member of the choir remarked during an interview that this blurring was intentional: "It

was nice to get some of the local people involved because it helps to bring it home” (Hodder 2002, 1).



Figure 9: A Folk of the Sea concert at a venue in one of the smaller towns they visited (Used with permission – Charlie and Sharon Kane’s personal collection)

Unity and Ideal Relationships

Barz maintains that “messages are portrayed better through music” (2006a, 56), and while it was stressed to me again and again by my informants that one of the main messages of the choir to the rest of the province and country was one of unity (Eugene Kane 2010, Charlie Kane 2010, Cull 2011, Francis Littlejohn 2010, Blackmore 2010), perhaps this was a message also to be learned by the choir itself through the means of playing music together and the adjustments and compromises required of everyone in order to put on a good show. A simple example of the personal adjustments that were necessary for members of Folk of the Sea is the matter of synchronizing the accordion players.

Section B contained, at times, twenty accordionists playing together. During my telephone interview with Max Sexton, I asked him how all the personal playing styles were synchronized for the performance. He told me that everyone played like him

because he was chosen as the best player. He made a tape of the songs and all the accordion players were given a copy with which to practice and move closer to Max's style. Working together as a solid unit and diminishing difference between members was important to Folk of the Sea, but it was also important to the performance. In order for the accordions to all play together, they had to agree on one style, or else their sound would have been only dissonance and cacophony.

Annie: When you were playing-, you brought your accordion and played with Folk of the Sea, and you were meeting people from around the island that also played accordion. Did you find that the styles of accordion were different depending on where they're from?

Max Sexton: Oh yes. All different. Yeah.

Annie: What were the differences?

Max: Well, you know, just a change in the tunes, you know. I don't know how to put that really. Different turns, I call it turns in the tunes, you know? Not the same, you know, people double it up a bit more. People don't play the same, put it that way. A bit of difference in the tunes too, you know. Some people got these two-step ones and some people got just the regular tunes and some people got the doubles, they call 'em. We had to do that step dance and then-, and all that kind of stuff, so there's a bit of difference there. It all worked all well. We used to all play accordion together in Folk of the Sea, must be about, probably twenty of us sometimes.

Annie: Wow. So which style did you decide on?

Max: Oh I did up a couple tunes for them.

Annie: Did you? Ok, so they all tried to play like you then?

Max: Yeah.

Annie: Oh, how come you were the one that got-

Max: Well, they say I was the better player, I don't know. I don't know about that, I'm just saying-that's what they said anyway, so.

Annie: Ok, I believe you.

Max: [laugh] So, I did a couple up for-, I sent them in to see how they were gonna like it and they thought it was great so it went from there. I gave everyone a copy, see the people who played accordion, I gave them a copy, I gave them a cassette tape.

Annie: Ok, so they practiced with it.

Max: Yeah. And then all everyone learned the same thing. When we played then everyone played the same.



Figure 10: An accordion jam during Section B of a Folk of the Sea performance at the Arts and Culture Centre in St. John's (Used with permission – Charlie and Sharon Kane's personal collection)

Performance gives people a chance to act differently than they would usually. Nineteen accordionists adjusted their own personal styles in order to present a united sound. Kapchan writes of the significance of acting like others, or, the Other: "Embracing the bodily dispositions – the gestures and postures – of others, we provoke emotions in ourselves that give us a better understanding of a different kind of lived experience" (2003, 128). Members of Folk of the Sea adopted the differences of another style of playing, demonstrating with their bodies the ways of another. Having to be flexible with their own musical style acted in tandem with members of the choir being flexible with their opinions.

Small describes music-making, or musicking, to be a form of ritual in which, like the adoption of another's accordion-playing style, different identities can be "tried on." Small writes that "rituals are used both as an act of affirmation of community ('This is who we are'), as an act of exploration (to try on identities to see who we think we are), and as an act of celebration (to rejoice in the knowledge of an identity not only possessed

but also shared with others)” (Small 1998, 95). If we are able, like Small, to liken music making to secular ritual, there is a heightened awareness and focus experienced in which “relationships are brought into existence between the participants that model, in metaphoric form, ideal relationships as they imagine them to be. In this way the participants not only *learn about* those relationships but actually *experience* them” (Small 1998, 96).

Folk of the Sea returned some social order to the lives of the fishers. It gave them something to do – which was a major lack – restoring a fleeting balance. It also gave them something beyond just a purpose and a reason to be: it gave them relationships which did not work in the real world (the quarreling between fishers recounted by Rose and Francis Littlejohn 2010) but did work within the performance and the community of the choir. During an interview, John Hewitt, referring to Ged Blackmore, the choir’s director, said, “If you could get a hundred and twenty fishermen to agree to anything, you had to be a genius” (2011)⁴. The platform of performance allowed The Folk of the Sea members to see that they shared similarities, no matter what part of the island they were from:

Norm Cull: Folk of the Sea brought the communities together. There was someone involved from every corner of the island. And everybody realized what the other person was going through and everything like this. And everybody felt good because they were meeting people from all corners of the island, which would never have happened. And the musical talents, and you know, you were meeting people that could play music and different-, because almost every corner of the island has different accents. [. . .] Folk of the Sea made everybody realize

⁴ This comment was made in a jocular manner and indeed the intensity of the differences between the fishers outside of the environment of Folk of the Sea was often made light of. However, this does not mean it was not real. Since these differences and arguments were emphasized so strongly by most of my informants whether in jest or in earnest alongside the respite found within the choir, I chose to take this point seriously.

that everybody was into this for the same purpose. You're quite similar no matter which part of the island you're from. (Cull 2011)

Sandy Morris, who played guitar with Folk of the Sea, recalls the relationships developed within the choir with fondness and awe:

They all had fantastic senses of humour. It was nothing but laughter, right? The whole time we were together, I mean. And what they told me-, I dunno, I mean, I grew up in St. John's so, you know, I had an uncle who was kind of a fisherman part time and that but I never really knew any fishermen. We're out hanging around together and they were saying, look, you know, if we were in any other circumstances, if you got a hundred of us in a room together we'd be at each other's throats. We'd be rippin' each other's eyes out. Cause you know what the fishery's like, you hear-, if you listen to the Fishermen's Broadcast, they're always arguing about the price of fish or which way to go around, you know what I mean, all that stuff? But-, they were-, it was like a love-in. Right? They just loved each other. (Morris 2010)

Folk of the Sea allowed fishers to experience a harmonious relationship with those they would often be arguing with; even before they had all met each other, they performed together. They tried on unity and pride in togetherness in musical terms before they ever tried them verbally. "Words are literal and propositional where musicking is metaphorical and allusive, and they insist on a single meaning where musicking has many meanings, all at once" (Small 1998, 185). The night of the first performance of Folk of the Sea, many of the members of the choir had never met before and had little opportunity to meet before going onstage. For most members, singing and performing together came before speech.



Figure 11: Folk of the Sea members practicing their walk on and off stage the night before their first concert together at the Arts and Culture Centre in St. John's (Used with permission – Charlie and Sharon Kane's personal collection)

Chapter Four

Memory and Performance

Charlie Rogers is not a fisher. In fact he works with the elderly at a nursing home in Harbour Grace. But he has been blessed with a rich and resonant singing voice and was encouraged as a young student of Ged Blackmore in the 1960s to use it. Compared to most of the members of Folk of the Sea, Charlie has considerable performing experience. Whenever he does perform he has the interesting habit of picking someone out in the audience, man, woman, or child, and directing all his energy and singing toward that person.

At the end of our interview around his kitchen table, Charlie sang me a song. Looking me in the eyes, his own eyes seemingly devoid of self-consciousness, he began, holding my gaze for the entirety of the song. That is, until I closed my eyes. I did this because I found myself thinking about what Charlie was doing instead of listening to him sing. Sociologist Simon Frith would describe my apparent inaction as a performance happening in parallel to Charlie's performance. According to Frith, "listening itself is a performance" (1996, 203), and under the steady gaze of Charlie singing "The River is Wide," my performance was grinning, turning red, and finally closing my eyes and relaxing. Deborah Kapchan writes that performance "is a materialization – of emotion, of mind, of spirit" (2003, 122). What I physically do while listening to Charlie is a direct result of my internal reaction to him. As performance demands an audience (Kapchan 2003, 133), within each performance exists at least two performers: In this case, Charlie and me. In the case of a Folk of the Sea performance, there are hundreds of performances happening at once.

When Charlie sings and his voice and gaze compel me to close my eyes, Charlie is acting and I am reacting. But the effects of performance go both ways. When I closed my eyes, it changed the way Charlie was singing. Listening to the recording I can pick out almost exactly where I did close my eyes. In that moment Charlie's voice becomes audibly louder and his vibrato becomes much more rich and full of feeling in response to my obvious enjoyment of the song. With the performance of my own reaction, I changed the initial performance. As Charlie's singing becomes more emotive, my own pleasure is heightened and this cyclical exchange of performances continues for the length of the song.

"Performance is always an exchange – of words, energy, emotion, and material" (Kapchan 2003, 133). Folk of the Sea's performance was a cathartic exchange in which both the performers and the audience participated in a pattern of give and take. Much like Charlie Roger's performance of "The River is Wide" in his kitchen and my listening presence, Folk of the Sea members were touched and changed by the audience's reactions and this in turn altered their performance.

The Memory of Performance

Charlie, and several other Folk of the Sea members recounted to me instances in which the performances of individual audience members and the audience acting as a unit deeply affected their own performances.

Charlie Rogers: When you look down and you see a grown man sitting down crying, I mean, you're filling up yourself then and you're still trying to sing. [laugh] And cause, I remember in Toronto when I was doing a solo and we started off "Who is My Brother?" and I looked down and this one gentleman caught my eye. And he was just sobbing and crying all the way through. [laugh] I started-, I mean, I had tears rolling down my face and Ged said, "What happened to you during the song?" He said, "You get something in your eye or what?" I said, "No

b'y, I had some frigging job singing though." I said to him, "There's a fella sitting in front that's just behind you crying to break his heart." And I said, "I got a job to be singing." (Rogers 2010)

Doug Dunne: If you looked at the audience that night, you'd lose it. Everybody in the front row was crying. Everybody was-, the tears coming out on their cheeks and whatever, right? And this one guy was there, I'll never forget it, and I couldn't stop looking at him, even though I didn't want to look, I couldn't stop looking at him. And he never stirred during the whole performance, never nothing. I mean, the standing ovations were coming one after the other [...]. And this one guy in particular was there, and he was [crossing his arms] the whole time. Just staring and staring. I said, "he's not enjoying it, for some reason he's not enjoying it." When we had a standing ovation, he'd stand up and politely clap, and then immediately sit down before anybody else. And, but the last song sung, they all got to their feet and he was the first one on his feet. And he clapped and he cried and he sang out. He done it all, right? So anyway, after every concert we'd meet the audience, right? And I was hoping that I would meet him and I did. Cause I went in search of him. Now, there were hundreds of people there but I finally met him and went over and introduced myself, and I said, "just have to ask you something," I said, "why during the concert," and I said, "you didn't seem like you were enjoying it, but," I said, "at the end of it, you seemed like you enjoyed it more than anybody?" He said, "I didn't want to be clapping, I didn't want to be crying, I didn't want to miss fucking nothing." That's the very words he said to me. He said, "I've been, I think it was 25 years that I haven't been home, been back to Newfoundland." And he said, "I can't get back and I can't see in the very near future that I can get back." And, he's a big guy too, right? And he threw his arms around me and kissed me on the cheek and said, "Thank you for bringing it." (Dunne 2010)

Eugene Kane: This lady was sitting at the front of the theatre and she started into crying. And I don't know how old she was. I figured she was in her seventies, right? And Doug Dunne was standing next to me and I said, "Doug, you know what, if she don't knock off crying we're all soon gonna be at it." He said, "I sees her." Well she sobbed, she broke her heart. And somebody went to her after. I didn't, I should have I suppose, but somebody said to her after, you know, "Why did she cry so much?" She said, "She was forty years since she had been home and she said everything came back to her, everything. She said when we came up on stage she couldn't believe it." When we started to sing the songs it was, boy, it was awful emotional. (Eugene Kane 2010)

Mac Critchley: There are some songs into the B section where there are people getting up on the floor and dancing.

Annie: Really? Could you see them?

Mac: Oh yes. Even members went down out of the choir and went down and danced with them on the floor. Oh yeah. Up in Ottawa and Toronto, that was the place-, especially in Toronto there was, old women were getting out, were coming

right out of the stands cause, you're barred off, right? From Ged and them. They were climbing over and they'd get out and start dancing and everything.
(Critchley 2011)

Charlie, Doug, Eugene, and Mac all remember moments during a concert when a particular audience member or several audience members altered their performance. In Charlie's case, he actually begins to cry while singing a solo in reaction to an audience member's tears. Doug becomes anxious when he believes that a man in the audience is not enjoying the concert and Eugene finds it difficult to keep from crying himself when he sees an older woman in the front row sobbing. Mac recalls an instance during the Toronto performance when audience members draw Folk of the Sea performers down off the stage to join them in their dancing – the most overt example of an audience's reaction to a performance changing that performance.

Deborah Kapchan writes that “[p]erformance is so intricately bound up with the nonverbal attributes of sound, taste, shape, color, and weight that it cannot be verbally mapped – only alluded to, only invoked” (2003, 121-122). In Chapter Three, I ventured a verbal rendering of the first performance of Folk of the Sea as I experienced it through video, which was not an accurate depiction of what that night felt like. A performance is experienced differently by all those present. I was curious to see how Folk of the Sea performances were remembered by different members of the choir. I asked many of them to recount a Folk of the Sea performance to me, and the moment nearly everyone remembered and commented on was the opening in which members of the choir walked down the aisles to fill the stage with the crowd often erupting in cheers as they did this.

Because, as Kapchan tells us, “[p]erformances are not only verbal” and so “writing about performance brings us to the limits of representation” (2003, 123), my

informants relied on physical as well as verbal descriptions. Through the performance, both physical and verbal, of their memory of a performance, what is very effectively evoked is what has remained most important and most memorable to them about the concert. I, as the audience of this performance of their memories, respond with my own performance both physical and verbal.

In their interviews, Charlie Kane and Norm Cull do not so much perform what *happened* during the concert as what they *felt*. Charlie speaks of the overwhelming and never-ending applause and the intense emotion of that night. As he does so, he begins to “flush right up” (Charlie Kane 2010). His memory of the performance is so strong that it moves him to physically recall the feelings he experienced.

Sharon Kane: People were just-, when it was over it was just-, people were just-, couldn't stop clapping.

Charlie Kane: People wouldn't sit down from clapping.

Sharon: Yeah, oh my God, and they were crying.

Charlie: We were saying-, you know, we went and had a few beers, all the group, “Jesus b'ys you know, can we do it again tomorrow night? Will we get that same response? Will we feel the same?” That kind of a way, right? And every time I think about it now I start to flush right up, honest to God. I'm getting goosebumps. It goes right through me. (Charlie and Sharon Kane 2010)

Like Charlie Kane, Norm Cull speaks of “goosebumps” and tells me that “all our hair was standing” (2010) when he remembers the first time Folk of the Sea ever performed together. Although Norm does not say that he now has goosebumps while talking about the experience, this is one of the only times during the whole interview when he falters over his words and allows for longer pauses between thoughts. His laughter is also telling and my own is an echo of his. During this part of the interview we were both laughing at a moment that was not particularly funny and it was that sort of gleeful laughter one does when crying is the only other option. The performance Norm is recalling happened

eighteen years ago but his eyes glimmer and he clears his throat with laughter.

Recounting the emotional surge he felt that night gives him a similar emotional reaction today:

Norm Cull: I will never forget the first time that we got together in St. John's at the Arts and Culture Centre, after meeting out in those little communities. We came in from the main entrance and we had to walk down the steps on both sides. While we were walking down to go on stage the whole place erupted. I mean it just [pause], and everybody came to their feet and we had a standing ovation just by walking in. And man, it was like [pause], it was like walking into [pause] into something that you couldn't even explain. Like every hair was just [pause], goosebumps and all our hair was standing [laugh]. I tell ya, it was an emotional time for me, at that time. [pause] And, we went on from there, and when we were doing the songs, every song that we did, people came to their feet. Every one. And, I'll never forget when Charlie Rogers did Amazing Grace, there were two or three people sitting right in front of us, I was out on stage there and we were all lined up and there was two or three people right in front, and I'll never forget [laugh].

Annie: What? [laugh]

Norm: I mean, they just sobbed, you could hear the-

Annie and Norm: [Laugh]

Norm: They were crying and I mean not just, not just the watery eyes, but I mean, just you know, the big sobs coming out of them.

Annie: Yeah [laugh]

Norm: Oh man, oh man. (Cull 2011)

The parts of the performance that seemed most vivid and easily recalled were those that were accompanied with the physical expression of emotion. I asked Norm when the choir would sing the "Ode to Newfoundland" during their performances but this detail was not significant enough for him to remember:

Annie: You sang the anthem at the beginning and the ending, did you?

Norm Cull: We sang it at the end, I think.

Annie: Not the beginning?

Norm: At the beginning? No, when we opened, we used to open with "O Canada."

Annie: I thought you sang both at the beginning.

Norm: Oh probably at the beginning too, it's been so long now. (Cull 2011)

I ask Norm so persistently because I was interested in the framing imagery of the anthem and several of my informants had already told me clearly that the anthem was sung at the beginning and the end of the concert. Norm's memory of the first time they walked down the aisle and the audience's sobbing when Charlie Rogers sang is so vivid and detailed because it is accompanied with the recollection of a physical reaction – "goosebumps" – becoming something "[he] will never forget."

As performance is an exchange between at least two participants, so is the performance of the memory of performance a performative exchange that recalls the original performance. Kapchan writes that imitation is often used to understand a performance (2003, 128). If performance is an exchange, so the mimetic replaying of that performance is also an exchange. Michael Taussig describes the imitation of a performance in some cases as almost a complete assumption of the initial performance: "The wonder of mimesis lies in the copy drawing on the character and power of the original, to the point whereby the representation may even assume that character and that power" (1993, xiii). In some cases during the interviews I conducted for this thesis, my informants would remember the performance to such an extent that they would be compelled to physically describe what they were telling me, effectively performing their memory of the performance.

The Performance of the Memory of Performance

The parts of the performance that seemed most vivid and easily recalled were those that were accompanied with the physical expression of emotion. My informants' performances of their memories of the event, along with the emotions they remember experiencing and details of the emotions they remember the audience to have

experienced, left me no other choice but to respond with similar emotion, and in doing so, I believe I was emphatically engaged. Psychologist and psychotherapist Ruthellen

Josselson writes

as both a tool and a goal of psychological research, empathy is premised on continuity, recognizing that kinship between self and other offers an opportunity for a deeper and more articulated understanding. Empathy becomes an attitude of attention to the real world based in an effort to connect ourselves to it rather than distance ourselves from it. (1995, 31)

Sociologist Susan Chase writes that “most scholars point to the ubiquity of narrative in Western societies and concur that all forms of narrative share the fundamental interest in making sense of experience, the interest in constructing and communicating meaning” (1995, 1). In the case of *Folk of the Sea* and the narratives I encountered, it not only was meaning that was constructed and communicated to me, but also emotion.

Francis Littlejohn: And then our, our ending, our signature song was “Who is My Brother?” And again, the idea with that was breaking the barrier between audience and performer, you know? And, the last words of the song, it says “you are my brothers, my sisters and my friends.” You know? “We share a treasure, the peace that never ends.” And we extended our arms to the audience as we said that. [Francis extends his arms towards me.] And again, the response there- wasn’t it Rose? The response there was just so moving, right? That’s one thing that I remember about the performances was that, so emotional, how emotional they were, you know? (Francis and Rose Littlejohn 2010)

Ged Blackmore: When we did it in Toronto-, when I came out at 8:25 to get ready for the thing, I mean, the place was-, you could feel the place bubbling. And so anyway, we sat down and all of a sudden the lights started to go down at 8:30. And people started to clap [Ged claps.] I remember Sandy Morris saying, “That’s the first time I ever heard of a concert where somebody clapped for the darkness.” They all started applauding just for that [clapping again.] Then we put on the slide show and then, of course, when the fishermen started to come in, everybody stood up and applauded them all the way onto the stage- [Ged stands up and claps, acting out the memory.]

Annie: Wow [laugh].

Ged: -the whole way on stage. So finally when they all got in place I had to turn around and go like this [Ged turns around and motions for the invisible audience behind him to sit down.] And they all sat down. And then of course I played the chord, “When sunrays crown . . .,” and of course the lights came up and they

started singing, "When sunrays crown . . ." [Ged sings the beginning to the "Ode to Newfoundland"] and then the whole place stood up again. [Ged stands up]. Like going to one of the Catholic church services where they're always up and down. And then I had to go [motions for them to sit down] sit down again. So it was-, [laugh]. But at the end of it, we'd be there yet except that I remember it was Trevor saying, "Ladies and gentlemen please would you-, we still have to sing the-, now we're going to sing the Ode to Newfoundland and O Canada. With the whole crowd singing so I mean, they took the roof off the place. [. . .] So there was a real sense of connection. And that's what resonated. You could feel it across the footlights. (Blackmore 2010)

Doug Dunne: You could hear a pin drop. There's all this music just playing. And it's just the footlights that are on. Folk of the Sea came down each aisle, each side, right? And came up the bleachers row by row by row. We practiced all that. Not a sound, everybody coming. And nobody could really see us. Could see us but couldn't see us, you know? Sort of a serene feeling I suppose. And then in the meantime we have all these images in the background of the fishery years ago playing and Ged was down tinkering on the piano the whole time we were coming in through. And all of a sudden, it just stopped [Doug stamps down his foot when he says this]. And the lights come on. And we were onstage in our uniform. [pause]

Annie: Wow [laugh]. It must have been amazing.

Doug: Yeah it was. And the first night, I don't know what it was, I think it was just such a relief we were there and just-, we come onstage and lights come on and just like that, [foot stamp again but this time to represent the note played by Ged], Ged struck the first note. Just quick as that. And we sang the Newfoundland anthem. And [pause] that was the first standing ovation. [pause] And see, I'm just sort of emotional talking about it [clears his throat]-

Annie: Well it's amazing, I mean, I get-, the hairs on the back of my neck stand up. (Dunne 2010)

Ged Blackmore, when I asked him about the power of music, spoke of

"sympathetic vibration" (2010) that can be transmitted from one human to another. Just as an unstruck tuning fork can ring with the same frequency as one that has been struck, so can the rhythm created by one human enter the body of another and be expressed in the way of a tapping foot or a nodding head. In some of my interviews, the informants actually embody the performance, acting out moments that they recall. I, as the listener, become an embodiment of the audience and my performance becomes more immediate, more intense, along with that of my informant. By performing their own memory of a

performance that happened seventeen years ago, my informants are able to convey to me what the experience was like for them, or more accurately, how they remember that experience to have been for them.

By recalling what happened during a performance, my informants evoke the feelings and emotions that accompanied that performance. While what actually happened is past, the feelings can be brought into the present, into the room where we sit. They remain with the memory and can be called forth through a re-performance of the memory of performance. The ethnographer uses "his or her own body as the medium for another kind of knowing." (Kapchan 2003, 128) and by listening to my informant's performance of their memory of performance, and in turn, performing the act of listening, I am able to experience how the audience felt that night, or at least how my informant remembers the audience to have felt.

In the above quotations it is interesting to note that the same moment of the same performance is described by Ged and Doug quite differently. This not to say that one of them is lying, or one of them or both have forgotten what actually happened during the opening moments of Folk of the Sea's first concert. Ged and Doug experienced the performance differently, having different roles, thinking different thoughts, standing in different places, and regardless of what actually happened, whether the first standing ovation was as the choir walked in (Ged) or after Folk of the Sea sang "Ode to Newfoundland" (Doug), the emotions generated by the event remain the most accurate. It is not exactly what *happened* that is clearly remembered, but what was *felt*.

Because performance is not only verbal, the recounting of a performance cannot be only verbal either. In the examples above I have shown moments in which my

informants, through physically remembering what happened, evoke how they felt during that happening. This feeling was transferred to me, as just like performance is an exchange, so is being interviewed (which is itself a performance of memory). I, as the interviewer, adopt the emotions of my informants and in this way, their emotional memories are conveyed to me.

Chapter Five

Identity and Place

Our speech, our songs, our common memories, that disposition and temper we recognize as characteristically Newfoundland, flows, almost genetically, from the ocean and its life. (Folk of the Sea 1994a)

Newfoundland identity is based, not upon the folk memories of its English and Irish settlers [. . .] but on a feeling of battling against the political and geographical realities of their chosen home. (McDonald 2006, 18)

Those taking part in a musical performance are in effect saying – to themselves, to one another, and to anyone else who may be watching or listening – This is who we are. (Small 1998, 134)

Why did the Folk of the Sea happen? The reason for the choir and its objectives varies depending on whom you ask but one theme everyone seems to agree on is that of identity lost and found. The cod moratorium brought forth jobless days spent in the desolation that comes when one feels useless, but it also threatened the understanding of self that comes with a livelihood as deep-rooted as fishing.

“Folklife expressions help to keep people oriented in the face of drastic cultural change,” writes Hufford (1987, 24), and the performance of folklore in order to reassert identity is not a new phenomenon. Certainly, as Dundes reminds us, “it was [Johann Gottfried von] Herder who claimed centuries ago that the soul of a people was expressed in that people’s folk-songs” (1983, 241). The moratorium was seen to be threatening to the identity of Newfoundland, and Folk of the Sea was an attempt to regain and strengthen “the soul of [its] people.” In this chapter I demonstrate how the region in which fishers primarily work, namely the sea, is deeply linked with their personal and occupational identities. Within songs written directly after the initiation of the cod moratorium and more, generally, Folk of the Sea’s performance, regionalized lore is

invoked as a rhetorical strategy. The composition of moratorium songs has vented frustrations and persuaded listeners disconnected from the fisheries to question accusations that “Newfoundland fishermen are living off the government” (Penney 1994, 6) and meditate on how the absence of fishing may be transforming their lives and the meanings associated with the places they inhabit.

Identity and the Routine of Fishing

To not fish, when all you have ever done is fish⁵, is shocking. More terrifying than job loss and no money was the “cancer of inactivity” (Hillier, *The Evening Telegram*, 1992) that set in. People who were used to getting up every morning with a purpose no longer had incentive to leave their homes: “[A fisher is] grappling with the loss of his daily routine – fishing with his father out of St. John’s for the last 21 years. ‘Money’s important. But when the sun shines, we’re supposed to be out in the boat. Now where will we be? In bed’” (Gorham, *The Morning Telegraph – Journal*, 1992b). Earle McCurdy, president of the FFAW since 1994, remarked, several years into the moratorium, on fishers he knew who “got out last year in their boats, waited for a rough day and just steamed around the harbour...so they could get the salt air and the salt water in the face and get a good tossing around and [go] home feeling better, because that’s the whole basis of their life” (*The Evening Telegram*, 1994).

Judith Butler writes of one’s gender identity as something “instituted through a stylized repetition of acts” (1990, 270). Such acts are described as “internally

⁵ It is well known that in Newfoundland, a fisher does not only fish but also performs a wide range of other tasks. For example, many of my informants had built their own houses and did carpentry work on the side. However, they refer to themselves first and foremost as fishers.

discontinuous" (Butler 1990, 271), and therefore not constant unceasing performances by individuals, but rather, acts that can be altered, their repeated patterns reversed or broken. The point is that gender identity is performative and can rest under the control of the actor, lying open to the possibility of transformation. One's gender identity is what one makes it to be by performing a series of stylized and repeated acts, and this gender identity is a belief rather than an unchanging reality of life.

To maintain one's gender identity, one must be an agent in one's life, performing that identity again and again. Occupational identity, or the identity one receives from one's occupation, is set through a performance of occupational acts as well. These acts exist and are performed by a father or grandfather before a young fisher steps into them, and he or she sees him or herself as the next link in an ancestral line of fishers. The identity of a fisher is maintained for as long as these acts are repeated. To be a fisher, one must fish. Selby Noseworthy from Green Island Brook wrote a song that was performed by Folk of the Sea about this concept entitled "No Longer a Fisherman" in which the protagonist is unable to fish and so becomes "just a shadow, of his forefather's name." I include the lyrics of this song later on in this chapter.

Hermann Bausinger writes of the importance of "everyday routines" (1983, 340) in maintaining one's sense of identity. The "regularity [. . .] of everyday life" provides "firm structures, routines creating a frame of everyday life, [and] repetitions that people are being themselves" (Bausinger 1983, 341). The loss of routine was devastating to the lives of fishers, disrupting their life rhythms and severing their connection to the flow of the world as they understood it.



Figure 12: Eugene Kane gutting a codfish in his work shed in Renews (Photo by A.McE.)

What happens when these repeated acts are suddenly put to a halt? Where does one's source for identity come from when the repeated acts that make up one's occupation and the rhythms of one's life and the life of one's community are no more? Butler writes of the possibility of altering the repeated acts one is born into, thus seeing one's gender identity as mutable, always shifting. There is choice in the change discussed by Butler – the actor consciously breaking what has been institutionalized. In the case of the cod moratorium, the repeated acts that made up the occupation of the Newfoundland fisher were halted against his or her will. What came about is what Jacobson-Widding describes as an “identity crisis” that can take place when an individual's “self-image does not correspond to the actual social reality” causing “the center of gravity of his personal identity” (1983, 14) to potentially disappear.

Kapchan writes of performance genres as being “[f]requent[] sites of political struggle” and transformation on which “the politics of identity are negotiated” (2003, 132). The performance of *Folk of the Sea* acted as an opportunity for the choir and its audiences “to rewrite themselves” (Kapchan 2003, 135). Judith Butler writes of the societal need for what Victor Turner has termed *social dramas* “as a means for settling internal conflicts within a culture and regenerating social cohesion” (1990, 277). These social dramas can take many forms and *Folk of the Sea* acted as a powerful social cohesive for its members, and others, following the moratorium.

Abrahams writes that it is in moments of performance that

[n]ew rules, new roles, [and] new ways of articulating time and space emerge. [. . .] And it is precisely here, in this area of free exchange, that identities are most subject to being tested and changed or reconfirmed. Play and fun are invoked as ways of articulating these liberated states of mind. (2003, 213-214)

In the case of *Folk of the Sea*, the liberated states of mind that saw fishers getting along so well and shrugging off their bitterness were not so much articulated by but brought about because of “play and fun”. The performance acted as a site for the wavering identities of the fishers who could not fish to be reconfirmed. Not only were their identities reconfirmed, they were once again permitted to be proud of them, but in a new context. As the romantic nationalist movement in 18th century Germany had done, they used their folklore as a way of reaffirming their sense of who they were and regaining the dignity that, it was felt, had been lost the day the moratorium began.

Folklore and Place

In their very name, *Folk of the Sea* establishes the importance of their relationship with their environment. Without the sea and its resources, they would be entirely

different “folk.” The waters surrounding Newfoundland not only operate as fishing grounds but also those places where the identities of fishers are tested and proven.

Occurring in tandem with the collapse of the North Atlantic cod fishery was the acute distress on the lives of the fishers and the communities depending on the fishery for their livelihoods. Mary Hufford, in her essay on air pollution and the resulting diseases of the forests of Appalachia, writes, “[m]issing in the national environmental policy debate is any recognition of the geographic commons and its critical role in community life” (1998, 159). Sinclair acknowledges this lack at the Newfoundland provincial level, explaining that “[w]hereas the provincial statistics indicate that the failure of the cod fisheries occurred in a setting unprepared to absorb the displaced labour force, they tell us nothing directly about the experience of these workers. How have they fared? Do they feel a sense of crisis?” (2001, 171). What happens to the way of life of a community when the most important resource ceases to be? Hufford writes of coal-mining companies’ appropriation of the Appalachian ginseng habitat as a cultural as well as an ecological loss, as the ginseng habitat, as well as “the regional public that forms around the harvesting of ginseng” (2003, 268), is destroyed. The same can be stated for the loss of the cod-fishing habitat to bottom-draggers and intense over-fishing; along with the cod stocks, the fisher culture is deeply damaged. The commons of the waters surrounding Newfoundland fulfill not only the office of providing a place to fish, but are also understood as grounds on which the identities of those who fish are formed and tested.

For a long time, the waters surrounding Newfoundland were perceived as containing a limitless, “divinely inexhaustible” (Cadigan 1999, 17) supply of codfish. In his essay, “The Moral Economy of the Commons: Ecology and Equity in the

Newfoundland Cod Fishery, 1815-1855," Sean Cadigan strives to disprove the widely-held notion that Newfoundland fishers are heavily responsible for the current decimated state of the North Atlantic cod stocks:

The attempts of fishing people to regulate common-property marine resources in Newfoundland suggests that some European settlers were also capable of non-capitalist forms of ecological management. The recent collapse of northern cod (*Gadus morhua*) stocks and other marine species in the North Atlantic might appear superficially to support the view that these settlers were capable only of ruthless natural resource exploitation. Such a view [...] has been at the ideological core of Canadian fisheries management. (Cadigan 1999, 10)

Newfoundland fishing communities traditionally practiced resource management for many years and the "tragedy of the commons" is an overly simplified understanding of "the relationship between fishing people and the eco-systems in which they have lived" (Cadigan 1999, 11).

The commons, traditionally communally used spaces in medieval villages (Pocius 2000, 125), are understood to be spaces or resources that demand equal and careful use by a community and that any independent attempt to make personal gain from the commons will be at the detriment to all others in the community. Garret Hardin, in his essay "The Tragedy of the Commons," published in 1968, wrote that in a commons, "with every instance of individual gain, there is an instance of loss felt by the rest of the community" (1998, 682). In order for the commons to be maintained, they must be used with great care and equality, and the balance achieved by the community must be seen as more important than the gain of the individual.

Gerald Pocius, in his book *A Place to Belong: Community Order and Everyday Space in Calvert, Newfoundland*, writes of the prevalence of space and resources held in common by communities all over the island (2000, 133). Cod was one of the main

resources maintained within Newfoundland communities and as methods of catching cod changed and evolved, so did the ways in which the commons of the inshore fishery were sustained. As Cadigan points out, in the early nineteenth century, fishers from Newfoundland communities noticing the declining cod stocks in their region opposed, often by force, the use of new fishing technology (1999). The introduction of cod seines, a technology that allowed for a more indiscriminate and rigorous harvesting method, was a violation of the community-held belief that those living within the commons should have equal access to fish (Cadigan 1999, 27). These fishers were concerned with sustaining the cod stocks for the benefit of future generations (Cadigan 1999, 12). Newfoundland communities followed what Cadigan calls a "moral economy of access" (1999, 16) to the resources of the sea, only allowing as many other fishers as there were spaces to fish within the surrounding waters of the community. Peter Sinclair, writing of the more recent events of the Newfoundland fishing crisis, describes the crews of the open boat, off-shore fishery to be "composed of household members...[who were] [g]enerally satisfied if they could make a living and did not see fishing as a business enterprise in which success is measured in terms of profit" (2001, 175).

Pocius gives an account of a similar instance concerning the residents of Calvert with the introduction of the cod trap into everyday fishing practices. Unlike jigging and seining, the cod trap could catch fish night and day, and do so quite effectively depending on where the trap was set. The trap led to an increased level of competition within the fishing community, as there were only a certain number of fishing berths within Calvert harbour and everyone wanted to claim those that were known to be the most productive. With the introduction of the trap, the commons of the harbour was threatened as fishers

attempted to stake out the best berths in order to catch the most fish. The community was “outraged at these assertions of individual resource control” (Pocius 2000, 145) and instigated a mandatory draw for the berths at the opening of each fishing season, allowing each fisher to have an equal chance for the best berths. This draw, according to Calvert resident Kitty Vincent Sullivan, was introduced “to keep people civilized” (Pocius 2000, 145).

The meaning and impact of the commons on a region cannot be determined through an understanding of its list of potential physical resources. The commons of the waters off Newfoundland are not only used for just fishing, but are also important to identity construction within the fishing culture of the province. Mary Hufford, writing of the commons of Appalachia, suggests that in order to begin a remediation of environmental damage, it must be understood that “[a]s a social phenomenon, the commons is always produced and perceived in more than one perspective” (2002, 73).

Hufford explains that the value of the commons rests in its cultural past as well as

the historical openness of the commons, where almost anything can happen. In the social imagination, conjured through stories of plying the commons, the commons becomes a proving ground on which attributes of courage, loyalty, belonging, stamina, wit, foolishness, honesty, judgment, and luck are continuously displayed and evaluated. (1998, 155)

For Newfoundland fishers, the sea is this “proving ground.” They shape their characters and identities through a direct relationship to the sea through the act of fishing.

Gendered Space and the Male “Proving Ground” of the Sea Expressed in Song

Kent Ryden describes the woodsmen of the Adirondacks, writing of their experiences in the culture of the woods as directly informing their sense of identity, or more accurately, their sense of male identity. “In the woods individual men and groups of

peers confront natural phenomena, self, and other men on male terms” (Ryden 1993, 77). The place, the woods, forms their occupation, and their occupation forms their sense of self. “Their oral lore [...] in turn reveals both their sense of place – their understanding of what the woods means – and their personal identity as attached to and determined by that place” (Ryden 1993, 77).

Although today there are many women involved in the fishing industry, traditionally it was a male occupation. Pocius describes male and female space within the community of Calvert during the mid-to-late 1970s as equally complex but quite separate. Hilda Chaulk Murray, in her book, *More Than Fifty Per Cent: Woman's Life in a Newfoundland Outport 1900-1950*, complicates this separation, writing that while “a woman was responsible for running the home” (2010, 147), she was still very much involved in many aspects of the production of fish:

No woman in Ellison went catching cod, but this was the only part of the operation in which she was not involved. On shore she might do any job, for in the preparation of fish for market, or home use, ‘men’s work’ and ‘women’s work’ might be interchangeable. (Murray 2010, 21)

It seems that women would frequently be required to enter the male space in order to help with the processing of the daily catch, but men would rarely enter the female space in assistance. The male space was generally outside of the home, in the woods or on the sea, and “young boys [would] travel into the woods or out in a boat with their fathers or older brothers to learn about these spaces” (Pocius 2000, 91). The men of Calvert respected the house and the yard as women’s space and generally “socialize[d] outdoors or in work-related outbuildings and spaces” (Pocius 2000, 93). Much like the woodsmen of the Adirondacks, the cod fishermen of Calvert identified themselves by what they did. The woods or the sea determined the identity of the men who worked within these places.

The crisis of the Atlantic fisheries and the resulting cod moratorium has transformed lives and thrown off the balance of gendered space within Newfoundland. Sinclair writes of an interview with a married man who worked on a trawler for thirteen years before the moratorium prevented him from going to sea. During the time the interview was conducted, he had been spending most of his time at home:

Interviewer: Are families feeling the strain?

Respondent: Oh, God, yes, definitely. [...] I think in a lot of cases it's tearing families apart. There's a strain on my family [...] all of a sudden I'm home all the time. Even (daughter) is having a hard time coping with me being around and I'm having an even harder time. (Sinclair 2001, 173)

"Sense of self becomes inextricably linked to the physical components of a place, or to participation in place-bound ways of life" (Ryden 1993, 64), and with the disruption of the cod fishery comes the disruption of the social patterns shaped by that fishery. During an interview, Doug Dunne recalled how lost he was without fishing:

The cod fishery was gone. They closed that down, and our livelihood was gone. And you know, you were walking around, that year of the moratorium, and [pause] you were lost. You know, a feeling of lost. And there was nothing you could do about it. Not a thing. I was down doing a bit of rock gardens for my wife, and making rock walls and stuff that I didn't want to be at because I was supposed to be on the water at this time. (Dunne 2010)



Figure 13: Doug Dunne looking out across the harbour in Renewes (Photo by A.McE.)

Doug speaks of “the water” as somewhere he belongs, not helping his wife within the domestic space of their home. Without the sea and those activities he is used to performing on the sea, he is disoriented and it is clear that the “feeling of lost” he speaks of is in reference to the “sense of self” confused by the move from boat to garden.

The folklore that emerges from a particular region is often “crafted out of the imagination’s encounter with the land and its resources” (Hufford 1987, 19). Ryden writes that “regional folklore indicates the emotions which local residents attach to their place and the components of their place, feelings which arise from a knowledge of place-based history and identity and which inevitably tinge their contemplation of their physical surroundings” (Ryden 1993, 66). The place of the sea and fishing within the lives of fishers represents not only their present occupation and identity, but also the long history of men before them who, like themselves, worked on the sea all their lives. Fishing is not just an occupation, it is a “traditional way of life” (Narváez 1997, 1).

During the formation of the choir, landlocked Grand Falls-Windsor native Ged Blackmore, was asked, “What’s a fella from a paper-town doing with Folk of the Sea?” Ged answered, “The reason [I’m] here [is] because my father’s father’s father’s father left Devon and came over here to fish. And somewhere down the line I was born. Whether I understand it or not, it’s part of who I am” (2010). This long line of fishing ancestors is part of the sense of place experienced by fishers when they consider the sea. Ryden explains that “landscape of a place is an objectification of the past, a catalyst for memory” (1993, 39). Songs written by fishermen as a direct response to the cod moratorium demonstrate that the memory of their fathers and grandfathers is part of their sense of the sea and their own identity:

Taken from: "The Fisherman's Lament" by Ed McCann

*I fished with my father so long, long ago.
We were proud of our trade and in us it did show.
We held our heads high, there was lots of fish then.
That was the time when we were proud men.*

*My father, he is gone now and the fish are gone too.
Abused and mismanaged: oh, what can we do?
I'm too old to change, but what of my sons?
How will they know that we weren't the ones? (Narváez 1997, 5)*

Taken from: "Will They Live There Evermore?" by John Phippard

*I was born under the star, never meant to journey far,
From all the faces and the places that I called home.
And my father lived the same, and his father before him,
But now I see in my son's eyes, something has changed.*

*Now my son, he's barely twenty-one, and handy at the trawl
For years he helped me fish the Labrador
Now he's moving to Ontario before the first snowfall:
"Dad, there's nothing left for me 'round here no more."
And I wonder, will I see his children born? (Narváez 1997, 8)*

Below I include a few songs sung by the Folk of the Sea that, like these songs, suggest through the repeated mentioning of fathers, that the history of their fishing ancestors is of great importance to the songmakers. It is clear that for these men, "sense of place is inseparable from sense of past" (Hufford 1986, 74). A great sense of fear and uncertainty of the future is demonstrated in these songs as a concern for the fates of their sons. The moratorium has broken the ancestral chain of men who have been fishers in Newfoundland. This long-established chain has defined a family and a community, and without this practice, this communion with the sea, the sense of place experienced by their sons will change.

Hufford's description of the commons as "a proving ground" (1998, 155) is apt when understanding the importance of fishing to the identity of a man. Just as the

woodsmen of the Adirondacks “confront natural phenomena” (Ryden 1993, 77) and in doing so, shape conceptions of themselves as men, fishermen wrestle with the powers of the sea, proving their worth:

Taken from: “*The Fisherman’s Lament*” by Ed McCann

*We challenged great storms and sometimes we won.
Faced death and disaster, we rose with the sun.
We worked and toiled, we strained arm and brain.
We were a proud people, will we e’er be again?* (Narváez 1997, 5)

With the absence of the sea in their lives, the men no longer have this “proving ground” that allowed them to affirm their identities as “proud people” (Narváez 1997, 5). The men in this verse are tied with the environment around them, battling with its mighty forces and linking themselves to the pattern of the rising and setting sun. Their pride and their hard work are joined with their closeness to the region they inhabit.

A man’s space in Newfoundland, as detailed by Pocius in his description of space within the community of Calvert (2000), is traditionally outside of the home, and typically on the sea or in the woods. From the speaker’s voice in the moratorium songs, there is a distinct sense of immobility, as if he is fixed to the place where he stands:

Taken from: “*She’s Gone Boys, She’s Gone*” by Wayne Bartlett

*The old man looked down in his Dory
As he stood on the wharf one more time.
With the wind in his hair, he stood there and stared
“Look at her now, what a crime.”
Said, “I can recall when I built her
When I lived in the place I call home.”* (Narváez 1997, 2)

Taken from: “*The Fisherman’s Lament*” by Ed McCann

*I stand in my doorway as the Moon rises high,
Over glorious ocean reflects the broad sky.
My heart it is aching so much I could die.
I’ve known only the ocean since I was a boy.* (Narváez 1997, 5)

These songs open with the central character standing and looking out on the ocean. The first “old man” is standing on the wharf, neither land nor sea, but a place that is used to traverse from one to the other. The second character stands in a doorway, a place of indecision, used to separate the inside from the outside. In both instances, the men are separated from the sea, but are not comfortably situated on land. The wharf and the doorway can be seen as spaces of liminality, evoking Van Gennep’s concept of “the rites of passage” (Van Gennep 1999, 102).

Van Gennep describes certain “liminal rites” or “rites of transition” that exist in order to depict a “change of condition” (Van Gennep 1999, 103) most often signifying a shift in societal place for an individual. Taking a boy out on to the sea is a way of initiating him into a group of men directly linked to his association with place. He is physically separated from home (the land), and set out on the sea, where he can “challenge great storms” (Narváez 1997, 5) alongside his father. The transition from land to sea, from indoors to outdoors, establishes the rite of passage a boy must undergo to become a man. The men fixed in the liminal states of the wharf and the doorway lament their position. The place of the sea that is deeply understood and incorporated into their lives has been taken from them, and they are left, unable to prove themselves men, frozen between two spaces that cannot be reconciled. In Phippard’s song, the speaker agonizes over the future of his son. Rather than working and living with the sea, affirming his male identity, he is “moving to Ontario” (Narváez 1997, 9), further inland, away from the place that has for generations defined his people.

Most members of Folk of the Sea I spoke with who had children warned them away from the fishery as an occupation. Stan Fiander remembered his sons coming out of school and having little inclination to follow in his footsteps:

Annie: For your own children, did you hope that they wouldn't fish or-?

Stan Fiander: No, I told them. They could see for themselves. Sixteen, seventeen years old, about time to come out of school, they could see what I was doing. I mean I wasn't getting rich at it. I was working twelve and fourteen hours a day, six days a week, you know? A lot of days it was from dawn to dark. So they could see what I was doing. (Fiander 2010)

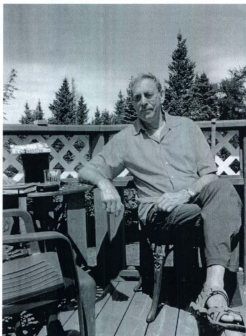


Figure 14: Stan Fiander at his home in Tors Cove (Photo by A.McE.)

Charlie Kane recounted to me an astonishing moment when he realized that his son was embarrassed to tell his class that his father was a fisher:

[The fishery] shut down by the time [Andrew] was ready to go down on the water to become a fisherman. So I went to work with the union, for the fishermen, still being a fisherman, as a fisherman, but I went to work to help the fishermen, rather than go onto TAGS and all that stuff. So September rolled around and Andrew went to Grade Four, and his teacher asked [the class], "What does your dad do?"

"Mine's a fireman." And [the teacher] asked Andrew, "What does your dad do?" And he said, "He works out at the Radisson Hotel" [pause]. I mean, our kids are losing it. Some didn't even want to say their father was a fisherman, because there was a stigma involved with all that then, right? Because of the TAGS and the NCARP and all that stuff. People were saying it was a handout. (Charlie Kane 2010)

Peter Narváez, in his essay "'She's Gone Boys': Vernacular Song Responses to the Atlantic Fisheries Crisis" writes of these moratorium songs as expressions of vernacular poetics in the face of a regional catastrophe. "Responding to a complex, critical issue, Moratorium poetics are poetics of persuasion that affect listeners in varying ways through the use of narrative, lyric, rhetorical, and polemical techniques, stressing story, emotional state, logical argument, and confrontation respectively" (Narváez 1997, 4). The ocean and the coast and the powerful meaning given to these spaces in the lives of the locals are present in these songs. These songs are written and sung to persuade their audiences of the injustices done to the fishers in forbidding them to fish, a practice "widely viewed as a natural Newfoundland right" (Narváez 1997, 9).

Suzi Jones describes the "regionalizing of the lore" as "one of the strategies of persuasion available to the transmitter of folklore. Because of the environment's capacity for meaning, the performer of the lore may, through selective reference to that environment, produce certain effects and responses in his audience" (1976, 111). The moratorium songs drawing on the romantic regionalism placed on rural Newfoundland by the outside gaze incorporate the meaning carried by sense of place as a rhetorical strategy, moving the outside audience in their favour. The songs sung by Folk of the Sea are examples of regional lore used as rhetorical strategy in producing compassion and understanding in their audiences. Nearly every song contains explicit reference to the ocean and rural Newfoundland. Some songs were well-known, like "Petty Harbour Bait

Skiff" and "Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary's," but many were written by Ged Blackmore or by Newfoundlanders in the years following the moratorium. I include two of these songs, one written by Selby Noseworthy of Green Island Brook on the Northern Peninsula, and the other by Myrtle Power of St. Mary's Bay on the Avalon Peninsula:

"No Longer a Fisherman" (Taken from Mickey Waddleton's personal collection)

*A young man was angry, he wanted to know
Why a fisherman's life, was not his to hold
From a long line he'd come, of old fishermen
He fished off the shores, of old Labrador
When he was but ten.*

*And the way that he captured, the prize of the sea
With his life now in shambles, is just a fond memory
Of the long lines he hauled, he knew them as trawls
Of six or eight lines, that he'd run several times
How nice to recall.*

*He remembered the old days, in the spring of the year
When news would be heard, of the fish coming near
The cod traps were ready, when the capelin arrived
He tried everything, if a dollar it'd bring
That's how he survived.*

*Now his boats are all shabby, his gear is all old
The life that he longs for, is beyond his control
Though the times keep on movin', his memory lags
And the pay that he gets, is a government cheque
For he's now on the tags.*

*Now on some days he wonders, what good will it do
And how will he make it, when this program is through
so as he waits without knowing, he utters a prayer
as he talks with his wife, 'bout his fisherman's life
that is no longer there.*

*For he's just a shadow, of his forefather's name
And he feels quite dejected, but he's not to blame
For the way that the fishery, was so blindly destroyed
And away went his pay, and his freedom to say
I have a fisherman's pride,*

*For the way that the fishery, was so blindly destroyed
And away went his pay, and his freedom to say
I have a fisherman's pride.*

-Selby Noseworthy, Green Island Brook

"*Newfoundland People – Salt Sea*" (Taken from Mickey Waddleton's personal collection)

*The waves are calm now
Not a breath on the wind
The mist is just burning away
The boats that once sputtered
Their way to the sea
Are lying alone in the bay*

*The shorelines are dotted
with rudders and oars
all upturned and baked in the sun,
the names that were painted
with pride on the bows
are withered and rusted and done*

*Chorus: O Newfoundland people,
Where will you go?
What will you do to hold free?
The white squalls still beckon
The foghorns still blow
O Newfoundland People – salt sea*

*An old man looks lonely
On the landwash below
Staring into an empty trawl heap
The lines and the wrinkles
That weather his brow
Tell a tale of the fish in the deep*

*A tale of the glory
And plight of the sea
When fish flourished rich on the run,
When codlines scaled heavy
With teeming full loads
And seagulls yelled into the sun (chorus)*

*And what of your children?
O what will they know*

*For stocks have all vanished from sight?
Will they ever look seaward
And ride with the wind
In oilskins that harbour the bite?*

*What will they remember?
What will they hold dear
When stories fall faint on the tongue?
When the sea and its fury
That kept us alive
Drift away like a song that's been sung (chorus)*

-Myrtle Power, St. Mary's Bay

The protagonist in "No Longer a Fisherman" is an angry young man who, because he cannot be a continuation of the "long line" of "old fishermen" from which he comes, he is nothing but "a shadow of his forefather's name." This man is unable to prove his masculinity and is reduced to praying while speaking about "his fisherman's life / that is no longer there." Specific images of the occupation ("of the long lines he hauled, he knew them as trawls / of six or eight lines, that he'd run several times") and the environment where that occupation was performed ("the spring of the year" and "the cod traps were ready, when the capelin arrived") are invoked, acting as memory stimulants for the audience.

"Newfoundland People – Salt Sea" sets up a clear relationship between the wilderness of the sea and the men who eke out their living upon it. "The waves" and "the wind" are hushed without "the boats that once sputtered their way to the sea" and "the lines and the wrinkles / that weather [an old man's] brow" communicate to the listener what is happening to "the fish in the deep." The health of humans and their communities is entwined with the health and robustness of the sea. The closing lines show a concern for a time when no one will remember what it was like to "look seaward / and ride with

the wind," linking the disappearance of fishing with the disappearance of the sea itself: "when the sea and its fury / that kept us alive / drift away." In these lyrics localities are produced, and the individual is connected to the wider public audience. The understanding and the meaning of the region and what it means to no longer have that region to work within can be read through these songs.

The Danger of Regionalizing Lore

Kent Ryden encourages an understanding of folklore as a method of interpreting one's surroundings and communicating that interpretation to others. Like Judith Butler's performance of the repetition of stylized acts that make up one's gender identity, the identity of a fisher is maintained by fishing. The act of fishing on the sea generates an understanding of self that comes from an occupational routine in sync with a landscape. References to this landscape and the work done within it were used by songwriters following the cod moratorium to gain sympathy from the listener and Folk of the Sea used this strategy in their songs and also in the ocean and seagull sounds that brought the sea right into the Arts and Culture centres in which they performed.

While regionalism can be used as a persuasive tool, Mary Hufford is also aware of the drawbacks of place-based folklore, writing, "regionalization is a symbolic operation of the media-through advertisements, political campaigns, and the news" (2002, 63) that prevent the Other from breaking out of the essentialized role in which it is placed. Writing of this issue within the context of the "hillbilly" image associated with those who inhabit the region known as "Appalachia," Hufford evokes two quite different popular regionalisms of Appalachia "according to their orientations toward progress [. . .]: a romantic regionalism that fears it, and a rational regionalism that loves it" (2002,

64). These regional stereotypes are firmly established and promoted in the outsider's understanding of Appalachia through the media. Appalachia is marked as a space of disempowerment and underdevelopment, making it difficult for it to become anything more.

It was very important for those performing with Folk of the Sea to be different from a stereotypical image of fishers perceived by the members of the choir. The fisher people of Newfoundland, like the "popular regionalisms" (Hufford 2002, 64) of the Appalachian hillbilly image as seen from the outside, are seen to be one of two characters: either powerless, benevolent people done wrong by every government and every merchant, who if left alone would quietly go about their lives with humility and grace, and remain forever singing, pulling nets, and raising robust and ocean-savvy boys; or, a dark, backwards, greedy, stupid, drinking people with no regard for the environment (Davies 2002, 129). It is against this image that Folk of the Sea fought and the next chapter discusses how.

Chapter Six

Image and the Construction of Identity

Personal identity and its articulation with folklore forms and processes should merit increasing attention. Situations in which identity is challenged or denied – that is, situations of identity conflict – may prove particularly promising for investigation, as they are the arenas in which the contours of identity become most prominent and visible. (Oring 1994, 226)

Music and dance are key to identity formation because they are often public presentations of the deepest feelings and qualities that make a group unique. (Turino 2008, 2-3)

Stuart Pierson, in his article “Newfoundland in Photographs” (1985), describes the overly saccharine melodrama he found depicted in books of photos taken of Newfoundland. He writes of the simplified dichotomy found in the books, presenting Newfoundlanders as either “[p]ioneers” or “freeloaders” and nothing in between, and having moved tragically from “self-sufficiency to ignominious dependence on handouts and somebody else’s (dehumanizing) culture” (Pierson 1985, 214).

I realized when reading Pierson that when I first started contacting my informants, I was unconsciously pressing upon them this image of the morosely dependent fisherman and the tragic romance of his life on the sea that Pierson describes in such a tongue-in-cheek manner. I had spent some time in the Centre for Newfoundland Studies at Memorial University going through stacks of old newspaper clippings, some national, some local, that were published during the years following the cod moratorium. Any portrayal of a Newfoundland fisher I encountered was a distinctly helpless and poor one. In the following three cartoons, published in 1992, 1993, and 1994 in the *St. John’s Evening Telegram*, one can get a taste of the climate of victimization that existed at the time:



Figure 15: Cartoon by Kevin Tobin, *Evening Telegram* Feb. 25, 1992, p.4

This cartoon is a dramatic depiction of the moratorium. The ocean has dried up, there is a jagged hole in the hull of a boat, and a sinister storm is gathering on the horizon. A gnarled old fisher in rubber boots and a woolen hat with a grizzled, dirty look about him (raggedy ears, specks of dirt or flies surrounding his head) is unable to give anything to his son. The face of the young boy is turned away from us, looking out across the dry sea and the desolate town to the oncoming storm. The future is faceless, standing dejected, with his hands by his sides. The previous generation has nothing to offer but the wreckage of a mismanaged resource. The fisher in this cartoon is portrayed as a victim, unable to help himself or his son.



Figure 16: Cartoon by Josh Beutel, *Evening Telegram* Dec. 9, 1993, p.4

The fisher sitting by his front door wears rubber boots, a wool sweater, and a sou'wester. His facial expression is one of wide-eyed helpless confusion and stunned stupidity. There is no anger, no righteousness, portrayed in his features. He is begging for money, as if this is the only thing he is able to do. His sign reads, "Fishing . . . Gone!" lending the impression that he has no clue what has happened to the fish, no understanding of the creature he has laboured to capture all his life other than its sudden absence.



Figure 17: Cartoon by Kevin Tobin, *Evening Telegram* April 2, 1994, p.4

In this cartoon, the fishers are drowning. The sea has turned against them, setting its sharks and rogue waves upon them. They are portrayed as stupid and hapless, with exhausted crossed eyes and frantic hands clawing at the government's latest inadequate solution. The men who are saved in the boat sit numbly doing nothing, highlighting their uselessness and their reliance on the government to save them. There is neither anger nor strength in their expressions. Rather, two of them look weary and wet while the third cowers sheepishly behind them, feeling guilty about the government aid he has been given as others around him drown.

These cartoons are extremes of sentiments felt at the time. I naively adopted an extremely dumbed-down version of them in my initial prediction for the people I would encounter during my fieldwork. I romanticized and praised the pioneer and pitied and had sympathy for the freeloader. As I began to interview my informants, my initial conception of a fisher became very quickly complicated by what I saw and heard. There was no dejected poverty, no helplessness. I saw angry and sharp words for the

government and a knowledge of the sea and the life patterns of cod that would destroy any conception of fishers as being a simple-minded folk like the ones portrayed in the cartoons.

I met multidimensional characters whose narratives and stories challenged both the pioneer and the freeloader images of the Newfoundland fisher. These people were skilled in many areas. They were not dirt-poor, nor were they rich. Many of them were not musical. Should this not have been obvious to me? Certainly every human being is complex. However, Newfoundlanders are often portrayed as a dichotomous folk.

Ruthellen Josselson writes of the capacity of the narrative approach in fieldwork to “force us to supersede dichotomies” (1995, 33). During the interviews I would ask my informants about their beginnings in fishing and in music. I would often come away from an interview with a life narrative and feel quite overwhelmed with the content, realizing that those I spoke with would not fit into the dichotomy I had built for them, nor would Folk of the Sea be the singular and focused force I had imagined it to be. Frustrating though it was, my fieldwork and the life narratives I collected revealed to me the complex and contradictory components that make up an individual, dispelling the “[d]ichotomous thinking [that] eliminates the inner contradiction that is intrinsic to human personality” (Josselson 1995, 33).

Folk of the Sea struggled with this dichotomy. Doug Dunne explained to me the anxiety and excitement leading up to their first performance, not knowing who the choir would prove right, the nay-sayers or the supporters:

Doug Dunne: And everybody couldn't wait to see all the fishermen up on stage, right? Some people preferred to say, “yeah, they're ours.” And some people to see us make a fool of ourselves. Yeah, and we didn't know what was going to happen. We didn't know which was going to be right. (Dunne 2010)

Norm Cull told me that Folk of the Sea was able to break out of the dichotomy of the pioneer versus the freeloader:

Norm Cull: I think that Folk of the Sea probably made the politicians in Ottawa feel differently towards Newfoundland and what they did before we went there. They realized that we were people. Because I think a fisherman was regarded, at one time, as someone that was, you know -, we weren't looked at as anything, it was, "Oh you know, he's just an old fisherman." (Cull 2011)

Just as hearing the life narratives of individual Folk of the Sea members expanded my understanding of what it meant to be a Newfoundland fisher, a Folk of the Sea performance similarly complicated the notion of "just an old fisherman" for those, in this case those in Ottawa, who saw fishers as either one extreme or another. Through Folk of the Sea, fishers became "people" with all the human complexities that go along with them and they did this not through their professional appearances or their performance of "O Canada" in French, but through their blunders, their missed cues, and their imperfect harmonies.

Pierson finds only one of the photography books he analyzes effective. While this book, *Newfoundland Photography 1849-1949* (McGrath 1980), contains some photos he describes as "clumsy, amateurish or downright depressing" (1985, 232) in contrast to some of the more professionally shot photo books, it nevertheless reveals something about Newfoundland that the others cannot: "One can find there not just the rocks and dories and the weather-beaten elderly – not just the picturesque – but a vision of the community with all its tensions and its different ideals of itself" (Pierson 1985, 232).

While Folk of the Sea aimed to look professional, its flaws gave its performance a richness, a humanity, and a warmth that the audience praised and applauded. Like the one photography book Pierson commended, the amateur qualities of Folk of the Sea lent their

performance a grace and an honesty that could be described as neither pioneer nor

freeloader:

Ged Blackmore: The Toronto show, we had-, one of our soloists that night was as nervous as a cat. Gerard Chaytor, God love him. And he started too soon, like the light hadn't come up. But, you know, they weren't professional performers. So he started playing like this [Ged mimes strumming a guitar] and he was as nervous as all get out and finally the light came on and from way back in the audience one of the-, some of the people obviously who lived up in that part of the world were from Conche, tip of the Northern Peninsula. You heard this big voice calling out in the Roy Thomson Hall, said, "Heave it out of you, Gerard!" It was that people were moved [. . .]. You know, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir we weren't. (Blackmore 2010)

Mac Critchley: One of the boys did "The Smokeroom on the Kyle." He got a quarter of the way through live and shagged up. Blamed it on his wife. He said, "I knew I was going to do this tonight," he said, "cause my wife is here." Right in the concert, live.

Annie: Did everyone laugh?

Mac: Oh yes. Claps and everything. And he just went right back into it. (Critchley 2011)

Francis Littlejohn: We were all very nervous about the first time we performed. Wanted to present ourselves properly. But we discovered it didn't make any difference. We could make all the mistakes we wanted to. It wasn't about the music. It was about the-, we jelled with the audience. The audience wasn't there to pick it apart.

Annie: Yeah, they were forgiving.

Francis: Oh, very much so, very much so. (Littlejohn 2011)

Doug Dunne: I think if we had sneezed up there, there would have been a standing ovation. (Dunne 2010)

Although Folk of the Sea felt it was necessary to seem as professional as possible, they complicated the stereotypical dichotomy not through flawless presentation, but through their honest blunders and imperfections. Like a life narrative cutting through any simplified depictions of a human life and its culture, and like the photography book Pierson found most effective, in that it demonstrated an honest and complex "vision of

the community,” so did Folk of the Sea’s performance disprove the “freeloader” and the “pioneer” images set upon them by simply being themselves.

Presenting a Certain Image

According to Pat Byrne, the term “Newfie” and “Newf” were coined by Canadian and American servicemen during the Second World War (1997, 236):

What began to emerge to replace the traditional culture of the fisherfolk was ‘Newfieland’ peopled by ‘Newfies’ – a place out of step with time, inhabited by the numskull figure of the ‘Newfie’ joke, too stupid to realize his own ineptitude and alien status vis-à-vis mainstream North American society, but eternally happy, embarrassingly hospitable, and full of fun, deferential to his betters (read any non-Newfoundlander), but fiercely proud of his homeland and his way of life. (Byrne 1997, 238)

King and Clarke write that Newfoundlanders are aware of mainland Canadian stereotypes of Newfoundlanders, in which “distinctive Newfoundland accents are typically associated with laziness and stupidity” (2002, 538). This image of the Newfoundlander, “[t]he stereotype of the ‘goofy Newfie,’ the butt of the ‘Newfie joke’” (King and Clarke 2002, 539) was embraced by Newfoundland tourism following Confederation and “many Newfoundlanders found it convenient and expedient to bathe it in the rosy glow of ‘tradition’” (Byrne 1997, 238). Pat Byrne describes this impulse as a “survival technique based on turning a half-believed stereotype into a sort of personified, self-sustained *blason populaire*” (1997, 238-239).

A song titled “Goofie Newfie” published in a Dominion Ale *Newfoundland Song Book* that was put out in commemoration of the Canada Games held in St. John’s in 1977, demonstrates the self-sustained *blason populaire* about which Byrne writes:

“Goofie Newfie”

I know that we don’t talk like you mainlanders

*And I know that we're the victims of your jokes
And I know that you all think we're goofy Newfies
And that we all belong in fishing boats
Why you even make fun of Joey Smallwood
And you call him Newfie's funny little man
But he sure shakes up your politicians
When he stands up to fight for Newfoundland.*

*So go on and call us goofy Newfies
Laugh aloud when you hear us speak
We'll just sit back and enjoy liven
And chug-a-lug that good old Newfie screech*

*Now I know we don't have your super highways
And buildings that are forty stories high
No we don't have your fancy cars and money
But we don't need them and I'll tell you why
Why if we had them we'd be just like you are
And proving it by telling stupid jokes
So I'm proud to say that I come from Newfie
And that I was raised up in fishing boats.*

*So go on and call us goofy Newfies
Laugh aloud when you hear us speak
We'll just sit back and enjoy liven
And chug-a-lug that good old Newfie screech*
(Words and music by Roy Payne and Jury Krytiuk (1970, 44))

The song shows an awareness of the “goofie Newfie” jokes told on the mainland about the speech (“we don’t talk like you mainlanders”) and the simple lifestyle (“I was raised up in fishing boats”) of Newfoundlanders. Instead of disproving these accusations, the narrator embraces them with pride. The chorus, depicting Newfoundlanders who don’t mind being made fun of and who spend their “liven” in “chug-a-lug[ging] that good old Newfie screech [(Newfoundland rum)],” paints Newfoundlanders as a fun-loving bunch who spend their days simply, performing exactly that for which they are being made fun.

While many of the strengths of the performance of Folk of the Sea came from their unrefined delivery (“I think that’s what probably got the crowds of people to go,

right? It was so natural, right?" (Hewitt 2011)), the choir intended to look and sound as professional and crisp as possible. Anthony Seeger writes of music as a creator of sorts: "...members of some social groups create their past(s), their present(s), and their visions of the future partly through musical performances" (1993, 23). The musical event that was the first performance of *Folk of the Sea* presented the past to its audience as one of glorious toil, beauty, honesty, and joy. It was important to establish this foundation to stand on as the cod moratorium had effectively removed any romanticization of the fishery. "Musical structures, values, and performance practices are themselves informed by concepts of history, and their realization in the present is a demonstration of certain attitudes about the past and the future" (Seeger 1993, 23-24). During the years following the moratorium fishers needed both provincial and national support. Singing songs about the beauty and drama of the occupation was a way of demonstrating the past in order to gain compassion in the present.

Doug Dunne spoke to me of the powerful influence of the choir on the image of the Newfoundland fisher. He described the reaction of the audience, as if people had been looking for something and found it in *Folk of the Sea*:

And see, I'm just sort of emotional talking about it because there was something there. And see, when you looked down, [then you saw] a lot of people were there and saying, "Yes! Thanks to God, yes. Yes, this is what we need. This is the image we want to portray." Not what we had been portrayed as in a long time, right? (2010)

While the sound of the choir was important, it did not matter if everyone sang. Ged Blackmore would tell people, "If you can't sing, fake it!" (Blackmore 2010). My informants spoke openly and good-naturedly about the fact that there were members of the choir who "couldn't carry a note in a shopping bag" (Taylor 1994) and there was a

joke within the choir that those who were not singers were called “hummers.” When I asked Charlie Kane if he could sing he replied with, “Actually, you know, I’m a fine singer, with a hundred people, right? [laugh]” (2010). Charlie’s wife Sharon was equally as comical, “No, we can’t sing at all. We get together for family functions and we get a few drinks in, and we think we’re all wonderful singers. So we do sing, but we can’t sing, no [laugh]” (2010). Mike Symmonds recalled when Ged didn’t care as long as it looked like everyone was singing: “If [Ged] saw someone up there that wasn’t singing he’d tell him, ‘move your mouth or do something. Pretend that you’re singing or something’” (2011). Mac Critchley recalled to me how Ged Blackmore was able to pick out someone from the choir who was not singing in key and move them to stand next to someone who could sing:

Mac Critchley: Several people there couldn’t sing a note.

Annie: You needed to fill in for them?

Mac: Basically. That’s what we were doing. [Ged] was putting us in places so it would take the sound around the choir so that people that couldn’t sing sounded like they could sing. (Critchley 2011).

Appearance was paramount. Mac Critchley, bubbling with mirth, told me of a circumstance in which Folk of the Sea performed an appearance that negated the stereotype of the “Goofie Newfie” brilliantly:

Mac Critchley: When we went to Ottawa and Toronto, now, they wanted us to do “O Canada” in French. Now we had fun. When we got to Ottawa and Toronto [it whipped] together. You couldn’t tell the difference. People from Ottawa couldn’t believe it. There we were, a bunch of Newfoundlanders, doing O Canada in French! (Critchley 2011)

Instead of learning to sing “O Canada” in French, the choir learned to sing a phonetic rendering of “O Canada” in French, singing this:

O Canada
Terra duh nose ayuh

*Ton frone eh sawn
Duh flor own glory uh
Car tone braw say portay lay pay uh
Ill say portay la craw
Tone his twar ate oone ay-po-pay uh
Day ploo bree-yant ex-plu-a*

(Taken from Mickey Waddleton's personal collection)

instead of this:

*O Canada
Terre de nos aïeux,
Ton front est ceint de fleurons glorieux.
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,
Il sait porter la croix.
Ton histoire est une épopée,
Des plus brillants exploits.*

It was not important that the choir knew the national anthem in French as long as they appeared to. Mickey Waddleton showed me his copy of these lyrics, which had been given to all the members of Folk of the Sea by Ged Blackmore and Francis Littlejohn in preparation for their shows in Ontario.

Why was it so important to sing "O Canada" in French and pull a fast one on Ontario? Why did some members of Folk of the Sea only *appear* to sing? I asked Charlie Rogers how the cod moratorium had changed people. He stopped me mid-question:

I don't think you'll ever change them. They're going to be the one way no matter what happens. Me, I'm not good with words, I don't know how to put it to you. The group - I don't think there's changing any of them. Even if they went off to make a million dollars. (Rogers 2010)

Listening to Charlie I realized that perhaps the identity the choir was reshaping was not for themselves – they were certain of who they were, always had been – but for those who they feared saw them as lazy, cruel, over-fishing, environmentally ignorant low people who always wore rubber clothing and were caricatures more than humans. They were using music and performance to re-name themselves, to "rewrite" (Kapchan 2003,

135) themselves in the eyes of mainlanders and Newfoundlanders alike and they were doing so for their own behalf and that of their province.

Historian Fay Stevens, in her work on body ornamentation as a means of representing the self in later prehistoric Europe, states that "people create their identities in relation to their interactions with others and this requires some degree of performance" (2007, 94-95). The identity created by Folk of the Sea was set in relation to, not "others," but their perceived notions of what others thought of them. Their uniforms challenged the rubber clothing, the clean and sharply dressed countering the lazy and sloppy fisher. Richard Bauman, writing in the early 1970s about the importance of the doing or the performance of folklore as well as the songs or things that folklorists were spending their time collecting and analyzing, stresses the interaction that is key to a folklore performance. Folklore performance can be "found in both symmetrical and asymmetrical relationships; members of particular groups or social categories may exchange folklore with each other, on the basis of shared identity [(as was the case when the fishers played music together following an FFAW meeting)], or with others, on the basis of differential identity" (1971, 38) [(when Folk of the Sea performed for non-fishers in various Arts and Culture centres across Newfoundland and their two shows in Ontario)].

Lloyd and Mullen saw something similar in their work with fishers on Lake Erie, finding that they "must look not only at the way fishermen see themselves but also at the way other people's views influence their self-image" (1990, 125). The Lake Erie fishers are aware of the negative stereotypes about them held by non-fishing members of the community and saw the interviews and stories they gave for Lloyd and Mullen's book as a way of contending with the negativity. Folk of the Sea sang and performed for the same

reason. Indeed, “[m]uch of folklore [. . .] is formed to create or counteract such stereotypes” (Lloyd and Mullen 1990, 173). Folk of the Sea opposed the ‘Goofie Newfie’ stereotype by countering this with a different stereotype – that of Newfoundland outports being idyllic places, throwing away what they saw as the negative aspects while keeping the positive. The concerts of Folk of the Sea were identity performances in which the negative stereotypes of the Newfoundland fisher were inverted.

Clothing and Identity

When I first went to visit Eugene Kane at his home in Renew, he got out some old photographs taken in the 1980s of him and his brothers fishing with their dories and skiffs in the late afternoon sun. The photos were well preserved and only yellowed slightly, lending that warm nostalgic glow that some photos from the ‘80s seem to have. The Kanes were all handsome, strong men with browned skin and hair bleached in the sun. Most of them wore rubber overalls, rubber boots, and thick wool sweaters. As a choir whose membership consisted entirely of fishers or fish plant workers, why did Folk of the Sea not wear their occupational uniforms - namely, the rubber clothing and wool sweaters I saw in Eugene’s photographs?

Joanna Sofaer writes that “[m]ateriality conveys meaning. It provides the means by which social relations are visualized, for it is through materiality that we articulate meaning and thus it is the frame through which people communicate identities” (2007, 1). Much like Christopher Small’s concept of idealized relationships demonstrated in musical performances, so clothing can be part of this ideal both in the uniformed appearance of the choir presenting harmony among the fishers of Newfoundland, and the total absence of rubbers and fishing gear, presenting Newfoundland fishers as individuals

who are much more than their occupation. Not only was Folk of the Sea representing those working within the fishing industry in Newfoundland, they were representing the entire province, to itself, and to the rest of Canada. “[We] were ambassadors for the industry, and for the province” (Way 2011). If, as Sofaer says, meaning comes into being through materiality, then what did Folk of the Sea convey to their audience with their green sweaters and gray slacks?

Christie Davies, in his study of ethnic jokes, says “[f]ish and fishing have been central to Newfoundland’s way of life for most of its history and humorous cartoons of the Newfoundlander tend to show him dressed and equipped for work as a fisherman” (Davies 2002, 118). Similarly, in stereotypical representations of Newfoundlanders in oral jokes, rubber clothing is often involved: “How do you recognize the groom at a ‘Newfie’ wedding? He is the one wearing the new rubber boots” (Davies 2002, 118). Hiscock writes of the crystallization that can occur during the creation of *blason populaire* as a feature is extracted from its context and “isolated for its incongruity and humour” (2005, 216). Mercer and Swackhammer, in their work on advertisements in Newfoundland song books and their stereotypical depictions of Newfoundlanders they found that “the cultural heritage [of Newfoundland] has been reduced to a stereotype based on a few aspects of the folk culture, viewed as static, quaint possessions of a rural underdeveloped populace” (Mercer and Swackhammer 1978, 36). The *blason populaire* created around the Newfoundland fisher has crystallized rubber clothing: “[T]he key occupational badge of the Newfoundland fishermen – and by extension Newfoundlanders in general – is their high rubber boots” (Davies 2002, 118).

Men of the Deeps, the famous Cape Breton mining choir to which Folk of the Sea is often compared and with whom they once performed, wear their mining headlamps while performing:

We have a dress code and everyone must abide by it. Each man must have a proper hat and a working lamp. The belts must be on properly. There must be a black T-shirt under the coveralls; you can't go showing the hairs on your chest. And the shirt must be buttoned at the top, and the rest must be zippered. The sleeves must be rolled up. Each man must have the regular pit shoes.
(MacGillivray 2000, 125-127)

Men of the Deeps performed in their occupational uniform until it was decided that full mining garb was too hot for the bright lights of the stage. They then opted for a simplified and more pedestrian look, careful to maintain the headlamp and helmet – fixtures in both past and present image of the miner.

While the material image of the occupation of Men of the Deeps is very much a part of their performance (walking onto a darkened stage with only their headlamps to light the way), the uniform worn by Folk of the Sea contains nothing that references fishing. The purpose of Men of the Deeps was “to perpetuate, via song and story, the heritage and folklore of the mining communities” (MacGillivray 2000, 20). The mining choir was formed in an effort to preserve the memory of the past by presenting it in an art form:

Over the past three decades, the public perception of coal mining has been shaped by scholars, musicians and playwrights, and by novelists and movie-makers. The works of these artists replaced ‘pit-talk’ as the medium of interpretation for the mining experience. (MacGillivray 2000, xv)

Men of the Deeps, like other artistic renderings of Cape Breton mining culture, is a medium through which heritage is transmitted to the public, created “as the tangible presence of coal mining wanes from our midst” (MacGillivray 2000, xvi). Folk of the

Sea, while performing interpretations of the fishing experience through multiple genres of folklore – singing, playing music, joking, acting, orating, dancing – is much more than an attempt at conservation. Image is one of the choir’s chief purposes and it was formed in great part to move the image of the Newfoundland fisher away from that of a lazy free-loader, and towards a more well-rounded character. In understanding the different purposes of the two occupational choirs, greater meaning can be read in the uniforms both choose to wear.

Allan Fotheringham, writing for *Maclean’s* after seeing Folk of the Sea perform in Toronto, describes the clothing worn by the choir as “simple green sweaters and beige trousers and skirts” and the emcees as being “outfitted in the finest tuxedos that made them look right off a Hollywood stage” (1994, 104). The illustration accompanying the article, however, depicts a singing man standing on a bluff by the edge of a roiling sea, gesturing to the water with one hand and holding an empty net in the other. He is dressed in a sou’wester, a knee-length raincoat and rubber boots. In an article as short as Fotheringham’s (one page), it is interesting that he would find it relevant to include a description of what the choir members were wearing. Clearly, there is a preconceived image of Newfoundland fishers that proceeds the choir onto the mainland and the fact that Folk of the Sea were not portraying this image was noteworthy. It is against this representation that Folk of the Sea, with their simple, clean uniforms, set another.



Figure 18: Folk of the Sea during section A or C of the first night of their performance at the Arts and Culture Centre in St. John's (Used with permission – Charlie and Sharon Kane's personal collection)

The image of Folk of the Sea was carefully created with the intention to “do it properly” (Francis Littlejohn 2010). Francis Littlejohn recounted to me one of the many times he shared a motel room with Ged Blackmore on the road during the recruitment period of Folk of the Sea. Ged paced the room while Francis took notes:

We talked about if we're going to do this, we're going to do it properly. We're going to have them properly dressed, you know? They're not going to see oil clothes and long rubber boots. They're going to see proper attire [. . .]. We had our white shirts, our Newfoundland tartan ties. We had our grey slacks, and we had our sea-green sweaters. And then we had our emcees [. . .] and they were dressed in black tuxes [. . .]. We were sending a message, you know? This was not your ordinary show. (Francis Littlejohn 2010)

The occupational uniform of the fisher signifies the specialized skills necessary to be part of the fishing industry. As the industry, at the time when Folk of the Sea was forming, had fallen, these skills became suddenly useless. The change of uniform, from rubber clothing to slacks and sweaters, demonstrated that their skill-base was much broader than those required for fishing. They could perform a musical concert, for example.

Folk of the Sea's performance is a presentation of image, of a certain identity. Elliott Oring, referring to Victor Turner, remarks on the performance of identity as reflexive, enabling those who are performing to reflect back upon themselves those aspects they feel describe themselves to the other (Oring 1994, 222). The image of the Newfoundland fisherman can be one-dimensional to those who view it from the outside. It is an image of rubber clothing, humour, and hard work followed by unemployment insurance. Folk of the Sea worked to flesh out this image, to present not only alternatives, but additions that enrich the outsider's understanding of the Newfoundland fisher.

"[P]eople can hold multiple or plural identities which may spring to the fore in different circumstances, times, and places" (Sofaer 2007, 4). The moratorium was the catalyst for what was already a steady stream of "Newfie jokes" to explode into a torrent of negative images of Newfoundlanders. Newspapers across the country were riddled with cartoons depicting rubber-clad fishers. Stereotypes contain truth, but they also provide only a fragment of what the subject really is. Doug Dunne, in his meditative way, explained the need to complicate that stereotype:

A lot of us got talking [. . .] and said, you know, a lot of people have the wrong impression of Newfoundland. I mean, you look at pictures of Newfoundland and people can talk about the fishermen of Newfoundland [with their] old stages, old houses falling down, or rotten boats, salt and pepper hats, rubbers, oilclothes. Which is all a very, very important part of Newfoundland and an important part of the fishery and fishermen, and all the fisherpeople. But that's not all of it. There's more to it than that, right? We're a people and we do have brains, we can think for ourselves. The more we [talked about it] the stronger I started to feel about it and I think the other guys did too [. . .]. Look, this is what we need to portray [. . .]. So then, it started to escalate after that because then we ended up-, ok, we just can't go onstage, you know, with just anything on, right? And even though, like I said, I told you it was a good part of our heritage, stages and rubber boots and whatever, that's what everybody thinks when they think about fishermen right? So we said, we're going to portray a different image that's also us too. And we got our uniforms. (Dunne 2010)

Sofaer urges for specific studies considering “the ways that particular aspects of identity may be singled out, projected, and [. . .] used through specific forms of material culture” to be undertaken in tandem with the exploration of “ways that other elements of identity may be downplayed or concealed” (Sofaer 2007, 4). Doug’s explanation for the choir’s uniforms acknowledges the importance of the typical “material articulation[s]” (Sofaer 2007, 4) of Newfoundland identity (“old stages, old houses falling down, rotten boats, salt and pepper hats, rubbers, oilcloths”). However, he is quite clear in stating that those identity markers, while being “a good part of our heritage,” were “what everyone thinks when they think about fishermen” and that their absence in the Folk of the Sea uniforms were an attempt to portray “other elements of [the] identity” (Sofaer 2007, 4) of a Newfoundland fisher.

Shaping a certain image was important to Folk of the Sea and the clothing worn by the members was one of the most important aspects of the controlled image. During my interviews, the Folk of the Sea uniform would often be described as something to be proud of. However, it was not what it was that drew great pride, but what it wasn’t – namely, rubber.

Mac Critchley: They were expecting us to come in-, Ottawa and Toronto, in rubber clothes and rubber boots. That’s-, honest, that’s how they were expecting us to come onstage. (Critchley 2011)

Stan Fiander: Met some wonderful people. Made good friends. You know, you meet somebody from [Wild] Cove or wherever they’re from up there and they come and they straighten up your tie a little bit. I mean there’s a sort of camaraderie there, eh? You know, everybody had to look proper [. . .] I think they expected us to come out-, you know, everybody was amazed. We were dressed up in gray slacks and sweaters and stuff like that. I think everybody expected us-, to see rain gear on or something or fishing gear or something like that.

Annie: Why did you guys not dress up in rain gear?

Stan: I don't know. I guess we'd look better if we were dressed up in slacks. I mean, maybe we didn't want to give the impression that we were poverty-stricken or something, you know? (Fiander 2010)

Eugene: We wanted everything to be so perfect. No one ever said you had to do this, but if some fella's tie was crooked, you know, the other fella would straighten it up and, you know, this sort of stuff. It was amazing. There was a lot of good friends came out of it.

Annie: Why was it important to straighten a tie?

Eugene: No one wanted to see a fella go onstage half-dressed. Now, as you know, fishermen were never supposed to be the tidiest. Down through the years. We're not known for being tidy. But when we came out there onstage and even when we walked down to the stage through the Arts and Culture Centre, they started into clapping. And would not stop. (Eugene Kane 2010)

It became clear that Folk of the Sea's designed image was driven by the fishers' individual understandings of how they were seen in the wake of the moratorium. In Lloyd and Mullen's study of Lake Erie fishermen's personal experience narratives, a similar need to present an identity in opposition to an outsider's view is recognized. Much like the fishers of Newfoundland, those of Lake Erie "are very much aware of projecting an image to the outside because they are so conscious of what outsiders think of them" (Lloyd and Mullen 1990, 161). While, as Lloyd and Mullen point out, an outside perspective often contains some accuracy, it is usually a one-dimensional understanding of a group of people. The narratives collected by Lloyd and Mullen reflected this dynamic, "in many ways [. . .] reflect[ing] the outsider's bias, but it [is also] turned around, inverted at times, in order to project a positive image of fishermen" (Lloyd and Mullen 1990, 161). We see this same inversion in the performance clothing of Folk of the Sea. The tuxedos worn by the emcees Charlie Kane and Trevor Taylor act as a particularly sharp contrast to the occupational dress they were used to wearing.

When I asked my informants if they still had their uniforms, the answer was always "Yes," although many followed that with a joke about how it would certainly no

longer fit. To members of Folk of the Sea, the uniform was more than a costume used in performance. I sensed a respect for the outfit, as if the memories of the good times were somehow locked within the fibers of the green sweater.

When I asked Loomis if he still had his uniform, his wife Brenda disappeared and returned with it moments later. It had been in the back of the closet, very neatly organized in a suit bag. The shoes were particularly funny to Brenda and Loomis - black shiny leather "brogues" with western trim. Loomis explained to me that the uniform was a "big deal" and that "we had to have it on [. . .] when we were in other places [. . .] because we were representing" (Loomis 2011). Despite the giggles the uniform eliciting from Brenda as she imagined going on a date with Loomis as he tried on the green wool coat (Loomis: "Brenda, what do you think of this blazer?" Brenda: "[pause] You're not going with me! [laugh]"), Loomis confessed his fondness for the outfit, stroking its lapels and resting his hands comfortably in the pockets, "It's nice though. Jesus, I think the world of it" (Loomis 2011).

Mickey Waddleton had been preparing for our interview the night before. He went through all his clippings and notes he had saved over the years and re-watched a video of the Trepassey performance in which he sings a solo – the first of his life. I asked him if he still had his uniform, and without missing a beat he replied, "Yes, yes. I think I'll be buried in it when I die [laugh]" (Waddleton 2011). Mickey said this with a great deal of laughter in his voice, but I believe he was serious. He was embarrassed that the white collared shirts had become discoloured with time, as if this lack of vigilance was worthy of rebuke.



Figure 19: Mickey Waddleton posing with his Folk of the Sea uniform at his home in Trepassey (Photo by A.McE.)

Francis and Rose spoke to me of the reverence some Folk of the Sea members seemed to have for their uniform:

Francis Littlejohn: We had one guy, a fantastic voice, beautiful voice, and he was used to singing publicly all the time, but the songs that he sang were a little rancid, you know? They were a little off-colour, right? Always singing dirty songs. [...] And he sang them well. He was funny. There's no doubt about it, right? But it got to the point where he wouldn't sing them anymore.

Rose Littlejohn: He didn't want to tarnish the group and he didn't want to tarnish that outfit he had on, you know? It was almost like it was—
Francis: Oh, it was sacred.

Rose: It was! It was almost like sacrilegious to sing that kind of song with your green sweater and your plaid tie on. (Francis and Rose Littlejohn 2010)

The Folk of the Sea uniform itself is one of simplicity and civility. There is a warmth and friendliness to its colours and materials that lends one the look of an approachable and polite citizen. How would wearing oil clothing onstage have made people feel? Jennifer Craik writes of uniforms as having the potential to transform the wearer. “It is well

known that people report feeling different in a uniform as if the clothes themselves bolster the persona of the wearer and equip them to perform” (2005, 133). The man described by Francis and Rose seems to have come under the spell of his uniform. Instead of the uniform relaxing with the bawdy personality of the wearer, the wearer straightened up into the civil example set by the simple clothing. Craik describes the wearing of a uniform as a performance in itself: “uniforms seem to wear the body and to produce certain performances – the body becomes an extension of the uniform” (2005, 106).

Why was the uniform so important to the image of the choir? One reason was to offer an alternative to the typical oil-clothed fisherman. What about the pattern? – row upon row of green and grey, a picture perfect pattern of individuals. Küchler and Miller write of the uniform as a medium that can provide “pattern” and “stability in relation to conditions of change” (2005, 13). Amidst the confusing, wandering time of the years following the moratorium, the uniform and the structure of the choir are a constant, perhaps one of the only constants, in the lives of the performers. This pattern and stability, repetition of cloth and sound, is a stark juxtaposition to what was happening in their lives. The choir performs regularity and pattern, drawing these features back into the world.

While the uniform worn by Folk of the Sea was used to counter the outsider’s negative image of the fishers, it also acted as a unifying agent. Within the choir there were fishers from the inshore and offshore with differing opinions about the causes of the codstock depletions. “We had members from both sectors in the group. But once that sweater went on, all the differences disappeared” (Littlejohn 2011). Both the uniform and the act of making music together dissolved differences among the members of the group:

“Some fellas probably could sing better than others or they could play better than others [. . .] but when we all come together in an auditorium, everybody was alike” (Hewitt 2011).

Folk of the Sea did not wear their occupational uniform because they wanted to complicate the stereotype of the “Goofie Newfie” in his rubber boots. Unlike Men of the Deeps, a choir dedicated to the preservation of Cape Breton mining culture, Folk of the Sea was taking an active role in altering the image of the Newfoundlander, combating the perceived negativity directed towards the island’s fishing culture following the moratorium.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

While interviewing Doug Dunne in *Renews*, I made the mistake of beginning a question with "When you were a fisherman . . .," placing his occupation and thus his identity in the past tense. Doug responded with a low voice that silenced me: "I *am* a fisherman." In fact Doug does still fish and my question was asked with the ignorance of a mainlander, believing that those who stopped fishing during the initial phase of the cod moratorium never fished again. With this one phrase, Doug demonstrates how essential the act of fishing is to the identity of the Newfoundland fisher. When the cod moratorium stripped the occupational routine from the lives of thousands of fishers all over the island, this identity was jeopardized. Anger was one avenue that many took, including Doug initially, in dealing with this loss of identity. However, some fishers, during one of the most distressing times in their lives in which they struggled with the indignity of being forced to accept government handouts and a loss of purpose, found the energy to join a large fisher choir and raise their spirits in performance.

Folk of the Sea was an attempt to reach back to the roots of what made Newfoundlanders a fishing province, rebuilding through song and story that which had been shaken down by the moratorium. When conducting the interviews for this thesis I heard many stories of the unhappiness that settled over communities all over the island when the cod moratorium began. There was fighting within communities, within families, and between husbands and wives. The structure and performance of the choir demonstrated a harmonious union between those who had been fighting, allowing the singers to try out relationships that only existed in the world of performance. Fishers

from all over the island joined their voices together and quickly learned that they were not so different from one another. Performances have the power to change people and their opinions, and while unity was a message put forth by the choir, it was also a message internalized by the choir itself, learned through the adjustments and compromises necessary for a group of over one hundred people to make music in harmony together.

It was not only the choir who worked to shape this unity. The audience had a large role to play in the performance of *Folk of the Sea*, with reactions reciprocating back and forth between the two, ever altering the original performance. I realized this when I thought about my own performance as an audience to my informants. The *Folk of the Sea* concerts were emotional performances and those instances that generated the strongest emotions initially for my informants were the most vivid in their memories. It was often the case that the memory was so strong that instead of giving a verbal description, my informant would begin to act out the performance and the emotion as it was remembered. Through the performance of the memory of performance, the emotions of the audience were conveyed directly to me and it became clear that not only the choir but the audience members at the various Arts and Culture centres were active participants in the creation of the performance and the unity and identity that was generated.

The relationship between identity and place is strong with those who spend their days working on the sea. Without the landscape and the occupational routines they are used to performing within it, the identity of the male fisher was seen to be threatened by the moratorium. The sea can be a "proving ground" of sorts for the Newfoundland fisher, acting as a stage on which the transition from boy to man can take place. As Narváez has

shown, when the cod moratorium began, there was a flourishing of songs written about the loss felt when the ocean was no longer capable of taking on this meaning and giving men their identities. The songs adopt references to the wilderness and the landscape of Newfoundland in order to gain sympathy from the listener. Many of those sung by Folk of the Sea reference the sea and the loss felt by those who cannot envision their sons toiling upon it. This regionalization of lore is used as an effective strategy to persuade audiences to see the singer's side of the story. However, in the eyes of the other, certain stereotypes can be seen to accompany a landscape. Part of the shaping of identity that was central to the performance of Folk of the Sea was the breaking up of these stereotypes.

Through the use of a uniform that carried with it no references to the occupation of fishing, Folk of the Sea challenged the stereotype of the rubber boots and hats of the stereotypical Newfoundland fisher's dress. While the choir made great effort to present a clean, professional image, with harmony emphasized in look and sound, it was the blunders and the imperfections that most effectively tore down the stereotype of the "Goofie Newfie" by complicating the character of the Newfoundlander, demonstrating the humanity and grace within each complex human being. The amateur qualities of the Folk of the Sea banished the dichotomy of the pioneer and the freeloader better than any perfectly harmonized choir or rubber-wearing, rum-sloshing performers ever could have.

In this thesis I have examined, using the memories of my informants as my main sources, the influence of a vernacular fishers choir on the social climate during the years following the initiation of the cod moratorium in Newfoundland in 1992. I was drawn to the story of the choir because I found it fascinating that individuals, who might rather, in

the words of Sandy Morris, “rip each other’s eyes out” than speak with one another, could come together in the realm of performance and sing in harmony with one another. I wanted to see if this harmony extended into other, non-musical social relations between the fishers and I found that it did. Everything from the structure of the choir and its performance, to the choice of uniforms, to the choice of venue, to the choice of songs, to the inclusion of the audience held meaning and this meaning was not unknown to Folk of the Sea. The choir was self-reflexive and its actions were part of a deliberate effort to unite as a community and to rebuild the image of the Newfoundland fisher in the eyes of their province and the mainland.

While researching for this thesis, I spent a lot of time in the archives at Memorial University reading newspaper clippings about the cod moratorium. The newspaper headlines repeated the stories of “gloom and doom” that I heard from my informants about those initial dark years. However, when I did come across an article about Folk of the Sea, the tone changed to one of praise, relief, and hope of renewal. From these articles I saw that the identity of the Newfoundland fisher, if not from anything else, was receiving a giant boost from the actions of Folk of the Sea and the unity generated within the choir did spread beyond the boundaries of the stage and the sphere of performance.

Norm Cull was, and perhaps still is, concerned that there is no physical monument to honour Newfoundland fishers lost at sea. Perhaps the choir itself can be seen as a monument, a living tribute to the people who made the island of Newfoundland a possibility. Perhaps song is more lasting and far-reaching than a stone of any size. Folk of the Sea, in performing a unity and an identity that returned a sense of pride to those who participated, dignified the honour of those drowned, and as the memories of those who

participated in the choir are so vivid as to rekindle the emotions of the original performances, it seems that so far the monument has endured.

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