

THE EMERGENCE OF NEW EXPRESSIVE
SKILLS IN RETIREMENT AND LATER
LIFE IN CONTEMPORARY NEWFOUNDLAND

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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THE EMERGENCE OF NEW EXPRESSIVE SKILLS
IN RETIREMENT AND LATER LIFE
IN CONTEMPORARY NEWFOUNDLAND

by

© Laurel Catherine Doucette, B.A., M.A.

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Studies in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

While elderly people have long served folklorists as informants, scant attention has been paid to the later years as a life phase, and folklorists have been slow to consider the elderly in any role other than that of tradition bearer. This study attempts to redress this situation by examining an increasingly familiar phenomenon of later life, the adoption of a creative activity. The manifestation of creativity late in life prompts a number of questions concerning patterns of practice, factors of influence, and perceptions of personal and cultural meaning.

Interviews were conducted with a selection of ten retired or elderly Newfoundland men and women, all of whom have adopted or greatly intensified the practice of a creative activity within recent years. Life history materials and details of current practice were assembled with the aim of determining the underlying behavioural patterns of these creative seniors, and the relationships between these patterns, the aging process, and local traditional culture.

The data collected suggests that the creative senior is an emerging rather than an existing model. Choice of activity, here ranging from visual arts and crafts

to performance and written composition, was dictated by personal preference rather than by local or family precedent. For these individuals there was a strong indication that the adoption of creative work was a constructive reaction to change or stress. Such adoption may in fact indicate an existing pattern, developed over a lifetime, for coping with difficulty.

Within the lives and present activities of these individuals there are recurrent themes which indicate areas of special concern and interest. These are autobiography; integration; the preparation of a cultural legacy; status maintenance and enhancement; play; compensation; social and cultural involvement; and the creation of a personal domain. The strong presence of themes which provide benefits directed towards the personal and social development of the individual rather than towards the well-being of society suggests that folklorists, in restricting their attention to the elderly in their role as tradition bearers, have neglected important aspects of the articulation of individual late life and traditional culture.

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PREFACE

The original inspiration for this study came, as so much of my inspiration for research in folklore has, from my own family. Having examined in detail the traditional skills of my maternal aunts and uncles for my master's thesis,¹ I thought I had neatly encapsulated their entire range of creative activities. I was wrong. Aunt Florence, whom I had discussed as a singer, has since taken up oil painting, and has revived long dormant mat-hooking skills, which I had missed entirely in my original research. Aunt Loretta, whose painting, an art taken up in late middle-age, was not discussed in detail in the study because it had attracted no family attention, continues to produce landscapes and figures in oils and acrylics. Aunt Lima says she has now given up quilt-making, although from her early seventies to her early eighties she produced three to five quilts a winter. She has, however, returned to crochet, a skill not practiced since early adulthood for lack of time, and when I last saw her had just learned how to turn the heel of a sock, although she had been knitting other items since adolescence. Aunt Agatha continues to make

¹"Skill and Status: Traditional Expertise Within a Rural Canadian Family," M.A. thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1977; Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies Mercury Series 28 (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1979).

quilts and broided mats, and manages to master just about every craft promulgated in the women's magazines.² Uncle Jackie was presented with a multi-key harmonica a few Christmases ago, when he notified his family that he wanted to learn to play the instrument, and Uncle Fred, had he lived, might now be master of the button accordion, for he was hinting mightily for such a gift shortly before his death in 1981. The surviving family members, now ranging in age from their late sixties to mid-eighties, continue to surprise me with their interests and accomplishments, pursued with vigour and enthusiasm in spite of illness and bereavement.

In contemplating my aunts and uncles, I began to question whether I was witnessing a new social phenomenon, this adoption of new activities and development of new skills late in life. Was it a growing trend among the elderly in general, one made possible by improved health care, extended life expectancy, and increased financial security due to government pension schemes? Or was it a long existing pattern of activity among the elderly, but one that had gone unnoticed by scholars?

Such questions as these had been fermenting in my mind for several years when, in the fall of 1982, I decided

²Family Circle, Woman's Day, Good Housekeeping and similar publications, widely available at supermarket and drug store newsstands.

to make late-life creativity the subject of my doctoral thesis. The original idea was to examine patterns of creativity among the retired or elderly who had turned to new means of artistic expression late in life, and to confine field research to the island of Newfoundland. From observation of my relatives, I suspected that many of the elderly, especially those who had spent their early years in a traditional environment, turned in later life either to traditional creative activities, or to modern expressions of traditional themes and interests. The project seemed to be an appropriate means of building on what I had already learned about skills and expertise through the earlier research. It also seemed a suitable way for a folklorist to contribute to the increasingly vital field of gerontological studies. The topic has, in fact, taken me not only into the field of gerontology, but also more deeply into my own discipline, especially as that discipline touches on relationships, demonstrated and perceived, between tradition, creativity, and the human life cycle.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There is a sense in which the creativity of elderly men and women lies at the heart of folklore scholarship. Many of the songs and tales we know have come from their lips, much of the folk art has been the products of their hands. But there is also a sense in which the creativity of the old has been a neglected topic in folklore research. While many folklorists have concentrated attention on the expressive activities of people who are old, they have tended to focus on these individuals primarily as maintainers and transmitters of traditional culture, and to consider their behaviour in terms of how it serves the social group in general, or more particularly younger generations within the group. Little account has been taken of the fact that older people, like those of any age set, may utilize folklore for their own benefit, and may develop modes of expression specific to and reflective of their life stage.

The increasingly familiar pattern of the elderly person who, freed from the constraints of a career or from family responsibilities, becomes deeply involved in a new, often expressive or creative activity, offers an opportunity to address directly the topic of late-life creativity and

its relationship to traditional culture. A consideration of this phenomenon prompts a number of questions which have been considered in the course of this research. Is the creative senior a behavioural model presented by the community or an emerging role model? Do individuals reared in an environment oriented towards tradition turn in later life to a creative activity that is reflective of that tradition? What factors influence the choice of genre of expression? What meaning does the activity have for the practitioner? Does it have the same significance within the context of the individual's native culture?

As well as prompting such research questions, the adoption of this perspective of later life demands not only a reconsideration of the scholarly understanding of traditional culture and of aging (to be dealt with in the following two chapters) but also an acknowledgement of one's own personal notions of these subjects. This chapter, therefore, deals not only with concepts and methods related to the project, but also with underlying pre-conceptions concerning both the topic of study and the geographic area of research, the island of Newfoundland.

In a discussion of concepts, even a folklorist cannot use words like "folk culture" and "tradition" without a qualifying explanation, for the terms, as Bruce Jackson

has recently pointed out,¹ are not absolute but relative, and need to be re-defined in relation to each research project. The question of definitions will be taken up in detail in Chapter 2. For the present suffice it to say that the "folk" being dealt with here are people of average circumstance within present-day Newfoundland society. They are not highly influenced by formal education, beyond what is the norm for their age group and their place of origin. Nor are they greatly affected by elite concepts of art or elite aesthetic standards. With only one exception, they are self-taught in their late-life creative activities.

Within this study the term "traditional" is used in the sense of being a part of the informant's home culture, the informal customs, practices and lore of the family and community. For some of these people, that means Newfoundland outport life of the early twentieth century, and a general but not absolute maintenance of older patterns of economic and social behaviour. For others it means the inter-war years in small or large cities here or elsewhere, and a greater orientation towards contemporary trends in education, career, and social life.

The subject matter of this thesis presents a third terminological area which requires explanation. The terms

¹Bruce Jackson, "Things That From a Long Way Off Look Like Flies," Journal of American Folklore 98 (1985): 131-147.

most frequently used here in reference to the informants are "retired" and "elderly" because these words seem the most appropriate. Not all of the informants are advanced in years, nor are they all officially retired. But all, by one means or another, have passed into a different life stage, and that is the common denominator. I have tended to use the term "later life" rather than "old age" in reference to the informants, partly because some of them were still among the "young old" (fifties and sixties) when interviewed, and also because even those in their seventies and eighties seemed "elderly" in the sense of being the elders of their generation, but not "old" in the sense of exhibiting the physical characteristics commonly associated with advanced chronological age. The term "senior citizen" has not been avoided, but is used as the informants use it, especially in reference to official policy and formal organizations.

Having stated the original concept of this project and the accompanying definitions of the field and subjects of study, I must note here two attendant pre-conceptions. In the first place, my feeling that a contribution to gerontology on the part of a folklorist was long overdue was based on an implicit premise of which I was then unaware; that folklore, as a body of cultural material, pertains more to the elderly than to any other generation. Present-day folklorists, of course, are always quick to point out the

universality of the material we study, and to chastise those who would associate it exclusively with the aged, and not with other age groups. Nevertheless, we still operate at times, often subconsciously, from a different perspective, one that views the lore of one generation as the relic of the day-to-day culture of previous ones. We expect that lore to persist with greater tenacity among the elderly, since they witnessed much of it firsthand in childhood, or at least have the longest memories to recall what they were told of it. I must admit that, as a mainland Canadian permanently resident in Newfoundland only since 1979, I began this project with the notion that the folklore/age connection would be especially prominent in this province. After all, I thought, many present-day elders, born in the first quarter of the century or earlier, experienced in their youth a way of life which had remained little changed from that of preceding generations.² Surely this would mean that most if not all elderly would have a special interest not only in preserving the memory of that way of life, but also, to the extent feasible in the later twentieth century, in practicing its cultural manifestations.

²A similar view has been expressed by other folklorists. See, for example, J. D. A. Widdowson's introduction to Aubrey Malcolm Tizzard, On Sloping Ground: Reminiscences of Outport Life in Notre Dame Bay, Newfoundland, Memorial U of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Publications, Community Studies Series 2 (St. John's: Memorial U of Newfoundland, 1979) xvii.

A second pre-conception stemmed more from my impressions of the nature of Newfoundland society than from my presumptions about the nature of old age. It occurred to me that perhaps this province was an especially good place in which to grow old. Even a superficial acquaintance with Newfoundland gives one the impression that family ties are strong here. This is not to suggest that strong bonds are not a feature of family life elsewhere in the country, nor that Newfoundland families are quantitatively happier than those elsewhere. But one would guess that a higher percentage of Newfoundlanders are deeply involved in family relationships as a primary value in life and a great source of pleasure and support. Moreover, with larger families due to continuing high birthrates, and less out-migration than in many areas of the country, at least until recent years,³ the extended family appears to prevail as the dominant model. One notices here, even in casual conversations, that people make frequent mention of interaction with various

³It is impossible to compare provincial fertility rates, for the manner of reporting differs in Newfoundland; however, on the basis of 1971 census data, Statistics Canada reported a continuing high average number of children born to women of all age groups in the province. See Profile Studies: Fertility in Canada, Vol. 5, part 1 (Bulletin 5.1-6), May 1976, 29, 31. In a 1969 publication, Migration in Canada: Some Regional Aspects (Ottawa: Dominion Bureau of Statistics), Leroy O. Stone reported low inter-provincial migration rates for Newfoundland, Quebec, and Ontario over a five-year period, 1956-1961 (p. 10). During the same period, St. John's was among the six metropolitan regions to have the highest influx of in-migrants from rural areas (p. 12).

family members beyond the immediate range of parents and siblings. And conversations so often begin with an attempt to place a named individual into a proper family and community setting before any news of him or her can be transmitted. One hears frequently of grandparents sharing a household with the family of an adult child, and even in suburban St. John's the basement apartment is often reserved for that generation. With this evidently high level of inter-family interaction--evident to a central Canadian viewing Newfoundland family life exclusively from the outside--it seemed that an elderly person would be less likely here than in many areas of the country to suffer loneliness or to lack a proper home, and more likely to be integrated into a network of family and community members.

In addition, Newfoundland appeared to me to be a good place for the elderly for another reason. Commentators, both popular and scholarly, often envisage the aged as roleless, having been deprived of significant activity and consigned to a passive existence. The perception is that, especially in contemporary industrialized society, the elderly are forced by retirement to withdraw from economic activity, and find themselves relegated to entertainment activities in a setting of perpetual conviviality, a lifestyle that runs counter to the prevailing values of North American culture. But leisure time in Newfoundland has always existed in seasonal balance with work time, and

has been valued in itself.⁴ It would seem that relegating elders to the status of performer or entertainer within the provincial context would indicate no loss of status, for these are honoured roles in a society that prides itself on its singing, music making, dancing and storytelling. In addition, this would appear to be a province remarkably appreciative, not ~~only~~ of performers, but of those knowledgeable about any aspect of what is perceived as "Newfoundland tradition," and one would expect all such people to be esteemed.

When I examine the evidence on which this assumption is based, I find there are two major sources. In the first place, I am relying on the attention paid to elderly artists, authors, and performers by members of the media and by the local "cultural" community: artists, authors, professional entertainers, and those with an interest in preserving cultural heritage. Such groups are hardly representative of the population at large. Secondly, I am basing my observation on personal experience in dealing with students in folklore courses at Memorial University, especially summer school students. This latter group is comprised chiefly of schoolteachers from rural areas of

⁴James C. Paris has emphasized the "tremendous seasonal specialization" of both work and leisure activities in his study of outport life. See Cat Harbour: A Newfoundland Fishing Settlement, Newfoundland Social and Economic Studies 3 (St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial U of Newfoundland, 1972) 43-45.

the province who return to their home communities to do fieldwork and seem invariably impressed with their elderly informants. But I would have to question to what extent the attitudes reflected in their term projects are coloured by two factors: their own nostalgia for supposedly declining local culture; and their perception of appropriate behavioural roles vis-à-vis the elderly of their communities. There is also the matter of whether they are merely living up to what they perceive as my expectations of proper attitude in order to pass the course.

These then were the concepts and pre-conceptions, or perhaps more honestly, prejudices and stereotypes, I first brought to this project. The first task was locating informants, a task rendered more difficult by the fact that I had decided to limit my study to "late bloomers" in traditional or tradition-related skills, rather than to include lifelong creators. This decision was based primarily on the desire to see if this was indeed an emerging pattern of behaviour for the age group in question. However, there were other considerations here as well. Perhaps such a concentration of attention might reveal more about creativity itself, for these late developers, new to the activity, might be able to articulate their experience of the creative urge as lifelong practitioners would not. There was also the consideration that the study of these people might shed light on folklore-related dimensions of

the life cycle within contemporary society, and on how the emotional development of this age group is informed by tradition.

This choice of focus thus made sense from several perspectives. The difficulty, however, was in separating the "late bloomers" from other creative people. In a province with as lively a local culture as Newfoundland, locating informants is generally not difficult except for studies of the more obscure aspects of traditional life. One has only to inform friends and acquaintances of the proposed project and names of potential informants will be forthcoming. This project was no different, except that I decided to follow up only on the names of those known to be recent adopters of the skill or craft in question. This was done to avoid offending someone by making a contact and then having to reject him or her as not suitable to the project because of a lifelong practice of the creative activity.

The informant group was limited to ten individuals, a group large enough to provide a sizeable body of data, but small enough to allow intensive analysis and interpretation. While this selection of retired and elderly people is not a "representative sample" as such, it is indeed representative of a variety of statuses. Of the ten informants, six are male, four female. All had married (three had married twice), but two are now widowed. Most had raised families with whom they maintained close rela-

tionships, but two were childless, and two others with children from previous marriages rarely saw them. Eight of the informants had been born in Newfoundland, one in another province, and one in another country. One had spent her entire life, except for occasional vacations, within a small area of St. John's, another had lived in three different provinces, and a third in three countries. At the time of the interviews, five were living in St. John's, three in a central Newfoundland town, and two in a small outport.

Several had retired early, while one, well past retirement age, was still working. A variety of religious denominations were represented, and a variety of attitudes to religion. The occupations ranged from housewife to skipper, secretary to construction superintendent. When interviewed, six of the group were living in houses which they owned. One had an apartment in a daughter's house, another occupied a cottage unit in a provincially-owned seniors' housing project, and two others lived in a residence which was part of the same project. The youngest of the informants, a woman who had followed her husband into early retirement, was 54 when interviewed, the eldest 84, although the average age was 69 years. One informant has died since the interview.

The procedure followed for the interviews, all of which were conducted between January and August of 1983, was standard. After setting up an interview time by telephone,

I proceeded to the home of the informant. When I had informed the individual of the nature of the project, the uses to which the material would be put, and the arrangements for final storage of the data, I set up the recording equipment and conducted the interview according to a previously devised questionnaire.⁵ In several cases I decided on the spot to proceed without using a tape recorder, if this seemed more appropriate within the situation (a shy informant, or one who seemed nervous or physically fragile). In two cases the informants had been interviewed before about their skills, and the data had been deposited in the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive (MUNFLA) by another researcher. I did not repeat the entire questionnaire but merely filled in missing information, and obtained the informant's permission to use the previously recorded material. In one case where a husband and wife were both interviewed, the work was done simultaneously in adjoining rooms by another folklorist, Elke Dettmer, and myself, with both of us using the same questionnaire. In this particular situation doing the two interviews consecutively would have been an imposition on the couple. Photographs of the individual's work were also taken at the time of the

⁵Recording was done with a Sony TC-142 portable recorder. The questionnaire is given in Appendix A, p. 339.

interview when possible, or a later visit was arranged.⁶

This general operating procedure was to an extent modified in some cases due to the following considerations. In the first place, half of the informants led very active lives. For these people, interviews had to be sandwiched between events in a full round of weekly activities. This necessitated a concerted effort on my part to cover all essentials at our first meeting, in anticipation of the difficulty of arranging a subsequent meeting.

A second consideration related to the state of health of the more elderly informants. I made a point of monitoring them closely during the interview for signs of physical or mental fatigue. If such reactions were even suspected, I either dispensed with, or treated in summary fashion, the less essential elements of my questionnaire. In retrospect, I was perhaps overly cautious in this regard, but it seemed better to err on the side of caution, even though this meant that the data obtained on some individuals was quantitatively less than for others.

Another consideration was the state of health of those spouses who were present during the interviews, and their attitude to the research. In several cases the spouses were obviously under physical or mental duress at

⁶All photographs were taken with a Pentax SP1000 camera or a Minolta SRT200. Films used were Kodak Plus X. Pan for black and white prints, and Kodachrome 64 for colour slides.

the time of my visit and allowances had to be made for this fact. This meant conducting the research as quickly as possible, but also being careful to phrase questions which might prove delicate in as sensitive a way as possible, so as not to cause undue anxiety on the part of the spouse or the informant. An obvious example here is the topic of illness and death. Ascertaining the informant's attitude had at times to be done in a roundabout manner in the presence of a spouse who was obviously suffering health problems at the time.

Finally, in several cases the informants expressed a desire for anonymity for financial reasons. Some of them were deriving additional income from their activities and did not wish this to be made known. As a result, all personal names are disguised in this report, and any details or photographs which might be used to identify the individuals or their works are suppressed. This approach meets in full the expressed wishes of the individuals involved.

The accumulated materials of the ten interviews of this research project (field tapes, field notes, and photo negatives) have been deposited in MUNFLA (Accession number 83-282). These and other materials from the archive will be referred to throughout this thesis by the appropriate accession number, tape shelf number and counter number for recorded materials (e.g., 83-282/C6462:A:170); and accession number and page number for manuscript mater-

ials (e.g., 83-282/p. 39). In cases where no shelf number has yet been assigned to a tape, a substitute number relating only to that collection will be inserted (e.g., 82-007/[1]:A:045). Transcriptions from recorded interviews are given verbatim. The insertion of an ellipsis indicates the omission of extraneous or repetitive material. Editorial comments of an explanatory nature within quotations are inserted in brackets and underlined. Questions of the interviewer are placed within parentheses.

Even before beginning to analyze the data of this project, I had several reactions to the fieldwork experience which deserve mention, for they influenced the shape of this thesis. First of all, I was struck by the individuality of the informants and the great diversity they represented on various levels--social, occupational, and personal. These ten people had much less in common than I had originally expected to find.

Secondly, they were much more up-to-date than I had imagined. These informants, many of whom had known the life of traditional outport Newfoundland from childhood, were now leading the same kind of urbanized life as most of the population.⁷ The only exceptions were the married couple who, upon returning in retirement to Newfoundland,

⁷An excellent overview of the outport life of earlier decades can be found in Hilda Chaulk Murray, More Than Fifty Percent: Woman's Life in a Newfoundland Outport 1900-1950 (St. John's: Breakwater, 1979).

had deliberately chosen a life of rural self-sufficiency. I do not suggest here that there are no elderly Newfoundlanders still immersed in an older, more traditional lifestyle who adopt new crafts or skills in their later years. I am merely saying that I did not manage to come across any of these people. Occasionally, I thought I had located a real "old-timer," a native outport son or daughter who could provide me with a glimpse of what it means to age creatively within an ultra-traditional frame of reference. I heard of and contacted a retired man who made furniture from local lumber in a tiny settlement in a northern bay. But I missed him when I was doing fieldwork in the area, for he had driven off across the province on a camping trip. This in itself should have aroused my suspicions. I later learned of his intention to return to Ontario where he had spent his later working years, and where he had left all his friends. When I found out that he had learned how to make furniture from his next-door neighbour in Toronto, an Italian-Canadian construction worker, I crossed him off the list and went on to other leads.

The point is that these informants were engaged in many of the same activities as elderly or retired people across the country--living in modern housing provided by the government, getting involved in senior citizens' clubs, flying off to visit children and grandchildren in other provinces, dropping by the local shopping plaza to pick up

supplies for their current craft projects. Their involvement with tradition was not of the kind, or of the importance, which I had expected.

A third and somewhat humbling realization came out of the fieldwork experience: my research was of very little real significance in their lives. This was a new experience for me, for my previous major research projects, conducted in my home area, had been viewed as being of great importance to the community in terms of recording and preserving local culture. Moreover, the actual interviews had been highly pleasurable occasions for my informants as well as for me, a time for building or strengthening family or community relationships, reviewing memories, imparting important local knowledge, and enjoying together pleasant activities like singing or storytelling. The difference was not merely that there I had been an insider and here I was a stranger. Indeed, in all but two cases, I had an entree to the informants through a third party known to them, and thus, while a new acquaintance, I could be placed within a known set of relationships. It seemed that the nature of the research, which I explained as an interest in "activities people take up when they retire or when their children are grown," was too abstract to be of real significance and meaning. This is not to suggest that the informants were any less than universally hospitable and helpful. It is just that, in most cases, I was at best a short-

term acquaintance, and for them this was an entirely satisfactory state of affairs.

In addition, my interest in their creative activities appeared in no way to alter their self-perception. This again was in direct contrast to my earlier collecting experiences, for surely one of the joys of being a folklorist is to see, at the conclusion of an interview, the heightened self-esteem of a talented informant, perhaps elderly, perhaps timid, who has never attracted acclaim within his or her own family or community. These people, in contrast, had a stable, solid, healthy outlook, and did not in any way need me to bolster their perceptions of themselves or of their work. Moreover, the work was to them much more significant than the mere talking about it. The work was vital and primary to their lives, while the discussion could only be secondary.

These realizations, which came out of the fieldwork experience, have shaped the format of this thesis. On entering this project, I had obviously been operating on stereotypes of the elderly and on popular presumptions about old age. Not even my judicious reading of gerontological literature previous to embarking on fieldwork had saved me, for much of the scholarship, especially the earlier material, was based on the same stereotypes and presumptions that plagued my thought. And how many folklorists in the future might be subject to the same misconceptions? Indeed, how

many in the past already have been? With considerations such as these in mind, it seemed to me that the place to start was with an overview of folklore scholarship from a gerontological perspective to determine what image of old age and what attitudes to the elderly have been reflected in folklore studies. This is the content of Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 examines the present state of cultural studies on aging with emphasis on theoretical contributions which are of value in an examination of creativity in this life period. These two chapters are followed by a description of the lives and creative activities of the ten informants, with particular attention being given to how these interact with local culture. A final analytical chapter examines the behavioural patterns which underly the expressive work and the meanings the activities seem to hold for the informants. The thesis concludes with a summary of findings and some suggestions of possible avenues for future research.

CHAPTER 2
GERONTOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON FOLKLORE SCHOLARSHIP:
AN OVERVIEW

In the public view, folklore is often perceived to be inextricably, if somewhat vaguely, connected with old age; and folklorists are thought to consistently seek out for interview the most elderly members of any given population.¹ Folklorists who attempt to refute this reputation for exclusive involvement with the elderly usually do so by insisting that contemporary scholars are not preoccupied with either old lore or old folk, but that earlier ones were. Within the field of cultural research on aging, there is an equally pervasive generalization about past scholarly performance: that generations of researchers have been guilty of using the elderly as sources of cultural information without making any contribution to an understanding

¹This popular image of the profession was graphically portrayed in a New Yorker cartoon of June 7, 1982 by Harold Steig (p. 37). Entitled simply "Folklorist," the drawing depicts a young man with notebook in hand kneeling reverently before an aged woman who is seated in an archtypal handmade chair a short distance from her archtypal log cabin. Michael Tart commented on this stereotype in "The Role of Folklore Studies in Gerontological Research," a paper presented at the Research in Aging Conference, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, in September 1979.

of the aging process.²

Discerning the truth behind these stereotypes requires an examination of existing folklore scholarship. Such an examination, however, reveals not so much clearly articulated statements of attitude or specific theoretical approaches to the elderly and to aging, but rather general tendencies of practice based on embedded assumptions about the nature of folklore and of old age, assumptions which have generally led folklorists away from any direct consideration of gerontological matters. The discussion which follows cannot be termed an exhaustive survey of references to aging and the aged in folklore scholarship, for such references are widely dispersed and not readily apparent. Given the volume of literature in the discipline, and the fact that folklorists have tended to address the topic only indirectly if at all, such a survey is not feasible. This examination, illustrated with selected representative citations, is rather intended to reflect general patterns in the practice of folklore scholars and to account for these tendencies by determining the underlying assumptions. The

²This same thought is expressed by various anthropologists. See Christine L. Fry, "Toward an Anthropology of Aging," in Christine L. Fry and Contributors, Aging in Culture and Society: Comparative Viewpoints and Strategies (New York: J. F. Bergin, 1980) 1; Lowell D. Holmes, "Trends in Anthropological Gerontology: From Simmons to the Seventies," International Journal of Aging and Human Development 7 (1976): 212; Jennie Keith, "The Best Is Yet To Be: Toward an Anthropology of Age," Annual Review of Anthropology 9 (1980) 339.

questions addressed are these: how have folklorists historically treated the aged; how have they dealt with the factor of age in their analysis of folklore; and why have these approaches predominated?

The scholars who bear the brunt of our criticism for creating a distorted image of folklore studies as a discipline preoccupied with the elderly are the antiquarians, comparativists, and others of the last century. We label them "survivalists," a term which suggests that they were interested solely in finding the oldest level of extant tradition, and thus looked exclusively to informants of an advanced age who could supply the purest, most authentic material. However, a review of late eighteenth and nineteenth century literature reveals little information that would confirm this view of their activities. Their interests centered on the lore itself, not on the sources of that lore, whether these were live informants or earlier books or manuscripts. The antiquarians frequently recorded customs and beliefs without much indication of where they got their information. In the three volumes of Brand's Popular Antiquities of Great Britain, revised and edited by W. Carew Hazlitt, we find a great deal of material recorded anonymously, although complete references are given when it is

taken from published sources.³ The later comparativists depended on earlier books or manuscripts, but concentrated almost exclusively on texts and data. In his massive compilation, The Golden Bough, Sir James Frazer seldom acknowledges any source, except for the occasional vague reference to "an old historian of Madagascar," or "the old Danish historian" when specific reports are being quoted verbatim.⁴

Throughout this era, folklore is manifestly seen to reside in a social class, not in an age grouping. The uneducated rural dweller, member of the peasant class, is depicted as the prime source of traditional culture. The publications of the period are thus replete with terms denoting social or cultural status: "rustic," "barbaric," "peasant," "savage," etc. But age markers are remarkably few in number. While scholars of the day in Britain and on the continent were fascinated by questions of age of the material, there is little expressed interest in age of the living sources of that material. Even in the work that is often considered the landmark of the start of actual folklore scholarship, Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm's Kinder- und

³John Brand, Popular Antiquities of Great Britain: Comprising Notices of the Moveable and Immoveable Monuments, Customs, Superstitions and Amusements Past and Present, ed. and rev. W. Carew Hazlitt, 3 vols. (London: John Russell Smith, 1870).

⁴Sir James George Frazer, The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion, abr. ed. (London: Macmillan, 1929).

Hausmarchen of 1812-1814, little hard data is given about the tale tellers, and recent research has indicated that even that is suspect. The compilers note only that their best informant was a rural peasant woman of just over 50 years of age. It now appears that her age is possibly the only truthful element in this description, for the woman was a middle-class town-dweller of French Huguenot extraction.⁵ It is interesting to consider the fact that the Grimms, in order to substantiate their claim of authenticity for the material, manipulated details of class and ethnic background relative to this informant, but apparently not of age. Their suppression of all details about other informants led later commentators to presume that all of the tales had come from aged tellers.⁶

Incidental references to age of informants recur in the work of Francis James Child more frequently than in other studies of the last century, but even he does not give undue attention to age alone. It is true that he uses

⁵John M. Ellis in a recent study documents not only the manipulation of facts by the Grimms and by subsequent editors, but also the continuing reluctance of other scholars to admit that such manipulation had taken place. See One Fairy Story Too Many: The Brothers Grimm and Their Tales (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1983). For information on the informant in question, see in particular pages 15 and 32. See also Linda Dégh's comments on the Grimm informants in "Grimm's Household Tales and Its Place in the Household: The Social Relevance of a Controversial Classic" Western Folklore 38 (1979) 83-103.

⁶Ellis 30.

the advanced age of those who sang or recited the ballads for earlier collectors such as Scott and Motherwell as evidence of the authenticity of the texts. Phrases such as "chiefly from the recitation of an old woman," or "from the recitation of an old maid servant," quoted from these earlier sources, recur throughout The English and Scottish Popular Ballads.⁷ However, from other more facetious comments on the part of the ballad scholar, we get the impression that although he realized that age of informant could be an indicator of age of the material, this did not guarantee the quality of the material. In the notes to "Young Bearwell," he states the following:

This is one of a half a dozen pieces sent Buchan by Mr. Nicol of Strichen, "who wrote them from memory as he had learned them in his earlier years from old people." It is also one of not a few flimsy and unjointed ballads found in Buchan's volumes It will not, however, help the ballad much . . . even if it was learned from an old person by Mr. Nicol in his youth. The intrinsic character of the ballad remains, and old people have sometimes burdened their memory with worthless things.⁸

At this same period on the continent, we have some slight indication that age of performer was beginning to be perceived as one significant factor among many in folklore research. A Finnish committee of 1884, organized to

⁷Francis James Child, The English and Scottish Popular Ballads, 5 vols. (1882-1898; New York: Dover, 1965). See, for example, volume 2 of the Dover edition, pp. 63-64.

⁸Child, 5: 178.

plan the publication of Kalevala variants, noted that each text should be printed with relevant information: time and place of recording; name of singer, "as well as what is known about their circumstances, facts which must have some effect on the poet (e.g. the singer's age; his family circumstances, which can explain the distribution of the poem; the clarity or confused state of his other poems

...)"⁹ But this suggestion seems to represent advanced thinking for the day, for George Lawrence Gomme in his collectors' manual of 1887 reinforces the earlier view of folklore residing in the uncivilized, uncultural, savage, backward and barbarous peoples of the world, and neglects to consider the importance of recording any personal detail whatsoever, let alone age, about the people who provide the collector with information.¹⁰ However, by the time this publication was reprinted in a revised and enlarged edition in 1914, there was a recognition that the nature of the material collected would vary with the age, sex, occupation or other roles of the person interviewed.¹¹ Nevertheless,

⁹Quoted by Juoko Hautala, Finnish Folklore Research 1828-1918 (Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1969), 79-80, from minutes of the meeting of the Finnish Literature Society, March 6, 1884.

¹⁰George Lawrence Gomme, ed., The Handbook of Folklore, Publications of the Folklore Society 20 (1887; Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1967).

¹¹Charlotte Sophia Burne, The Handbook of Folklore, rev. and enl. ed. (London: Sidgwick and Jackson for the Folk-Lore Society, 1914) 13.

the view of folklore as the possession of a special social group persists. It is still "essentially the property of the unlearned and backward portion of the community."¹²

We find in the published transactions of the 1891 international Folk-Lore Congress held in London a good indication of the attitudes of late nineteenth century scholars. In his opening address, Andrew Lang, the president of the conference, makes the point that folklore is to be found wherever there are human beings.¹³ However, from subsequent remarks it becomes obvious that he feels that the lore can be collected from people of all ages and occupations, but only among the folk or peasant class, a view that is reinforced by another speaker who points out the urgent need for collecting before civilization wipes out the material altogether.¹⁴ In this publication the majority of papers deal with textual analysis and the search for origins, as might be expected. Of the few presentations that discuss fieldwork, one stands out for frequent references to age, but references of a dubious sort. In Mary A. Owens's account of research among American blacks in the state of Missouri, pejorative descriptions of the informants

¹²Burne 2.

¹³Joseph Jacobs and Alfred Nutt, eds., The International Folk-Lore Congress 1891: Papers and Transactions (London: David Nutt, 1892) 1.

¹⁴Jacobs and Nutt 15-16.

abound. It is difficult to tell whether the oft-repeated words "old" or "ancient" are intended as actual age markers or are used rather as uncomplimentary epithets, in phrases such as "this ancient, ill-smelling, half-naked, black sinner."¹⁵

At roughly the same historic period, we get some indication of the prevailing attitude in North America in relation to who possesses folklore and where it is to be found if we look to the statements of purpose published in the Journal of American Folklore. In the very first volume, published in 1888, the editors state their intention to publish "the fast-vanishing remains of Folk-Lore in America," namely relics of Old English lore and the traditions of the southern negroes, Indian tribes, French Canada and Mexico.¹⁶ In a later volume, Otis T. Mason specifies who the folk are: "(1) all savages, (2) the old-fashioned people, (3) the children, and (4) all of us when we are old-fashioned."¹⁷ He goes on to explain that "The folk include all unlettered men and women and tribes, and even lettered people when they think and act like the folk, rather than in accordance with the rules of science and culture." It

¹⁵Mary A. Owen, "Among the Voodoos," in Jacobs and Nutt 233.

¹⁶"On the Field and Work of a Journal of American Folk-Lore," Journal of American Folklore 1 (1888): 3.

¹⁷Otis T. Mason, "The Natural History of Folk-Lore," Journal of American Folklore; 4 (1891), 97.

would appear that these scholars relate the possession of traditional culture rather narrowly to ethnic or racial identity or to educational levels, rather than to any other considerations. In an 1892 handbook published by the Chicago Folk-Lore Society, the editor seems to be broadening this definition when he states that folklore is to be found in city and country, among all occupations, "among children and gray-hairs--everywhere, folk-lore is abundant, for it is the lore of the people, not of any class, and is to be sought everywhere."¹⁸ A little further on, however, he admits that "the greater mass of material will be found among women, children and old people," a hint perhaps that in his view these groups represent the least rational elements of the human population.

This sampling of nineteenth-century attitudes suggests that, while much of the data published might have come from elderly informants, generally neither the collectors nor the theoreticians gave much thought to age as a significant factor in the possession of folkloric knowledge or the practice of traditional culture. There are scattered references to elderly informants and the material they can provide, but these are more than balanced by admonitions that folklore resides among all age groups. In Europe, social class seems to hold a dominant place as a prime

¹⁸Fletcher S. Bassett, The Folk-Lore Manual (1892; Darby, Pa.: Norwood, 1973) 7.

determinant of traditional culture, while in North America ethnic or racial identity is a predominant factor. Throughout the literature of the era, we can discern an early tendency to attribute folklore to a group perceived as being inferior, whether because of social status, geographic remoteness, lack of education, or ethnic or racial background. But while other underprivileged minorities figure in the consciousness of folklore scholars, at this point the elderly do not.

While the twentieth century brought no dramatic change to this situation, we do find one publication from the first two decades of the new century which treats age as a significant factor in folklore process. W. Roy Mackenzie's The Quest of the Ballad has been justifiably cited as an important early attempt to understand the context of the singing tradition in a particular region and to explain the decline of that tradition by relating it to social change within the district.¹⁹ But the book, which makes valid points about the retention of ballad singing in such a situation by only the oldest levels of the population, is rife with stereotypical descriptions of elderly informants. They are scarcely ever mentioned without

¹⁹W. Roy Mackenzie, The Quest of the Ballad (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 1919). For an assessment of Mackenzie's contribution, see Martin Lovelace, "W. Roy Mackenzie as a Collector of Folksong," Canadian Folk Music Journal 5 (1977): 5-11.

reference to age, often through a derogatory epithet: "old, savage man-eating tiger," "jolly old dog," "ancient and obstinate lady."²⁰ Mackenzie is condescending and patronizing toward these people, and shows no sympathy for their physical infirmities or their straitened economic circumstances. He admires their ability to remember and perform the old ballads, but generally considers them old-fashioned and simple-minded. Mackenzie's compulsive preoccupation with age might be explained as a facetious attempt to mock the antiquarian tendencies of the conventional ballad hunters of the day. But this explanation is belied by the author's own statement in Ballads and Sea Songs from Nova Scotia that his earlier publication was intended as a serious and scholarly introduction to the tradition of the area.²¹ A less flattering but possibly more accurate explanation is that Mackenzie, the son of a local elite family, was revealing his snobbishness towards the elderly, uneducated, rural poor of his home community. Such blatantly prejudicial descriptions are rare in the literature of this period, however, as are references of any sort to age. Mackenzie's work, both in terms of its positive analysis of age-related social factors, and in its negative attitude to elderly informants, must be seen as an anomaly among

²⁰Mackenzie 21, 22, 163 respectively.

²¹W. Roy Mackenzie, Ballads and Sea Songs from Nova Scotia (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1928) xvi.

the publications of other early twentieth-century scholars who, like their nineteenth-century counterparts, gave age relatively little thought.

Nor did practitioners of the historic-geographic method of analysis, and its attendant theoreticians give much consideration to questions of age, for these scholars tended to see the folk as mechanical agents for dissemination rather than as individuals with a distinct life history. The prominent theories of that day have little relevance to the living sources of collected material, and some theoreticians, such as Wesselski, go so far as to suggest a distrust that the folk at any age can get things right.²² Even in Kaarle Krohn's Folklore Methodology, there is less direct reference to informants than we might expect, for he concentrates on the methodology of analysis rather than of collecting.²³ Even when discussing the topic of faulty memory on the part of the informant, Krohn makes no explicit

²²For a summary of Wesselski's ideas and those of other leading scholars of the period, see Emma Emily Kiefert, Albert Wesselski and Recent Folktale Theories (1947; New York: Haskell House, 1973). Some additional theories and scholars are treated in succinct form in Alan Dundes, "The Devolutionary Premise in Folklore Theory," Journal of the Folklore Institute 6 (1969): 5-19.

²³Kaarle Krohn, Folklore Methodology: Formulated by Julius Krohn and Expanded by Nordic Researchers, trans. Roger L. Welsch, Publications of the American Folklore Society Bibliographical and Special Series 21 (1926; Austin and London: U of Texas P, 1971). Krohn's discussion of faulty memory is found in Chapter 9, pp. 64-70.

reference to age, for he deals with forgetfulness over subsequent generations and the resulting loss of material, rather than individual memory loss during one lifetime. Moreover, he balances the significance of this by also considering the matter of textual expansion over succeeding generations, as exhibited in the comparison of parent and child repertoires.

We see the beginnings of a more particular examination of the role of informants in the transmission process in the work of Carl W. von Sydow, who is among the first to pay serious attention to age among other factors. In considering the impact of migration on tale transmission, for example, he postulates that it is minimal, for it is usually the young who migrate, whereas it is the older generation who have had the time to acquire a large repertoire.²⁴ In the same publication he notes that tradition is not the general property of all members of a community, but that generic specialization occurs among groups differentiated by age, sex, and other factors.

By mid-twentieth century, we can notice a range of diverse attitudes toward advanced age as an informant prerequisite, along with a generally continuing disregard of

²⁴Carl W. von Sydow, "Geography and Folk-Tale Oicotypes," *Béaloideas* 7 (1932): 346-355; rpt. in his Selected Papers on Folklore: Published on the Occasion of his 70th Birthday, ed. Laurits Bødker (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1948) 44-59.

age as a factor in the analysis of folklore process.

In Four Symposia on Folklore, the report of a 1950 meeting which brought together world leaders in the discipline, only the section on collecting has any reference at all to aging or to the elderly, and the opinions offered vary.²⁵ Some scholars advise a survivalistic approach in searching for material among the most elderly. Some suggest poverty rather than age as a clue to suitable informants. One avows that in his experience all the adults of his research area were accomplished practitioners of traditional genres.

And one praises the aged as the best informants, not because they know more, but because they have the time to be observant of the whole community and the self-confidence to relate their observations to the collector. This same participant also notes the usefulness of older people, who enjoy positions of respect, in gaining access for the collector to other age groups in the community. The general impression created by the panelists, who were the leading international scholars of the day, is one of frequent interaction with all age groups in the course of fieldwork. While they appear to consider the elderly as specialists in fixed text activities such as tale telling, and speak of making conscious efforts to locate older informants as

²⁵Stith Thompson, ed., Four Symposia on Folklore, Indiana University Publications, Folklore Series 8 (1953; Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1976) 1-88.

sources of this type of material, age considerations otherwise bear little relevance to their scholarly work.

This brief sampling of what we could term pre-contextual folklore scholarship indicates that we may be wrong in suggesting that our forebears in the discipline were greatly preoccupied with concern for locating the oldest informants, or that they consciously considered age a prerequisite for knowledge about or practice of traditional culture. While they may have collected more data from the elderly than from other age groups, the literature from the earliest days of folklore scholarship down to the middle decade of this century does not appear to suggest the preponderant connection between folklore and advanced age which we attribute to these generations of scholars.²⁶

Since 1950 the world of international folklore scholarship has witnessed a tremendous growth in bulk of publication and a gradual diversification of approach. This shifting outlook has been characterized by Lauri Honko

²⁶Given the fact that the elderly formed a very small percentage of the population in the nineteenth century, the limited overt concern with age and the aged is not surprising. According to Edward Rosset, people 65 and over formed 4.64% of the population of Great Britain in 1851. See Aging Process of Population, trans. I. Dobosz, R. Janikowska, K. Kozłowska, and W. Skibicki, ed. H. Infeld (New York: Macmillan, 1964), 173. In England and Wales, life expectancy at birth at mid-century has been estimated at 39.91 years for males and 41.85 years for females. See Louis I. Dublin, Alfred J. Lotka, and Mortimer Spiegelman, Length of Life: A Study of the Life Table, rev. ed. (New York: Ronald, 1949) 346, 349.

as a tendency to concentrate on present action over historical perspective; on observable individuals and groups over stereotypical tradition-bearers; on context over text; and on actual use and manifest meaning over origins.²⁷ The question is whether there has been an accompanying change in attitudes to the elderly or any increased interest in considering the significance of age in the analysis of cultural process.

Some contemporary scholars continue to maintain a chiefly textual focus which precludes a direct interest of any sort in the people who transmit the texts. In the early seventies, for example, articles defining either folklore or specific folkloric genres abounded, articles which made few direct references to the folk except in general and abstract ways. While this redefinition of the discipline and its subject matter was a necessary stage in its growth, the operation contributed only occasional insights into age-related concerns. In the publication Folklore Genres, for example, the article by Linda Dégh and Andrew Vazsonyi goes beyond a narrowly generic approach to consider the significance of age as one of the variables which can influence the

²⁷Lauri Honko, "Genre Theory Revisited," Folk Narrative Congress, Helsinki, 1974.

appreciation of specific legends.²⁸

In terms of gerontological reference, one can also discount the work of some of the latter-day oral-formulaic scholars, those who have used the theories of Milman Parry and Albert B. Lord to examine historical manuscripts and literary texts rather than living traditions. These scholars demonstrate little interest in the tellers of the tales or singers of the epics, and in fact have been criticized by Lord for this very reason.²⁹ Lord himself, by contrast, devotes a chapter of his monumental work, The Singer of Tales, to the performance and training of singers.³⁰ He traces their growth as performers, not in terms of chronological age but rather through progressive stages from novice to expert. His interests extended to a study of change over time in the repertoire of an individual singer, for in 1951 he returned to the field to interview an 80-year old singer first recorded by Parry in 1935, when the man would have been 64. We might expect such a study to

²⁸Linda Dégh and Andrew Vazsonyi, "Legend and Belief," in Dan Ben-Amos, ed., Folklore Genres, Publications of the American Folklore Society Bibliographical and Special Series 26 (Austin and London: U of Texas P, 1976) 93-123.

²⁹Albert B. Lord, "Perspectives on Recent Work on Oral Literature," Oral Literature: Seven Essays, ed. Joseph J. Duggan (Edinburgh and London: Scottish Academic Press, 1975) 1-24.

³⁰Albert B. Lord, The Singer of Tales, Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature 24 (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1960) 13-29.

concentrate on factors like memory loss and physical decline, but from Lord's description of his findings we can clearly perceive the emergence of a view of later life which concentrates on personal development rather than decline.³¹

We have another example of a sound interpretation of the age factor in the work of another oral-compositional scholar, David D. Buchan. Because Mrs. Brown, the late eighteenth-century ballad informant, acquired her repertoire at an early age and learned her songs in the era before the development of universal literacy, Buchan considers her age to be an indicator of the "traditionality" of her oral performance method.³² The emphasis is not merely on the age of the singer or on the age of the material, but on the historical period when the material was acquired.

In addition to generic and oral-formulaic scholars, a third group, the structuralists, often reflect a point of view which precludes consideration of age in any way. This is true of those studies which, following on the model of Vladimir Propp's Morphology of the Folktale, focus

³¹Albert B. Lord, "Avanredović, Guslar," Journal of American Folklore 69 (1956): 320-330.

³²David D. Buchan, The Ballad and the Folk (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972).

purely on text.³³ It is also true of those structural studies which relate text to social context but on a very broad cultural level and without particular relevance to social sub-groups or categories.³⁴ But there are other structural studies which do take account of age. One fine example, the translation if not the production of which falls within contemporary scholarship, is Petr Bogatyrev's The Functions of Folk Costume in Moravian Slovakia, in which he discusses folk costume as an indicator of age as well as other social statuses.³⁵

In contemporary folklore studies, it is to the behaviouralist and functionalist schools, with all their assorted theoretical sub-groups, that we must look to find the expression of age-related concerns. Within this body of scholarship, we find that the topic figures more significantly than in all previous analytical approaches, but that the views of its significance are as varied as the differing viewpoints and interests of the scholars. In 1971, for example, Bauman noted that age, along with other factors

³³Vladimir Propp, Morphology of the Folktale, trans. Laurence Scott; rev. and ed. Louis A. Wagner; intro. Alan Dundes (1928; Austin: U of Texas P, 1968).

³⁴An example of such a study would be Alan Dundes, "The Making and Breaking of Friendship as a Structural Frame in African Folk Tales," Structural Analysis of Oral Tradition, ed. Pierre Maranda and Elli Kängas Maranda (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1971) 171-185.

³⁵Petr Bogatyrev, The Functions of Folk Costume in Moravian Slovakia (1937; The Hague: Mouton, 1971).

such as ethnicity, occupation, religion and kinship, was one possible determinant of a folk group.³⁶ Age has also been examined as a relevant factor in choice of genre. In an article analyzing various genres on the basis of levels of performer-audience interaction, Roger D. Abrahams considers the need for appropriateness in choice of genre.³⁷ He notes that this choice may be influenced by the relative ages of the persons interacting. Since between social equals, decorum demands an equal involvement in conversation, a proverb, used between adults to make an ethical point, would be more appropriate than a fable; whereas the latter genre, which demands a time period of pure listening, could be used by an older to a younger person. John Blacking, in his study of riddle use among the Venda of Northern Transvaal, also comments on the differential use of a specific genre within this culture.³⁸ Riddles served to educate the young for social life and group interaction, and their use among peers was part of the process of growth to full adult status. Those who had attained that status did not use them to any extent, and often had forgotten the riddles

³⁶Richard Bauman, "Differential Identity and the Social Base of Folklore," Journal of American Folklore 84 (1971): 31-41.

³⁷Roger D. Abrahams, "The Complex Relations of Simple Forms," Genre 2 (1969): 104-128.

³⁸John Blacking, "The Social Value of Venda Riddles," African Studies 20 (1961): 1-32.

completely by later life.

Age considerations have played a part in many functional analyses of various folklore genres; especially those which have examined the educative and enculturative functions. Anna Birgitta Rooth, in her study of the storytelling traditions of the Athabascan Indians in Northern Alaska, stresses the role played by the elderly people of the community in relating purposely pedagogical stories.³⁹ Many of her informants, in fact, referred to these storytelling sessions as "schools" which pre-dated the white educational system.

Questions of age also enter into Kenneth S. Goldstein's application of von Sydow's concepts of active and inactive tradition bearers.⁴⁰ He demonstrates that it is not age itself but the changing social roles of the individual which may result in such performance patterns as intermittance or postponement, and that the patterns over a lifetime may be very complex and varied. In fact, the folly of making superficial judgments in considering different age groups as tradition bearers had been pointed out as early as 1943. In a study of agricultural practices in southern

³⁹Anna Birgitta Rooth, The Importance of Storytelling: A Study Based on Field Work in Northern Alaska, Studia Ethnologica Upsaliensia 1 (Uppsala: U of Uppsala, 1976) 32-39; 79-84.

⁴⁰Kenneth S. Goldstein, "On the Application of the Concepts of Active and Inactive Traditions to the Study of Repertory," Journal of American Folklore 84 (1971): 62-67.

Illinois, sociologists Herbert Passin and John W. Bennett had noted the complexity of the rural-urban transition in relation to the attitudes of different age groups, and pointed out that advanced age did not necessarily indicate a greater bulk of knowledge of tradition nor a stronger level of belief in it.⁴¹ In 1962 Linda D6gh noted that whife taletelling was practiced by young people in such contexts as youth camps and hostels. Hungarian tales had generally been collected from elderly people after they had settled down in villages, achieved status as tellers, and become accessible to researchers.⁴²

The few representative works from recent decades cited above indicate the variety of publications which, from diverse perspectives, have illuminated some aspect of the interplay between traditional culture and the life course. It is conceivable that more information could be gleaned from an exhaustive review of contemporary literature.⁴³ But such research would be hampered by the fact that references to aging are often lacking where one might expect them, and

⁴¹Herbert Passin and John W. Bennett, "Changing Agricultural Magic in Southern Illinois: A Systematic Analysis of Folk-Urban Transition," Social Forces 22 (1943): 98-106. This article came to the general attention of folklorists only after its reprinting in Alan Dundes, ed., The Study of Folklore (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965) 314-328.

⁴²Linda D6gh, Folktales and Society: Story-Telling in a Hungarian Peasant Community, trans. Emily M. Schossberger (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1969) 169.

where existent, are often embedded in scholarly documents whose titles give no indication of their presence. It is important for our purposes to note that those scholars who have considered age as a factor in folkloric process have frequently not confined themselves to any one age group, but have related folklore to changing social roles and interests across the life span.⁴³ While particular insights into later life are sparse in folklore scholarship, we are fortunate to have as a base for future studies integrated views of lifelong relationships between the individual and traditional culture.⁴⁴

Before leaving the field of contemporary folklore studies, we should consider two other bodies of published material which have influence on the folklorist: works on oral history, and field methodology texts. We might expect oral historians to place particular stress on age of informant, an important consideration in works of historical reconstruction when an eyewitness account of a particular

⁴³As in the previously cited studies by Abrahams and by Goldstein, for example.

⁴⁴In addition to the kinds of analytical articles previously cited, biographic studies such as Roger D. Abrahams, A Singer and Her Songs: Almeda Riddle's Book of Ballads (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1970); Edward D. Ives, Larry Gorman: The Man Who Made the Songs (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1964); and Robin Morton, Come Day, Go Day: The Songs and Life Story, Told in his Own Words, of John Maguire, Traditional Singer and Farmer from Co. Fermanagh (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973) are examples of useful sources of such information.

event or period is being sought. But neither of the two most prominent authors in the field, Jan Vansina and Paul Thompson, set great store by age in itself in relation to either the locating of data or the judgment of its reliability. In Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology, Vansina states categorically that age by itself is no criterion for choice of informant.⁴⁵ Thompson addresses the question of memory decline in elderly informants. Relying on various studies in the fields of physiology and psychology, he reviews what is known of memory across the life span, and concludes that old people in normal health differ little from younger adults in terms of memory power.⁴⁶ Both of these scholars have taken care to note that advanced age is not a guarantor of a good informant, nor is it a liability in terms of memory retention, for the individual's interest in the subject, his motivation, and his perception of the relevance of the material to his own life are much more important factors.

Similarly, in the folklore methodology texts, which have proliferated over the last two decades, some addressed to the professional scholar, some to the amateur, the attitude to age of informant is varied. Some authors have

⁴⁵Jan Vansina, Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology, trans. R. M. Wright (1961; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965) 192.

⁴⁶Paul Thompson, The Voice of the Past: Oral History (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1978) 113.

suggested interviewing grandparents or other elderly people as the most suitable informants.⁴⁷ Others insist that this notion is outdated and that folklore can be found in any age group.⁴⁸ Elaine S. Katz advises the interviewer to first seek out "someone old enough to be your grandparent," while Edward D. Ives warns that "the first thing that you have to do in this line of work is to stop looking for that wonderfully gnarled old woman sitting in front of her toffire in a just-right-squeaking-rocking chair." . . .⁴⁹ Some field-work manuals completely ignore any detailed consideration of age, and place more importance on factors such as occupation, ethnicity, regional background or language.⁵⁰ Overall these guides make few references to age in any context.

This sampling of folklore scholarship reveals little evidence of direct advocacy of going to the elderly

⁴⁷MacEdward Leach and Henry Glassie, A Guide for Collectors of Oral Traditions and Folk Cultural Material in Pennsylvania (1968; Harrisburg: The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1973) 4.

⁴⁸Kenneth W. Clarke and Mary W. Clarke, Introducing Folklore (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963).

⁴⁹Elaine S. Katz, Folklore for the Time of Your Life (Birmingham, Ala.: Oxmoor, 1978) 58; Edward D. Ives, The Tape-Recorded Interview: A Manual for Field Workers in Folklore and Oral History, rev. and enl. ed. (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P., 1980) 33.

⁵⁰Jan Harold Brunvand, A Guide for Collectors of Folklore in Utah, U of Utah Publications in the American West 7 (Salt Lake City: U of Utah P., 1971); Kenneth S. Goldstein, A Guide for Field Workers in Folklore (Hatboro, Pa.: Folklore Associates, 1964).

as the only or the best sources of information concerning folk culture. There is no expressed view of a necessary and intimate link between the old people and traditional culture. What we do find is generally sensible, although limited, interpretations of the significance of age as a factor in the analysis of folk culture. Nevertheless, we know that there has been a continuing practice among folklorists and folklore students of gravitating towards the elderly as informants above other age groups. Many of us are guilty of a certain ambivalence of attitude here. I must admit to teaching students that everyone participates in folk culture, but at the same time suggesting that they go to a grandparent or elderly relative for material for a collecting project. No doubt I have contributed to the stereotype of the folklorist by implying that quality and quantity of lore is greater among the elderly. Similar contradictory stances are in evidence in the literature. In her study of storytelling in Hungary, Dégh denies that advanced age is a prerequisite for storytelling ability. Yet she clearly informs us of the exact age of her two elderly tale-tellers, while leaving us to figure out for ourselves that of the middle-aged one.⁵¹ Richard Dorson, in his introduction to Folklore and Folklife, complains that

⁵¹Mrs. Palkó was 69 when first interviewed (p. 192), Mrs. Sebastyén 78 (p. 254); Mr. Andrásfalvi, born in 1904 (p. 387, footnote 1), would have been 44 when the collection project was begun. See Dégh, Folktales and Society.

the term folklore all too frequently conjures up "pictures of granny women spinning traditional tales in mountain cabins," and then invokes the same stereotype himself by speaking of "grannies" in his discussion of traditional medicine.⁵² It would seem that we cannot dismiss the stereotype of the discipline without recognizing the underlying paradox: folklorists have relied on the elderly for information about culture but have been extremely slow to consider the significance of age as a factor when they interpret that culture. In addition, they have neglected to examine in depth late life as a separate life stage. The question, of course, is why.

The reasons for this general pattern of practice are easy enough to understand in the pre-contextual era of folklore scholarship. Folklore was defined in survivalistic terms as the last remains of traditions from a time long past. The study of folklore was therefore a historical science whose aim was historical reconstruction.⁵³ If folklore, in early nineteenth century thought, was already dead except among the least "civilized" elements of the population, by late century it had surely disappeared.

⁵²Richard M. Dorson, "Introduction: Concepts of Folklore and Folklife Studies," Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction, ed. Richard M. Dorson (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1972) 1, 4.

⁵³Alan Dundes, "The American Concept of Folklore," Journal of American Folklore 3 (1966): 226-249.

completely. Scholars had no choice but to rely on the memories of elderly people to provide them with information about past practice. Because this interpretation of tradition and the progress of civilization was taken for granted among the scholars of the day, there was no felt need to explain collecting procedures or document sources. Hence, apart from rare people like Mackenzie who viewed genre use in direct relation to local social history, references of any sort to age are rare in the literature of the era, for folklore was not perceived to have any actual functioning links to any elements within the population.⁵⁴

This conceptualization of the field of study originated in Europe, but was reinforced in North America by Franz Boas.⁵⁵ His deep interest in the expressive culture of the native societies he studied led him to concentrate his attention on a limited number of genres--language, mythology, art, and ritual--and to rely almost exclusively on elderly informants, whom he saw as "storehouses" of traditions already being lost through assimilation. Boasian-trained fieldworkers followed his practice, and the image of the anthropologist or folklorist as interviewer of

⁵⁴Dundes 242.

⁵⁵In this discussion of the influence of Franz Boas, I am particularly indebted to Mr. Rex Clark of the Department of Anthropology, Memorial University, as well as to my supervisor in the Department of Folklore, Dr. Neil Rosenberg.

the elderly was born.⁵⁶ This was of course not Boas' only legacy to cultural research. His long-term influence on the development of contextual studies in folklore is well documented.⁵⁷

The early equating of folklore with verbal traditions was likely an additional contributing factor to the stereotype of the discipline. If the subject of study was limited to tales, legends, songs, and such materials, it only made sense to go to the people who had the longest time to accumulate a repertoire of texts and the greatest experience in performing them. Advanced age, if not a prerequisite, was a handy guarantor of both quality and quantity.

Given our present understanding of this conceptualization of folklore, attitudes of earlier generations of

⁵⁶Lowell D. Holmes, "Trends in Anthropological Gerontology: From Simmons to the Seventies," International Journal of Aging and Human Development 7 (1976): 211-220.

⁵⁷Dundes 241-242. For overviews of Boas' contribution to cultural studies, see Walter Goldschmidt, ed., The Anthropology of Franz Boas: Essays on the Centennial of His Birth, American Anthropologist Memoir Series 89 (1959); and Melville J. Herskovits, Franz Boas: The Science of Man in the Making (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953).

folklore scholars are comprehensible.⁵⁸ The puzzle is that the situation did not change with the introduction of new concepts at mid-century. With a revised view of folklore as process rather than as item, boundaries of study widened and analytical approaches diversified in many ways. But, unlike other age groups, the elderly drew more or less the same kind of attention they always had from folklorists. They continued to be valued informants, especially on matters relating to the past; and some scholars, as we have seen, made insightful comments on the significance of age in the analysis of tradition. But until very recently old age as a life stage did not attract notice as an object of study in itself. In its late adoption of an interest in cultural aspects of aging, folklore lags behind anthropology by twenty years.⁵⁹ To uncover the reasons for this, it is necessary to go beyond stated definitions and examine

⁵⁸For historical considerations of the meanings of folklore and folklore studies in English language areas, see, in addition to works noted elsewhere in this chapter, the following: Dan Ben-Amos, "A History of Folklore Studies—Why Do We Need It?" Journal of the Folklore Institute 10 (1973): 113-124; Francis A. de Caro, "Concepts of the Past in Folkloristics," Western Folklore 35 (1976): 3-22; Richard M. Dorson, The British Folklorists: A History (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1968); Neil R. Grobman, "Conceptual Problems in Writing a History of the Development of Folkloristic Thought," Folklore Forum, Bibliographic and Special Series 12 (1974): 56-63; M. Carole Henderson, "Folklore Scholarship and the Sociopolitical Milieu in Canada," Journal of the Folklore Institute 10 (1973): 97-107.

⁵⁹The development of anthropological interest in gerontology will be examined in Chapter 3.

underlying conceptualizations of both folklore and aging.

Whether defined narrowly as text or broadly as social process, the general understanding of folklore, both among folklorists and among the general public, has been founded on the more basic concept of a dichotomy between "tradition" and "modernity" in relation to human cultures. Edward Shils has suggested that this view is essentially a product of the Enlightenment which set "rationality and scientific knowledge" as the antithesis of "traditionality and ignorance," and posited a view of progress in which "modern society moves towards a state of traditionlessness."⁶⁰ Shils sees the discipline of folklore as a direct result of this new conceptualization:

As the idea of tradition took form in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it tended to be confined by those who studied it to particular kinds of traditions It was connected with the transmission of expressive works which had not been reduced to written form. Tradition was sought in the culture possessed by strata which had little formal education and which were considered to be less articulate, less literate, and less ratiocinative. The founders of the modern discipline of folklore believed that in these strata there were at work some deeper mental processes which had been lost in the course of the progress of a rationalized civilization. . . .⁶¹

The arguments against this rigid view of human history are many and have been expressed repeatedly by folklorists and others over the past several decades. It is

⁶⁰Edward Shils, Tradition (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1981) 5, 10.

⁶¹Shils 18.

a time and culture bound view, reflecting a specific era in European history. As a basis for scholarship it is devolutionary, and restricts the researcher to a study of survivals.⁶² It leads to "a nostalgic sense of 'Paradise lost'" and "romantic visions of a society in which, though materially poor and uneducated, people led simple, contented lives in harmony with nature and bound by strong affective ties into an intensive and cohesive communal existence."⁶³ It is a naturalistic view, treating tradition as a bounded entity, rather than an intellectual construct.⁶⁴ It posits folklore as a superorganic force, working independently of human actions and desires.⁶⁵ It leads to an "overvaluation of the primitive."⁶⁶

Nevertheless this view continues to live, both without and within academic studies of culture. A combination of animosity towards industrialization and nostalgia for traditionality continues as a "major theme of modern

⁶²Alan Dundes, "The Devolutionary Premise in Folklore Theory," 5-19.

⁶³Dean C. Tipps, "Modernization Theory and the Comparative Study of Societies: A Critical Perspective," Comparative Studies in Society and History 15 (1973): 207.

⁶⁴Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin, "Tradition, Genuine or Spurious," Journal of American Folklore 97 (1984): 273.

⁶⁵Elli-Kaija Kõngas Maranda, "The Concept of Folklore," Midwest Folklore, 13 (1963): 77.

⁶⁶Eric R. Wolf, Anthropology (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964) 85.

thought," according to Shils who lists poets, essayists, playwrights, philosophers, and economists, all of whom have "implied that before the coming of the ruinous modern society, the human race had lived in a condition of unbroken traditionality."⁶⁷ In spite of a widespread belief within the discipline that we have broken from the definitions of past scholarship, we continue to operate from a "mythical baseline"⁶⁸ of a static and continuous traditional culture and interpret contemporary process in terms of this ideal. As Handler and Linnekin point out, tradition is still widely perceived as a "core of traits handed down from one generation to the next."⁶⁹ And the carriers of these traits by extension are the elderly.

Because this view of folklore is widespread among the general population, the public tends also to associate cultural identity with the elderly, and to see the traditions of their own group persisting only in the oldest survivors. Folklorists are familiar with the fieldwork experience of being directed to the oldest person available, or, even more frequently, of being told of an even older and

⁶⁷Shils 14, footnote 13.

⁶⁸M. Estellie Smith, "The Process of Sociocultural Continuity," Current Anthropology 23 (1982): 128.

⁶⁹Handler and Linnekin 274. This is essentially A. L. Kroeber's definition of 1948. See Anthropology (New York: Harcourt, 1948) 411.

better informant who recently passed on. And most of us would have to admit to trading on this popular attitude when seeking to gain entry to a community. The approach, "The old songs are beautiful, the old people who know them are dying, their songs must be collected and thus saved," here quoted from the previously mentioned 1953 publication, Four Symposia on Folklore, has a familiar ring.⁷⁰ No matter how fervently we preach folklore as social and cultural process, we continue to use lines such as these because they work. They echo the attitudes of the folk themselves toward local traditions, and are ingratiating because they play on feelings of respect for the knowledge and wisdom of the family or community elders. In addition we continue to operate out of the old mental framework because it is a useful way of explaining differences between societies and between behavioural patterns within societies.⁷¹ But it is limiting in numerous ways, not least of which is the way it defines a narrow approach to elderly people.

If the dominant underlying concept of folklore has limited our view of later life relative to traditional culture, the same can be said of the dominant view of aging, which has been similarly "devolutionary." Aging in western

⁷⁰Quoted from Jonas Balys, a scholar of Lithuanian traditions, in Thompson, ed., Four Symposia on Folklore, 74-75.

⁷¹Shils 19.

industrialized society has been widely viewed as a process of inevitable loss and deterioration, leading to death.⁷² By contrast old age in primitive or "folk" societies has been portrayed most frequently as a time of heightened prestige, freedom, and power. The romantic view of old age in other societies coupled with a devolutionary view of the same life stage in western societies is exemplified by Melville Jacobs' comments in a 1964 publication. He paints an idyllic picture of "young old age" in primitive societies as a time of cultural creativity when people emerge as artistic specialists and moral leaders, and contrasts this with the dreadful state of the elderly in western cultures.⁷³ The contrast is illogical because he is speaking of two different age groups, and it is unproven, for no data is given, but the prose is powerful and representative of a widespread opinion, held by the general public as well as by scholars.

Nor did the introduction of a contextualist-functional approach change this preconception of aging, for functionalism in spite of what it promised mitigated against an altered perception of this life phase. In 1946 A. Irving Hallowell, in a paper read before the American

⁷²The way in which this concept has similarly dominated gerontological studies until recently is examined in Chapter 3.

⁷³Melville Jacobs, Pattern in Cultural Anthropology (Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey, 1964) 172-181.

Folklore society, suggested that the new paradigm would shed light on "the psycho-dynamics of the adjustment of individuals to the exigencies of their culturally constituted worlds."⁷⁴ Whatever its particular application by any individual scholar, functionalism was approached in terms of seeking to discover what contribution a cultural element or phenomenon made to the cultural whole.⁷⁵ Within folklore studies, this was frequently reduced to what a given genre did for the people who used it.⁷⁶

Logically this should have meant that attention would be given to the functions of folklore for elderly people along with other age and social sub-groups. But the application of functionalist explanation was selective as far as age groups were concerned. Because children and young people were perceived to be in an evolutionary mode, on the way to full status within a social system where they would be required to play vital roles, increased attention

⁷⁴A. Irving Hallowell, "Myth, Culture and Personality," American Anthropologist 49 (1947): 544.

⁷⁵A comprehensive overview of functionalism is presented in Jonathan H. Turner and Alexandra Maryanski, Functionalism (Menlo Park, Cal.: Benjamin/Cummings, 1979).

⁷⁶William R. Bascom, "Folklore and Anthropology," Journal of American Folklore 66 (1953): 290; "Four Functions of Folklore," Journal of American Folklore 67 (1954): 342.

was given to child and youth lore.⁷⁷ Insightful studies began to appear which went beyond mere collecting to concentrate on what the traditions of young people do for the young people themselves, and by extension for the entire society.⁷⁸

By contrast, consideration of what the lore of the elderly did for the elderly was ignored, for this was not a question of much consequence. Since these people were in a devolutionary mode, of lessening value to the entire group, a study of their cultural traditions was important only insofar as it might reveal something of relevance to the society as a whole. Therefore we find that attention is paid to the elderly in roles which relate to other age groups: how they use lore to maintain behavioural standards among the young, or to teach knowledge and values; what choice of genre they make in interactions with younger generations; how they are afforded or deprived of status by the society as a whole.⁷⁹ We do not find attention being paid to them when they are involved in patterns of activity

⁷⁷In Jan Harold Brunvand's widely used introductory text, a paragraph is devoted to age groups as bearers of folk tradition, but only children and adolescents are considered. See The Study of American Folklore: An Introduction, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978) 29-30.

⁷⁸An excellent example is Robert C. Cosbey, All in Together, Girls: Skipping Songs from Regina, Saskatchewan, Occasional Paper 2 (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, U of Regina, 1980).

⁷⁹Rooth; Abrahams; and D6gh, Folktales and Society.

directed to their own purposes or shared with their age cohorts.⁸⁰

Folklore studies have developed in many directions since the introduction of functionalist analysis in the 1950s, but the ingrained attitudes described above have been slow to change. That the situation has remained substantially the same is evident from a survey of articles appearing in the Journal of American Folklore over the past decade. During the ten-year period from 1975 to the present, there have been ten studies of childhood or adolescent lore. But no study directly approaches the culture of elderly people. Some, such as a 1982 examination of gospel singing assemblies in the American south, have relevance to aging, for the author notes that the participants are chiefly elderly people; but the significance of this fact is never examined in detail.⁸¹ The title of a 1984 performance-centered analysis of retirement ceremonies suggests a pertinence which the content belies, for the study of firemen who retire after twenty years service examines a

⁸⁰Brunvand, in fact, doubts whether age-group lore exists other than among the young, although he admits this is an untested supposition. See p. 30.

⁸¹David H. Stanley, "The Gospel-Singing Convention in South Georgia," Journal of American Folklore, 95 (1982): 1-32.

mid-life rather than late-life rite of passage.⁸² Incidental information on aging in a particular social situation is included in a 1982 study of Caribbean wake amusements; but this kind of data is too particularistic to be widely significant.⁸³ A significant comment, on the other hand, is offered in the concluding section of a 1983 study of traditional song. Debora Kodish, after examining the social values embedded in the texts contained in an elderly woman's handwritten songbook, notes that the "realization of adult status" treated in the songs is an ongoing lifelong process. The informant must "still labor to constitute her social self," and does this through the continuing use of her songs and her songbooks in social gatherings.⁸⁴ This rare attention to the present functioning of traditional material in the life of an elderly person is nevertheless incidental to the main thrust of the study; it occupies one paragraph in a fifteen-page article.

Evidence of the interest folklorists are now directing towards the elderly, an interest yet too recent to

⁸²Robert S. McCarl, "You've Come A Long Way--And Now This Is Your Retirement: An Analysis of Performance in Fire Fighting Culture," Journal of American Folklore 97 (1984): 393-422.

⁸³Roger D. Abrahams, "Storytelling Events: Wake Amusements and the Structure of Nonsense on St. Vincent," Journal of American Folklore 95 (1982): 389-414.

⁸⁴Debora Kodish, "Fair Young Ladies and Bonny Irish Boys: Pattern in Vernacular Poetics," Journal of American Folklore 96 (1983): 144-145.

be reflected in the major periodicals of the discipline, will be examined in the following chapter, and the first attempts towards the formulation of folkloristic approaches to gerontology will be considered. The intellectual climate within which this interest is developing bears scrutiny for recent developments bode well for the provision of fresh insights into the aging process. The limitations of the old model of culture based on a dichotomy between "traditionality" and "modernity" have already been mentioned. Tipps in particular has shown how the theory of modernization, developed in the United States since the Second World War and based on evolutionary theory combined with functionalism, is as time and culture bound as previous models.⁸⁵ By conceptualizing cultural change as a transformation from a "traditional" to a "modern" society, social scientists limit themselves to an ethnocentric view which ignores the varieties of change and the multiplicity of traditions which can occur in a supposedly "traditional" society. The model fails to account for the persistence of "traditional" traits in modernized societies, or for the influence of "traditional" values on modern institutions. When criticizing these weaknesses in modernization theory in 1973, Tipps nevertheless admitted that no one had yet suggested a viable substitute.

⁸⁵Tipps 199-226.

Since that time, however, alternative approaches have been suggested. In 1982 M. Estellie Smith offered the concept of "sociocultural continuity" as a means of understanding how cultures "persist through time, with constantly reaffirmed identities, while also undergoing continuous change . . . in response to shifting demands in the human and natural environment."⁸⁶ She suggests the abandonment of a dichotomous view of tradition and change as opposing forces, and the adoption of a new view which sees both as constituent parts of "continuity," defined as "the process whereby societies and individual members of those societies persist by deliberately or unwittingly altering and adapting in matters major and minor."⁸⁷ She perceives continuity as a state of synthesis in which "tradition" means "persistent viability through adaptation," and "change" equates with "the novel manifestation of a durable identity."⁸⁸ Similar concepts were offered in the 1984 article by Handler and Linnekin previously cited. Mindful of the fact that tradition as an element of cultural life is "always symbolically constructed, never naturally given," they define tradition as a "process of interpretation, attributing meaning in the present through making references to the

⁸⁶Smith 127.

⁸⁷Smith 128.

⁸⁸Smith 135.

past.⁸⁹

These two approaches are not entirely new, for folklorists have been working towards them over the past decade at least.⁹⁰ Nor are they without problematical aspects. In both cases, the authors have illustrated their concepts by applying them to situations where members of a group have made conscious decisions about the cultural dimensions of their lives. Smith discusses an example of cultural revival among Indians of the American southwest, while Handler and Linnekin examine concepts of national tradition in Québec and Hawaii. The general applicability of their ideas to situations where continuity is chiefly an un-reflective process and reinterpretation is carried out unintentionally remains to be seen.

Nevertheless, in light of the very "modern" lives which I found the informants of this project to be leading within the supposedly "traditional" environment of Newfoundland, the usefulness of these models is apparent. Concepts like "reinterpretation" and "adaptation" are more appropriate to the activities of the contemporary elderly.

⁸⁹Handler and Linnekin 287.

⁹⁰Suggestions of these approaches are found in Dell Hymes, "Folklore's Nature and the Sun's Myth," Journal of American Folklore 88 (1975): 345-369. See in particular his thoughts on the meaning of tradition, pp. 353, 355. However, see also Henry Glassie, "The Moral Lore of Folklore," Folklore Forum 16 (1983): 123-151, for a criticism of survivalistic attitudes to folklore, combined with an advocacy of the goal of textual preservation.

these informants included, than concepts like "repetition" and "maintenance." The adoption of a new paradigm within which tradition and modernity are seen as part of the same cultural process allows the folklorist to break free from the old stereotype of the cultural researcher as opportunist, availing him or herself of the knowledge of the elderly, and to join scholars in other intellectual domains in contributing to an understanding of the cultural possibilities of later life.

CHAPTER 3

AGING AS A CULTURAL PROCESS: THE SCHOLARLY STUDY

It is evident from the previous chapter that the discipline of folklore, while not actively contributing to any extent to a negative view of aging, has yet to make a positive contribution to the understanding of this phase of human life. Thus the folklorist with an interest in gerontological studies has to draw on the knowledge and theory of other disciplines, especially those which view aging from a cultural perspective. This chapter will present an overview of scholarly approaches to aging, an overview which aims to introduce the folklorist to the present state of cultural studies in the field. The chapter will conclude with an examination of folklorists' ventures into this sphere of scholarly activity.

While cultural research in aging is usually dated to the publication in 1945 of L. W. Simmons' The Role of the Aged in Primitive Society,¹ it was not until the 1960s and 1970s that anthropologists developed a wide interest in the topic and cultural studies of aging began to proliferate. The discipline of gerontology, of course, had by then been long and well established, primarily by biologists.

¹L. W. Simmons, The Role of the Aged in Primitive Society (New Haven: Yale UP, 1945).

psychologists and sociologists who from the 1930s onward had made significant contributions to the steadily growing field.² While cultural studies of aging are thus relatively new, the earlier period of gerontological research had cultural repercussions in that it set the tone for much subsequent activity in the field. Although the breadth and depth of gerontological research down to the present defies easy summary, certain early and continuing tendencies are evident.

From the 1930s when the first studies later deemed "seminal" began to appear,³ the entire field of gerontological study exhibited a marked inclination to place emphasis on the problems of old age, whether physical (illness, senility), social (poverty), or psychological (loneliness, depression). Another and possibly associated trend was toward the use of a limited range of research methods: survey techniques, clinical testing, and analysis

²A comprehensive overview of the study of social aspects of aging can be found in Russell A. Ward, The Aging Experience: An Introduction to Social Gerontology (New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1979). A Canadian perspective is presented in Victor W. Marshall, ed., Aging in Canada: Social Perspectives (Don Mills: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1980); Barry McPherson, Aging as a Social Process (Toronto: Butterworth, 1983); and Dermot Stewart, ed., The Aged in Society, Social Science Monograph Series 3 (Saint John: U of New Brunswick, 1979).

³A concise history of the scholarly study of aging from ancient times to the present era is James Birren and Vivian Clayton, "History of Gerontology," Aging: Scientific Perspectives and Social Issues, ed. Diana Woodruff and James Birren (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1975) 15-27.

of data derived from previous literature or from other existing sources such as census reports. These methods became the accepted way of generating research material on the elderly. In fact, in all branches of gerontological study up until the late sixties and early seventies, one sees in the literature little evidence of direct contact on an individual basis with a cross-section of elderly people. All too often the research runs to generalizations on the aging process based on a sample of ill or institutionalized elders; or on suppositions about relative social involvement and contentment of seniors derived from statistics on living accommodations and yearly income. Lest the above observations be seen as an attempt to denigrate the work of this entire period, it must be emphasized that much of the research was of the highest calibre, was desperately needed at the time, and has had significant impact in many fields of human activity from medical treatment to social services to financial planning. Nevertheless we must admit that much of it was limited in scope and methodology.

Another important consideration in relation to these earlier studies is the worldview, or perhaps more accurately lifeview, which underlies many of them. In the first place, old age is perceived as a transitional state, much like adolescence, the latter leading into full adult status, the former out of it. Of the two, adolescence is seen as being of more concern since it prepares a person for

participation in society and thus has social importance as a stage. Old age on the other hand only prepares a person for death. Emphasis is thus not on what is gained in this transitional state, but on what is given up. This view is reflected in the earliest widely influential theory of aging, that of "disengagement," which dates to a 1961 publication. Its authors, Elaine Cumming and William E. Henry, contended that old age was marked by a gradual withdrawal from social life which prepared the individual for the ultimate separation of death.⁴ This minimizing of the significance of later life is not restricted to gerontological research, as we have already seen. It can be noted in cultural studies as early as Arnold van Gennep, who devotes only one paragraph to this life stage in Rites of Passage, although he allows that this phase is "very important among the semicivilized."⁵

A second aspect of the view of life reflected in much of the earlier gerontological literature is its basic devolutionary premise. As noted by Steven H. Zarit, aging is perceived as essentially a downhill course, a terminal disease; there is a general feeling that only a "major biological breakthrough" to modify aging could help the

⁴Elaine Cumming and William E. Henry, Growing Old: The Process of Disengagement (New York: Basic, 1961).

⁵Arnold van Gennep, The Rites of Passage, trans. Monika B. Visdom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (1908; Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1960) 145.

elderly.⁶ This idea underlies the perception of gerontology as a concern with the problems of the aged, since solving their problems to the extent possible is all that can be done for them. Thus, in an attempt to help the greatest number of people in the shortest time--before death overtakes them--the emphasis is placed on group analysis of problems and group treatment. Little attention is paid to individual experience, unless the individual is in severe distress.

The limited focus of much earlier gerontological research can therefore be attributed at least in part to the "transitional" and "devolutionary" views of later life. While such views are not as widespread as formerly, they continue to play a role in shaping perceptions of the elderly both within and without the scholarly domain.

In considering the gradual acceptance of a different view of the final stage of life, a view which has become evident both within the research community and within society at large, we must look to the demographic changes of the later twentieth century and to concomitant social

⁶Steven H. Zarit, "Gerontology -- Getting Better All the Time," Readings in Aging and Death: Contemporary Perspectives, ed. Steven H. Zarit, 1977-78 ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1977) 11-12.

changes.⁷ With the extension of life expectancy, the elderly have become a clearly recognizable, numerically substantial group within society at large, and not just within hospitals and special care facilities.⁸ Old age has become a life stage of longer duration, one that demands consideration on its own terms, and that can no longer be ignored or explained away in terms of another stage. Moreover, this demographic trend is universal. Even in the developing world, where continuing high birthrates preclude the high percentage growth of the elderly population which we find in industrialized countries, there is still a substantial increase in gross numbers of elderly people, due to improved medical care. Moreover, as industrialization spreads, the onset of this new expanded life phase is more clearly marked as salaried workers around the globe retire from regular employment and become pensioners.

In addition to the demographic changes brought about by increased life expectancy, the twentieth century has seen significant shifts in family structure and life

⁷A concise yet comprehensive survey of recent demographic change in Canada can be found in Leroy O. Stone and Susan Fletcher, A Profile of Canada's Older Population (Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1980).

⁸Statistics Canada Advisory Services, St. John's, report the following life expectancy rates for 1982: males 71.1 years; females 78.9 years. In comparison to 1931 rates, this represents a gain of almost 12 years for men, and almost 17 years for women. In 1981 those 65 and over represented 9.7% of the Canadian population. See The Elderly in Canada (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1984) [2].

patterns, shifts which have worked to alter the flow of life on a personal and family basis and to force us to reconsider our concepts of various life stages. Within our own society in the past, full entry into adult life was marked by assuming a career, getting married, and establishing a family, three activities which usually occurred in fairly close succession. Since families were often large, this period of adult life frequently lasted forty years and ended with the marriage of the last child. However, with the shorter life expectancy of the past, in fifty percent of all families at least one parent was dead by this point.⁹ A surviving spouse entered old age with only one remaining social role, that of grandparent.

The above-described pattern is now rare in Canada. Work, marriage, and reproduction do not necessarily happen in close succession, if at all. The last child is often married long before the parents retire, and a new "empty nest" period of perhaps 20 years before retirement occurs is created. Couples often have clear status as grandparents long before retirement, and look forward to an active life for many years after retirement. The wide variety of life patterns now in play--single parenthood, late parenthood, divorce, remarriage--means there is less

⁹Judith Treas, "Aging and the Family," Aging: Scientific Perspectives and Social Issues, ed. Diana S. Woodruff and James E. Birren (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1975) 97-98.

stability and more variability of role and status in the adult lives of many people. With extended life expectancy and all of these changes, passing into old age is becoming one more transition requiring adjustment and adaptation. The extension of this life phase means that its onset is not as readily perceived as the final transition. As old age is increasingly separated from death,¹⁰ one suspects that there is less fear of the latter, and more interest in examining all aspects of the former. In the scholarship which is proliferating around us, old age is more commonly treated no longer as a problem, but merely as another stage of life.

Throughout all of these developments, understanding of the term "gerontology" has broadened as the scope of the discipline has expanded to include cultural aspects of aging. As noted in the previous chapter, anthropologists from the time of Boas had been using elderly people as sources of information on various cultures, and many had exhibited an abiding interest in the status of the

¹⁰It has been suggested by some scholars that it is only in recent history that old age has been connected with death in popular thought, since in previous centuries individuals of any age could be struck down, especially by infectious diseases. See Kenneth M. Weiss, "Evolutionary Perspectives on Human Aging," Other Ways of Growing Old: Anthropological Perspectives, ed. Pamela T. Amoss and Stevan Harrell (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford UP, 1981) 56.

elderly and their treatment within their society.¹¹ However, the investigations have only recently extended to cultural aspects of these individuals' own lives as elderly people. For the past decade studies of this type have been increasing, and we can already see a general direction for most of the research, both in terms of the choice of study topic and in the theoretical approaches used.

Anthropological studies of aging continue to reflect Simmons' interest in primitive societies. Since his innovative cross-cultural study, many others have examined the process of aging in specific tribal or peasant societies, or more recently in developing countries where the process itself is in a state of considerable change.¹² In western industrialized nations, the focus has been on ethnic, racial or religious minority groups. These studies show a concern for such questions as the importance of

¹¹This limited focus of research has been noted by Jennie Keith in her survey of anthropological work on aging, "The Best Is Yet To Be": Toward an Anthropology of Age," Annual Review of Anthropology 9 (1980): 339-340. Two other excellent review articles are the following: Christine L. Fry, "Toward an Anthropology of Aging," in Christine L. Fry and contributors, Aging in Culture and Society: Comparative Viewpoints and Strategies (New York: J. F. Bergin, 1980) 1-20; and Lovell D. Holmes, "Trends in Anthropological Gerontology: from Simmons to the Seventies," International Journal of Aging and Human Development 7 (1976): 211-220.

¹²Excellent examples of these types of study can be found in Pamela T. Amoss and Stevan Harrell, eds., Other Ways of Growing Old: Anthropological Perspectives (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford U., 1981).

ethnicity in old age, or whether members of clearly delineated sub-groups fare better in later life.¹³ Several important recent collections of essays have combined the above two approaches in an attempt to take a more universal view of the topic.¹⁴ Finally some researchers have sought subjects of study within specific residence groups: retirement communities, housing estates, old age homes, nursing homes or hospitals, or subsidized housing for the elderly, as well as inner-city ghettos and hotels.¹⁵ While the study group in these research projects is determined by residence rather than other considerations, and the prime focus is a cultural one, there is often the added

¹³These interests are reflected in recent doctoral dissertations: Charlotte Meier Collier, "A Community Study of Aging and Religion Among Rural Pennsylvania Germans," U of Massachusetts, 1978; Doris F. Goist, "Will You Still Need Me? Will You Still Feed Me? When I'm 64," Case Western Reserve U, 1980 (a comparative study of Jews in Ohio and England); Dena Sherk, "Aging Lebanese-Americans: Retirement in an Ethnic Context," U of Massachusetts, 1979.

¹⁴The following publications contain studies of aging in both developing and developed areas of the world, with some although not all of the latter type concentrating on minorities of various kinds in industrialized countries: Christine L. Fry and contributors, Aging in Culture and Society: Comparative Viewpoints and Strategies (New York: J. F. Bergin, 1980); Christine L. Fry and contributors, Dimensions: Aging, Culture, and Health (New York: J. F. Bergin, 1981); Barbara Myerhoff and Andrei Simic, eds., Life's Career--Aging: Cultural Variations on Growing Old (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1978).

¹⁵One of the most frequently quoted examples of this type of study is Arlie Russell Hochschild, The Unexpected Community: Portrait of an Old Age Subculture (Berkeley: U of California P, 1973).

dimension of physical, or financial problems to be considered.

Even in this brief overview of subjects of study, it is obvious that the ethnographic focus is still on either primitive or developing societies, or on easily identifiable and locatable groups of elderly people in western countries. There is still not a sufficiently wide range of ethnographic material on cultural aspects of the life of the average normal elderly person living in society at large. In spite of the recent broadening trend within gerontological studies, the scholarship still creates the impression that the elderly with problems are in the majority, whereas in fact they form a small percentage of the total aged population.

In considering theoretical approaches within the domain of gerontological anthropology, one finds here also that, although the field has broadened over the last two decades, there remains a small selection of research focal points which are still dominant. The following types can be cited, many of which often overlap in any given study.¹⁶

The concentration on problems of elderly people continues, both in directly pragmatic studies addressed to a particular undesirable situation, and in studies of wider

¹⁶While this typology of research approaches is based on my own reading of the literature, it is influenced by the three excellent overviews of the anthropology of aging cited in footnote 10. •

some which utilize the analysis of a particular problem as a means of illuminating some aspect of the aging process in general. Margaret Clark and Barbara G. Anderson, for example, have used a comparison of attitudes to life among groups of elderly psychiatric patients, former psychiatric patients, and well members of the community to determine what the researchers perceive as basic adaptive tasks of the elderly.¹⁷

Status-role studies have continued as well since Simmons' 1945 pioneer study, which was based on data from the Human Relations Area Files. Although he was criticized on a methodological basis for taking cultural traits out of context, his focus on the role of the elderly, if not his methodology, has been adopted by numerous other researchers in a variety of ways. In 1960, Ernest W. Burgess first posited the "roleless" role of the elderly in modern societies.¹⁸ Since then others have developed or disagreed with this concept. Barbara Anderson discussed the process of "deculturation" among American elderly, a process which she saw as a gradual forced withdrawal from all social roles

¹⁷Margaret Clark and Barbara G. Anderson, Culture and Aging: An Anthropological Study of Older Americans (Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas, 1967).

¹⁸Ernest W. Burgess, "Aging in Western Culture," in Ernest W. Burgess, ed., Aging in Western Societies (Chicago: U of Chicago P., 1960) 3-28.

and the status which goes with them.¹⁹ Other researchers have found that rolelessness is by no means a universal trait of elderly people. Carlos G. Vélez described the range of roles being played by the elderly in four Mexican families who migrated from rural areas to an urban centre, and the varying levels of status maintained by these aged individuals.²⁰ Pamela T. Amoss discovered an increase in the prestige of Coast Salish elders whose roles as sole keepers of the traditional culture and as providers (through old age security payments) were being enhanced in the face of rampant social change.²¹

A third area of analytical focus for cultural studies of aging has been the social interaction of elderly people with society at large, or with specific groups within society such as age cohorts or family members. Doris Francis Goist's previously mentioned study of elderly Jews in Ohio and England examined the patterns of interaction between research subjects and their adult children. Among other factors, the author attributed the more successful

¹⁹Barbara Anderson, "The Process of Deculturation-- Its Dynamics among United States Aged," Anthropological Quarterly 45 (1972): 209-216.

²⁰Carlos G. Vélez, "Youth and Aging in Central Mexico: One Day in the Life of Four Families of Migrants," Life's Career--Aging, ed. Barbara Myerhoff and Andrei Simic, 107-162.

²¹Pamela T. Amoss, "Coast Salish Elders," in Other Ways of Growing Old, ed. Pamela T. Amoss and Stevan Harrell, 227-247.

adaptation to aging of the English group to their previous experience of elderly role models, and to the more realistic expectations of later life provided by their culture.²²

A fourth approach, which could be termed cognitive, is to examine concepts of, and attitudes to age and aging held by the elderly and by other age groups. W. Andrew Achenbaum has given an interesting historical perspective on such concepts in his review of the public image of aging in nineteenth and twentieth century America.²³ In a 1978 doctoral dissertation, Maria D. Vesperi concentrated on the self-concepts evident among elderly Florida residents.²⁴ The meaning of old age in a small town of the American Midwest was examined by Philip B. Stafford in a 1977 doctoral dissertation, which utilized a semiotic approach to social interaction within this specific cultural setting.²⁵ All of these works suggest that cultures develop their concepts of the aging process

²²In addition to the dissertation previously cited, see also the following article: Doris Francis, "Adaptive Strategies of the Elderly in England and Ohio," in Christine L. Fry and contributors, Dimensions 85-107.

²³W. Andrew Achenbaum, Old Age in the New Land: The American Experience Since 1790 (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1978).

²⁴Maria D. Vesperi, "The Cultural Construction of Old Age: Changes in Self-Concept Among Older Americans," Princeton U., 1978.

²⁵Philip B. Stafford, "The Semiotics of Old Age in a Small Midwestern Town: An Interactionist Approach," Indiana U, 1977.

without reference to the actual experiences of aging individuals, and then maintain these concepts by strategies which force the compliance of the elderly to the established image.

Studies of the elderly within specific residence groups often adopt what has been termed the subculture approach. The researcher examines the creation of community and the development of community culture within an age-homogeneous group defined by common residence in a particular location, or common participation in a social organization. Hochschild, in the previously cited The Unexpected Community: Portrait of an Old Age Subculture, was one of the first to recognize that residence apart from a family group did not mean a necessarily cultureless existence. Since the 1973 publication of that study, many others have followed the same line of research. In 1979 an entire issue of Anthropological Quarterly was devoted to the topic of community formation among elders in age-homogeneous groups.²⁶ An excellent and moving example of this approach and one which will be referred to frequently in this thesis is Barbara Myerhoff's Number Our Days which presents an insightful description of the dynamic fabrication of culture

²⁶"The Ethnography of Old Age," Anthropological Quarterly 52.1 (1979). The introduction is provided by Jennie Keith who edited the special issue.

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within a Jewish community centre in California.²⁷

The cross-cultural focus of Simmons has been taken up in recent years by a number of other researchers. The most concerted attempt to define universals in regard to old age has been made by Donald O. Cowgill and Lowell

D. Holmes. In the conclusion to their collection of essays by various scholars on a series of primitive and industrialized societies, they list eight "universals" and twenty-three "variations" which constitute their theory of aging from a cross-cultural perspective.²⁸ In the years since this publication appeared, others have questioned the universality of many of these precepts by presenting evidence from field research which illustrates their cultural specificity. But the attempt to define generalizations remains an important step in the growth of gerontological anthropology.

The final one of these theoretical approaches is the one which will be utilized in this study. It is the developmental approach. Many of the researchers who follow this line of approach would acknowledge a debt to Eric Erikson's 1959 publication, Identity and the Life Cycle, in

²⁷Barbara Myerhoff, Number Our Days (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1978).

²⁸Donald O. Cowgill and Lowell D. Holmes, eds., Aging and Modernization (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1972). See in particular "Summary and Conclusions: The Theory in Review," by the editors, 305-323.

which he presents a psychological analysis of normal growth and development at various stages of life.²⁹ While he concentrates mostly on the infancy to parenthood period, he does give some consideration to mature adulthood, and suggests that, for the healthy personality, growth is a continuous process, and there are developmental tasks to be completed at this stage as at any other. This thought has in recent years been taken up by an increasing number of ethnological researchers who look for the cultural components of personal growth in later life.³⁰ Aging is perceived as a vital stage in the evolutionary cycle of the individual, a stage at which the possibilities are open for success and achievement. As early as 1975, an entire conference was devoted to the concept of "successful aging," a conference whose theme was reflected in the name of the sponsoring body: Center for the Study of Aging and Human Development.³¹ This perspective is also reflected in the title of one of the previously mentioned cross-cultural

²⁹Eric Erikson, Identity and the Life Cycle: Selected Papers, Psychological Issues 1.1 (New York: International Universities Press, 1959).

³⁰Emphasis on personal growth in later life is reflected in work of scholars in various disciplines. See for example a recently published overview by sociologist, Mark Novak, Successful Aging: The Myths, Realities and Future of Aging in Canada (Markham, Ont.: Penguin Canada, 1985).

³¹Eric Pfeiffer, ed., Successful Aging: A Conference Report (Durham, N.C.: Center for the Study of Aging and Human Development, Duke U, 1975).

collections of articles on aging: Life's Career--Aging, a book which takes the view that aging is not a mere biological process to which one is subjected, but a dynamic cultural process in which one can creatively participate.³²

The developmental perspective appears particularly useful to the folklorist entering the domain of gerontology. We have for long concentrated attention on the individual experience of aging people, especially creative ones; for they have often proven valued informants. Nevertheless, the interest of folklorists in gerontological questions is very recent, and only a few very tentative statements on the topic have appeared to date. Michael Taft suggested the possibilities for research in 1979 at a Saskatoon conference on aging.³³ Jude Wilson-Powers, at the 1982 meeting of the American Folklore Society, did essentially the same thing, and suggested the need for cooperation among the various disciplines interested in the topic.³⁴ Also in 1982, Polly Pope briefly outlined to the California Folklore Society the kinds of traditional material related to aging which she has uncovered in

³²Myerhoff and Simic, eds.

³³Michael Taft, "The Role of Folklore Studies in Gerontological Research," Research in Aging Conference, U of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Sept. 1979.

³⁴Jude Wilson-Powers, "Research in Aging and Folklife: Sharing Information," American Folklore Society Annual Meeting, Minneapolis, Minnesota, Oct. 1982.

research in that state, and tentatively suggested genres where such items seem to proliferate.³⁵ A course entitled "Folklore, Aging and Culture" has been offered as part of the University of Pennsylvania graduate programme in folklore since at least 1979. Taught by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Mary Hufford, and Jane Edwards, among others, the course examines such topics as cross-cultural concepts of aging, subcultures of the aged, symbolic and expressive behavior in later life, and cognitive organization, with readings being drawn from a wide variety of disciplines.³⁶

Truly analytical publications or presentations, however, have been few. In 1981 in a paper read to a joint meeting of the American and Canadian associations of gerontology, Jude Wilson-Powers presented a thought-provoking analysis of the themes utilized by elderly folk artists, a topic she explored again in a paper read to the American

³⁵Polly Pope, "'Old Age is Hard to Bear' -- The Folklore of Aging," California Folklore Society Meeting, U of California, Davis, April 1982.

³⁶A folklorist, Kenneth S. Goldstein, now heads the University of Pennsylvania's Department of Social Gerontology, established in 1982 in coordination with the university's Center for Gerontology to provide training in social and cultural areas of gerontology.

Folklore Society meeting in 1983.³⁷ In 1981 also, Alan Jabbour contributed an essay on the life cycle of folk artists and performers to a lecture series on creativity and aging.³⁸ Roberta Krel, a doctoral candidate at the University of California, Los Angeles, is examining creativity in the lives of nursing home residents for her doctoral dissertation.³⁹ There exist a few publications with promising titles related to folklore and gerontology, but frequently the content does not reflect what the title suggests. "The Role of Folklore in the Study of Gerontology" by Michael D. Patrick is a typescript description of a collecting project done among elderly Missourians, and nothing more.⁴⁰ And there exists one promising outline for a project which sadly will never be undertaken, for at the time of her death Elli Kõngäs Maranda was seeking funds to undertake a major study of the meaning of aging in our

³⁷Jude Wilson-Powers, "Elder Artists: The Long Life of the Imagination," Gerontological Society of America and the Canadian Association on Gerontology, Joint Meeting, Toronto, Nov. 1981; and "Images of Aging in 20th Century Folk Art," American Folklore Society Annual Meeting, Nashville, Tennessee, Oct. 1983.

³⁸Alan Jabbour, "Some Thoughts from a Folk Cultural Perspective," Perspectives on Aging: Exploding the Myths: A Lecture Series Funded by the Colonial Penn Insurance Group, ed. Priscilla W. Johnston (Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger, 1981) 139-149.

³⁹Personal communication from Roberta Krel.

⁴⁰Michael D. Patrick, "The Role of Folklore in the Study of Gerontology," ts., U of Missouri, [c.1978].

culture.⁴¹ There may indeed be other research projects under way at present in the domain of folklore and aging, but these are too recent to have as yet been reported in the scholarly literature.⁴²

This overview of scholarly approaches to cultural aspects of the aging process, has, for the sake of brevity, avoided critical comments on much of the literature mentioned. Further discussion of these and other pertinent works will be made in the ensuing chapters, as theory relevant to the data of this research project is examined in greater detail.

In concluding this survey of the field, it would be well to pause before proceeding to the data of this project and to consider the long-term impact of much of the existing literature. Because of the accelerated development of the entire field of gerontology at the present time, subsequent research is quickly rendering even fairly recent studies obsolete. The "buzzword" theories of the fifties, sixties, and even early seventies (disengagement, deculturation, etc.) already appear naïve and presumptuous.

⁴¹Elli Kõngas-Maranda, "Beautiful Losers"/Les Perdants Magnifiques: La Culture de la Vieillesse," Travaux et Inédits de Elli Kaija Kõngas-Maranda, Cahiers du CELAT 1 (avril 1983) 251-255.

⁴²A study of elderly chain carvers which examines, among other things, the relationship between age and their craft, has recently been published: Simon J. Bronner, Chain Carvers: Old Men Crafting Meaning (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1985).

tuous in comparison to the multilinear approaches of the eighties. In addition, analysis within this scholarly field is complicated by the fact that the study group itself is in a state of significant transition on many levels: numerical, social, economic, cultural. It is a state of affairs to inspire humility and caution, but also hopeful anticipation on the part of any researcher.

CHAPTER 4

ARTISTS, CRAFTSPEOPLE, POETS AND PERFORMERS

The topic of creativity among the elderly has not received a great deal of scholarly attention, and those studies which have been done are limited to a few aspects of the subject. From the time of Harvey Lehman's attempt to determine the most productive years for individuals in a number of artistic or scientific careers, to more recent studies ranking the performance of older and younger students in various courses of a creative nature, competence has been a chief concern in many of these investigations.¹ Another focus of attention has been the relationship of creativity to mental or physical health. Studies of this sort have attempted to correlate artistic production to physical state, or to judge the therapeutic effects of arts or crafts programmes on individuals who are most frequently institutionalized or suffering temporary problems which

¹Harvey Lehman, *Age and Achievement* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 1953); Patricia K. Alpaugh, V. Jayne Renner, and James E. Birren, "Age and Creativity: Implications for Education and Teachers," *Educational Gerontology* 1 (1976): 17-40. A recent book with a promising title, *The Crown of Life: Artistic Creativity in Old Age* by Hugo Munsterberg (New York: Harcourt, 1983), is devoted almost entirely to biographical sketches of professional visual artists who continued to be productive into later life.

require professional treatment.² And some studies have touched on the topic of creative work by examining preferences among the elderly for expressive or informational learning programmes.³ At least one author has tried to understand the phenomenon of creativity across the life span, by isolating five different forms of creativity and identifying them with various life stages.⁴ This sounds like a promising line of approach, but the author's categories overlap somewhat, and in any event the retired and elderly subjects of this study display all of his forms simultaneously. Generally the literature avoids any consideration of the place of the late life creative activity in the total experience of the individual; or any question of the meaning of the art or craft to the elderly practitioner, or its relationship to his or her cultural background.

The descriptions which follow of the lives and creative activities of the ten informants of this project concentrate on these previously avoided questions: what is

²An example is A. M. Dawson and W. R. Baller, "Relationship Between Creativity and the Health of Elderly Persons," Journal of Psychology 82 (1972): 49-58.

³See, for example, R. Hiemstra, "Older Adult Learning: Instrumental and Expressive Categories," Educational Gerontology 1 (1976): 227-236.

⁴Irving A. Taylor, "Patterns of Creativity and Aging," Successful Aging: A Conference Report, ed. Eric Pfeiffer (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Center for the Study of Aging and Human Development, 1974) 113-117.

the place of the activity in the temporal flow of the person's life; and what meaning does it have in relation to the individual's experience and the culture of his or her community? As these life histories unfold, the reader will perceive that relationships between late-life creativity and traditional culture are complex and operate simultaneously on many levels. Traditional skills are being used to convey contemporary content, and recently introduced techniques are being used to express well-established concepts. Time-honoured roles are being turned to new purposes, and customary elements are being employed in innovative ways.

Because of the number of informants discussed here, the reader's immediate reaction may be one of perplexity in the face of widely divergent detail. But he or she will come to realize that, amid the variety of forms, uses, motivations, and products, the informants are not ranging as widely from family and community patterns as might first seem; and amid the diversity there are recurrent elements common to the lives and creative works of many of these individuals. These common factors or "themes" will be the focus of attention in the final chapter of this thesis.

Informant 1: Mrs. Byrne

Mrs. Byrne, aged 62 at the time of interview, was born in 1920 in the east end of the city of St. John's. One of five boys and two girls born to a telephone company truck driver and his wife, both of whom were natives of the city, she attended the local convent school to the level of grade 10. Because her mother was ailing at that time, Mrs. Byrne stayed home to look after her until her older sister quit her job to marry, and was then able to assume care of the mother. At the age of 16, the informant went to work for the telephone company, but after six months moved to the Royal Navy where she remained for four years until her marriage at the age of 20 to a St. John's native who had been raised in a Catholic boys' orphanage in the city. Enlisted with the Royal Navy at the time of their marriage, her husband took his discharge after the war. Mrs. Byrne did not return to work after her marriage, but stayed home to raise their two sons, and to once again look after her mother who lived with the couple until her death in 1972 at an advanced age. Except for a brief period when they moved to another part of the city, the couple has continued to live in their own house in the same neighbourhood where Mrs. Byrne was raised. Both sons have since married and live in St. John's. There are two grandchildren.

Mrs. Byrne's husband opted for early retirement when they were both in their fifties. At that time they

took a Home Health Aids course, and were briefly involved in providing home care to ailing individuals and their families. They found, however, that this work was too demanding physically and emotionally and soon gave it up.

Activities for Mrs. Byrne and her husband now centre around a social club for retired people and a senior citizens' choral group. As members of the Silver Chord Singers since 1979, they rehearse one evening every week, and perform for church services and concerts in the city and the surrounding area. The 89-member group has a repertoire of show tunes, sentimental favourites dating from the 1860s to the present, and hymns and inspirational songs, standard fare for seniors' choirs across the continent.⁵ Mrs. Byrne in fact mentioned that their former director, Ignatius Rumbolt, had attended yearly summertime courses in choral direction offered by the American director, Fred Waring.⁶

⁵The informant showed me a number of pages Xeroxed from printed and typescript songsters, as well as the following complete books: Atlantic Canada Sings: Songbook Compiled by Mrs. E. Miller for the Use of Retired Citizens in Homes and Clubs (Waterloo: Waterloo Music Company, 1974); The Fred Waring Olden Goldies Songbook, arr. Paulie Aves (Delaware Water Gap, Pa.: Shawnee, 1978); and Old Time Songs and Poetry of Newfoundland, 5th ed. (St. John's: Gerald S. Doyle Ltd., 1978). The first listed of these three books was prepared under the New Horizons programme of the federal government and is not available commercially.

⁶A biography of Ignatius Rumboldt, the founder and first director of the Silver Chord Singers, was recently published: Paul G. Woodford, The Life and Contributions of Ignatius Rumboldt to Music in Newfoundland (St. John's: Creative Printers, 1984).

Rumboldt had instigated a much more creative form of expression for the informant and her husband when he encouraged the formation of a small sub-group within the larger choir as a means of adding variety to their concerts. Mrs. Byrne described the formation and activities of this smaller group:

When we went, when we joined the Silver Chords, we met the [informant names another couple] for the first time, Mike and Mary, and he was playing the accordion. So our director said, "Well, see if you can get a little group together." You know, to sing--like just sort of more or less to give us a break on the concert, you know, come out with this little, with the accordion, 'cause people love the accordion, especially the elderly. And, so this is how we organized, we got together on that then, and we have tambourine and maracas and, and harmonica and spoons--[her husband] plays the spoons--and we have played, we played for CBC in July, and we played at the Murray Premises [a downtown heritage site converted to shops] in July, we put on a noonday concert and . . . we play at Saint Patrick's Mercy Home, the Hoyles Home--these are all senior citizens' homes--the Hoyles Home, Eskasoni, Saint Luke's, and generally mostly all the senior citizens' home--homes in St. John's.

(What kind of music do you play in the small group?)

Well, just sing and, and we play, with the, you know, the maracas and the tambourine, and we just sing along, and dance, and take the people out to dance, go out and take out the elderly and dance with them. . . . And Mary and I . . . we go out and we dance, we take out the patients, take out the ladies, take out the gentlemen. And generally take, you know, dance with them, and talk to them, bring them their birthday gifts, which are given to us by their, by their association, ladies' association, they bring them--the men go up with the ladies' gifts, and the women go up with the men's, give them a little kiss.
(83-282/C6462;8:120)

This smaller group, which bears the name of the accordion player, a professional entertainer in St. John's

before his retirement, consists of three couples and a widow.⁷ They entertain regularly at monthly birthday parties held in the different Homes to honour all those who have had a birthday during that month. While they perform also on other occasions and for other audiences, it is these monthly parties, described above and in the following quotation, which seem to provide the most satisfaction to Mrs. Byrne:

They love it, they can't seem to get enough of it, especially on the 28th of every month, if they have say four birthdays in that month or five, well they, everybody celebrates, they bring everybody in wheelchairs and, every, and people, everyone who would like to come downstairs to the auditorium, they come down and, they, they sit on, you know, they sit them down, sit them in, bring down the wheelchairs and then they have a grand little party, have their cake, you know, a nice big birthday cake is wheeled in. And then they have all sorts of punch and cookies and sandwiches, and then when, when we're finished with our part, they, we go back and have a cup of tea and piece of their birthday cake--it's really nice. They look forward to it, so they, they call us every, the end of every month and we go, all the different Homes.
(83-282/C6462:B:167)

With this smaller group, Mrs. Byrne says they do "a nice lot of Newfoundland" music, which in this context would mean jigs and reels, waltzes, and anything else under the sun played in the upbeat, accordion-dominated Newfoundland dance style. Vocals are done by all of the women of the group singing in unison. The stylistic amalgam

⁷The group leader has been the subject of an interview by Peter Narváez of the Department of Folklore, Memorial University, as part of his ongoing study of local professional musicians (MUNFLA 82-243).

represented in their performances is not unlike that of other local dance bands, except that this group relies more heavily on popular songs from earlier decades of this century, and less on commercial country-western music.⁸

For someone who has led the restricted family-centered adult life of Mrs. Byrne, public performance would seem to be a highly unusual retirement activity. Her earlier experience provided no active role models, creative or otherwise, for later life. She did not know her grandparents for they had died when she was young. Her father died in late middle age, and her mother, although long-lived, was in ill health in old age as she had been in the informant's youth. Not have age cohorts been particularly influential in encouraging her new career as an entertainer. While the initial encouragement to join the Silver Chords came from an elderly acquaintance in a Senior Citizens' Home, most of her friends do not participate in any such activity, nor do they heed her invitations to participate.

⁸For a sample performance, see MUNPLA 83-282/0733. Scholarly attention to Newfoundland popular music can be found in the following sources: Michael Taft, A Regional Discography of Newfoundland and Labrador 1904-1972, Bibliographical and Special Series 1 (St. John's: Memorial U of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive, 1975); Peter Narváez, "Country and Western in Diffusion: Juxtaposition and Syncretism in the Popular Music of Newfoundland," Culture & Tradition 2 (1977): 107-114; and I. Sheldon Posen and Michael Taft, "The Newfoundland Popular Music Project," Canadian Folk Music Journal 1 (1973): 17-23.

A closer look at the details of Mrs. Byrne's life, however, reveals that there are many underlying continuities which indicate that this late life career is not the anomaly it first appears. One of the most apparent of these is physical: she has lived most of her life on the same street, and most of her married life in a house on that street which was built by her maternal grandfather, and which is located opposite her former school. This geographic immobility means that she is deeply rooted in St. John's social life and culture, of which music (traditional, ecclesiastical, popular and light classical) has long been an important part.⁹ While her earlier direct involvement in musical expression was limited to choral singing at school concerts, she was always an avid fan of local musical productions, and attended as many as she could both as a student and later as a young working woman.

... they had--the Mount Cashel concerts, Mount Cashel boys--that's Mount Cashel Orphanage. They would put on a lot of plays, like you know, Gilbert and Sullivan's, and we--they, they would be here in this, in this community, at Saint Patrick's Hall, and they would--of course the convent would put on plays and concerts, you know.

(Then in the years when you started working, were you still attending concerts and hearing that kind of music?)

⁹A history of the musical stage in St. John's is contained in the previously noted biography of Ignatius Rumboldt, as well as in another biography by the same author, Paul Woodford: Charles Hutton: "Newfoundland's Greatest Musician and Dramatist," 1861-1949 (St. John's: Creative Printers, 1983).

Oh yes, whenever we could get to, whenever there was any on at the Casino, on--on Duckworth Street there was this theatre they called Casino, the Casino, and they had all sorts of Saint Patrick's Day concerts, and this would consist of older people [adults rather than children] but lovely, they were really beautiful, singing and dancing and choral music and--lovely. So I liked that. (83-282/C6462:A:122)

Within her family as well, there was a continuing tradition of performance, both public and private. Her uncles and one brother sang for family get-togethers when she was young. Her husband had learned to read music, sing, and play several instruments while a resident at Mount Cashel Orphanage, and had in fact performed in most of the shows she had seen as a young girl. And one of her sons learned to play the guitar, taught the instrument for a while, and performed at coffee houses and in concert with two different folk-style groups while a student at university. This son had written much of his own material, and had shortly before the interview given Mr. Byrne a guitar for a birthday present, along with the promise of teaching him to play. Thus, although she had not performed herself except in a limited way in childhood, Mrs. Byrne was surrounded by a musical tradition which encompassed both traditional song and commercial music.

Along with music, another thread runs through Mrs. Byrne's life: service to others. She spent a large part of her adolescent and adult life looking after other people: first her mother; then her children, and then her

mother again. The Home Health Aids course and her involvement in that work for a year fit into the same pattern, as does her other favourite pastime at present, minding her two grandchildren. In performing music for the elderly, which she refers to as volunteer work, Mrs. Byrne is able to continue to express this concern for others, while at the same time getting a respite from the care and worry of tending the sick and dependant. She clearly sees her musical activities as a break from the routine of her earlier life, and a way to make up for lost time by doing the things she missed out on when younger. When I commented on her busy retirement schedule, she replied by alluding voluntarily to the restrictions circumstance had placed on her earlier life:

Yes, because, see, I--my mother--when my father died, well I had to look after my mother. And I had her sick for several years, and you couldn't very well leave, you--leave her, you know. So therefore, things that I'd have like to have done at that time when I was a younger woman, I just couldn't do it because I had to look after my mother. (83-282/C6462:B:252)

Mrs. Byrne probably would not have taken up this activity if her husband had not been interested in participating also. For her it represents an unexpected turn of events, for she never expected to be entertaining the public in retirement. In fact, she said she had not known of the existence of senior citizens' choirs until the founding of the local one. Nevertheless, her late life career allows her a measure of emotional and aesthetic

expression which had never been possible in earlier years.

Finally, if we view Mrs. Byrne's career as an entertainer within the provincial context, a different meaning emerges. It has been suggested by Alan Jabbour that later life is the prime time for the achievement of specialist status.¹⁰ He traces the life patterns of various musicians who have acquired their technique at an early age, served an apprenticeship with intensive performance in youth, experienced a period of intermittence while attending to the responsibilities of adult life, and then returned to the craft in later years with ample time for the final honing of skills and the achievement of local, regional, or even national acclaim for excellence.¹¹ The general applicability of this model has yet to be tested, but certainly the practice of performance genres has long been a culturally acceptable means of expression for the elderly of the province. In recent years, many lifelong performers, now of advanced age, have achieved wide attention through the media. Musical entertainers like Emile Benoit, Rufus

¹⁰Alan Jabbour, "Some Thoughts from a Folk Cultural Perspective," Perspectives on Aging: Exploding the Myths: A Lecture Series Funded by the Colonial Penn Insurance Group, ed. Priscilla W. Johnston (Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger, 1981) 139-149.

¹¹The term "intermittence" is used here in the sense suggested by Kenneth S. Goldstein in "On the Application of the Concepts of Active and Inactive Traditions to the Study of Repertory," Journal of American Folklore 84 (1971): 62-67.

Guinohard and Lem Snow have made records, performed on radio and television, and appeared at folk festivals across the island, on the mainland, and abroad.¹² But these elderly Newfoundlanders, and many more like them, were specialists within their own families and communities long before they achieved public acclaim. They came to prominence, in fact, after first attracting the attention of folklore students, folklorists, and then those involved in the folk revival within the province. Their public renown reinforces the existing model of the performing senior, or perhaps more accurately, the senior performer. Mrs. Byrne did not spend a lifetime perfecting her skills. She came late into an activity where older people have long been considered the experts. Seen from this perspective, her entry into the field is not astounding.

There are, of course, important differences between the performance of a senior entertainer within a community context and the present musical practice of Mrs. Byrne. In local practice, the senior performers sang,

¹²Material is now available on these performers. Emile Benoit's narrating talents are the subject of Gerald Thomas's study, Les deux traditions (Montréal: Bellarmin, 1983). Kelly Russell has written a biography of Rufus Guinohard entitled Rufus Guinohard: The Man and His Music (St. John's: H. Cuff, 1982). All three performers have been featured on LP recordings by Pigeon Inlet Productions of St. John's: Emile Benoit, Ça Vient du Tchoueur/It Comes from the Heart, PIP-731; Rufus Guinohard, Step Tunes and Doubles, PIP-737; Lem Snow, The Great Lobster Boil, PIP-7316.

played or recited for the whole community, not just for one age group, and were seen as embodying the best of community culture, not just the culture of their own generation.¹³ Mrs. Byrne and her friends perform chiefly for the elderly, or for the general public as representatives of that age group. Moreover, the local performer acted within the mainstream of community life, with the provision of entertainment as the chief motive for performance. The context within which Mrs. Byrne performs is segmented along age lines, and she herself refers to her activity in the Homes as "volunteer work," rather than as "entertainment." She and her friends gain deep satisfaction from providing a service to people they perceive as being in need; but that very perception creates a kind of performer/audience distinction which would not exist within a community performance setting. Mrs. Byrne speaks glowingly of the interaction with Home residents during the monthly parties, but it is a relationship restricted to stylized activities within specific time periods. It is the interaction of the professional entertainer with his audience, rather than the interaction of the folk performer with his community.

¹³Song performance within a community context in Newfoundland is examined in George J. Casey, Neil V. Rosenberg, and Wilfred W. Wareham, "Repertoire Categorization and Performer-Audience Relationships: Some Newfoundland Examples," Ethnomusicology 16 (1972): 397-403.

Informant 2: Mrs. Green

The life of this informant stands in great contrast to that of the previous one. Mrs. Green, a widow for ten years and 62 years old at the time of interview, was born in 1920 in a large urban centre in Britain. She was the daughter of a master tradesman who had moved into the city from a small country town where he had learned the trade of his ancestors. In the city, her father taught the skills of his craft in a technical college, and her mother, from the same small town, kept house and took an active part in community affairs as a social activist. Throughout her very active childhood and adolescence, the informant appears to have been closer to her parents than to her two sisters, who were respectively fourteen and twelve years older than herself. After completing a commercial course at secondary school, she sat the examination to enter chartered accountancy school, but her education was interrupted when World War II broke out. At the age of 19, she joined the British Navy and was posted to pay office duty. She served at several locations in England and Scotland, and at one of these met a Newfoundlander who was serving in the British forces. They married and less than a year before the war ended, she left the Navy due to pregnancy. After her husband's discharge, she followed him back to Newfoundland as a war bride with an infant daughter.

In spite of ill health occasioned by active war

service, her husband undertook a career applying the skills of military life to industrial organization. They moved frequently as various jobs demanded: to the United States, to mainland Canada, back to Newfoundland, to Britain, and finally back to several smaller centres in Newfoundland before settling in St. John's. Through this period, Mrs. Green worked in the home, raising their three daughters, born in Britain, Newfoundland and Britain respectively, and assisting her husband with his career through her own knowledge of commercial management and large-scale organization. The three girls, now raising families of their own, have professional careers. Two were living in Newfoundland at the time of the interview, and one was on the mainland.

Mrs. Green's present creative activities started when her daughters were at the final stages of their education. Her interests first manifested themselves in the form of writing:

[The first time] I sort of started real, sort of seriously, doing something properly with it, was when the girls were at the university. And I don't know what started me off on it. I mean, writing is something you don't know what starts you off, uh? Maybe I got fed up working, trying to correct their essays. I don't know but something did it and I started doing it. (83-282/C6463:B:370)

Her first published piece was an article in the Newfoundland Quarterly. Then followed "some articles in the papers," and pieces in some Newfoundland anthologies. There was also a series of scripts on historical characters for

provincial school programmes on radio, a university extension course having served to introduce her to the skills required for writing for the broadcast media.

At the time of the interview, Mrs. Green was taking a creative writing course through university extension, this time with a particular project in mind:

... at the moment what I have been doing--this is why I haven't been writing anything for sale--is I suddenly realized that I was a bridge between two cultures for my grandchildren. I've got three grandchildren. And I thought that no amount of sitting down, because there isn't as much sitting down as there used to be, and listening to what an older person says, uh--I said to you I remember sitting on my grandfather's bed and listening--I couldn't tell you what I listened to but possibly some of the stories I've related or thoughts I've had have come from that listening, eh? And made me aware of things. Now my grandchildren haven't got that. They've been taken to [Britain] on h--but it's just a place to visit on holiday, eh? So I thought the best thing I can do is sit down and write up something, not in a dry, date, something that happened on such and such a date, not that way, and--have you read any of the vet's--Herriot's books? (83-282/C6463:B:386)

The informant suggested that James Herriot's work was the model she wished to follow,¹⁴ and continued:

So I started doing sort of incidents that came up, like one was silk stockings, how it had started off with one of the youngsters here looking for nylons on her first date. And I suddenly realized what, you know, nylons meant to her, and that put me back in memory to my first pair of silk stockings and how I wanted these silk stockings so badly. And by doing that I brought in things that were happening at that time, which meant for grandchildren reading, they were reading of what I was like as a youngster and the times I was in, you

¹⁴The informant was referring to books by British writer James Herriot such as All Creatures Great and Small and All Things Bright and Beautiful (New York: St. Martin's, 1971, 1973).

see. But they're all sort of disconnected into occasions, uh. Now whether that will work out to be suitable for publication, I don't know. I don't, I'm not worried about it, I'm only wanting it for these three children to be able to read and see, well that's what it must have been like, and give them a word picture, picture of what life was when I was young, sort of thing. And I hadn't really even intended to bring it out of childhood, but the family say no, they want it to come right out of childhood into the war years and so on, you see . . . that's bringing it into their memories that they want to remember and see how I saw them in those times, you know. So whether I'll keep along those lines or not I don't know. But that's it, what I've been working at, that's why I'm saying I haven't done any work for, you know, for sale or even to compete with any, enter any competitions or anything, you know. (83-282/C6463:B:401)

Mrs. Green had already written up three or four incidents at that time and her plan seemed to be working out. She admitted that the university course, taught by a professor familiar to her, was a good means of prompting herself into action, for she did not really derive pleasure from writing the way she did from other creative activities. It represented work, but work that she was highly motivated to complete.

Writing was, however, just one creative activity in Mrs. Green's life. When her husband, long in poor health, died in 1973, she took a night course in pottery "for something to do, you know, to get out at night time." She described it as being "very beneficial at that time in particular," and has gone on to do other courses in the visual arts; additional pottery and clay sculpting, copper enamelling, stained glass work, drawing, and studies in

various aspects of artistic design and use of colour. The products of these courses and of continuing work in her tiny studio at home fill the house: small enamelled bowls and plates; ceramic figurines; oil paintings; works in stained glass. Some of these represent rather standard "learning" pieces, the type beginning students might be expected to produce, and others represent original designs of charm and ingenuity. An enamelled wall plaque depicts a quiet winter landscape with a cosy house snuggled into a cleft in the hills (Figure 1, p. 108). A stained glass piece in progress, entitled "The Gates of the Day," features a central pathway of clear glass leading to a golden sunrise; the words to a poem were later to be etched into the surface (Figure 2, p. 109). In contrast to the serenity of these works, many others exhibit a mirthful sense of fun and whimsy: a giant whale swallowing a tiny Jonah (figure 3, p. 110), and a pensive ape pondering a human skull. She has done an entire series of ceramic figures depicting characters of a popular American children's television programme, "The Muppet Show" (Figure 4, p. 111). While the majority of Mrs. Green's designs are derived from her imagination or from contemporary popular culture, she was working on a series of sculptures depicting the work of the traditional outport fishery (Figure 5, p. 112). These highly detailed representations of figures at work catching, salting, and drying fish were based on her memories of life

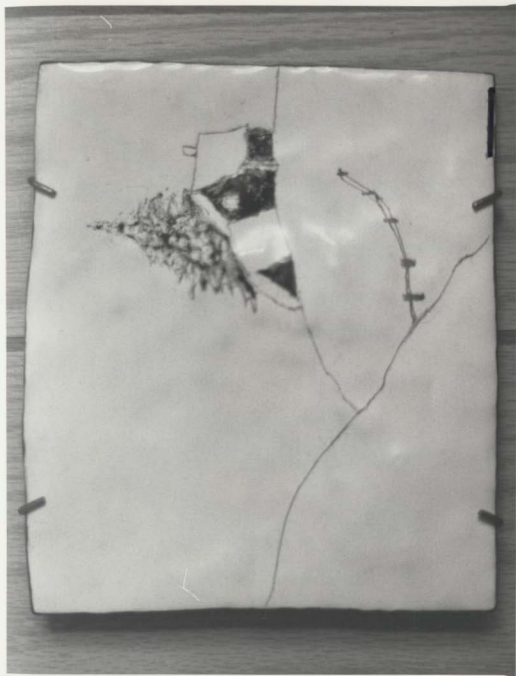


Figure 1: Winter scene, enamel (Mrs. Green)



Figure 2: "The Gates of the Day," stained glass (Mrs. Green)



Figure 3: Jonah and the whale, ceramic sculpture (Mrs. Green)



Figure 4: Muppets, ceramic sculpture (Mrs. Green)



Figure 5: Stage with splitting table, ceramic sculpture (Mrs. Green)

in the several small coastal communities where she and her family had lived before moving into St. John's.

The informant's ingenuity was reflected in her adaptation of conventional art techniques to suit her own purposes. The figures described above were moulded in clay, fired, and then painted with acrylic paints, rather than being fired after the colouring process. This allowed her to achieve the exact colours desired, without running the risk of cracking the pieces in the delicate firing process. The informant's detailed explanation of the reasons for this change of technique (83-282/C6463:A:010) is evidence of the professional approach to art which she has developed over the last decade.

Mrs. Green has not sought public recognition for her visual art work, except for one submission of an early painting to the provincial Arts and Letters Competition which is organized annually by the Memorial University Art Gallery, situated in the Arts and Culture Centre, St. John's. The circumstances attending this submission were revealed when I asked what medium she used for landscape painting:

... oils and acrylics, I've done them in. And, I did one, I'll show you, it's hanging up through there, because we play tricks on people with it. And--I put it into the, the Arts and Culture contest, you know, the Arts and Letters Contest? I put it in there one year, and she names a local art critic gave me a wonderful write-up. And said it was very ambitious, et cetera, et cetera, and was really craz--raved about it. And in his opinion it would--should have been, if not third, at least top of the honourable mentions. So

I felt very proud of myself. But I'd done it for a lark, and I told a few people I'd done it for a lark, so [the critic] didn't like that. (83-282/C6463:A:475)

The second half of this anecdote, which appears to have entered family legendry, was revealed when I questioned the informant about family reaction to her artistic endeavours. With a chuckle she replied:

They'll probably tell you, "My mother's nuts." You just laugh and keep going. Sometimes, they say, "Oh yes, my mum does that," and other times, say, "Sh-h-h." Like that picture I showed you? I had one of my sons-in-law take it into the Art--into the Arts and Culture [Centre] to get hung, well to enter the contest. And he said, "You don't want me to take this in." I said, "Yes, he's the only one I can get to take it in." So seemingly, he--we heard afterwards, he took it in, dropped it outside the office and fled. [At this point, gales of laughter erupt from the informant.] Then it was--we had an occasion to go--I didn't know if there'd been any, what the reception was to it. And we were in with a grand-nephew and one of my daughters. And we'd gone into the Arts--Gallery--just was passing the time, I think we were waiting to go into the theatre. And Danny saw the picture hung and he said, "Aunt _____, your picture's in here." And with that he ran out and yelled to Georgie, "Georgie, come in here, Aunt _____'s picture's hung!" And of course this voice all over the gallery. And Georgie, "Sh-h-h," and she came up, she said, "Oh my God!" and fled. [More laughter from informant.] And of course everybody turned round, of course nobody could immediately recognize the picture that got this reception, "Oh my God." So that gives you an idea how sometimes they feel about it. Other times they're very proud of it. (83-282/C6464:A:008)

Mrs. Green's comments on her various activities in the visual arts reflect a combination of attitudes which I found very appealing. On the one hand these activities are no mere hobbies. They stem from a profoundly felt need for creative expression and for continuing development of her considerable talents. She spoke enthusiastically of the

challenges of mastering a new skill or finding a fresh way of making a visual statement. However, she is serious about her work without taking herself too seriously. There is no trace of affectation or pomposity when she discusses her considerable knowledge of various artistic media. A sense of fun and adventure, and a tendency to laugh at her own mistakes and even at her accomplishments come through both in her spoken comments (as in the anecdote quoted above) and in her artistic works.

In addition to writing and working with different visual art forms, this informant has taken up another activity in recent years, the operation of a "nursery school" in her home. According to Mrs. Green, she "got the children in for company" after her husband's death. She originally intended to give this up after the first group of children started to attend school all day, but "the first four got siblings and the next four got siblings and so it went on." While providing morning, lunchtime, or after-school care to a group of children ranging in age from infancy to perhaps eight or nine years would not seem a creative activity to many, the informant encourages the children in various expressive forms: drawing, print making, puppetry, theatrical performances. During the interview, her pride in the children was evident as she described how one of the four-year-olds had earlier that day drawn a detailed picture of himself in his future career as a Fix-It

Man, and how the previous Christmas the children had designed and printed their own greeting cards. (83-282/C6463:B:220;.265)

Mrs. Green's present life is obviously a very full one. With young children taking her attention on weekdays, her own creative endeavours are restricted to evenings and weekends. She confessed that she never gets to bed the same day she gets up. Yet she obviously thrives on this full schedule, and interrupts it only during the school holiday months of July and August, which are reserved for travel and family visiting.

Viewed in isolation, the informant's activities appear highly contemporary and innovative, and perhaps out of place in a study of later life undertaken by a folklorist. But when these same activities are viewed against the context of her background, the continuities become apparent. Many earlier personal, familial and community patterns are mirrored in her present life. While earlier generations of her family presented no specific models for the late-life adoption of a creative activity per se, there was a definite pattern of continuing high levels of activity into old age among the family members she was closest to. Only one grandparent survived into the informant's childhood, but the informant had strong memories of this grandfather's later years:

He was, he was quite a dominant person, you know, and quite friendly to his grandchildren. I can remember

that and I can remember sitting up on his bed listening to stories--I can't remember the stories, I just know that I enjoyed sitting up on his bed listening to stories and so on, you know. And that he had a parrot, and he had a passion for birds. He had a big aviary built in the windows of his bedroom so he could watch the birds. They'd come partly into the house sort of thing, you know. (83-282/C6463:A:055)

Her parents, like her grandfather, lived into their eighties, and were highly active in later life just as they had been in earlier years. The informant adopted a similar pattern very early in life when her father first introduced her to a range of outdoor activities in which the family participated as a group: fishing, swimming, hiking, mountaineering. As a teenager she continued the same activities within organized youth groups. Her description of the local recreational institute which was the centre of her teenage social life is interesting, for it suggests the continuation of the intergenerational approach to recreation which had already been established with her family.

I was kind of fortunate because there was this building . . . a recreation centre. . . . And in it we had all the facilities you could possibly want for a youth centre. . . . And not only was it for youth, but there was what they called the "Darby and Joan" [a special social club] for retired people. There was a kindergarten for small babies. From that age up this place was constantly in use and quite often we frequently joined up with different groups, and because it was the Darby-and-Joans that used to help babysit the kindergarten groups and all this sort of stuff, you see. And it was a very tight group, almost like a school, in spirit, you know. (83-282/C6463:A:117)

Similarly registration in night courses as a means of pursuing particular interests was an accepted part of her youth in Britain, as she makes clear in this passage which

underscores her previously mentioned sense of adventure and fun:

... night school is a way of life, you--as soon as you finish school, you enrol in night school, and you can take all kinds of courses. I've taken Esperanto, and, you know, anything--I was going to say from Esperanto to something serious, you know--that's a sin, because people who take Esperanto might be very serious about it. I wasn't, I only did it for fun. But I have, you know, I grew up with that background, so, I mean, every year I look to see what's coming on. And if I get interested in it, well I'll keep at it, you know, till something attracts me somewhere else. (83-282/C6463:A:362).

There has also been a continuity in her interest in the visual arts and in writing.

I've always been interested in art. The school I went to, there was quite a lot of emphasis on it. And so I always had a background in it. But just depending on circumstances or where I happened to be, what I sort of picked up as a, to be a hobby. I've also, always, eh, been interested in writing. So if I wasn't doing something in visual art, I was writing. So I've always been, what you call it, happy in myself. (83-282/C6463:A:318).

Mrs. Green's youthful writing projects began with neighbourhood play. While a group of playmates acted out scenes of crime, ranging from traffic violations to murder, she, as court reporter, recorded all the details in half a dozen notebooks, filled over the whole of one summer. The pattern continued in adolescence:

And my next effort was keeping a log book on a year, a year's log book on going around youth hostels--who we saw, and what we saw and, and folklore of the places and tales and so on. And that was about my first sort of really serious effort to sit down and do it properly sort of thing. And then all through the war, believe it or not, I never put pen to paper. Well first of all, we weren't encouraged. And then when the children came along I started scribbling again, but actually I

never got published till I was here in Newfoundland. And then I got a couple of short stories and that published. (83-282/C6463;B:294)

Because marriage and motherhood followed quickly upon active war service, and led to a series of moves necessitated by her husband's career, a pattern of intermittence has characterized Mrs. Green's creative work for most of her life. It is only in the period since her husband's death that she has plunged wholeheartedly into the activities that first attracted her in childhood. Many Newfoundlanders, and indeed many mainland Canadians in her age group would never consider enrolling in a night course, for such an action would seem to them to be a prerogative of the young and the elite. This informant, however, is merely availing herself of a resource which has been familiar to her since childhood. Her daily association with a wide range of age groups, both through the art courses and through her nursery school, is also a lifelong pattern, having its roots in a particularly warm relationship with parents who were considerably older than herself, and being fostered through close intergenerational contacts both within and without the family during her youth.

While this informant, like the previous one, has the sense of having the freedom now to do things which family responsibilities prevented during earlier years, she denied having feelings of regret that deeper artistic involvement had not been possible at an earlier time:

No, no. No, I think everything has a place and a time. And I'm very much a fatalist and therefore, you know, what you do at that time was what was to be done. I don't mean now that, that everything is ordained or anything like that, I don't mean that at all. I mean that circumstances are such that you can only do certain things at certain times, you know, and therefore, you know, it doesn't matter what you try to do, you're only going to be up against a brick wall if you, you know, because there isn't the time or the space at that particular time in your life to do these things. And it's just frustrating if you try to do it. (83-282/C6463:A:078)

Mrs. Green in fact sees those earlier years as contributing to her creativity, in the sense of providing a wide range of experiences and images which can now be drawn on. But, paradoxically, she also sees those earlier interests as providing a basis not only for her present artistic expression, but also for her contentment and serenity, without which the productivity would be impossible. In her opinion, late-life satisfaction does not come to those who have centered their earlier interests too closely on occupational or family concerns:

Well, I think a lot, a lot--if you want creativity or any sense of doing anything in later life, I think you have to have made a foundation in the earlier life. If you're just honed in on one thing earlier, unless that's a very, you know, wide, complicated thing or growing thing, you--it you're honed in just on rearing children and you come to later life, you're going to be lost; if that's all you ever did or ever wanted to do, you know. Because even the relationship of grandparents to children is totally different from what you had as a mother. And things are totally different like . . . [An example follows here of a friend who was out of touch with the changes going on about her.]

. . . Now I never had that because I've always been involved with children at various ages and I grew up through it, sort of thing, you know. And I'm still with it, as far as the children are concerned. But nevertheless, I'm still a grandparent, eh, and see

the children as a grandparent, not as closely involved as I was as a mother. When they go out the door at six o'clock at night, it doesn't, you know, I'm not wondering what I'm going to do now. You know, that time's over, my fun with them during the day is over. At the weekends, I don't wonder what they're doing, I'm involved in my own things. And unless people can make that transferral over from what they used to do as what you say it, the best years of their life, if they can't bring something over into their latter years, they, yeah, they're going to be lonely. And old. 'Cause they're going to slow down. (83-282/C6464:A:80)

Viewed against the backdrop of her entire life, Mrs. Green's present creative activities reflect a complex blend of influences. Her media of expression are dictated by elite art and literature, to the extent that she follows formal classes. But the content of her work reflects popular culture, Newfoundland outport culture, and family tradition, as well as personal preferences and interpretations. And in her mode of life she is following the models and practices of her earlier years in her natal home, not those of her adopted country.

There is also another component here of importance: the urge to use artistic means to transmit cultural knowledge within the family. As noted earlier, Mrs. Green is keenly aware of her position as a "bridge between two cultures," that of the old country and the new. In writing personal and family history for her children and grandchildren, she sees herself as adopting the role of her grandfather (83-282/C6463:B:386). The only difference is that the medium has changed from an oral to a written one. This sense of the creation and transmission of a family

legacy through artistic work is a central motivation in her writing, although it does not, at least at present, play a major part in her work in the visual arts. It is a theme which has been suggested as a central component in the expressive history of many elderly people, and one which will merit further attention in relation to other informants.

Informant 3: Captain Peddle

Captain Peddle painted his first picture in 1923, and then gave up the activity for fifty years. Born into a merchant family in a thriving Bonavista Bay outport of 1908, this informant spent his childhood in the midst of a huge extended family, whose history on both sides was intimately linked to the cod and seal fishery in the days of sail. He counts among his ancestors and kin numerous captains of sealing ships and Labrador schooners, many of whose names are familiar in Newfoundland legendry for courageous and sometimes tragic exploits. Although the informant's father died when he was extremely young, this history was passed on to him by his mother, whose family had been equally active and well known in the fishing and sealing industries, and by his many uncles, aunts and other older relatives, all of whom lived in immediate proximity to each other in a series of fine merchant houses overlooking their harbour front premises.

One of ten children, the informant left school at age 15 with the equivalent of a present-day grade nine education, and went to sea on family vessels. He studied navigation on his own, and obtained his master's ticket. From that time he served as captain on several vessels: a public health association ship, a luxury yacht, a fishery company ship, a ferry boat. Except for a period of fifteen years when he worked at installing engines for the family

business, he has spent his life sailing in Newfoundland waters, and was still employed as a captain at the time of the interview, although he was then 75 years of age.

Since 1941 Captain Peddle has been living in St. John's, although he still maintains the family house in his home community and lives there for part of every summer. Married in 1952 to a rural Newfoundland woman who had moved into St. John's, the informant has three children, the youngest of whom is still at home. The couple have one grandchild who lives with his parents in central Canada.

The 1923 painting mentioned earlier was of the local church in the informant's community, painted with house paints on ship's canvas. A cousin had earlier painted the same church in the same way. It was not until a work-related accident incapacitated the informant in 1973 that he resumed this activity. Three years before this, however, his interest in family history had prompted him to start work on a genealogy, a project which began as a simple family tree and blossomed into a book. Captain Peddle started this work while he was in command of a private yacht. He obtained information from such sources as provincial registers, the College of Heralds in England, and different correspondents on the mainland of Canada. A large part of the information, however, came from records kept by the family in the old family home, records which told where they were born, what ministers married them, and all this

kind of stuff" (83-282/C6465:A:232). He knew much family history already through his mother, who, in his words, "was an avid reader, you know, and although she never had much education, but she could talk to the King." His mother's stories obviously remained with him, and the family tree grew as he "started writing about certain other things and told anecdotes of whatever you see in the book there now." The "certain other things" were mostly data about the family's involvement in shipping and the fishery: names of schooners, catches of fish or hauls of seals, information about captains and shipbuilders, and anecdotes about ships and the men who sailed them.¹⁵ After three years in preparation, the informant had the book, containing numerous photographs, printed privately. He also had 200 copies of the photos alone run off and bound in a smaller booklet which he gave away to friends and relatives.

At the time of the interview, a second book was being planned, this one focusing on the schooners of Bonavista Bay. He intends to rely on information found in another publication (he has already requested the permission of the other author), and to supplement this with more details, so as to produce a complete reference book on all

¹⁵The presentation of this kind of autobiographical material has been examined by Martin J. Lovelace in a recent paper: "Literary and Oral Styles in Newfoundland Autobiographies," Folklore Studies Association of Canada, Learned Societies Conference, Montreal, June 1985.

the schooners that were built and worked in the region. The compilation of such material will, of course, be a massive job, and Captain Peddle has no ambitions, at present at least, to attempt a third publication after this one is completed.

The family history (not identified here in order to preserve the informant's anonymity) appeared in 1973. In that same year, the informant broke his arm in a fall on board ship, and during a long convalescence turned again to painting:

Well, I couldn't do much with a broken arm, you know, but I could manage to paint with the right hand. I got a few paints and paint all, all the houses in the community. [He refers here to all the family houses in the home community]. They were all, 'twas the tickle run this way. We, we lived on the south side of the tickle. 'Twas eight [members of the family] lived on that side, and on the north side of the tickle, there was two lived over there. And they had their houses and premises. So I painted all our side first, and then I painted Uncle Tom's side last, and that's the one I got the third prize for in the exhibition. (83-282/C6465:A:315)

The painting which showed the other side of the harbour with the family houses and premises took third prize in the annual Newfoundland Arts and Letters Competition of 1975.

From painting family houses, Captain Peddle went on to paint lighthouses. His explanation for continuing the activity was merely that they "took very good."

No, well, when I started painting, and it seemed like they took very good, so I continued on then painting. I, I started in at lighthouses then, old lighthouses. Pre-1917 lighthou--out of an old navigation book that we, we had for what we called The Coast, Coast Buoys Navigation Book. So all them pictures is there, see.

And I did a few of those . . . from the pictures in the book, yeah. So they're all authentic, you know, there's nothing fictitious about them at all. (83-282/C6465:A:346)

In painting the family houses, the informant had also relied on old photos for several of them. In fact, he used the word "authentic" in relation to his paintings several times, an indication of his concern for historical accuracy.

Many of his paintings depict scenes from his youth or stories remembered from the telling of relatives or local people. One of his favourites is of a giant whale that was towed into harbour in Bonavista Bay in 1910:

That whaling station was down in Bonavista Bay, about practically ninety years ago. And they caught this monstrous whale, and they brought it in, and they towed it all up on the slipway, like you see there. And this Sunday hundreds of people went to see the whale. And my brother-in-law . . . he was a little boy. They carried him down from _____ and they put him in the whale's mouth. But the whale was covered with people and the people looked like matches, the whale was that big, you know. And I, I had a picture of that, my uncle had a picture of that down in _____ with the station and the whale up, you know, and all the men standing around it. So I remembered that, see, and I painted that from memory, now. (83-282/C6465:B:176)

While this picture is his favourite, he thinks his best one is of the church and school in his home community.

It too brings back memories:

That's our old church built in 1888. And that's the school that I went to, the first school, enough to freeze you, in that school. We all had to, in the mornings we'd go to school about nine o'clock in the mornings and we'd be, all be up around the stove warming our hands up till ten o'clock. And then we'd clean our slates, we'd go back to the seat and, and clean our slates, we had slates in them days, see. Some people used to carry a bottle of soapy water to school to clean their slates with, and more fellows

would spit on their slates and before you had a chance, before you had a chance to get the rag on it, the spit'd be frozen solid [informant laughs]. And that was the parsonage. Now that parsonage is still there. And this house there is still there. But this is gone, a new church and a new school. (83-282/C6465:B:197)

This is a scene which he has painted several times on request for different friends and acquaintances, a practice which he has not followed frequently.

Sometimes the inspiration for a painting comes not from a personal memory or family story, but from Newfoundland legendry. The story of Aunt Lydia's prayer is one that recurs in popular regional publications, but Captain Peddle appears to have heard it first from a local minister and Newfoundland historian, who later published the story in a small pamphlet.¹⁶ The following is the informant's explanation of the background to his painting of Hants Harbour Church in 1868:

That was a church in Hant's Harbour when the Reverend Fox was there, that they couldn't get any fish, there wasn't a fish come to Hant's Harbour that summer. So he said, announced a call, all the people together, and he said, "We'll have our prayer meeting and pray for fish." So anyway there was one woman, Aunt Lydia, she was a great woman to pray, you know. So he asked Aunt Lydia to pray. And she went home that night and she made up a prayer, and the next Sunday night she went to church and went up on the three steps on the pulpit, and she prayed. And the minister said, "You mark my words, something's going to come out of this." Now I got that in writing here too, see [referring to a recent newspaper article which inspired the painting]. "Something's going to come out of this." So anyway they left the church, they were all sceptical, even

¹⁶Rev. Moses Harvey, How the Fish Came to Hant's Harbour Sixty Years Ago (St. John's: Robinson & Co., 1926).

her own husband, he was sceptical too, you know. But he got up the next morning, went out fishing, he and his son. And, just to, more or less to go again, see, you know. So the first time they let down the rope, a big fish came up. And they loaded the boat, he and her son, came in. Now they thought Uncle Israel was playing tricks on them, he thought he had her full of [unintelligible phrase], you know. But it wasn't [unintelligible]. And that year, the most fish that ever came to Hant's Harbour that year. And they give Aunt Lydia the credit. And that was the church that she--I saw that in the paper and I said, "I must paint that one, now." (83-282/C6465:A:416)

Other paintings depict historical scenes from communities which the informant would have known well from his years at sea around the coast. The navigation book which inspired the series of lighthouse paintings also prompted him to do a scene from a photo of a neighbouring community which shows the houses and buildings along the front as they were around 1915. In reference to this painting, which was long and narrow to accommodate the shape of the tickle, the painter commented, "I got that out of that book too, so it was all authentic, you know." This too was a fairly recent painting, finished the previous summer.

When I commented that most of the informant's paintings seemed to represent historical scenes, he agreed that they were all of the past, and explained:

Well, I like, I like the old stuff, you know. All those paintings--like . . . [referring to the painting of the neighbouring community] . . . practically all that's gone now, you know. That was in 1915, 1916, up to 1921, see. But many, all those houses are gone now. New houses are put up in their place, see. (83-282/C6465:B:110)

Captain Peddle has achieved a certain amount of

renown both within and without the province for his art (no photographs of the paintings appear in this study for that reason). He did not have a large number on hand when I visited because many had been sold, some for handsome sums. He related his first sale of a painting as follows:

The first picture ever I sold, I painted a little small picture about that, about that big. [gesturing to indicate a small canvas] of three or four schooners in a ice bound harbour down on the Labrador. And I said, "I'm going down to try to sell this one now," just fancy's sake, you know. I went down to the Mason Gallery and he said, "I'll give you a hundred dollars for that right away." I nearly fainted away. That's the first picture ever I sold and he gave me a hundred dollars for it. And that encouraged me, you know, to paint more. (83-282/C6465:8:137)

In 1977 Captain Peddle took part in a five-man exhibit of naive art at the Memorial Art Gallery. Several of his paintings are now in the provincial collection in St. John's and in the national collection in Ottawa. One measure of his acceptance by the local art community is the fact that he has exchanged paintings with the prominent Newfoundland artist, David Blackwood. At present, the informant's works are not for sale, for he wishes to build up his stock. "I might be poor one of those days, you know," he jokingly explained; "missus might want some money." The offers, however, continue to come in: a dealer from Nova Scotia had contacted him shortly before our interview.

When Captain Peddle first took up painting during his convalescence, he restricted his practice to "a couple

or hours a night," and that is still his pattern. He paints only irregularly and very seldom in the daytime. When I asked if this would change if he retired later in the year, as he had earlier suggested he might, he explained, "Well, painting comes in spurts, sometimes, you have to have a mood, to get into the mood for it, you know." He admitted that, in addition to continuing the painting, he would like to try pottery as well, because "... there's more of an art to that, I think." He has considered taking art courses offered by the Memorial University Extension Service, but with a work schedule requiring his absence from St. John's every second week, this is impossible. Even in vacation periods, there is not much time for painting, for he and his wife spend a month or two each summer visiting their daughter and her family in Ontario, and there is also an annual stay at the old family home.

There were no role models for later life among Captain Peddle's grandparents. Three of them had died before he was born. While his maternal grandmother survived, she had remarried after the death of her first husband and moved to another location. The informant's contact with her was restricted to visits of two or three weeks' duration at intervals during his childhood. His numerous aunts and uncles, however, appear to have served as models for active later life, for they were all longlived. In addition, there were family models within his own

generation for both of his creative pursuits, painting and writing. The cousin who first painted the local church in his youth has already been mentioned. In addition, the informant's older brother, also a sea captain, had been involved in a treacherous escapade at sea in 1929, and survived to write a book describing the event. The older brother, who was a man of 31 at the time of the incident, never wrote another book, but that publication, which dated to the early 1930s, made its author's name a familiar one to Newfoundlanders.

Captain Peddie may, in fact, prove to be a later-life role model himself, for he is one of the first generation of naive painters in the province to gain prominence. Of the artists represented in the previously mentioned 1977 exhibition at the provincial art gallery, Arch Williams from the Southern Shore of the Avalon Peninsula was the first to achieve public recognition, but his first show had been held only three years earlier. The five individuals represented in the 1977 exhibition indeed represent the vanguard of publicly recognized naive painters in the province.¹⁷ When I asked Captain Peddie whether he knew any of these other artists (for there had been a group show by Williams and two of the other men in 1976, and I wondered if there had

¹⁷Details of these exhibitions are derived from an article by Philip Hicks, "Arch Williams in Retrospect," The Evening Telegram (St. John's), 7 Aug. 1982, 14.

been any influence on his work), he replied:

Not, not before we went down there that night and I saw them. But the pictures went there single-handedly, you know. I carried mine down and they carried theirs down. I didn't know what's the name? Fellow up the coast, he died this summer. (Interviewer: Williams, Arch Williams.) Yeah. I didn't know him until that night. We met him down there, see. (83-282/C6465:B:151)

He has not maintained contact with any of the other artists since that showing.

There is a distinct autobiographical dimension to the work of this informant. In addition to directly representing scenes from his childhood and youth, both his writing and his paintings in a more general way suggest the geographic and occupational continuity of his own experience. The importance of the sea as the central fact of his life is reflected everywhere, whether he is depicting merchants' houses, fishing vessels, or harbour scenes, or describing annual catches or the complex genealogy of generations of captains, merchants, sealers and fishermen. The motivation in all of this, however, is not primarily to tell his own life story, but to preserve a sense of an earlier way of life, especially for his children and their descendants. During our discussion of the research for his book, it was his wife who stated this motivation:

Mrs. Peddle: You wanted that for the children, mostly.

Captain Peddle: Yeah. I did it mostly for my children, you know. . . . (83-282/C6465:A:247)

In writing the book, as in painting the pictures, he showed a deep concern for accuracy of detail. When I asked if the

problems of revising and re-writing were great, once the material was assembled, he referred only to verification of detail in his reply, as if this was the central task of being an author: "I made sure it was practically all true before I printed it at all." Similarly he seemed unable to describe his painting techniques, in spite of my attempts to draw him out on that topic. However, he was fluent when it came to giving detailed accounts of the content of each painting, for this seemed to be of much more importance to him. When I asked whether the paintings served equally with the book as a way of preserving history, he suggested that the only difference was that one could have many copies of a book, but only one of a painting.

The paintings undoubtedly also serve as a means of status enhancement, for the artist proudly told me of the sales he has had over the decade since he started this activity. He very realistically acknowledges the benefits of financial reward in a society which judges artistic merit in terms of sale value. When I inquired about the reactions of family and friends to both his writing and his painting, he admitted that reactions were positive on all sides. But he added that, in regard to painting, there would tend to be a reaction only if the product did not sell, for then one would be judged to be wasting one's time.

Nevertheless, this sense of enhanced status, real though it is, does not appear to be a motivating factor in

either of Captain Peddie's creative activities. He could certainly produce more paintings for the open market and achieve much greater fame in that way if he so desired. As with the previous informant, the preservation of the past, especially as a tangible legacy for his own children, appears to be a much more significant motivating factor, for he has a sense of having been in touch, both directly and through his mother and other family members, with a way of life that has now disappeared from the coasts he knows so well.

Informant 4: Mr. Squires

The first handcrafted item that Mr. Squires showed me was a recently completed model of a Labrador fishing schooner, the sixth that he had created in as many years of retirement. It was to be the last, for he passed away shortly after our first meeting. From the information I was able to record on his life, both from the informant himself and from neighbours, and from the many works of art and ingenuity that I observed during that brief visit, we can gain at least some insight into the creativity of his retirement years.

Mr. Squires was born in 1920 to parents of minimal education whose families had migrated from England three or four generations earlier to fish in the same east coast outport where he was born. His father too was a fisherman, and his mother, like many young women of her generation, had worked as cook on a Labrador schooner for two summers before her marriage. The second oldest of five children, the informant had known all four of his grandparents, for all survived into their seventies. But he was particularly close to his father's parents, who shared the family house for the first fifteen years of the informant's life. After retirement from a career as skipper of a Labrador fishing schooner, this grandfather undertook in his mid-sixties to keep a light on a small offshore island, and the informant had happy memories of summers spent at the lighthouse.

Oh yeah, very close, to my father's people, eh. My grandfather there, i--summertime, now, I used to live with them, eh. Cause they were out on the island. After he knocked off fishing, he went out and looked after one of the lights out what we call Putfin Island, you know. So he was out there for four year, when I was about probably 7 or 8 years old. And that was where I used to spend the summer out there with them, you know. (83--282/C6466:A:044)

As a child, the informant also had close relationships with a number of aunts and uncles, for his father had been one of seven children and his mother one of six. Many of these individuals, however, eventually moved to the mainland, often to follow sons and daughters who had already settled down in central Canada, and over time the old ties were broken.

The informant spoke of other close relationships during his youth with individuals who were considerably older than himself. As a boy of 15, he had left school to work, as most boys of his community did, on the Labrador fishery:

... the first two year that I had, went out working, I went to Labrador fishing, eh, see. Well, most all the men that we went down there, they were all practically in their fifties and sixties, eh. So we used to go out and when we started work at them times when I was a boy, the first year you go out, you go out as a, what they call a half-man, you get half a share, you know. So every skipper carried two boys with him, you know. So we were what they call half-men, you know. Then the next year you went out, you went out as three-quarters a man, you know, you got a three-quarter share. That's how it was, used to work, see. And the third year, then you went as a man, you know. (83-282/C6466:A:063)

The fact that the above explanation was given in response to a question about close relationships with elderly people

other than near kin indicates that the informant perceived these early work situations as supportive, and emotionally significant ones.

Mr. Squires was engaged in the Labrador fishery for only two summers, for at the age of seventeen, he went to work for Newfoundland Railways on the coastal boats, which at the time of confederation with Canada were taken over by Canadian National Railways. He began employment in the catering department of a boat running from St. John's to Corner Brook by way of the northeast coast, was promoted to Chief Steward within ten years, and ended his career forty years later in 1976 as Chief Steward on the Sydney-Port-aux-Basques run.

From 1950 on, the informant lived in St. John's. In 1957 he married a woman whom he had met on the coastal boat when he was working the northeast run. The couple had no children. At the time of the interview, all of Mr. Squires' siblings were living in the general district of the old family home, his two sisters having returned to the province after their husbands had retired from jobs on the mainland. His mother, then, was in excellent health, was living with one of his sisters. From references to various family members, it seemed that early retirement was the norm for this family. Mr. Squires was still only 63 years old and had just entered his sixth year of retirement. At the time I met him, the St. John's house was up for sale, for

he and his wife were planning to move back to her home community the following summer.

42 The extent of Mr. Squires' creativity can perhaps best be conveyed through a description of the various works I observed on the evening of our meeting.¹⁸ After greeting me near the front entrance of his home, a suburban bungalow, the informant suggested we go down to the basement to see some of his work. As we passed the door leading to the backyard, he paused to point out the location of some of his pieces which were displayed in the yard beyond. It was covered with snow at the time, but I had already known about these items, for it was his backyard neighbours who had originally suggested Mr. Squires as an ideal informant for this project.

The area at the bottom of the stairs was a combined laundry-utility room. On a work table here was placed the previously mentioned model of a Labrador schooner, just recently completed. Mr. Squires had given away the other models made since retirement, and joked about holding on to this one. The schooner was approximately thirty inches long, brightly painted, and fully equipped with all the necessary gear for a voyage to the Labrador coast. In describing the use of some of these miniature items, Mr. Squires emphasized that he had made every part

¹⁸The information given here is based on fieldnotes for Feb. 21, 1983 (83-282/pp. 162-166).

and fitting himself, even though a drug store in the city stocked many of these pieces. This "purist" attitude to his handiwork expressed itself in other ways as well. His neighbours later told me that in doing odd jobs for remuneration after his retirement, he completely eschewed the use of power tools.

After I had admired the schooner model, I was led into a recreation room which he had finished and decorated himself. This was the central display area for much of his work. It was a square room which occupied roughly one-third of the basement area, and was partitioned into two equal sections by a room divider in the form of display shelves and a wide archway. One side of the room was taken up by beds which Mr. Squires had recessed into the wall to resemble bunks in a ship's cabin. The beds, complete with fresh linens and curtains which could be drawn for privacy, were turned back as if ready for immediate use. They were covered with brightly coloured patchwork quilts in the crazy-patch design widely used in Newfoundland, and each bed had several toss cushions encased in crocheted and knitted covers of brightly-coloured yarns. Mr. Squires mentioned that it was his mother who had made the quilts and cushion covers. The space under each bed was filled with four large built-in storage drawers which enhanced the illusion of being in a ship's cabin.

The wall adjacent to the beds was hung with framed

pictures and with mementos and souvenirs of various sorts, and a bar occupied a corner at the opposite end of the room. The counter surface of the bar was painted black, and the front was padded and covered in black vinyl which was button-tufted with gold buttons from the informant's various steward's uniforms. The bar was perhaps five feet long, and the corner facing into the room had been rounded off. The gold stripes of Mr. Squires' uniforms had been glued in horizontal bars from top to bottom of this curve, and the names of the various boats on which he had served were imprinted on plastic tape affixed under each set of stripes. When I asked the informant if he would take this bar to their new home when they moved that summer, he replied that it was bolted sturdily to the floor and would be too difficult to move.

The shelves of the room divider next to the bar were filled with various artifacts relating to Newfoundland life and to Mr. Squires' career: shells, pieces of fishing equipment, representations of sea creatures, rocks, etc. Among these there was a bird which looked amazingly life-like, but which I suspected was one of the informant's own creation, stuffed and covered with actual feathers. My suspicions were aroused by the way in which he handed the bird to me for inspection, and then carefully watched for a reaction. I had already heard from his neighbours of the time when, in their absence, he had fixed a fake but

very realistic looking puffin to a rock in their back garden, and then had waited for a reaction when they returned. On this occasion he gave no indication of the bird's origin, and, having just met him moments before, I hesitated to ask.

The archway which spanned the room was decorated with miniature lite preservers about six inches in diameter, each of which bore the name of one of the ships the informant had served on: the Brigus, the Northern Ranger, the Springdale, the Bonavista, the Kyle, the Patrick Morris, the Sir Robert Bond, the Frederick Carter. The space between the partition and the door we had entered by was taken up by a small sitting area with several well-stuffed seats. On the wall above a small sofa, Mr. Squires had painted a mural on the plasterboard. In the centre of the painting and dominating it was a schooner, much like the model he had built, depicted in a bay with Newfoundland coastline on either side. He had captured in a striking way the dark colours and rocky outlines of the landscape. One had to approach the painting more closely, however, to see other features. The wild animals and birds of Newfoundland were painted into the scene as well, but in such subtle colours that they blended into the landscape. Only a close inspection revealed their charming presence among the rocks and sparse foliage of the coast. And out in the bay beyond the schooner the appropriate fishing gear was in

place. The cloud-dotted blue sky of this painting had been extended over an adjoining door and down into another scene, this time a seascape with a full-masted sailing ship on a dark blue ocean.

Mr. Squires greeted my exclamations of praise for this work with modest pleasure. He said he had done the painting with ordinary house paint at the same time as he was working on the house. Whenever he happened to have the appropriate colour available, he would add a bit more detail, much to the amazement of one particular friend whose reactions still caused him to chuckle.

Scattered about the room were souvenirs of all sorts and mementoes of earlier phases of his life. There were chairs and tables which the informant had made as well as other pieces of purchased furniture. Four small occasional tables were done in the shapes of the four suits of playing cards and were painted appropriately in black or red shiny hard enamel. When we finally sat down to discuss his work after touring the room, it was under an old mantle-style oil lamp which had seen long use in his outpost home before being brought to St. John's.

In the brief interview I conducted with Mr. Squires before illness called an end to our conversation, he gave no evidence that there had been any models for his creativity either among his cohorts or among earlier generations of his family. In our discussion of his early

years at home, no representational artists or craftspeople were mentioned at all. To my knowledge, there had been little in his previous life to suggest the artist which was to emerge after retirement. The informant's retirement itself merits some attention, for he, in a presage of the innovative productivity which was to follow, created a very personal "rite of passage" out of the event. The mutual friend who first told me of this informant described a dinner party to which various friends and neighbours had been invited. It was a celebration of the retirement date, but not an ordinary celebration. Mr. Squires had set up tables in the living room of his home, and he himself, in a final act as steward, prepared and served the meal to his guests, not joining them himself, but waiting on table as he had during his forty-year career.

This ritual of reenactment extended beyond that one occasion and into the years of retirement, for his basement recreation room retold his entire life's history. In it he combined elements from his childhood (the lamp from the family home, the assorted bits of fishing gear), his first entry into the working world (the model schooners and

painted mural),¹⁹ and his eventual career as steward (the cabin bunks, the bar with its tokens of years of service, the miniature life preservers). These three periods of his life were artistically blended in that one room whose autobiographical impact was striking to any visitor. The back garden contained a similar combination of elements: animals; anchors; a bird house constructed in the form of his hometown church; and a weathervane in the shape of an airplane of the regional carrier, Eastern Provincial Airways.

In Mr. Squires' case, this re-creation of his life was all the more impressive, for there were no children for whom he was preparing a family legacy, an important motivation for two of the previously discussed informants. In this instance the impetus to autobiography appears to have stemmed from a personal need to integrate the various chapters of his life's story into one whole, a phenomenon that has been commented on by various scholars but never more eloquently than by Barbara Myerhoff in her study of elderly Californian Jews.²⁰ While most of Myerhoff's

¹⁹Martin J. Lovelace has noted the significant first time at work as a narrative type common to workers' autobiographies. See "The Presentation of Folklife in the Biographies and Autobiographies of English Rural Workers," PhD thesis, Memorial U of Newfoundland, 1983, 560-561. Note this informant's oral presentation of the same theme, p. 138.

²⁰Barbara Myerhoff, Number Our Days (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1978).

subjects fashioned oral life reviews in the form of reminiscences, Mr. Squires chose other means of accomplishing the same end. The integrative functions of autobiographical activity will be discussed later, for similar elements will be found reflected in the creative projects of other informants. Mr. Squires' presentation of his life, however, is particularly noteworthy because of its form. His experience was presented not sequentially as in a set of oral reminiscences or a series of paintings, but simultaneously through a skillful combination of media which created a separate Gestalt within that basement room. The various physical features combined to give the viewer the impression of stepping out of present reality to directly experience the life of another human being. The fact that this room was a public area, the scene of parties and other social occasions shared with neighbours and friends, indicates that Mr. Squires meant this as a public presentation of his personal history.

On the surface, Mr. Squires' life, like that of the previous informant, appears to exhibit a degree of geographic and cultural continuity not often found in present-day North America. One might comment that perhaps the artful presentation of autobiography is simplified in lives where career choice flows from childhood circumstance, in this case family involvement with the sea and maritime occupations. While Myerhoff in her study felt that her

immigrant-informants, the last generation of East European Jewry in America, were particularly driven to recount and integrate the conflicting experiences of their often troubled lives, the creative activities of Mr. Squires and those like him would suggest that the autobiographical drive is no less strong among those who have never experienced extremes of cultural discontinuity. But discontinuity, like so many other factors, is relative. The move from a fishing outport to the city of St. John's may not be as traumatic as the move from rural East Europe to a large American city. But it may still in later life require the kind of integration of disparate elements reflected in the creative handwork of this informant.

Similar to Myerhoff's informants, Mr. Squires, in recounting his life history, was also fashioning another kind of portrait. The natural history of Newfoundland was suggested both directly by specimens from nature (rocks and sea shells, for example), and representationally through his mural depicting the landscape and its fauna. Traditional domestic life was evoked in the decorative touches of the bunks with their quilts and cushions. And maritime customs were reflected in artifacts from the fishery, in mementoes of marine service, in the representations of ships, and in many other minor details scattered about the room. In short, the room encapsulated major elements not only of the informant's own life, but also of Newfoundland life: the natural

setting, domestic traditions, rural culture, the maritime economy.

A final comment which ought to be made in relation to the creative work of this informant is that at the time I met him, he did not appear to have any plans for continued work in the future. As we toured his basement room before beginning the interview, I specifically questioned on several instances whether he would do similar work when he and his wife moved back to her community, or whether there were other skills he would like to try his hand at. Each of these questions was answered negatively and without any perceptible sense of regret, as if the creative work of his life had been completed. At the time it struck me as odd that a still relatively young man of such creative talent and energy would not have plans and ideas for yet more work, as the previous informants had. In retrospect, I wondered whether he had a premonition of the illness which was to take his life; and whether his stoical approach was in any way related to the successful creativity of his final years. That, of course, is something we will never know.

Informant 5: Mr. White

Of all of the informants, Mr. White was the only one to make much of the problems of retirement, but he was also the only one who faced the adjustment to giving up full-time employment at the same time as he experienced the trauma of resettlement, the provincial government policy of relocating entire communities.²¹

Born in 1907 in a small fishing outpost in Placentia Bay, where his family had fished for three or more generations, the informant was the youngest of five children. When he was four years old, his father died, but the family managed to stay together. In 1914, a telegraph office opened in their small community, and his oldest sister was appointed to operate it, a position she held for the next ten years. The position then passed to another of his sisters who held it for a further four years. In the meantime, the informant had completed his education in the local school and had gone fishing, the common occupation of young men of the area. He found, however, that this

²¹ Varied views of this much studied period of Newfoundland history are presented in the following works: Parzival Copes, The Resettlement of Fishing Communities in Newfoundland (Ottawa: Canadian Council on Rural Development, 1972); Noel Iverson and D. Ralph Matthews, Communities in Decline: An Examination of Household Resettlement in Newfoundland, Newfoundland Social and Economic Studies 6 (St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial U of Newfoundland, 1968); Ralph Matthews, "There's No Better Place Than Here": Social Change in Three Newfoundland Communities (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1976).

occupation did not suit him, for he was constantly seasick when on the water, and gave up the work after a year to go logging. When the second of his sisters left the telegraph office in 1929, he took over the position of operator and held it for twelve years. During this period he married a woman from the community and the couple had one daughter.

With the outbreak of World War II, an American naval base was opened in Placentia Bay, and the informant with hundreds of other Newfoundlanders in search of good wages went to work there. From 1941 to 1944 he remained at that work and then began to undertake small construction projects and carpentry work in and around his home community. When the telegraph office became vacant again, he resumed the position of operator and remained there for another twenty-one years, first in the home outport, then in a larger neighbouring one.

During this period of his life, Mr. White spent a lot of his spare time on board local schooners, which were not phased out of use in Placentia Bay until the early 1960s. He was fascinated by the boats, and even though a poor sailor himself, enjoyed going on board the moored vessels, "trying to figure out this and how this come to be, what that was for . . . "22 The latter of the two

²²Information on this informant is derived from the tape-recorded interview and manuscript of MUNFLA.81-447 (Eliza Reeve collection) as well as from my fieldnotes of April 26, 1983 (83-282/pp. 170-178)..

outports in which he served as telegraph operator was an especially thriving fishing centre at this time, and he described it with enthusiasm. There was always a great deal of activity around the harbour, and more work available than the local men could complete. The largest of the local merchant families had as many as seven or more schooners in operation at a time. In such a booming community, the provincial plan to resettle people to regional growth centres with centralized services seemed particularly unnecessary and outlandish. But the policy, which provided financial benefits as incentives, particularly to merchants who could assist with relocation, was implemented in earnest in 1965, and talk of moving began. When rumours spread, as they did in hundreds of small outports, that there would be fewer teachers, or perhaps none at all provided the following year, the people lost heart and the exodus began.

In 1967 the informant and his wife decided to move to the city of St. John's to be near their daughter, now married, and the two couples pooled their resources to build the house where they still live, the younger couple with their three children on the main floor of the bungalow, and the older couple in the basement apartment. After the decision to move was made, Mr. White, then 60, approached the Post Office in St. John's to see if he could be transferred there. When they offered him a position which would

have paid only one hundred dollars a month more than his pension, he reluctantly decided to take early retirement, confident that he could easily earn at least a hundred dollars a month in odd jobs.

Mr. White's first thought was to put his woodworking skills to use. He had done major carpentry projects in his home community, where he had constructed several public buildings as well as his own house. In addition he had built two speedboats while living there, and several dories. In this early period of his retirement, he made four more speedboats and also turned his hand to furniture making. It appears that he looked to popular contemporary furniture styles as models for his pieces. One of these was in his living room when I visited. It had the appearance of a combined stereo and imitation fireplace, with storage space provided as well, an unusual combination of purposes to my mind, but very carefully designed, stained and finished to resemble products one might see in the furniture department of stores such as Woolworth's. Such multi-purpose items were unknown to me, but several of my fellow folklore students informed me that they had seen similar pieces in the homes of relatives.

Mr. White soon discovered, however, that large-scale furniture making and woodworking were not suited to life in a small apartment. During this early period of retirement, the informant admitted that he was difficult to

live with, and praised his wife for her patience. The difficulties of finding a financially rewarding way of occupying his time at home were compounded by the necessary adjustment to urban dwelling, after having spent most of his life in small communities where he knew everyone. He ruefully noted during my visit that even after sixteen years on the same city street, he knew only the next door neighbours, and even then always addressed them formally as Mr. and Mrs.

Eventually Mr. White tried his hand at making model dories, and after completing quite a few decided to attempt a model of a schooner. That first model was of the Arcania, a ship owned by a close friend, a former fishing merchant from Placentia Bay. The ship had been lost on a voyage to Nova Scotia for coal. The friend assisted him by supplying details of the boat's construction. This first model was very large compared to the later ones (about five feet long), and it was given to his grandson. He stated that he had never felt more satisfaction in his life than when he looked on that first completed schooner.

Other models followed: dories and fishing equipment as well as schooners. And in 1972 he first entered his work in public competition, a move which led to both recognition and financial reward:

The first... the first year I put my model schooner and dory and lobster trap on exhibition. And I might say I got a pleasant surprise the next day when I found out that, that I had won first place for my schooner,

first place for my dory, and second tor, for my lobster trap, which was of another category, you understand. There are three different categories, schooner and the dory, and miniature. Well, I, I got the, the two firsts and one second. . . . That was held at the Arts and Culture Centre. And I don't know exactly who it was I had a letter from now, I don't know if it was, I think it was Mr. Moores, Frank Moores [then premier of the province]. And they wanted me to sell it to him. So I, I got the money tor the first prize, and sold it, got a dollar extra. So I did alright off that. And the following two years, I, I put one on exhibition, and again, just the schooner, the following two years, and I got first place each time. So I figured that was good enough on, tor exhibitions--I'd sooner give somebody else a chance. Wonderful to be blowing your own horn scattered time, isn't it? (84-447(11):A:203)

The exhibitions led to orders which in turn led to additional orders as Mr. White's work became known. From that first model of the Arcania, he branched out to do four more: the Bluenose, the Norma and Gladys, the Bay Rover, and the Elsie. He based his Bluenose model on plans tor Bluenose II which were in a book given to him by a friend.²³ The hull of the second Bluenose was an exact replica of the celebrated Nova Scotia schooner; and Mr. White followed the blueprints carefully, preserving the original scale. All of the other models were of Newfoundland boats. He copied the Elsie from memory after having caretully studied a model of it which was on display in the Battery Motel in St. John's. He did the Norma and Gladys and the Bay Rover entirely

²³These plans appeared in a book entitled Bluenose II, published in 1975 by Hosman Enterprises and L. B. Jenson (no place of publication given).

from memory.²⁴ The informant noted that in fact the fittings were similar for all of these models, since there was little variation in the schooners in terms of equipment and its placement. The variation occurred in the shape of the hull. At the present time, Mr. White makes and sells models of these five schooners. He has not added any others to his repertoire.

He speaks of this work now as a full-time activity. He puts in a forty-hour week from September to May or June of each year, and then takes a break over the summer to get outdoors and to visit. It now takes an average of 200 hours to make a model, although it originally took him twice that length of time. He works in a spare room in the apartment, and does all of the intricate work without glasses, and using only common tools. All of the fittings for the models (see Figures 6 to 8, pp. 157-159, for photographs of a nearly completed schooner) are made by hand by the informant, except for the sails which are sewn by his wife. The hull is pine, while the masts are dowels of birch, pine or whatever is available. Mr. White cuts tiny cogs and pulleys from aluminum, and fashions the ship's

²⁴The Norma and Gladys figured frequently in the provincial news during the 1970s. Originally a fishing schooner, it had been purchased by the provincial tourism department for use as a floating museum and tourist attraction, but there were frequent allegations of its lack of sea-worthiness. Sold by the government to private interests in the early 1980s, it went to the bottom off the southern coast of the island in 1984.

wheel from the end of a spool of thread (not the wooden kind, but the now much more common metallic spool). Tiny nails are driven in around the rim of the spool to give it the proper appearance of a ship's wheel (Figure 7, p. 158). A great deal of drilling is required on each model. Since the entire model is only roughly thirty inches in length, much of the work is very delicate.

With each model selling for several hundred dollars, the informant feels well compensated for his work, and takes satisfaction in the fact that his models are in homes across Canada and in several of the United States. They have been bought by private citizens as well as by public figures, and many expatriate Newfoundlanders have wanted one to add a touch of home to their mainland houses. While Mr. White no longer enters competitions, he frequently participates in public craft demonstrations, which often serve to attract additional offers. A few weeks before our meeting he had exhibited his work at a Senior Citizens' Craft Fair sponsored by a local service club at the Avalon Shopping Mall in St. John's. At the present time, he has no other hobby or pastime, and does not belong to any social clubs or organizations, although he jokingly admitted he might join a senior citizens' group "when he got older."

Mr. White knew of no one among his family or acquaintance who made models of ships or marine equipment when he first started. He sees the craft as a dying one, in



Figure 6: Schooner model (Mr. White)



Figure 7: Detail of schooner model showing ship's wheel (Mr. White)

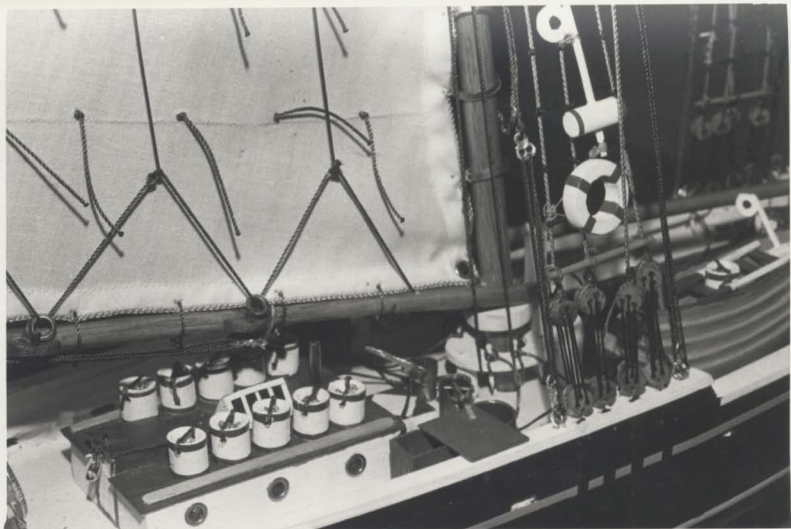


Figure 8: Detail of schooner model showing riggings and gear (Mr. White)

that there are few people left who can remember the ships from their own experience. Model shipbuilding, however, is a craft well known in Newfoundland, and a fairly common hobby among older men. Even among this group of informants, we have already seen one who reproduced the Labrador schooners of his youth. And an individual yet to be discussed has done his own version of a sailboat in a bottle. As well as being a private hobby, the building of ship models is a craft of public dimensions for the models have long been used in an educational context to familiarize apprentice boatbuilders with the vessels of the region.

In discussing his adoption of this activity with the original student interviewer in 1981, Mr. White suggested that he arrived at a deliberate decision to undertake model building after much thought on the subject of choosing a suitable "hobby":

And, now comes the time to retire, and to decide what am I going to do as a hobby in me old days. After much deliberation, I decided I'm going to build dories, model dories and schooners. (81-447/[1]:A:050)

In his conversation with me, however, the adoption of the craft appeared as an event based more on happenstance than on deliberate decision. It seemed to be an occurrence which came out of those difficult early days of retirement. He first made model dories, and after quite a number of these, the thought struck that perhaps he could undertake the more ambitious project of making a schooner.

The apparent contradiction in these two versions

of how he happened to take up the craft is revealing of his state of mind during that period. His earlier endeavours to earn money by making furniture and full-size boats had proven impractical. There was probably much deliberation and anxiety over the choice of a suitable money-making activity that would be within his abilities and appropriate to the limited workspace available. My interpretation is that the thought of making model dories crossed his mind, that he gained sufficient confidence with these smaller items to undertake the challenge of building a schooner, and that only after the first sale of a schooner did he realize that he had hit on the proper money-making activity. The choice seems a natural one, given his previous woodworking skills and his lifetime in close proximity to the sea, but it was arrived at only after a lengthy period of frustration and anxiety. He retired in 1967, and sold his first schooner in 1972.

The informant's stated motivation for taking up this activity was financial gain, and this remains an important consideration for him. To judge by his present living situation, one would guess that the additional money is no longer needed, for he and his wife would now be receiving Old Age Pensions in addition to his retirement pension. As with the previous informant, however, one senses that he feels that the value of his work is reflected in the prices that buyers are willing to pay, and offers for

his work are now rewardingly high.

From his comments during the original taped interview and during our conversation it is obvious that the activity has another meaning in his life as well. In 1981 he had told the student interviewer that if he had his life to live over again, he might have decided to be a full-time carpenter rather than a government employee. When I asked him about this, he said that he thought he would have been better suited to working outdoors instead of in an office, especially since he lived in a situation where so much was going on out-of-doors.

This comment suggests that in the building of model ships there is an element of compensation. While anyone with the steady income of a government position would still be considered fortunate in a province with the troubled economy and high unemployment rates of Newfoundland, Mr. White would have preferred to have participated more fully in the prime economic activity of his region, the fishery. He was physically unsuited to the dominant male career of fisherman. Nor could his second choice, carpentry, one of the few alternate choices available in a small community, provide a steady income, for such work is limited once the usual public buildings of a small outport are erected, especially since most people build their own homes. Given the fact that the informant took over the telegraph office position after his two sisters had

held it, it is possible that he retains a perception of this work as being more suitable to females than males. This, however, was not clearly stated during the interview, although he did point out, in response to my query, that when the telegraph offices first opened in Newfoundland, the majority of operators were women.²⁵

In any event, by now occupying himself with the building of model boats, he is able in retrospect to participate in the dominant male activity of his home culture, and to make a significant contribution to preserving the memory of that way of life. It is important to note that there is no suggestion of regret when this informant talks of career preferences. One senses merely that he is achieving a balance, that he is now enjoying a feeling of participation in a sphere of activity from which he was distanced by the particular circumstances of his working career, and that this activity gives him a sense of cultural involvement which is very rewarding.

Mr. White was adamant that I should stress in this thesis the need to plan for retirement. His own experience of the difficult adjustment to loss of work has made him more aware than any of the other informants of retirement as a critical time. But this would seem to be the result of an

²⁵This statement is supported by documentary and oral evidence in P. Bradbrook, "The Telegraph and Female Telegraphists in Newfoundland," ts., Newfoundland Centre, Memorial U of Newfoundland, 1980.

unfortunate coincidence of circumstances, rather than lack of planning on his part, for who could have foreseen the sudden adoption of the resettlement policy and the widespread personal and social trauma it would create. He, however, does not take this view, and links his early period of retirement with its anxiety and insecurity to his own failure to plan. He feels now that things have worked out very well in his case, but that others should be advised to plan ahead in order to save themselves a great deal of misery. He particularly emphasized the importance of finding some activity to offset the loss of work, and suggested that, judging by the numbers of old people one sees sitting around shopping malls, those like himself with a rewarding "hobby" are still in the minority.

Informant 6: Mrs. Hiscock

Mrs. Hiscock's trim, attractive appearance belies both her age (84 at the time of the interview) and the troubled life she has led.²⁶ Born in 1899 in a remote settlement in Notre Dame Bay, she was the youngest of three children. She never attended school for there was none in the vicinity, but listened in as her mother taught her two older brothers. When her mother died, even this education stopped. Her father, a fisherman, remarried and there were additional children, all boys.

At the age of seventeen, the informant married, but her husband died a few years later of acute appendicitis, and she was left with two small children, a daughter and a son. Mrs. Hiscock used the only skill she had, house-keeping, as a means of supporting them. She left her home community for St. Anthony, then as now a major medical centre for the Great Northern Peninsula, and got a job in the hospital. At this time, the children were put to board in an orphanage there. Later she took a position as housekeeper for a bachelor minister, even though she had some misgivings about being able to handle that position. The minister was obviously pleased, for when he was transferred to Fogo Island he asked her to accompany him, promising that she could keep her younger child, a boy, with

²⁶The information given here is based on fieldnotes for June 11, 1983. (83-282/pp. 186-193).

her. Her daughter was sent back to stay with her family, and she moved to Fogo.

After several years in Fogo, the minister married and no longer required her services. She herself remarried at this time, and her daughter was brought to a new home in Fogo. Her second husband was a fisherman who worked in the woods in the winter, and occasionally went as a cook on the boats. Two more sons were born and while raising her family of four, the informant attended night school and completed grade three, a minimal education but one which enables her to read letters and to correspond with friends.

All four children are now married and living in various parts of Newfoundland. The three boys are well settled in secure careers, and the daughter is raising a family. When Mrs. Hiscock's husband died in 1969, she stayed on in the family home for a while, and then moved to the community where she now lives to stay with her daughter. After a year in that situation, a publically funded senior citizens' housing complex was opened in the community. In 1975, a few months after the new facility opened, she moved in. She was then 76 years of age. Her daughter has since moved into St. John's with her husband and family.

Mrs. Hiscock has a simply but pleasantly furnished single room in the residence of the housing complex, where meals and all other services are furnished. The other

residents tend to be advanced elderly people, some in good health like herself, and others requiring some measure of medical care. The residents are both single people and married couples. Within the complex, this residence building is surrounded by "cottages" which are townhouse-style buildings with four one-bedroom units in each building. These are occupied primarily by married couples who are able to look after their own needs.

When she is not off visiting her children or other friends, Mrs. Hiscock spends most of her time in her room, perhaps knitting, but more likely crocheting. Crocheting is a skill most Newfoundland women of her generation would have learned from their mothers, but the informant learned it on her own after her mother's premature death.²⁷ She never, however, had the time to practice it while earning a living and raising her children. It was only after moving into her present living situation that she had the opportunity to crochet in earnest. And this is obviously her preferred way of spending time.

Mrs. Hiscock cannot read instructions for crochet patterns, but copies pieces she has seen or imitates designs

²⁷Although crocheting has been a domestic skill common to most areas of North America for well over a century, it has not received much attention from folklorists, perhaps because it is perceived as a recent (nineteenth century) importation, rather than an authentic folk craft. See Allen H. Eaton, *Handicrafts of New England* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949) 99-100 and 111-112, on this topic.

from photographs or illustrations. Over the years since moving into the residence, she has made many tablecloths, centrepieces and table runners in both medium and fine cotton thread. She generally works in white or ecru, although she showed me some pieces in combinations of white and pink, and white and gold. Like many crocheters in the days before printed instructions became widely available, Mrs. Hiscock keeps a "sample" box, a cardboard box in which she stores samples of the different designs she has made. These serve as a visual record of her repertoire of patterns. When I asked about the designs, she removed this box from her bedside stand and displayed the various sample blocks. This same bedside stand was decorated with one of her favourite pieces, a circular centrepiece in the familiar pineapple design (Figure 9, p. 169).

When I visited Mrs. Hiscock, two separate crocheted items were in progress. One was a square motif for a tablecloth she is now making on request from an acquaintance, a project requiring five or six months if one were to work steadily at that one item (the motif is shown in Figure 10, p. 170, along with a finished doily). The other was a round centre for a doily or centrepiece which she had just begun. She keeps her work in a wicker basket with the balls of cotton neatly inside empty soft drink bottles from which the bottoms have been removed. With the thread end drawn up through the neck of the bottle, the work

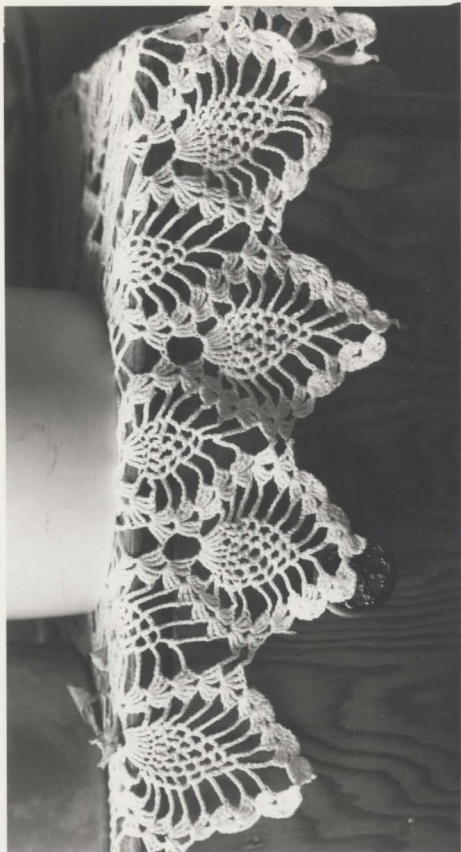


Figure 9: Pineapple design crocheted centrepiece, cotton (Mrs. Hiscock)

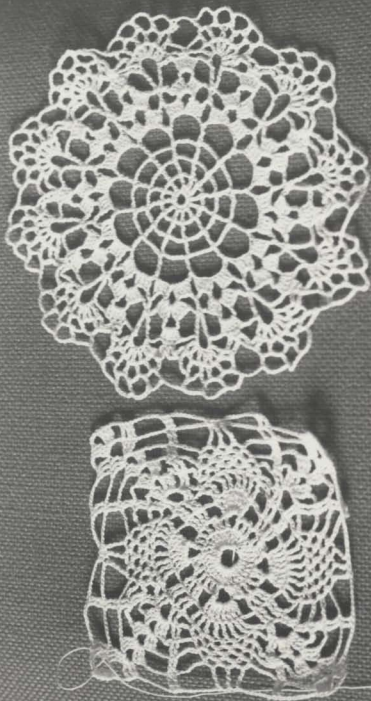


Figure 10: Square tablecloth motif, and completed doily, cotton (Mrs. Hiscock)

can be done without tangling the cotton or having it roll across the floor. (These ingenious thread-holders will be mentioned again later, for they were the "invention" of another informant.) Although the work at hand was being done with fairly fine cotton, Mrs. Hiscock said she had no difficulty with her eyesight, in spite of the fact that one eye was weaker than the other and she experienced a slight but constant discharge from it.

In addition to a variety of fine pieces in cotton thread, Mrs. Hiscock had also done crocheted items in yarn. Her bed was covered in a bedspread made of "hairpin" lace, a technique she has learned in recent years which utilizes a hairpin-shaped device over which the crocheting is done (Figure 11, p. 172; the other handmade items in this photograph were not made by the informant). This bedspread was made in stripes of green, gold and apricot in a synthetic yarn, Phentex, which is used widely in the province. The informant had made two other spreads identical to this one, one for a son, and one for a granddaughter.

While Mrs. Hiscock prefers crochet to other occupations, she also does knitting and sewing. She had on hand several pairs of men's gloves and mitts, done in the two-colour "double knitting" common in the province (two



Figure 11: "Hairpin lace" bedspread, Phentex (Mrs. Hiscock)

strands of yarn are used).²⁸ She had no name for the traditional pattern which she used, but always did these items in dark blue and white for the sake of economy, so that there would be no wasted ends of different colours. In addition to altering dresses for herself, the informant continues to sew quilts, although these activities are now always done during visits to her daughter who has a sewing machine. She referred to the quilts as "crazy quilts" but with a pattern, an indication most likely that, while the total effect is one of random colour, there is a studied repetition of basic geometric shapes from one block of the quilt to the next. She said she had such a quilt in progress, but it was, of course, at her daughter's. Neither of these activities, unlike crocheting, has been confined to her later life. She had always knitted and sewed for her children, and had done dressmaking for herself. On several occasions in earlier years she had also made knitted suits for babies on special order.

At present Mrs. Hiscock sells her crocheted and knitted items for the price of the materials. She finds

²⁸See Gerald L. Pocius, Textile Traditions of Eastern Newfoundland, Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies Mercury Series 29 (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1979) 23-28. Common Newfoundland double-knit patterns are illustrated in Knitting With Homespun, a publication of the Craft Training Section of the provincial Division of Adult and Continuing Education (St. John's: Dept. of Education, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1982) 100-105.

this necessary because of the cost of crochet thread and yarn. Much of her present work is obviously given to family members, and other items are given to the residents' association for fundraising projects within the housing complex.

Role models for creative activity in later life seem to have played no part in Mrs. Hiscock's development as a crocheter. She never knew any of her grandparents, lost her mother at a very early age, and lived most of her life far-removed from all other older relatives. She has outlived all family members of her own generation. Within her age cohorts at the residence, no influence has been apparent. She stated that only three or four of the women do any crocheting at all, and those who do have been lifelong practitioners; very few of the men have any activity to pass the time.

We might observe that in continuing to engage in an economic activity, Mrs. Hiscock is maintaining a lifelong pattern of self-reliance. Not content to live out her years in a passive existence like the majority of those in her residence, she is, through modest sales, preserving her financial equilibrium and contributing positively to the well-being of those around her by means of her donations of work to the group association. This pattern has been constant, for the initiative and determination which took her as a young widowed mother from her home community to another

distant settlement is still reflected in her life.

There is, however, another element in Mrs. Hiscock's biography, one which becomes apparent if we consider the place of crocheting in Newfoundland rural life in past decades. Knitting and hand sewing have long been necessities here as in other areas where warm clothing and bed linens have been required. Crocheting, on the other hand, has been a luxury, for the technique is not well suited to the production of serviceable yet inexpensive clothing or bed coverings. Because of their open texture, crocheted garments are not as warm as knitted ones of similar bulk. Crocheted bed coverings provide warmth, but require large quantities of wool which could more practically be put to use in sweaters, stockings and mittens, especially when used clothing and linens could be recycled into bed coverings. Thus the technique of crocheting has tended to be used for decorative pieces: table centres, runners for dressers, and decorative edgings on household linens and personal clothing. In his study of the textile traditions of the Avalon Peninsula, Pocius noted that crocheting is one of the crafts locally categorized as "fancywork."²⁹

In Mrs. Hiscock's life, crocheting is a means of aesthetic expression which she was unable to explore in the

²⁹Pocius 52.

days of attending to the practicalities of life. Through this craft she is able to compensate for the time she never had as a young woman to indulge in beauty and artistry. Crocheting as she practices it involves merely the duplication of existing patterns. It demands none of the creative ingenuity evident in the work of some of the previous informants. Nevertheless, tracing and re-tracing the delicate configurations now so familiar is obviously a deeply pleasurable activity to this informant, and she is content to spend most of her waking hours with hook and thread in hand. The serene way in which she described the difficulties of her life, with frankness and without regret, suggested that the creative present is to her a satisfactory counterbalance to the troubled past.

Informant 7: Mr. Willwood

It was Mrs. Hiscock who first directed me to Mr. Willwood, for he was one of the few men in the seniors' residence who passed the time in any activity other than talking and watching television. At the time of the interview, he was 76 years of age, and had been living in the complex for two years with his wife who had been admitted a year before his arrival, due to health problems. Because of her obviously fragile condition, my visit to their bed sitting room was brief. It was, however, rewarding in terms of the information gathered about the informant's life and present activities, for Mr. Willwood is a highly communicative man.

The informant was born in 1907 in a tiny fishing outport in Notre Dame Bay. He attended the local school and remained in the community fishing until after his marriage at the age of 30 to a woman from a neighbouring community. The only detail that Mr. Willwood related about this period of his life dated to the early years of their marriage. An infant daughter had fallen from the wharf close by their house and had drowned. His wife had been deeply affected by this tragedy. He implied, in fact, that she had never really recovered, and that her present physical and mental condition could be blamed on the incident.

Within a few years of this accident, the family moved to a deep water port in the vicinity, and Mr. Willwood

worked on ships during the Second World War. After the war, they remained in that area, and he worked for two of the large forestry companies operating in central Newfoundland, up until the time of his retirement in 1972 at the age of 65. Mr. Willwood and his wife have five surviving children, four of whom are still in the province. One son still lives in the family home, and two other children live in other central Newfoundland communities.

Since moving into the seniors' residence, Mr. Willwood has taken up a range of crafts, most of which involve textiles of various sorts. He began by producing doilies of his own design: a circle of cloth edged in bands of brightly coloured yarn. To produce these, he first cuts a circle of cloth, then turns it over and neatly hems the edge with fine thread. Next, the edge is overcast in woollen yarn. Then, using a plastic shuttle, which the informant calls a "needle," and the same knotting technique used for fishnets, he makes a series of expanding circles of varied yarns. He uses an ordinary pencil as a sort of marker to insure that the knots are at regular intervals. Because of his choice of colours and materials, the finished product is bright and colourful in appearance. In the sample which Mr. Willwood gave me (Figure 12, p. 179), the centre is cut from material with a Winnie-the-Pooh design. It is edged first in dark green, then in knotted rounds of (moving outward from the centre) pale pink, turquoise blue,



Figure 12: Doily and bottle yarn holder (Mr. Willwood)

wine, white, dark green, gold and fluorescent coral. The centre is roughly 3 3/4 inches in diameter, and the finished dolly is 6 1/2 inches across. After first starting to make dollies, the informant had gone on to make cushion covers which were edged in the same way as the dollies, but with only two or three rows of coloured yarn. He showed me two of these which were made of a brocade material.

Mr. Willwood uses this same knotting technique to make other articles. A handbag was in progress at the time of my visit (Figure 13, p. 181). He had already made a rectangular piece of netting approximately 20 inches long and 12 or 14 inches wide. The same medium weight of yarn was used as for the dollies, and he changed colours every eight to ten inches. To make a handbag, the length of netting would be extended to the required size, the ends would be sewn over purchased wooden handles, and finally the sides would be stitched.

Knitting was another technique used by this informant for several articles. Knitted covers for clothes hangers were done in brightly coloured yarns. Each was made from a long, narrow strip of stocking stitch (alternate rows of knitting and purling), with the colours being randomly changed every four inches or so. The strip was then sewn around a wire hanger. He also knits scarves and covers for the arms of chairs. Several of the latter had been placed on the padded arms of the easy chairs in his



Figure 13: Handbag in progress (Mr. Willwood)

room (Figure 14, p. 183).

In addition to these textile crafts, Mr. Willwood has made several other objects. Mrs. Hiscock's yarn holder was of his "invention;" that is to say, if he had copied rather than originated the idea, he did not admit so to me. The holder was a large soft drink bottle (1.5 litre size) made from soft plastic, the type which is equipped with a removable plastic cup on the bottom, which serves to reinforce the lightweight material of the body of the bottle. The informant had melted the bottom out of the bottle by pouring boiling water into it. Thus a ball of wool or crochet thread could be placed inside with the working end threaded up through the mouth of the bottle, and the reinforcement cup replaced on the bottom. Mr. Willwood made me a present of one of these yarn holders (Figure 12, p. 179). After showing me how to use it, he replaced the ~~cap on the bottle~~ in order to "keep the flies out," as he explained with a chuckle.

A plastic bottle modified in the same way had been used in making another article, a ship in a bottle. He had shaped the form of a small boat from lightweight wood, and had carved out the inside, leaving a fairly thick hull with two seats spanning its width. Two oars were added, and two paper sails mounted on what seemed to be the white paper sticks from lollipops. The boat was almost entirely white, except for the outboard (or as the informant said,



Figure 14: Knitted chair arm covers (Mr. Willwood)

"outport") motor,³⁰ which was black. There seemed to be a layer of thin white cotton material glued down over part of the side of the hull, but the reason for this was not apparent; perhaps it concealed some flaw in the wood. The boat fitted neatly inside the large soft drink bottle, and once the plastic cup on the bottom had been replaced, the illusion was complete. That this object was a source of delight to the informant was obvious from the pride with which he posed for a photograph.

The informant showed me another object which he had on display on the window sill. It consisted of two cylinders from toilet paper rolls, mounted upright about four inches apart on a cardboard base approximately eight inches long and three inches wide. Brightly coloured plastic flowers and leaves had been glued to the cardboard base, and the cylinders were wrapped in bands of yarn of various colours. At the top, the cylinders were attached to a slightly smaller (approximately six by two inches) strip of cardboard, which was also covered with leaves and flowers. This appeared to be a purely decorative object, and was certainly cheerful with its mixture of bright colours.

When I inquired how the informant had first taken up these activities, he was quick to point out that he had

³⁰A colleague has informed me that this term is a common one in Notre Dame Bay outports.

Begun completely on his own initiative, no one had encouraged him or suggested the forms of the various crafts. The director of the residence now obtains supplies for him in local stores at his request, but this has come about only after the fact. In this case, the circumstances of the interview were not conducive to detailed questioning about possible role models for late life activity and creativity. The lingering trauma of the little girl's death, related to me almost compulsively within a few minutes of the opening of our conversation, seemed to overshadow all other facts of life for the informant. And certainly his mention of it left me reluctant to probe too deeply into the past lest old griefs would be too vividly remembered. We spoke instead of the present, and there were obviously no role models within the residence. Mr. Willwood complained adamantly about the general lack of interest in "hobbies" among the other men of the residence, who, in his words, were interested only in eating, sleeping and talking. To judge by his comments and those of the previous informant, perhaps a few more of the women were active, but their interests were limited to knitting and crocheting.

Within the context of local culture, an interesting aspect of Mr. Willwood's activities is the fact that they involve to a large extent what would traditionally be considered women's work: the provision of various textiles for personal or domestic use. For a man who has spent his

working life engaged in the prime male occupations of the island, fishing and lumbering, the adoption of women's work in retirement would seem a strange and unlikely choice, especially given the strict sexual division of labour in the outport society of his youth.³¹ Yet the informant exhibited a positive outlook as if what he was doing was in no way abnormal or unexpected. It may be, of course, that his wife's health had forced him into assuming a share of the domestic work at an earlier date in their marriage, and that his assumption of female creative activities was just an extension of this. Or it may be that such activities seemed more appropriate to the physically restricted setting of the residence, for, as other scholars have pointed out, in outport life the home interior was the female domain, while exterior areas were male-dominated.³² In any case, the informant has creatively combined the two spheres of activity, by using a man's netting technique to

³¹On this topic see James C. Paris, Cat Harbour: A Newfoundland Fishing Settlement, Newfoundland Social and Economic Studies 3 (St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial U. of Newfoundland, 1972) 72; and Marilyn Porter, "Women and Old Boats: The Sexual Division of Labour in a Newfoundland Outport," The Public and the Private, ed. Eva Gamarnikow, David H. J. Morgan, Jane Purves, and Daphne Taylorson (London: Heinemann, 1983) 91-105.

³²Gerald L. Pocius, "Calvert: A Study of Artifacts and Spatial Usages in a Newfoundland Community," diss., U of Pennsylvania, 1979, 358-363. See also Linda Dale, "A Woman's Touch: Domestic Arrangements in the Rural Newfoundland Home," Material History Bulletin 15 (Summer 1982): 19-22.

produce "feminine" objects, doilies and handbags. In doing so, he has also integrated the two spheres of his own life, occupational and domestic. One sees the same sense of integration in his use of a common household object, a soft drink bottle, to hold either yarn, a symbol of woman's work, or a miniature boat, a symbol of man's.

Some of Mr. Willwood's crafts satisfy altruistic tendencies on his part. Some objects are given to the Residents' association to be sold. Others are given away: Mrs. Hiscock had been given a yarn holder, and I left his room with a doily as well as a yarn holder. His outgoing, generous spirit was obvious from the moment he, out of a group of men and women, spoke to me in the foyer of the residence, to the time of our leave-taking when I watched him gently usher his wife into the dining area and out of sight.

However, his generosity and sense of responsibility to others notwithstanding, one senses in viewing his work and hearing him discuss it, that a major underlying element is play. The objects he produces suggest not the careful planning and execution of an adult expert, but the spontaneous creativity of the child. The rounds of cloth centering the doilies are not perfectly circular. The hemming stitches are not uniform. The colours are chosen for their brightness and strong contrasts, and they are mixed according to no regular pattern. The prevailing mood

is one of whimsy and cheerfulness, a lively engagement in life as it unfolds day to day, not a studied striving for aesthetic effect.

We have already noted that, in Mr. Willwood's choice of activities, the usual sexual division of work is disregarded. In other ways too are standard categories ignored in order to put an object to a new use. Plastic soft drink bottles acquire new functions, either practical or fanciful. Mundane articles are transformed into aesthetic ones, as cardboard cylinders from toilet paper rolls take on a new nature. The newly created or modified objects are used either for brightening and personalizing the immediate surroundings of the couple's room, or for the benefit, practical or diversionary, of others. The ship in the bottle was used to amuse me and to engage me in social interaction; I am sure it has been put to the same purposes with most of the residents of the building. A sense of fun and experimentation runs through much of the informant's work, as familiar articles are turned to new uses, and new kinds of articles, such as the cloth-centred doilies, are devised.

Mr. Willwood, by moving into this sort of facility where almost all of his physical needs are met, has found liberation from much of life's usual concerns, and is free to enjoy. For him enjoyment does not lie in socializing alone, as he pointed out was the case with so many of the

residents, but in activity. He seems to be experimenting with the possibilities that are open to him in the present setting. It is obvious from his demeanour that he has found currently satisfying outlets for his creative drives, and one suspects he will find others in the future. The only remaining responsibility, that of caring for his wife, appears to sit lightly on his shoulders in the atmosphere of the residence where medical support is constantly present in the form of trained personnel. In his person he radiates the good humour and delight in life which are reflected in the doily he presented to me: Winnie-the-Pooh circled in swirling bands of colour.

Informant 8: Mr. Parsons

Mr. Parsons got up on the morning of his fiftieth wedding anniversary in January 1977 and made up a song about the occasion. He has been composing ever since. He resides in the same centre for the elderly as the two previous informants, but in one of the cottage units, rather than in the main residence. Due to the state of his wife's health at the time of my visit, and at the informant's suggestion, I concentrated on supplementing and updating, rather than repeating, material that had been collected by an undergraduate folklore student who had suggested Mr. Parsons to me as an ideal subject for this study.³³

Born in 1907 on an island in Notre-Dame Bay, Mr. Parsons belonged to a fishing family who, like many neighbours, took their schooner to Labrador every year for the summer fishery. At the age of ten, the informant joined his father on this trip, and continued to do so for thirty-three years. From the time of his marriage in 1927, his wife, a local woman, went along on the voyage as cook. When his father died in 1949, the informant went to Toronto for a year. On returning to Newfoundland, he sold the family boat and fishing gear, and the couple moved to Toronto permanently, where he worked for Canadian National Railways for

³³MUNFLA 82-007 (Randy Pond collection). Additional material is taken from my fieldnotes of June 11, 1983 (83-282/pp. 202-207).

twenty years. They had no children, and during this period his wife worked at various jobs such as sales clerk and housekeeper.

In 1971 at the age of 64, Mr. Parsons retired, and he and his wife moved back to Newfoundland to the town where they now live. While the town was new to them, it had become the resettlement centre for many families who had left their old home community, and they were among acquaintances. On first returning to the province, the couple built their own house and maintained it for several years. After the informant suffered a heart attack, however, they decided to give it up, and in 1979 moved into one of the cottage units of the seniors' complex. Their present home is a modern, one-bedroom townhouse in a single-level building which houses four such units, each with the entrance facing in a different direction to provide maximum privacy and create a sense of single family dwelling.

Mr. Parsons' songwriting career had started two years before this move to the housing development. He was seventy years of age at the time and the occasion was a memorable one.

Well, the first, first one ever I wrote that's, you know, . . . was on our fiftieth wedding anniversary. That was on the fourth of January in 1977. We'd been married fifty years. And then I got up that morning and it was a beautiful morning, just like the morning we got married, and then I made a cup of tea, and I went out and looked out through the window again, not a cloud in the sky, so I come in, sat down in the rocking chair. I had the radio on and I turned he down low, and I made up this song. I never wrote a word down.

never had a pen or pencil or nothing. And I wrote it down--or made it up, and then some time that day I wrote it down. You know--that was the first year, the first time ever I made up one. (82-007/11:A:005)

The above description of this first composition was recorded by Randy Pond on November 12, 1981. When Mr. Parsons described the event for me on June 11, 1983, he used almost the exact same words, an indication perhaps that the event has become a personal legend, and the narrating of it a permanent part of his oral repertoire. The text of that composition is as follows:

Just Fifty Years Ago

Just fifty years ago today
The sky was bright and clear,
On the fourth of January,
The beginning of the year.

The cold wind it was blowing,
The temperature three below
On the fourth of January
Just fifty years ago.

Yes, the cold wind it was blowing,
The ground all covered with snow,
When you put on your wedding gown,
Just fifty years ago.

Your wedding gown you made yourself,
Twas gorgeous to behold,
With bridal veil and flowers
Just fifty years ago.

As we walked up the aisle of St. Margaret's Church
The music was soft and low
On the fourth of January
Just fifty years ago.

The congregation stood waiting
For the service to begin,
The minister's voice came loud and clear,
Let all the people sing.

That voice that breathed o'er Eden
 That earliest wedding day,
 The primal marriage blessing,
 It hath not passed away.

The minister opened the Holy Book
 And this to us did say,
 "God's blessing be upon you both
 On this your wedding day."

The minister then he blessed the ring
 And gave to me your hand,
 And there upon your finger
 I placed the wedding band.

Whom God hath joined together
 Until death do us part,
 Just fifty years ago today
 When I gave you my heart.

"Now God has made you man and wife
 And gave to her the ring,
 I think it's time you kissed your wife."
 I said, "The proper thing!"

The minister closed the Holy Book
 With a smile upon his face,
 "I wish you joy and happiness
 You leave this holy place."

As we walked down the aisle that day
 So merrily and so gay,
 On the fourth of January
 On this our wedding day.

The church bell it was ringing
 And as it seemed to say,
 "We wish you joy and happiness
 As you go on your way."

God hath guarded us all through these years
 When both on land and sea,
 The time that we have left, O God,
 We'll give our thanks to Thee.

Now God has blessed us many times
 Since I gave you that ring,
 If you'd ask me to do it all over again,
 I'd say, "The proper thing!"

(82-007/[1]:B:104)

Later in that same month of January 1977, he was

inspired to compose again.

So I went on from that then, and the twenty-seventh of January then, that same year, that was when the first winter storm struck central Newfoundland, the twenty-seventh day of January. . . . And I looked out through the window and (an oil delivery truck) was over there trying to get some hose up to put some oil in the house on the other side of the road. And there was sometimes I couldn't see the truck, I couldn't see nothing; and I said to myself, well there must--there's some poor child, now, is wondering about where their father's to, the day like this. So I stood up again the window and I made up the song. About the tribute to the oil men. And he was pretty good too. I sang he up in the Legion one time for him (that is to say, he sang the song at the local Canadian Legion Hall, presumably for the delivery man in question). (82-007/[1]:A:019)

This second composition, similar to the first in melody and stanza form, presents the situation for the viewpoint of the child of the delivery man, and features dialogue between the anxious child, the reassuring mother, and the heroic father who braves wind and snow to deliver oil. It has a comic touch as well, for the man returns home to discover he has let his own tank run empty.

A Tribute to the Oil Men

"Momma, the winter storm is raging,
The wind is really wild,
Daddy's out there on the highway
Somewhere delivering oil."

"Now don't you worry, darling,
Everything will be alright,
God will take care of Daddy
And bring him safely home tonight."

"I know you love your Daddy
And (I'm sure) he loves you too,
But (he) is driving that big oil truck
And has his job to do."

The phone is constantly ringing,
The storm is raging wild,
"Oh please, Mister Oil Man,
Will you bring me some oil?"

"Now just a minute, dear lady,
I'll do what I can do,
The roads are very slippery
And I may not get through."

I then looked out the window,
The storm was raging wild,
Where can my Daddy ever be
Out there delivering oil?

Just then the door came open,
There was Daddy to behold,
He looked so pale and tired
And covered all over with snow.

"Oh kiss me, kiss me, Daddy,
I'm sure glad you have come,
When the winter storms are raging,
I want you to stay at home."

"Now just a minute, my darling,
For that I cannot do,
For there's hundreds of little children
They have to be kept warm too."

"Your supper is on the table,
It has been cooked for a while,
Oh Daddy, you have forgotten,
We haven't any oil."

After he had finished his supper
Straight to his truck did go,
And half a hour later
He had the tank filled full.

When he returned back home again
I greeted him with a smile,
For God takes care of Daddy
When he's out delivering oil.
(82-007/[1]:A:154)

In the month following these two compositions, the informant spotted two flies in his kitchen, and their midwinter appearance prompted him to write a third song,

"The Flies That Don't Like Electric Heat," set to the same melody as the two previous songs. In this fantasy of seventeen verses, the flies discuss the relative merits of different heating systems, and conclude by opting for a house heated with an oil turnace. According to the informant, the same two flies reappeared in his kitchen in May ("Well, they looked like them anyhow!") and he composed thirteen more verses in a sequel entitled "The Return of the Two Flies." And so the pattern of composition has been ever since; in the words of the informant, "I went on then making up one after the other, you know."

Very early on in his composing career, Mr. Parsons attracted public attention. He performed the first song at his golden wedding anniversary celebration, and the second and third compositions at the Canadian Legion Hall. Word of his talent spread throughout the town, and soon his poems were being carried regularly in the local weekly newspaper. The informant explained to me that he was in the practice of writing a song and then "walking it down" to the editor to have it published. Friends and acquaintances soon began requesting compositions for particular occasions such as wedding anniversaries. And without any prompting, Mr. Parsons has been inspired to compose by a wide range of local happenings: a community reunion, a service club dinner for the elderly, a political campaign, the day-to-day experiences of himself and his friends.

The actual number of compositions in existence at the time I met him was difficult to determine, but I would estimate the total to be around forty. He showed me a photograph album with clippings from the newspaper inserted beneath the plastic sheets. There were also some original typescripts of lyrics, and Xeroxes of typescripts, with some duplication of material. I recognized most of the titles from the thirty-seven song texts which had been included in the Pond manuscript (MUNPLA 82-007), but there were a few new titles as well. Not long before my visit, all of his more recent songs along with a photograph of the composer had been published in a feature item in the local newspaper. The informant told me that in the interval between the earlier interview and mine, most of his compositions had been done for the wedding anniversaries of friends, and that in general he was writing fewer songs than in the first couple of years of this activity.

Mr. Parsons explained to me, as he had in the earlier interview, that the popularity of his compositions had in fact caused him a great deal of expense, for friends and acquaintances were constantly asking for the song texts. He had been acquiring extra copies, either by purchasing duplicate newspapers, or photocopying the clippings, or paying to have the poems typed up and then photocopied. These texts were then inserted in photograph albums and given or sent to people in various parts of the

province and the country. In all, he had made up twenty-six such collections for friends, but stopped when he realized the money this was running into. In discussing these albums, Mr. Parsons seemed to equate this method of dissemination with the printing of a book. He spoke to the earlier interviewer, Randy Pond, of the possibility of publishing an actual volume of his verse, but perhaps had abandoned this plan for he did not mention it to me.

The local publication of his work had also served to attract numbers of schoolchildren who sought him out as an expert source for information on "the old days" for school projects. This appears to be due more to his age than to the content of his poems, for they deal more with present life than with earlier days. From the way Mr. Parsons discussed his reputation within the immediate district, I gathered that his songwriting had become somewhat of a mixed blessing. On the one hand, he enjoyed the attention it brought him, and he found the creation of poetry a personally rewarding experience. On the other hand, he appeared to be a bit tired of the fuss, and although very gracious was not as anxious to discuss his work with me in 1983 as he had been with Randy Pond in 1981.

Mr. Parsons' compositions are uniform in terms of both verse and musical form. Every song is composed in quatrains of alternate iambic tetrameter and trimeter lines, or standard ballad metre, except that quite frequently the

last accented beat is dropped from the first and third lines of a stanza. In musical form there is similar conformity. All of the forty-odd compositions have been set to the same simple musical pattern. As the informant explained, he started with one tune and "could not get out of it."

In content and style, however, there is such diversity in the informant's repertoire that his songs defy easy description and classification. If one were to judge only by the titles, they would be easy enough to categorize. Some sound nostalgic or romantic: "Old Fashioned Christmas," "When I Was Young," "Growing Old," "I Bought My Girl A Valentine." Some appear to be examples of the kind of commemorative verse one often finds in small town newspapers across the country: "The Beauty of Our Town," "A Day to Keep in Mind." Some appear to be based on personal experience: "A Visit to the Doctor's Office," "A Day at Sea." And some titles suggest humour: "The Flies That Don't Like Electric Heat," "Whiskey in the Stew."

Some of the just-named compositions do indeed fall into these categories. "I Bought My Girl a Valentine" is a romantic and nostalgic tribute to the memory of young love. But others start off in one direction and then veer off into quite a different one. "Growing Old" begins with a philosophical recitation of the problems of old age, and ends up as a rather severe criticism of snowplough operators who plough in the driveways of elderly people. "The Flies

That Don't Like Electric Heat" is humorous, but it also carries a clear endorsement of oil heat rather than electric, and has a bit of political satire thrown in for good measure. "Make It a Happy Christmas" contains nostalgic, bawdy, and moralizing elements, and also works in a reference to the "Year of the Child."

In spite of this diversity even within particular songs, one can discern several broad categories which suggest general areas which are of interest to the composer. In the first place, there is the obviously autobiographical material, relating either to the informant's younger days ("Just Fifty Years Ago"), or to fairly recent personal experiences ("A Day at Sea"). There are perhaps eight songs which would clearly fall into this category. A second major unit within the repertoire would be the songs of tribute or commemoration, which are directed towards a wide variety of places, people, events and institutions: the old home town, the local newspaper, a service club, a home town reunion, Canada Hospital Day, and so on. There are ten of these that can easily be classified as such. There are three songs that have humour as their main focus, whether the humour is drawn from self-deprecation (hypochondria revealed in "A Visit to the Doctor's Office") or from teasing one's friends or acquaintances ("Whiskey in the Stew" and "A Change in Times"). A couple of songs appear to have as their prime purpose the teaching

of a lesson, and seem to have been inspired by anxiety ("Our National Unity" which reflects the Canadian political scene of the 1970s), or by sheer annoyance (the previously mentioned reprimand to snowplough operators, "Growing Old"). While there are romantic elements in several of the songs, one features romance and little else as the informant offers advice "For Anyone Celebrating Their Anniversary."

All of the above songs add up to a total of twenty-four that can be clearly placed in the categories mentioned. The remaining texts from the total of thirty-seven which the informant provided for archival deposit could best be described as "promotional" in nature. They sound like advertising material for a wide range of products and services: baking flour, cars, local merchants, oil heating systems.³⁴ There is some duplication of topics here, for in fact four different songs praise local retail outlets, and two each promote specific brands of automobiles and baking flour. Some of the songs in this category set up an entire scenario before launching into the promotional message, much as television commercials do. In "Early Rise" the narrator, taking an early morning drive outside of town, is flagged down by a passing motorist who is seeking a

³⁴The use of Newfoundland song and other elements of local culture in advertising has been examined in Paul Mercer and Mac Swackhammer, "The Singing of Old Newfoundland Ballads and a Cool Glass of Good Beer Go Hand in Hand"; Folklore and Tradition in Newfoundland Advertising," Culture & Tradition 3 (1978): 36-45.

specific retail firm. The narrator directs him to it while praising its range of merchandise and its modest prices.

It should be noted that the promotional compositions have been of dubious value to the author, for at one point he was warned by the newspaper editor that no more "free advertising" for products would be printed. On the other hand, there have been some benefits; one of the songs in praise of a provincially-milled brand of flour earned him a free seven-pound bag and a letter from the company. In addition to the thirteen compositions which could be termed blatantly promotional in nature, the feeling of advertising creeps into many of the other songs as well. "A Day at Sea," while relating a personal experience, sounds like literature for the tourist trade; and the song about the local newspaper serves the dual purpose of tribute and advertising.

Lest it should appear that Mr. Parsons' compositions represent an aberration, it should be pointed out that, apart from the obviously promotional nature of many of them, they reflect many strains present in the twentieth century Newfoundland song repertoire. Indeed, there is little in these texts of the older tradition of ballad-making, for the informant's compositions are not predominantly narrative. But the satiric song tradition of the Atlantic region is well represented in such compositions as

"Whiskey in the Stew" and "A Change in Times."³⁵ In addition, the influence of late nineteenth and early twentieth century published songs of the romantic-nostalgic variety can be perceived in "Just Fifty Years Ago."³⁶ From this same era, we can see the influence of another kind of commercial composition, the sentimental ballad, in the previously quoted "A Tribute to the Oil Men," for the rhetorical device of the young child bemoaning the absence of a parent is common to this genre.³⁷

Nor is the mere activity of undertaking to write a song or a poem an unusual thing in Newfoundland. Bookstores in the province stock numerous volumes of locally produced verse, composed by amateur writers, and printed and distributed by local small publishing houses. Locally composed songs abound in the collections of the folklore archive at Memorial University, and there are numerous interviews

³⁵For an insightful discussion of satirical song-making, see Edward D. Ives' two book-length studies of practitioners of the genre: Larry Gorman: The Man Who Made the Songs (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1964); and Lawrence Doyle: The Farmer Poet of Prince Edward Island (Orono: U of Maine P, 1971).

³⁶The informant's anniversary song is reminiscent of "Twenty Years Ago," a nostalgic piece about school days with a boyhood friend. It was published seven times in the "Old Favourites" column of the Family Herald between 1898 and 1956. See Edith Fowke, "Old Favourites": A Selective Index, Canadian Folk Music Journal 7 (1979): 54.

³⁷Bill Ellis examined the emotional appeal of this type of song in "The Blind Girl" and the Rhetoric of Sentimental Heroism," Journal of American Folklore 91 (1978): 657-674.

recorded with practicing songwriters.³⁸ All of this activity points to the fact that within this province there is a persisting conviction that composing verse or songs is within the domain of any person who wants to write.

The informant, however, in composing that first song in 1977, was setting out on what was for him an entirely new path. In his case, even singing, let alone songwriting, would have been a departure, for apart from singing hymns in church with the rest of the congregation, he did not sing at all. Nor was music a family tradition, for none of his relatives composed songs. In response to a question about songwriting traditions in his home community, he mentioned only Art Scammell, well known for his composition, "The Squid-Jigging Ground." Scammell was born there in 1913, and wrote the song in 1927 or 1928 when he was still a teenager. He did not remain on the local scene, but his song achieved widespread circulation in the area long before it was ever recorded commercially or put into

³⁸A survey of MUNPLA materials accessioned as of May 1982 revealed 136 such collections dealing primarily with local composers of song and poetry.

print.³⁹ Another songwriter who has achieved province-wide fame in recent years, Lem Snow, now resides in another of the cottage units close by the informant's residence. He moved to the seniors' complex from Deer Lake in 1978.⁴⁰ Mr. Parsons, however, had begun composing before this composer's fame had spread beyond his home area, so there is little possibility of direct influence on the informant, although the humorous outlook reflected in their songs is somewhat similar.

The corpus of song produced by Mr. Parsons with its blend of nostalgia for the past and deep involvement in modern culture mirrors his life itself, for his working career spanned the traditional world of outport fishing and the cosmopolitan world of a major urban centre. We should therefore not be surprised that his poetry echoes his experience, and in fact serves to creatively integrate these two disparate worlds into a whole. The integration is

³⁹This information was contained in an interview with Art Scammell deposited in MUNFLA (79-384/p. 13). Paul Mercer, in Newfoundland Songs and Ballads in Print 1842-1974: A Title and First-Line Index, Memorial U of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Publications, Bibliographical and Special Series 6 (St. John's: Memorial U of Newfoundland, 1979) 181, reports that the song was first published in "Poetry and Ballads of Newfoundland," The Book of Newfoundland, vol. 1, ed. J. R. Smallwood (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1937) 479. According to Michael Taft, it was first recorded by Scammell in Montreal in 1943, and later by many others. See Michael Taft, A Regional Discography of Newfoundland and Labrador 1904-1972, 46, 94.

⁴⁰MUNFLA 80-106/p. 3.

accomplished partly through autobiography, as we have seen in the case of several other informants. Here, however, the autobiographical impulse seems to be most closely related to personal and family life, rather than to work history. For example, only one poem, "Me Own Birthday," describes his involvement in the fishery, although he worked at that career for thirty-three years. On the other hand, several depict important phases in his personal life: family celebrations during his youth, courtship, engagement, marriage. Nevertheless, while autobiography is an element in the poetry, it is not the dominant one. Fewer than a third of the songs recorded relate long-term memories of his earlier days.

The fact that the bulk of the informant's songs refer to contemporary life suggests that we should consider them in relation to the author's present life stage. There is certainly an element of play here, as we have seen in the creative activities of the previous informant, although here the play is verbal rather than visual. The spontaneity of these poems, revealed in their tendency to wander in unexpected directions and to combine unlikely elements, suggests the same childlike creativity which earlier appeared in a visual form in the unexpected combinations of colours and the recycling of common objects. Here too there is the use of a creative form to generate and stimulate social interaction. The poems play tricks on unsuspecting

friends and acquaintances by recording their foibles ("Whiskey in the Stew") or teasing them about their preferences ("The Best Car of the Year").

For Mr. Parsons, as for the previous informant, the creative activity is an assertion of life and self-under circumstances that do not allow a very wide range of such means of expression. Moreover, since in his case much of what he produces is made public almost immediately, either through performance or publication, it would seem that this work helps him achieve what Barbara Myerhoff terms "visibility," at a time in life when the usual personality-reinforcement mechanisms are dwindling.⁴¹ Mr. Parsons, childless and with only one surviving member of his immediate family, an older brother, is just one elderly person among many within the Seniors' complex. Daily life on its own provides him with only one social relationship against which to mirror his own self--that with his wife, who is now herself in need of emotional support. Seen in this light, his public display of creativity is much more than a means of achieving enhanced personal status. It is a vital statement of the importance of self and the value of one's own views, experiences and relationships.

⁴¹Barbara Myerhoff, "Life History Among the Elderly: Performance, Visibility and Re-Membering," Life Course: Integrative Theories and Exemplary Populations, ed. Kurt W. Back, AAAS Selected Symposium 41 (Washington, D.C.: American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1980) 133-153.

Informant 9: Mrs. Tucker

Mrs. Tucker, who was 54 years old at the time I met and interviewed her, came to Newfoundland only in retirement to live in an isolated outport with her husband, a native of the area. She was born in 1928 in Toronto to parents who were originally from adjacent communities in a vacation region of central Ontario. She remembers her parents' marriage as a very happy one, in spite of the constant need for frugality to support their eight children, six girls and two boys, as well as her father's four sons from a previous marriage. Their home, always rented quarters in a working class section of the city, seems to have been a cheerful and pleasant place, brimming with assorted aunts, uncles, and other relatives and frequently ringing with music and song. As the third to last child of the family, born when her father was 52 years old, the informant knew only one grandparent, for the others were dead by the time she was old enough to remember.

Because of the straitened economic circumstances at home, Mrs. Tucker felt obligated to quit high school after only two years to take a job, when her older sister, who had been helping out the family financially, got married. At the age of 15, she began work in a precious metal factory where she remained for seven years. In 1948 at the age of 20, she entered what turned out to be a disastrous marriage with a man who suffered from alcoholism

and other emotional problems. Two years later she quit her job when a son was born. Another child, a daughter, followed in 1952.

When the children were of school age, she returned to work for the same metal firm, but was forced to leave the position seven years later when she could not arrange proper care for her children during the summer holidays, and the firm refused to grant her a leave of absence. While this loss of position was devastating at the time, especially since she had already worked for the company for a total of fourteen years, it proved to be a blessing in disguise, for it led her into the federal Department of Manpower retraining programme. After two years learning office skills, she began to work once again in a better-paying job, first with a federal government department in Toronto, later with a provincial one.

During this period of her life, her first marriage ended when she left her husband after years of ill treatment. Her children, however, chose to stay with him. In 1964, she met Mr. Tucker, and after a courtship they both described as cautious because of their previous bad experiences, they married. Mr. Tucker was a Newfoundlander who had spent most of his childhood in the Maritimes. Their camping vacations soon brought them back to his home area of the province, and after nine years of regular visits, they decided to turn their plan of early retirement into reality.

and buy property.

In 1974 when she was 46, they retired from their respective jobs, and in 1976 moved to their present home, the shell of which had been constructed before their arrival by local builders. Since that time, Mrs. Tucker's life has been a flowering of creative skills, most of which she would not have thought of attempting before, even if she had had the time. In all of the projects she has undertaken with her husband, whose creative activities will be discussed in the following section, the two have worked as a team in an impressive harmony of purpose.

When the couple first moved to their retirement home, a one-bedroom bungalow situated on a two-acre plot running down to the sea, they worked together to complete the structural work and the exterior and interior decoration. Mrs. Tucker had never done carpentry before, but her husband was a former professional builder, and she soon learned the basic skills. With the sewing machine he had purchased for her while they were still in Toronto, she sewed the curtains and other textile articles such as toss cushions and padded back rests for chairs. Mr. Tucker added a sewing/sitting-room extension to the original house, and the informant was doing dressmaking as well by the time I met her. In addition to making various sewn articles for their home proper, Mrs. Tucker similarly furnished the one-room guest cottage which the couple erected towards the rear

of their property.

Once these basic furnishings were completed, the couple started other textile projects, such as quilting. In 1978, Mrs. Tucker completed a quilt, using a top which had been pieced by her mother, and then two years later went on to make an entire quilt in a traditional geometric block-pattern design (Figure 15, p. 212). She made this quilt by herself, sewing together and then quilting the patches of pink, black and grey by hand. The third quilt was a picture quilt, designed by her husband and executed by the two of them working together:

Oh, well, I made one quilt--it's down on your bed down there in the cottage, you'll see. That was my first effort. And I had one that I quilted that my mother had given me the top of, and she made it when she was 87 years old, so I quilted that. And then another one, I'll show you, it's a design, you know, it's more like a bed comforter, but it's a picture, you know, it's got the sunset and the ship and the water and--it's very beautiful. It's just made out of scraps. But it's, it's a cosy, comfy thing, and with a little house and flower gardens and lighthouse, and all this done with pieces of, you know, of material. (83-282/C6467:A:230)

This quilt, which is displayed on their bed (Figures 16, 17, pp. 213, 214) was made over the winter of 1981-82 as one of their carefully planned winter projects. The first of these projects had been rug-hooking, a craft they originally took up in Toronto by purchasing a prepared kit with a stamped design and doing the hooking themselves with a latch-hook and pre-cut lengths of yarn. They had made another mat in Newfoundland from a prepared kit, and



Figure 15: Block quilt (Mrs. Tucker)



Figure 16: Picture quilt (Mr. and Mrs. Tucker)



Figure 17: Detail of picture quilt (Mr. and Mrs. Tucker)

then set about designing their own. The winter of 1979-80 was especially devoted to mat-making, and the results of their work are displayed on the floors of the bungalow and the cottage. The designs for these mats, all pictorial rather than geometric, were drawn directly on to the canvas by Mr. Tucker with subjects taken from their immediate surroundings or from their memories (Figure 18, p. 216, is a mat depicting haying). Their seaside home with its flower and vegetable gardens and outbuildings is featured on one of these. Mrs. Tucker has also reproduced their home in crewel embroidery, using yarn on a cotton backing (Figure 19, p. 217). This seems to be the only original design she has done in embroidery, but from time to time she uses commercially produced iron-on designs to stamp other household articles, and embroiders these. The informant has also taken up knitting since retirement, and now makes hats and mittens for herself and her husband.

Another domestic skill which Mrs. Tucker has developed since coming to Newfoundland is preparing food. To the greatest extent possible, the couple now do everything "from scratch." This means growing their own vegetables and freezing them, buying food staples in quantity and doing all their own baking, picking local berries in season and preserving them. This aspect of life was carefully planned before the couple left Toronto, for they recognized the need to economize on a fixed retirement



Figure 18: Hooked mat, haymaking design (Mr. and Mrs. Tucker)

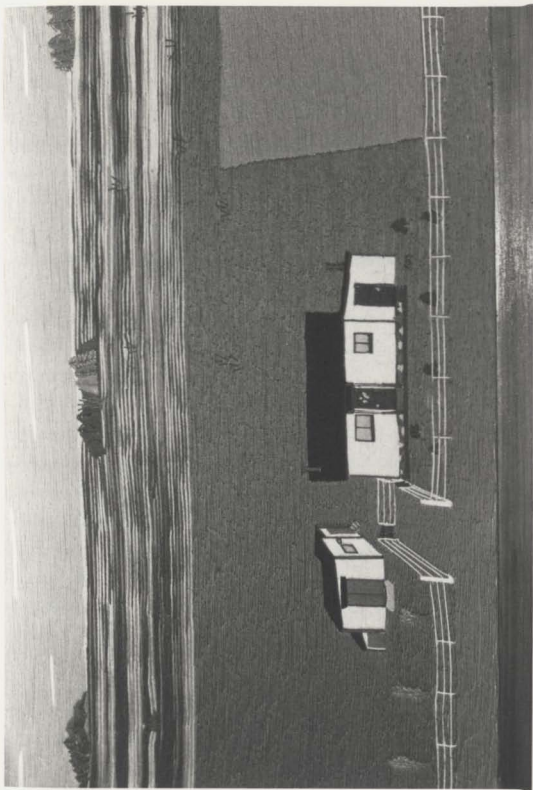


Figure 19: Crewel embroidery picture (Mrs. Tucker)

income. This economy has turned out to be a source of creative pleasure for both the informant and her husband, as they learn new skills and discover new recipes. It also promotes a healthy lifestyle, for the short Newfoundland summer forces gardeners to take advantage of every fine day to tend the plants. Both Mrs. Tucker and her husband benefit from the exercise and fresh air, and express a sense, which urban living never provided, of being in tune with the seasons. Apart from a monthly trip to a nearby town to replenish their supplies of staples and other necessities, the couple live happily independent of merchants and shops.

Since retirement, Mrs. Tucker's talents have blossomed in another direction. Always one to write commemorative or topical verse as a form of social intercourse on occasions that suggested it, she has now taken up the writing of more personal poetry.⁴² That the informant herself sees the present poetry as qualitatively different from her earlier versifying is evident in the following passage:

Well, when I left my job af--I'd been there--you know, the one at Baker Platinum--and they give me a lovely

⁴²The distinction between these two types of verse has been examined by Karen Baldwin, who terms them "reflexive" and "reflective," and suggests that in her experience the former is typical of male practice, the latter of female. See "Rhyming Pieces and Piecin' Rhymes: Recitation Verse and Family Poem-Making," Southern Folklore Quarterly 40 (1976): 209-242.

umbrella, you know, on a table for the, my retirement kind of thing. Well, it was just, you know, they were like family to me, I'd worked there so many years, and they were, they were very, very kind. So I wrote a little poem to thank them, and it was kind of, just on a joking thing, and I can't remember now, it was too many years ago. But it was just more or less to say thank you very much, and they were about the nicest people I'd ever meet, and you know--and just, well a few jokes thrown in about the hockey pools, and the--we used to, you know, I'm going to miss the pools, and stuff like that. And then I, oh, used to write little limericks. When we were working at the medical coding, we used to have to write to the coroners to send in the reports, you know, they'd be delayed, and some of them were not too nice [this is a reference to the provincial government clerical position]. So we'd make up little jokes about, limericks, you know, expressing our feelings about so-and-so, but it never got beyond our, you know, our, just our own desks--that stuff. But it was when I come down here that I got the feeling that I--I guess not having anybody to talk to, I had to talk to myself, and it was easier in poets--you know, in rhyme, and that's what got me started on it. (83-282/C6467:A:309)

The reference in the above passage to "not having anybody to talk to" relates to the emotional adjustment which the informant and her husband had to make on settling into their retirement home, for while the physical surroundings more than met their expectations, the social community did not. They seem to have envisaged their move to Newfoundland as a sort of return to the ancestral home, for the informant's husband had been born in the area and still had many relatives there. They thought it would be a matter of settling into a closely knit, supportive community where the traditional value of reciprocity would dominate neighbourly relationships. Their summertime camping visits unfortunately left them unaware of the actual social

condition of the community. They did not know that dependence on social welfare had become a fact of life in the district, which has an extremely high unemployment rate, much higher than the provincial average. Nor did they realize that the attendant problems of economic decay, high rates of alcoholism, family discord, violence towards women and general lack of initiative, were present also. Unmindful of these factors on their arrival, Mr. and Mrs. Tucker also overlooked the fact that the reciprocity of a small community normally obtains only between equals. No one with sufficient income to take early retirement, move halfway across the country, and build a new house could possibly be seen as an equal by inhabitants of any outport, let alone a severely-depressed outport. However friendly relationships had seemed when the couple were summer visitors, their permanent settlement in the neighbourhood prompted the common reaction of any small community towards those who are economically superior: distance, mistrust, and, when possible, advantage-taking.

In addition to misjudging community attitudes towards themselves, the couple wrongly expected these rural people to share their outlook on conservation of natural resources. They did not realize that sophisticated concepts of ecological balance are a phenomenon of modern urban life. Mrs. Tucker's first poem, written in 1977, a year after their arrival in Newfoundland, was inspired by a

conviction that the people were endangering local resources by overuse.

My Share

"I want my share," said the crow
As he swept down to the ground,
"I know there's lots of crows up there
And they'll soon be coming down."

A mighty gull soars high and fast
Till he circles on his prey,
With a mighty dive he

The graceful sea duck skims the sea
With a watchful eye below,
A silvery smelt goes swimming by,
One swoop and it's safe in tow.

"This food is mine, it is my due,"
That no man will refute;
Nature managed life that way,
That no man can dispute.

What is man's share, one might ask,
Is it all one consumes right now,
Or is it saving some little bit
For tomorrow's child to know?

Get your share, but just your share,
Beyond that no man needs,
Let's leave enough for those to come
So they may plant their seeds.

(83-282/C6467:A:482; B:002)

This same kind of very gentle social criticism can be seen in the most recent poem the informant had on hand. It had been composed the previous summer when her husband was in hospital recovering from surgery. On the three-mile walk home from the Post Office, a walk which took her right through the community, Mrs. Tucker was aware, both of the overwhelming presence of natural beauty and the total absence of human contact. Her description of the incident

reveals a great deal about the emotional adjustment which their move to the area necessitated:

And I was coming home from the Post Office and [her husband] was in the hospital. And it . . . was just about the wildflowers and how friendly they seemed, and I--you know, the daisies waving, and the, all this Queen Anne's lace bowing. And I thought it was just too bad people can't be, you know, wild again. Because I walked all--it's three miles there and three miles back. And I didn't see a soul or nobody waved, and I thought, well, they must know, you know, I'd know them if they passed. But I don't know, maybe they're watching "Another World" [an afternoon soap opera on television] or something, and--but that's the sad part . . . And also, under the illusion that these people are really friendly, that I'd never have a minute's, you know--and I'm always cooking, and, you know, they'd say they'd be down, and I'd, I'd go out of my way, and they never show up, they forgot, or maybe they were drinking at the time, didn't remember. But to me, it was [her husband] had to eat all that stuff, and I thought, what an awful waste. And so I just thought, well, I can't trust them to keep their word, and that was a sad lesson to have to cope with. But, but I think I've adjusted alright now, 'cause I'm, I'm quite happy with myself. And I guess that's the main thing. (83-282/C6467:A:362)

In spite of the hurt feelings suggested in the informant's comments, the text of the poem concentrates on the superior qualities of the natural world, rather than on the shortcomings of human beings.

A Walk on a Summer Day

They waved and nodded as I passed by,
Their joyful greeting to me,
No words were needed, just a look or the eye,
What a marvel of nature to see.

A blend of purple, gold and white,
What artist could challenge that feat,
Nature knows just what is right,
With her symmetry dare we compete?

The golden-eyed daisies in their bonnets so neat
Beckon coyly as I slowly walk by,

The princely purple of clover I'd greet
With a dignified bow and a sigh.

The Queen Anne's lace so dainty and slight
Gave a gentle and ladylike nod,
And the bright buttercups like a comet in flight
Twinkled cheerfully from the green sod.

The fields of flowers I passed today
Are labelled as wild by men
Cheering me in their own special way
Made me wish humans were wild again.
(83-282/C6467:B:009)

In the interval between these two poems, 1977 to 1982, the informant's poetry changed a great deal, as she learned to adjust to the local situation. Part of the adjustment lay in realizing the problem was not in her but in the external situation. The poetry and some prose writings provided a means of emotional expression during this period, and as the adjustment was gradually made, the poems began to change in tone.

I think it--it was something I couldn't cope with; you know, the change from what I thought and what I'd seen, and what was reality. I couldn't cope with that. And I guess maybe this was getting my feelings out on--it wasn't all poetry, some of it was just, you know, getting stuff off my chest. (83-282/C6467:A:342)

... it [the poetry] got light and funny from, you know, the sadness that I was trying to get out. . . . But I've noticed the last few times, it's--I'm, I'm alright. I've got it all out, so I don't have to worry about hurt feelings or pouting about, you know, thinking I'm not a nice person; and I--you know, not knowing what's the matter. But now I know it's alright, so. (83-282/C6467:A:390)

One of the "light and funny" poems, this one dating to 1979, is entitled "Newfie Logic." It was inspired when Mrs. Tucker overheard one neighbour comment about

another: "You'd have to be pretty stupid to lie awake and piss the bed."

Newfie Logic

We don't need education,
Around here we use our head,
We know it's pretty stupid
To be awake and piss the bed.

We know the roof is leakin'
But can never find the source
Until it starts to rain again,
But you can't fix it then of course.

But come the spring we'll heat the pitch,
Borrow the missus' favourite mop,
You don't have to have a PhD
To learn to spread that slop.

We're fishermen and proud of that,
So don't think that we are fools,
The caplin, herring, cod get caught
And they're the ones in schools.

(83-282/C6467:B:091)

Not all of the poems are an indictment of Newfoundland culture. The following verses celebrate local dance traditions.

Saturday Night Fever, Newfie Style

Oh fiddledee, riddledee, diddledee die,
It's hard to keep up with that fiddlin' guy,
You twirls and you stomp till you're fair fit to burst,
You works up a sweat and you works up a thirst.

So it's up to the bar for a fast little swig
And back to the floor for a reel or a jig,
Pick up your feet, slap them down on the floor,
You can bet come tomorrow those feet will be sore.

On Saturday night when the fever gets high,
You can't disco dance to the tune "I'se The B'y"
'Cause nothing compares to a Newfie soiree,
Put your dancing shoes on and let's dance, you and me.

(83-282/C6467:B:080)

While Mrs. Tucker spoke of her poetry especially in terms of how it helped her adjust to their adopted community, in fact it served as an emotional outlet in other contexts as well. At the time of her mother's death in 1978, she was unable to attend the funeral, presumably for financial reasons. Her grief was expressed in a poem addressed to her mother, which the informant said was "to make up for . . . not getting home." A long period of grief and mourning followed her mother's death, but eventually the sadness turned to anger at being unhappy for so long, and culminated in a poem entitled "The Sequel to Sadness" in which, according to the informant, all of these feelings were put behind her.

Mrs. Tucker has also used poetry to express appreciation and affection for specific individuals. As early as 1977 she wrote a poem to commemorate a chance visit by some passers-by, and sent a copy off to the tourists in question as a souvenir of the very pleasant afternoon they had spent together. The following year a poem served as a birthday present for her husband. Two poems, "Hidden Treasures" and "Tomorrow's People," both composed in 1979, express philosophical reflections on friendship and youth. A more recent composition, written when they were fogged in for three days, served as a means of coping with the weather.

The Fog

The fog is thick, it hides the fields
And tempers the sound of birds,
The sea is still beneath the mist
And voices in whispers are heard.

How still the air, how calm the breeze,
Each sound reverberates,
The calf's low call, the horse's neigh,
In the stillness seems so great.

It casts a shroud upon us all
And closes out the light,
It's very presence stills the mind
To give spectre to inner sight.

(83-282/C6467:B:135)

This poem and the previously quoted "Saturday Night Fever, Newfie Style" illustrate how far the informant has come in terms of emotional development and adjustment. In a sense these verses are "pure poetry," a reflection of a particular physical or emotional event or situation without the intrusion of the writer's personal feelings, whether positive or negative. There is no editorializing or moralizing, no self-recrimination or criticism of others.

The twelve poems referred to or quoted in full here form the bulk of Mrs. Tucker's production to the date of our interview. She was not clear on the topic of how many she had actually written; she did not seem to have ever counted them. Nor was she clear on how many people had ever read any of the poems, other than her husband, for unlike the previous informant, Mrs. Tucker had no audience in mind when writing them. She had certainly shown them to the chance caller whose visit was later commemorated in a poem.

This woman had urged her to send copies of the poetry to her grandchildren, an idea which had not previously crossed the informant's mind. In 1982 when she was planning a trip to Ontario to visit her children, she assembled some of her work for her two grandchildren, as a way of renewing her acquaintance with them: 1

See, I made that little booklet to send to my kids but that was mostly the poetry, and I thought, well, they, my granddaughters may have something, because I may not get back to Ontario again, so I thought, well, it's a little something for them to, you know, 'cause it had been so long since I'd seen them, and they are growing up, they're thirteen now, the oldest one. So, you know, they don't know their grandmother very well, so I thought this would be a little way of letting them know how I've been doing. . . . (83-282/C6467:A:351)

The booklet was also intended to inform her son and daughter of the emotional changes she had undergone since the move to Newfoundland, for she told me that she had told them, "You'll understand what I've been doing the last seven years, if you go from page one to the end, you'll see the change." The poetry, originally intended merely as the poet's "personal getting-it-off-my-chest stuff," was thus utilized both as a gift to her grandchildren and as a means of communicating on a deep emotional level with her children, although neither of these uses formed part of the original motivation for writing.

While Mrs. Tucker had not written anything since the previous summer, she was confident that she would write again, when, as she put it, she entered "another feeling phase." The poetry already written, however, was connected

not just with a need for personal emotional expression, but also with retirement, in that the freedom from work prompted deeper consideration of one's experiences and reactions. When I asked for clarification of this link between the fact of retirement and the taking up of poetry, she replied:

I think that's, that [connection] would be true because I had more time. And, you know, you're not distracted by pressures of, you know, busy, busy. And when you're away by yourself, and have time to think, just letting your mind rest, a lot of things can go on. And a lot of things did go on, but I'm surprised when I read it back myself sometimes that I said, "Did I feel that way then?" And it's been kind of a--just like [her husband's] paintings--it's a phase of growth that he went through and that's what I put it down to, it's a phase I passed through. And it's, it's good because it's like purging, you know, you get rid of all the bad feelings and express the good ones, and it's, you know, that's, that's how it affects me anyway, just a nice feeling after it's done. (83-282/C6467:A:426)

Later in the conversation, Mrs. Tucker suggested another facet of this relationship between retirement and creative expression. While one's new state allowed the freedom for emotional expression, it also necessitated it, especially if retirement meant a substantial change in the pattern of one's life.

I think everybody [who] retires must go through that when they change from one lifestyle to another, they must have to go through that, 'cause it is an awful transition, and--well, if you've left everything that you knew, and to start absolutely fresh in a world you never experienced before, you have to go through changes, you know, just to get in touch with yourself. Do you trust yourself to be able to handle it? Can somebody else trust you to handle it? And all this stuff that you, where before you were nine-to-five automatic, where this was altogether different. (83-282/C6467:B:298)

Unlike some of the other informants, Mrs. Tucker

has no wish to publish any of her poetry, for she thinks it would not be understandable to anyone who did not know her. While she herself saves clippings of printed poems which move her deeply, she not feel capable of moving anyone else with her poetry. This does not imply self-criticism, for she admitted, "I like what I've written . . . I'm pleased with it."

Another notable difference in the poetry of this informant is the complete lack of nostalgia here.

Mrs. Tucker, in fact, never writes about the past, nor does she allow herself to think of it.

Oh, you can't [think of the past], oh no. That's wasted, that's gone. . . . 'Cause some of the past wasn't very nice. But the future's looking good. Well, the present's good, so--that's all you can do, take one day at a time and make the best of it, so-- (83-282/C6467:B:451)

This informant had no model to imitate in the writing of poetry. In fact, her own contact with the art had been limited to the study of assigned readings at school, an activity she greatly enjoyed. In contrast, while she herself did not undertake in her earlier life the various forms of needlework she now practices, she had many models in these skills. Her mother was an accomplished needlewoman who continued until shortly before her death at the age of 90 to make quilt tops and potholders for the nursing home staff who cared for her. The informant's older sisters had learned many of their mother's skills and have continued to practice them. Mrs. Tucker joked that she had

missed this training because she came late in the family and her mother by then had no time to teach her.

While both forms of creative work, the writing of poetry and the performance of needlecrafts, have deep meaning for Mrs. Tucker and bring her a great deal of enjoyment, she makes a basic distinction between them in terms of the way they operate in her life:

Well, deep down feelings, it [the poetry] gives you a chance to face them. And, where the other is personal pleasure because you've learned to do something you didn't know how to do before. And there's that satisfaction. (83-282/C6467-290)

Informant 10: Mr. Tucker

Mr. Tucker's childhood was as troubled as his wife's was secure and free from emotional stress. The families of both of his parents were from the general area where he now lives. He is, in fact, surrounded by a large kinship group, but relationships are complex on the paternal side, due to the fact that his father, after the death of the informant's grandmother, was separated from his siblings and raised by a cousin; and the informant's grandfather later remarried and raised a second family. The informant's own parents married when his mother was only 16 or 17. After about three years of marriage, during which the informant was born in 1922, they separated, then reunited for another year and a half during which the informant's younger sister was born. After this, they separated for good, and Mr. Tucker's mother took her two children to New Brunswick where her mother was already living. Mr. Tucker's mother worked, first as a waitress, then as a restaurant hostess, while the grandmother raised the two children.

At the age of fourteen and with only seven years of elementary school behind him, Mr. Tucker quit school to work. He started in 1936 as a pin boy in a bowling alley, and within a year worked his way to the position of captain, supervising seven other boys. This was to be his pattern of advancement throughout his working career. After a year as

captain, he got a better paying position as a dishwasher in a hotel, but in 1940 at the age of 18 left to join the army. He became a machine gunner in the infantry, and by the next year had reached the rank of corporal. At this point, however, his advancement ceased, for after going A.W.O.L. in Paris, he was given the choice of reverting to private at his own request or receiving a dishonourable discharge. He chose reversion and stayed in the army for a total of five and a half years, during which time he completed his high school education by correspondence. After his discharge at the end of the war, Mr. Tucker returned to New Brunswick and took courses under the Canadian Vocational Training Plan for returned forces personnel. He studied carpentry, drafting, and drafting mathematics. During this first year back in Canada, he married a New Brunswick woman and the couple eventually had three children, two boys and a girl.

After completion of the army-sponsored courses, Mr. Tucker got a job as carpenter on a construction project. Within six months he was foreman, and another six months later, general foreman of the project. In approximately five years, he was superintendant of the construction company. At this point he took a leave of absence to complete a three-year contract with a federal government agency to build a wharf. In a year the wharf was completed. He was then offered a permanent government

position, which he accepted, but left after a year. This was in 1957, and at the same time, his eleven-year marriage ended. Throughout this period, Mr. Tucker had frequently had a night job in addition to his regular work, and had served in the reserve army while also doing volunteer work as a scout master.

In 1957 he left the Maritimes for Ottawa where he started his own small construction company. Two years later he sold it and took a federal government job in a construction agency, a job which brought relocation to Toronto. Within a year he was manager of the division and supervisor of a staff of fifteen professional and non-professional personnel. After thirteen years supervising the building of bridges and similar public projects, during which time he also remarried, he took early retirement in 1974 at the age of 52.

Mr. Tucker was obviously not undertaking anything new in doing the carpentry required to complete the house in Newfoundland to which he and his wife moved in 1976. However, finishing the house also meant decorating it and the surrounding property and here his creative talent flourished. The modest bungalow and the two outbuildings, a guest cottage and a workshop, are painted in plain turquoise green, a popular shade in rural Newfoundland. But there the ordinariness of the Tucker domain ends. A patio has been created in front of the house from inlaid stones, and

features a wooden bench. To the rear of the house, a wooden triangular frame standing in the centre of the lawn supports rows of potted herbs. Further back there is a boardwalk which ends at a bench attached to the side of the guest cottage. The small lawn area which has been cleared of brush and weeds at one side of the cottage features one of Mr. Tucker's several life-size figures, this one entitled "The Lady of the Cape." This is a pun on the name of a Quebec shrine in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Notre-Dame du Cap, situated at Cap-de-la-Madeleine near Trois-Rivières. The stuffed female figure, approximately six feet tall, has a painted bleach bottle head of plastic, covered with net and curlers, and wears a blouse, skirt, lacy red underclothing and alligator skin shoes. She is seated in a wooden lawn chair. Just to the rear of this seated figure, there is a rectangular unroofed gazebo furnished with a table and benches for outside dining. The raised platform is surrounded by a railing, and each tall corner post is topped by a carved and brightly painted wooden bird, each one different (Figure 20, p. 235).

The entrance to the guest cottage is to the rear of the building and towards the sea, providing a fine view. There is an open gallery about three feet deep on this end of the building. Two chairs flank the central door, and a quarter-circle table is built into each corner of the gallery railing, for the convenience of any guest who wants



Figure 20: Carved and painted birds (Mr. Tucker)

to take his ease while enjoying the view. The other building on the property, the work shed, is not decorated, except to have a set of moose antlers mounted on one wall under the eaves. There had been a painting on this building, but Mr. Tucker removed it because it was suffering damage from the weather. Similarly, there had been other large three-dimensional figures. One of these was a leprechaun, another a Scotsman in a kilt enjoying a glass. A third used to be changed according to the time of year. But these either quickly deteriorated in the maritime weather, or were demolished by local children, and have since been removed and dismantled. There are presently two such figures inside the work shed (see Figure 22, p. 237, for one of these).

The interiors of the buildings also demonstrate the creative instincts of Mr. Tucker. The guest cottage is a small, one-room structure, all the furnishings of which were made by Mr. Tucker and his wife, save for the woodstove and two plastic chairs. There are cupboards for storage of dishes and for firewood, surmounted by open shelves which display small, whimsical figures, each about eight inches high, made from odds and ends of household items. A picnic-style table and a bedside chair feature a heart design, which is echoed in a wooden bedstead. A rocking chair, the first of several made by the informant, is painted yellow (Figure 22, p. 238). The upper back sports a pair of



Figure 21: Three-dimensional figure, plywood with styrofoam head (Mr. Tucker)



Figure 22: Rocking chair with painted decorations (Mr. Tucker)

painted seals who are tossing a ball between them, and a single long-stemmed flower is painted on each of the arms. The handmade wooden bedstead is covered in the first quilt which his wife made entirely on her own (Figure 15, p. 212). This room also has a small bedside table and a typing table made by Mr. Tucker. All of the textile furnishings, such as the chair pads (seen in Figure 22, p. 238) and curtains, are made by Mrs. Tucker, and the exposed sections of flooring are covered in two hooked mats designed and made by the couple. There are also several of Mr. Tucker's oil paintings on the walls, and a gaily painted mobile decorates the light fixture (Figure 23, p. 240).

The interior of the bungalow is similarly furnished and decorated in a very individualistic way, with handmade furniture, objects, and special features in every room. The entry way features a wall-hung hooked mat, and opens into a den-like area which the couple refer to as Mrs. Tucker's sewing room. There are special cupboards built into one corner and a sewing table with storage space. Four hooked rugs brighten the floor of this room, two from purchased kits and two of the couple's own design. There are two rocking chairs, both made by Mr. Tucker (one of these is shown in Figure 24, p. 241), and a built-in bench along one wall. This small room opens into a very brightly decorated kitchen, designed, built and decorated by the informant. The cupboards which take up an entire wall



Figure 23: Horse design mobile, aluminum (Mr. Tucker)



Figure 24: Rocking chair (Mr. Tucker)

are painted in bright bands of dark green, yellow and white, with this colour combination carried over to the door separating kitchen from den. Disused white dinner plates on which Mr. Tucker painted bright designs are on display on top of these cupboards. There are bunches of strawberries painted on the white sections of the cupboard doors, and on a door to a low storage area which houses the washing machine. On a wall adjacent to one end of the cupboards, Mr. Tucker has created a cookbook holder which resembles a lectern, and which collapses flat against the wall when not in use. A large bird cage built by the informant is hung on another wall. It houses a budgie acquired just a few weeks before my visit. Underneath this cage is a small cabinet covered entirely with decorative painting; on the top is a setting sun and seascape (Figure 25, p. 243). The other exposed sections of kitchen wall which are not painted are covered in a tasteful pink floral stripe wallpaper, which completes the atmosphere of summertime warmth and abundance created in the room.

The panelled living room with its easy chairs and sofa has a more conventional and less individualized appearance than the two rooms already described, but even here there is a personal touch, a large handmade cloth doll, stuffed with an assortment of material oddments, sits on the sofa. In the tub enclosure of the bathroom, which opens off the living room, a rectangular scene, featuring

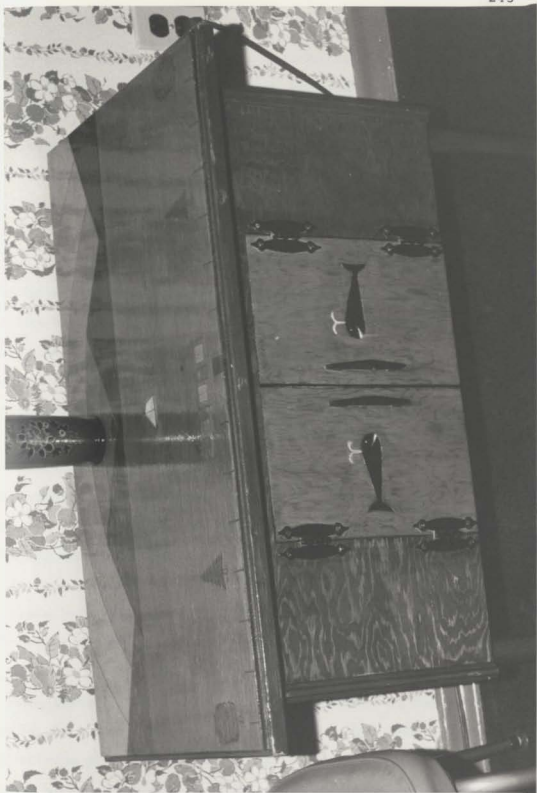


Figure 25: Decorated cabinet (Mr. Tucker)

frogs and other water creatures, is painted on the wall. Like the living room, the bedroom contains purchased furniture, but the bed is covered in the picture quilt described in the previous section (Figures 16 and 17, pp. 213, 214). In the small enclosed porch which opens off this room, the crewel embroidered picture of the house done by Mrs. Tucker is displayed (Figure 19, p. 217).

Scattered throughout the bungalow, there are also oil paintings by Mr. Tucker, but the bulk of his art hangs in the work shed located to one side of the property, opposite to the guest cottage. This is also a low, one-storey building, rectangular in shape with a small entry porch extending from one end. The interior space is subdivided into a workbench area, a lounging area, and a general unspecified area, but there are no full partitions as such. The walls, and even the ceilings, of this building are covered in over fifty paintings, framed by the informant and ranging in size from fairly large (47" by 33") to moderate (14" by 10"). This building is obviously used for work on various projects which require the use of carpentry tools, but it also serves as an alternate living space, especially during the winter when the couple may develop a sense of "cabin fever." Since this building, as well as the guest house, is furnished with electricity, a wood stove, and a television set, they have the option of moving to either of these other locations to spend an evening in a different

environment. The work shed "lounging area" has comfortable padded seats, and a bar-like atmosphere created by subdued lighting and hanging fishnets, floats and other seaside paraphernalia (some of which is visible in Figure 35, p. 260). In contrast, the atmosphere of the guest house is cottage-like, and suggests a rustic hideaway.

Mr. Tucker took up painting in the difficult period of his life when he separated from his first wife and moved to central Canada. In demonstrating these early paintings, he explained how he first began.

It was a case of--at the time I started I was in Ottawa, Ontario. And having free time on my hands, and nothing to do, not knowing anybody in the city, I just decided to take it up as a hobby. And from there I took a liking to it and I kept branching out. The first picture I tackled, which was--would be that clown, was done from a portrait of a clown. . . . [he explains that it was done from a photograph]. And, then I just enlarged it and put my own colouring in. And then from there on, the picture above that now, the baby, that's an actual baby, it's [the child of] a friend of mine. And I experimented with the baby . . . and it worked out fairly good. The colouring is a little richer than, than normal, but it sort of accents the cheeks a little. You'll find another one over there, which I was experimenting in blue. That's about 1962 I believe. (83-283/[1]:A:011)

In his discussion of this early period of painting, the informant frequently used the word "experimenting," trying to create a certain mood, to see what could be accomplished through the use of certain colours, to innovate a new kind of design (Figure 26, p. 246 is representative of this period). It is difficult to say how many paintings were done in this early period of practice, for Mr. Tucker



Figure 26: Winter landscape with church (Mr. Tucker)

did not always date them. In his work shed there were at least five to which he referred specifically as early paintings, and several others, reminiscent in style to paint-by-number sets or to variety store art work, seemed also to have been "learning pieces." In addition, he had given away an unspecified number of pieces while he was living in central Canada.

Whatever the tally of production from this period, by 1965 he was beginning to feel at ease in using the medium to represent anything his imagination suggested.

[I would, just try anything, just to, be sort of versatile, I suppose, you know, in whatever I did. Until I reached a point where I could use my own imagination and capture whatever I that came to my head. This came later, I think, in--oh, around '65 I think it started--well, there's a good example of it there. (83-243/11;A:062)]

The painting which he was indicating at this point was a colourful fall landscape (Figure 27, p. 248). The last painting dating to this early period was another landscape done in 1967. By then he was busy at his occupation in Toronto, and temporarily put aside painting to take it up again only on his arrival in Newfoundland. In 1977 when he returned again to painting, he dated most of his pieces, and from this time on it is easy to follow his development as an artist.

In retirement, the informant's interest in depicting nature was continued. There are additional land and sea scenes, portraits of animals, and still lifes of



Figure 27: Fall landscape (Mr. Tucker)

plants, as well as some overlapping of these categories. A quiet pastoral landscape with lake and cabin is crammed full of a variety of birds (Figure 28, p. 250). "The Whale Watcher" depicts the informant's wife seated on the back gallery of the guest cottage and looking out to a dramatic sunset over the sea (Figure 29, p. 251). A close-up of the interior of a tulip, "The Heart of a Tulip," presents a geometric image of the flower executed in draftsmanlike style.

There is also a continuation of the informant's interest in depicting the human form. Nudes abound in the post-retirement period, couples embracing, females reclining, nudes in draperies, and nudes in chains. While many of these seem like attempts to depict the human figure in what is seen as the classical style of the elite artist, others reflect a sense of humour and whimsy; the man and woman embracing, for example, are viewed through a keyhole, and the woman in chains is a "hard rock" nude sporting actual metal chain jewellery which is attached to the canvas (Figure 30, p. 252; note in particular the navel adornment).

There are also two pictures in this period which depict the informant's concept of traditional Newfoundland life. One is a scene of men hauling logs with horses. The other is an old-time Newfoundland interior (Figure 31, p. 253). A young woman and an older woman sit working at textile crafts in front of a fireplace whose mantel is



Figure 28: Landscape with birds (top of painting obscured by overhead pipe) (Mr. Tucker)



Figure 29: "The Whale Watcher" (Mr. Tucker)

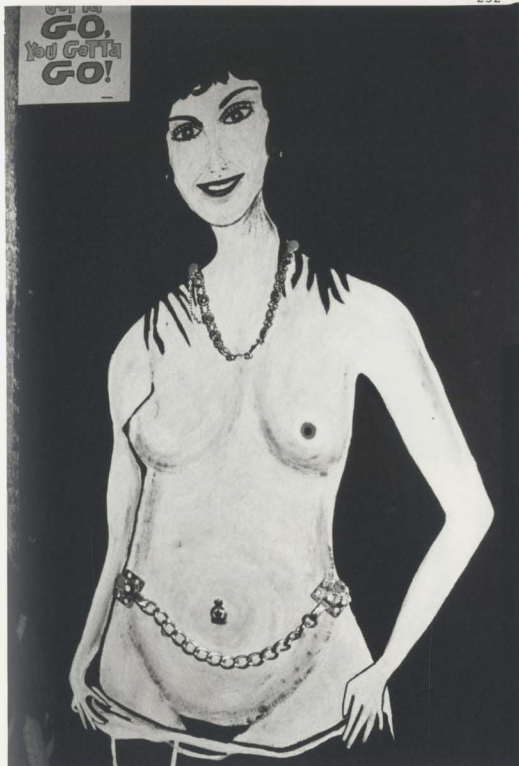


Figure 30: Nude in chains (greeting card tucked under edge of upper left frame) (Mr. Tucker)

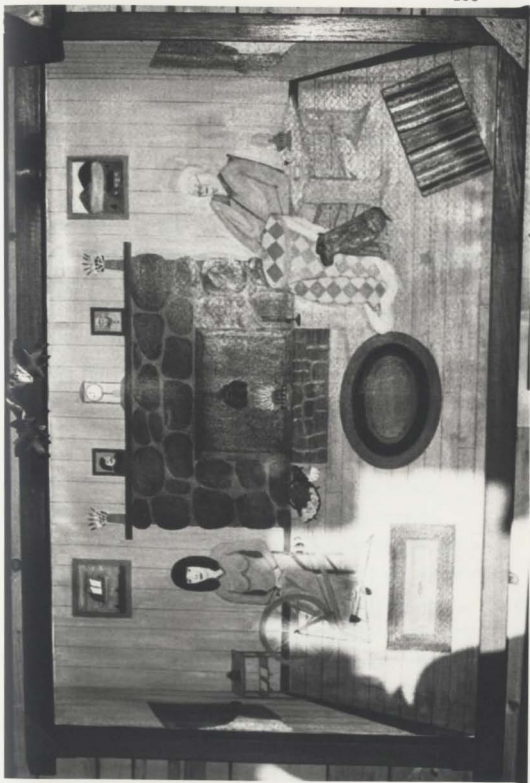



Figure 31: Newfoundland interior with female figures (Mr. Tucker)

surmounted by family portraits. The paintings and furnishings within the room symbolize an earlier way of life. These two paintings suggest an idyllic view of the province's past and present, a view which the informant's actual experience has sharply contradicted.

All of the above-mentioned paintings are done in a realistic graphic style of representation. The informant, however, has developed another style, and a startlingly different one, although it is used in only a minority of his paintings. Hints of this new style can be seen as early as 1977 in a canvas entitled "The Sorcerer." In this painting (which is not shown here because the dark colours made photography difficult) a robed figure standing at the edge of a storm-swept sea, conjures up destruction. In the painter's words, a "monstrous cloud" shoots lightning at a boat, while an octopus entraps human victims in his tentacles. Mr. Tucker said he painted this because "... the people in the area just, just turned me off a bit and sometimes when you're painting, you just get angry and you paint what you feel." This was the first of his paintings to represent such a direct expression of feeling, but others followed in which the style was even more symbolic and allegorical, rather than directly representational.

In the second example of this style, done in the following year, the informant painted a map of Newfoundland

on his canvas, and added various symbols to express his own impression of present day Newfoundland society (Figure 32, p. 256). The figure of a man nailing a horseshoe on a stooping, naked woman dominates the central portion of the painting, and is surrounded by other symbolic images:



... treating her as though it was a horse, which is basically my viewpoint of how they, they treat their women here in Newfoundland. . . . This is a church, and you can see the bingo sign written across with a broken cross fallen down, and the dollar sign on top of the steeple. . . . And then, of course, the flag at half-mast there is for the shame of Newfoundland. And these are the tears that you see here that, that's standing out. And of course the almighty case of beer, which is always with the, the Newfoundland men, especially around this part of the country. . . . "I se de B'y"--that's a Newfoundland expression [written on the male figure's T-shirt]. I am the boy--you know, the big guy. . . . And of course here is the bluebird of happiness is the Baby Bonus, the U.I.C. benefits, and the Canada grants, and of course here the blackbird which is bringing in the welfare [cheque]. And then you have your--you see your little clover here depicts the Irish section of the island and over here you have the fleur de lys which depicts the French section. . . . And of course, up here, this--the national game is darts. . . . (83-283/111A:107)

This allegorical painting was done in 1978, just when the informant was particularly oppressed with the realization that the Newfoundland he had returned to was not the idealized image of early childhood memory, a memory too early to be accurate. This critical view of local culture is depicted again in an 1980 painting, "Newfie Wedding," (Figure 33, p. 257), in which the newlyweds, groom with rented suit, and bride with rubber boots and newborn baby (barely visible in photo), pose stiffly side by side.



Figure 32: Newfoundland map with symbols (Mr. Tucker)



Figure 33: "Newfie Wedding" (Mr. Tucker)

... this is more of a, a comedy version or, of-- although it's not that comical because in a lot of respects what you see there is what we have actually seen at a wedding. The only thing is that I have exaggerated it slightly. Notice that she's wearing boots instead of slippers. And she's carrying a baby and getting married. And he's got his bottle in his hip here, carrying the rose, with his rubber boots. (83-2837[1]:A:170)

While "Newfie Wedding" represents rather sharp social criticism, it does not contain the abstract symbols of the earlier painting. However, in the following year, we see a return to the allegorical mode of presentation in several paintings. In a canvas done in conscious imitation of Canadian Indian art, the informant depicts a stylized eagle holding what appears to be a human figure in the process of giving birth over the gaping mouth of the eagle's young (Figure 34, p. 259). While Mr. Tucker described this as if it were merely an experiment in this style of art, it seems to suggest a theme which recurs in other paintings, that nature turns on humans who misuse the earth's resources and show cruelty to living creatures. (The informant presents this theme in realistic as well as allegorical form: see Figure 35, p. 260, for his impression of the whale fishery.) In this same year, he painted an enraged "Goddess of Nature" in front of a Canadian flag, surrounded by symbols of greed, violence and indulgence (Figure 36, p. 261).

Yeah, I was trying to depict a lot of things there with my mood, you know, even this, what I'm trying to say, you know, this greed, selfishness, stupidity, and dishonesty which is dripping down from a glass into the



Figure 34: Eagle with human figure (Mr. Tucker),



Figure 35: Whalers with diving whale (note man being knocked from boat) (Mr. Tucker)



Figure 36: "The Goddess of Nature" (Mr. Tucker)

mouth of a Newfoundlander. Because all Newfoundland is as far as I'm concerned is, is simply that. And we've lousy politicians, and these people here buy it up and vote them in again. . . [and get stuck with] the same old crap--in fact worse. And of course she's holding the head of a--I don't know if you can see the white, the hood like--well this is what the duck hunters wear around here [a balacclava]. And you can't see the rifle but her eyes have broken his rifle in two and she's chopped his head. What was it, a month later, the one guy here drowned. It was almost like an omen. [Shortly after the painting was done, a man was killed along the shore nearby in a hunting accident witnessed only by the man's brother.] And of course the clock in there with the hands off, the time has run out. And Canada splitting off into three places, which is the break-up of Canada, eventually, as I see it. And of course, the artist is not at his easel there. But his, the artist is, he's twirling around the legs of the goddess of nature and drinking wine. And of course the cigarettes that she's stamping on--it just depicts that, you know, I hate smoking. And there's the duck, the dead duck. And that's what the guy was, gave his life for, for one stupid duck. (83-283/ [1]:B:200)

By this point in Mr. Tucker's development in the craft, painting has become a vehicle for the expression of a wide range of emotions: disappointment and even disgust with local culture, but also political anxiety (the break-up of Canada) and personal guilt (the artist failing to do his work), all presented in a symbolic way. In the same year, however, the artist used an allegorical painting to depict another side of his emotional life. The untitled canvas depicts a bull and a lion flanking a heart-shaped tree, the shadow of which is also heart-shaped (Figure 37, p. 263). It represents the compatibility of the informant and his wife, a Taurus and a Leo, and the total effect is of balance and pastoral serenity.

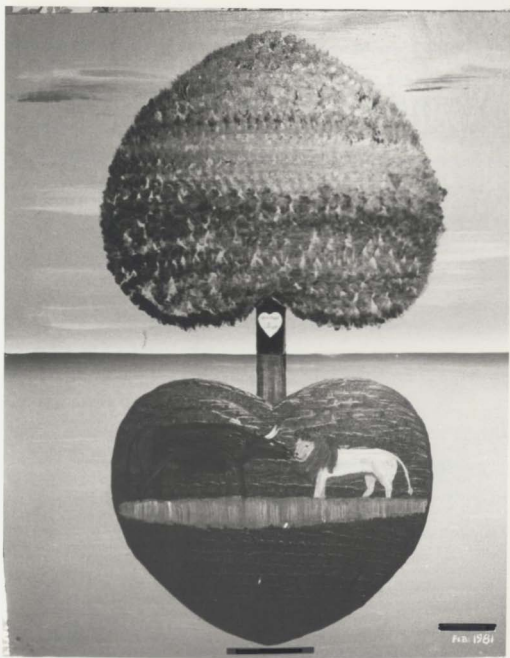


Figure 37: Bull and lion (Mr. Tucker)

When I met Mr. Tucker in 1983, he had not done a painting since the previous year, and that painting had been another piece of symbolic social criticism, a censure of his nearest neighbours and their alcoholic and violent relationship. When asked if he would continue painting in the future, he mentioned the excessive cost of oils and other supplies, which he purchases at an art supply store in a nearby town. For most of his existing paintings, he had constructed canvases himself from the tents which he and his wife used to use during their camping trips. But that supply was now exhausted and he was not definite about whether he would now begin purchasing prepared canvases. However, he did talk of future paintings in terms of design and approach in a way that would lead one to believe that he has not yet finished with the medium. In response to a question about his preferred subjects at present, he replied:

Oh, exaggerated forms. I wouldn't want to do anything like scenes and so on, I think that's passed with me now, I, I've had enough of that. So I'd want to do something exaggerated. (83-283/11:B:297)

When asked if he would depict events in the community, he responded:

Yes, I wouldn't mind doing that, but I would have to do it in my own way, I wouldn't make them realistic, in other words I would try to convey them more or less in a comedy vein. Not, not cartoon-like but a form of comedy in the painting. . . . (83-283/11:B:298)

What Mr. Tucker terms "comedy" most people would identify as strident social criticism. But he does not fear

the reaction of his neighbours to such pieces of art. He stated that he did not care what they thought of his work and whether they took offense at it. In fact he knows that they are unlikely to see much of it, considering the few social contacts he and his wife have with the neighbours. In addition, he realizes that they would not be able to understand the criticism presented in his paintings, because the form is so foreign to them.

It is obvious that painting has become an important emotional outlet for Mr. Tucker, and he is quick to admit this. But the corpus of paintings serves also as a sort of journal of emotional change and artistic development. If he were to sell them (as has been requested of him) or give them away, the knowledge, whether of life or of art, which each represents would be lost.

On, I think, yeah, I think I could, if I was to set them off, you know, by year, and then I could follow through and, you know, created a sort of a form of a diary. Cause I think, this is why I don't give any more away, I don't sell them or anything, because, you know, as one gets older, you want to be able to look at it and--because if you give it away or sell it, you don't have that memory, that's gone. . . . And it's nice to look back at this sort of stuff, you know, but--well, this is the way I, the way I felt then, and the way I've changed now. (83-283/11:B:274)

When he first started painting in Ontario, he did give some pieces away, but these were ones that "held no memory" for him: "They were pictures of waves coming in and crashing in on the shore, and--you know, this didn't have any meaning, for me at all." Thus, although he has had inquiries from

within and without the province, due no doubt to the publicity the couple's imaginatively decorated property received in local newspapers shortly after their arrival, and in spite of some lucrative offers, the paintings are not for sale.

Mr. Tucker's retirement activities present an interesting variation on what we have seen in relation to other informants who are motivated, at least in part, by a desire to preserve Newfoundland history and culture. Through his hooked mat designs in particular, and to a lesser extent through some of his paintings, this informant reflects the same interest in an artistic presentation of local tradition as it was in the past. But at the same time, this idyllic view of folk culture contrasts sharply with the cynical view of present-day culture which figures in many of his paintings. Separated from his extended family and home community at an early age, he retained an idealized image of local life which was bound to bring disappointment when he met the reality of contemporary Newfoundland. Other informants, who lived out sizeable portions of their lives in their home areas or nearby, exhibit a much more realistic outlook. Thus Mr. Parsons, a man of different experience and temperament, could indulge in nostalgia in his songs, but also praise contemporary life for the conveniences it provides.

The elements which have dominated Mr. Tucker's

life--independence, ambition, self-reliance--are still there. He has plans for future projects: another home, this one designed and built entirely by himself and his wife. And he would try his hand at totem pole carving, if he could find the appropriate log. While retirement has not brought him the sense of belonging to a community which he obviously expected, it has certainly presented a multitude of opportunities for the development of a variety of artistic skills, which in turn serve very pressing emotional needs. Moreover, the artistic development, carried out in close collaboration with his wife, has served to enhance and deepen their relationship. While the underlying mood in conversations with him is one of cynicism, one senses that he is happier now than at any time in his entire life.

CHAPTER 5

LATE LIFE CREATIVITY: FORM AND MEANING

The complexity of the relationship between late-life creativity and traditional culture is graphically demonstrated in the material of the preceding chapter. There is no simple equation between spending one's early years in a context oriented towards tradition and turning in later life to a craft, art, or skill reflective of that tradition. Within this group, some outport-bred individuals were indeed depicting in visual form aspects of rural Newfoundland culture, but so was the only foreign-born informant. In fact the two people whose present activities reflect most closely the frugal self-sufficiency so often equated with the rural history of the province had spent almost their entire lives in urban mainland areas. This couple were also practicing the widest range of skills common to outport life of earlier decades.

Nor is there any simple connection between extended family relationships and the present creative activities of these individuals. Contrary to my supposition that integration of the elderly into close family networks would be likely, as the provincial norm, to influence activities of the elderly, such considerations were not of major significance in relation to the current creative

activities of the informants in this project.¹ While some of the informants had spent their earlier years in close company with large numbers of aunts, uncles, and cousins, others had not. Beyond giving direct answers to questions posed, most never mentioned such family ties in their present lives, except perhaps to note that they had survived most of their siblings and cousins. When family was mentioned, it tended to be the three-generational family with attention being placed on children and grandchildren. With only one exception, Captain Peddle who was recording the maritime history of his extended kinship, the predominant concept of family reflected in this project is vertical rather than horizontal. Moreover, even with those informants who made reference to children and grandchildren, the frequency of contact between the older and younger generations varied widely from several times a week to infrequently.

Another factor which I had taken as a predetermined condition of the lives of present-day Newfoundland elders, lack of geographic mobility, was also contradicted by the data. Only one of the ten informants had spent a lifetime in the same locality. Three had moved between

¹A good general discussion of the importance of considering family ties in any examination of late life activity is Wayne E. Thompson and Gordon F. Streig's article, "Meaningful Activity in a Family Context," Social and Psychological Aspects of Aging, ed. Clark Tibbitts and Wilma Donahue (New York: Columbia UP, 1962) 905-912.

provinces, and one between continents. The other five had moved within the province, some widely in the course of a career, some only within the general home district. On the whole these people had not enjoyed the social continuity of a "life-term social arena" which has been posited by other scholars as an important aid in adjusting to both cultural and personal change over a lifetime.² But this appeared to have made no difference at all to their present creative lifestyles.

There are two additional factors, religion and the work ethic, which are often found to be of significance in scholarship on aging, but which were of negligible consequence here. There was little religious content in any of the creative work produced by these informants, and few references to religious matters entered their conversations. There were several paintings of churches, but the buildings served more as an element of a landscape (as in Figure 26, p. 246), or as a reflection of a feeling of community (as in Captain Peddie's depiction of the church of his home settlement). The latter informant had recounted a

²Sally Falk Moore, "Old Age in a Life-Term Social Arena: Some Chagga Of Kilimanjaro in 1974," Life's Career-- Aging: Cultural Variations on Growing Old, ed. Barbara Myerhoff and Andrei Simic (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1978): 23-76. Benefits to the individual of enjoying lifelong social relationships have also been discussed by Maria Davoren Vesperi in "The Cultural Construction of Old Age: Changes in Self-Concept Among Older Americans," diss., Princeton U, 1978.

narrative about prayer in a particular church which was the subject of another painting, but here too the community was as significant as spirituality in his relating of the event. The folly of viewing increased religiosity as a universal trait of old age has already been pointed out by other scholars.³ Nevertheless, in view of the continuing (although lessening) importance of religion in daily life in the province of Newfoundland, this finding is surprising. While one might have expected members of this generation to be deeply involved in church activities, not because of their present age but because they had been raised in an era that greatly valued religion, this was not so. While some were regular churchgoers, others were openly agnostic or attended formal services only irregularly.

The so-called "work ethic," seen as a factor of great importance in many studies of retirement, was of little concern here. Among these informants there were no negative feelings expressed towards retirement, except on the part of the man whose early retirement was forced by resettlement. Of the others, three had chosen early retirement, as had the husband of a fourth. Whether this disposition results from local attitudes which place work

³Russell A. Ward, The Aging Experience: An Introduction to Social Gerontology (New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1979) 13.

and leisure in cyclical balance rather than in opposition,⁴ or from a recent trend across North America towards a "leisure ethic" for the elderly,⁵ it is difficult to say. In fact a combination of these factors may be at play here. With the one exception of the resettled informant, these individuals have not consciously taken up their creative activity as a replacement for work, an interpretation which would reflect the once widely accepted "activity theory" offered by Robert J. Havighurst and others in the 1960s.⁶ The concept that successful aging depends on the individual's ability to find in retirement or later life a substitute for the abandoned activities of middle age has been discounted since the seventies as being too simplistic, although like many such theories it may have some application in specific cases. Stephen Inglis, for example, has interpreted the work of folk sculptor George Cockayne in this light.⁷

Within the lives of these individuals, the

⁴James C. Faris, *Cat Harbour: A Newfoundland Fishing Settlement*, Newfoundland Social and Economic Studies 3 (St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial U of Newfoundland, 1972) 43; Chart 4, Appendix.

⁵Richard B. Calhoun, *In Search of the New Old: Redefining Old Age in America, 1945-1970* (New York: Elsevier, 1978) 241-267.

⁶Robert J. Havighurst, "Successful Aging," *Gerontologist* 1 (1961): 8-13.

⁷Stephen Inglis, "Making a Go of It: The Art of Survival," *Canadian Folklore canadien* 4 (1982): 67-75.

influence of role models for late life creativity is another factor of negligible import. Few of the informants admitted to having any direct models for the undertaking of their activity, least of all other elderly people doing the same thing. Mrs. Byrne acknowledged that another senior citizen had encouraged her to join the large choral group, and that the director, himself an elderly man, had encouraged them to organize the smaller group presenting traditional Newfoundland music. But neither of these people were seen as examples to be imitated. Mr. Parsons had known of one songwriter in his home community, but that was a memory from his youth rather than a present-day influence. When questioned, informants generally expressed the belief that earlier generations had not taken up similar creative activities because the elderly then were forced by circumstance to keep working as long as they were able. While they saw themselves as the first generation with the opportunity to become involved in leisure activities of their choice, they had no particular perception of retirement or old age as a suitable time for creativity. They themselves were active by personal preference and because they enjoyed the activities.

In considering possible cultural precedents for late-life creativity, one notes a general scarcity of elderly role models available to this generation. Four of the informants had lost the parent of their own sex at a

very early age, three through death and one through the break-up of a family. The mother of another had been ill for most of the informant's life. Only three individuals specifically reported having had a parent who survived into a healthy, active old age, and one reported the same of both her parents. Relationships with grandparents were even more tenuous. Two individuals had never known any grandparents, for all had died either before their birth or when the informants were very young. Two others mentioned knowing only one grandparent, and only three reported close relationships with a grandparent. None of these facts should be surprising, for demographic patterns have shifted greatly since the childhoods of the informants, but it is well to remind ourselves that contemporary older generations were raised in a world very different from the one they are aging in.

When questioned as to whether their age cohorts were similarly involved in creative activities, the informants generally said no. Some had tried to encourage friends to try a hand at a new art or craft, but to no avail. Those living in a community of seniors reported with some disapproval the widespread lack of interest in anything other than talking or watching television. It would seem that among their contemporaries, these people are in the minority, and while they may themselves serve as models for future generations of aging people, they are not inspiring

their own contemporaries to increased creative activity.

A survey of the personal histories of these ten individuals gives no indication why these people are creatively active when so many other retired and elderly people are not. They represent a wide range of family, educational, career, and community backgrounds. Contrary to the findings of an earlier study which suggested that women are more likely than men to become involved in an expressive leisure activity, both sexes are represented almost equally here.⁸ There is, however, a predominant quality in their personalities which may furnish a clue. Apart from sharing good health, they also share a disposition. They are friendly, cheertul, pleasant people, the type you would be inclined to label "well-adjusted" and "stable," even after a brief meeting. Among the ten members of this group, there is only one possible exception to this blanket description. Mr. Tucker obviously harbours some resentments both towards people and events in his past, and towards individuals and circumstances in his present life. But even he is coping creatively with these conditions by turning negative feelings into works of art. And he is as outgoing and productive as any of the others.

Comments such as those expressed above are based,

⁸This study was reported by Jean Ellen Jones in "On Teaching Art to the Elderly: Research and Practice," Educational Gerontology 5 (1980): 17-31.

of course, on impressions, and could be definitively illustrated only through testing techniques which lie outside of the domain of the folklorist.⁹ It is interesting to note, however, that when other disciplines have addressed the topics of successful adjustment to aging and use of leisure time among the elderly, they have isolated personality characteristics which are shared by these informants. Two such studies are reported in a 1962 American publication. In research among working and retired men over the age of 55, Suzanna Reichard identified five personality types, three of which she considered successfully adjusted to aging. The informants here would fit most closely into her first category, termed "the mature." These are people who are constructive rather than impulsive or defensive; relatively free of neuroses and character defects; warm; responsible; happy in marriage; active in organizations and hobbies; realistic and flexible. Such people, she suggests, have adjusted well to the crises of life and have achieved a measure of serenity even if life has been difficult; thus they enjoy satisfaction in life and face old age calmly and

⁹The reader is directed to the ongoing work of A. Kozma and Michael Stones of the Department of Psychology, Memorial University of Newfoundland, on psychological well-being in the aged. See, for example, the following recent articles: "Re-validation of the Memorial University of Newfoundland Scale of Happiness," Canadian Journal on Aging 2 (1983): 27-29; "Predictors of Happiness," Journal of Gerontology 38 (1983): 626-632.

contentedly.¹⁰ In the same anthology of articles, Robert J. Havighurst defined five types of users of leisure time among a study group of middle-aged to elderly males. Here again, the Newfoundland informants would fit into his first category, considered by him the most successful users of leisure time. Termed the "challenging new experience group," these people were drawn to activities which rated high in "creativity, vitality, expansion of interest, talent, instrumental use of leisure, autonomy, enjoyment, and service."¹¹ Although these individuals often directed their activities towards a specific purpose or towards service to others, they contrasted sharply with other equally well-adjusted subjects in the study who used leisure time to accomplish practical tasks or to find relaxation and escape in the activity itself.¹²

In relation to the choice of a particular activity, again the picture is quite varied among these Newfoundland informants. It may be that an early interest

¹⁰Suzanne Reichard, "Personality and Adjustment to Aging," Social and Psychological Aspects of Aging, ed. Clark Tibbitts and Wilma Donahue, 666-669.

¹¹Robert J. Havighurst, "The Nature and Values of Meaningful Free-Time Activity," Social and Psychological Aspects of Aging, ed. Clark Tibbitts and Wilma Donahue, 899-904.

¹²Further studies of this sort are cited in the following article: Dermot Stewart, "Personality and Old Age," The Aged in Society, ed. Dermot Stewart, Social Science Monograph Series 3 (Saint John: U of New Brunswick, 1979) 56-66.

cannot be developed because of circumstances and is postponed until later life. Both Mrs. Green and Mrs. Hiscok said they would have taken up their creative work at an earlier age if they had not been occupied with their families. In Captain Peddle's case, however, no specific reason was given for the forty-year interval between his first and second paintings. With one man the final choice resulted from a conscious process of experimentation and elimination until the "right" activity was chosen. While five of the informants had settled on one major later-life activity, the others ranged over a variety of different arts and crafts in a continuing process of experimentation and learning. With several a specific conscious purpose led to the choice of a particular medium of expression. Both Mrs. Green and Captain Peddle have chosen visual and verbal means to recreate the culture of their families and natal districts. And we have one case within this group of a sudden and seemingly spontaneous inspiration: the adoption of songwriting by Mr. Parsons. While prior experience is not a necessary factor in the choice of activity among these informants, the suitability of interest to available working space may be. However, only one informant seemed to be conscious of this consideration: Mr. White spoke of the constraints of working in a small apartment. This factor may have subconsciously played a part in the choice of activity of other informants. The textile crafts of

Mr. Willwood may related to the domestic space available to him in the seniors' residence, but this remains an unproven hypothesis.

The stated motivations of the informants in the adoption of an art or craft also present a varied picture. Among the reasons given were the following: to supplement earnings, to pass the time, to get out of the house, to have the satisfaction of learning a new skill, to preserve the culture of Newfoundland. With a range of reasons such as these, the situation is obviously complex. Moreover, some individuals stated two or more of the above, while others stated no particular motivation at all. Some spoke of their work rather casually as a pastime or hobby, but obviously derived from its practice the deep delight of profound creative experience. Some emphasized the motivation of cultural preservation but also spoke glowingly of money earned or awards won.

The question of when the creative activity is taken up is equally complex. Since several of the informants had taken early retirement, the age of adoption was in some cases quite early. Mrs. Tucker was in her late forties, and two others were in their fifties. At the other end of the spectrum there is Mrs. Hiscock who was 76 when she started to crochet in earnest. Mr. Parsons, who was in his early seventies when he wrote his first poem, had already been long retired by this point, but others have

started a new activity before actual retirement. Captain Peddle was still working but had been painting and writing for a decade.

While there is obviously much diversity here, there may be a common factor in the time of adoption. An examination of the life histories of the informants reveals that in each case an event of deep personal significance preceded or coincided with the taking up of a creative activity. In two cases the event was retirement of the individual or of a spouse, a retirement requiring change and adjustment certainly, but not of a particularly traumatic nature. In other cases retirement occurred but it was accompanied by complicating factors: three of the informants either chose or were forced by circumstance to change places of residence. Mr. and Mrs. Tucker decided to move to Newfoundland, but then faced a long period of deep emotional adjustment after their arrival. Mr. White coped with resettlement, which in turn forced an early retirement and a move to an unknown urban environment. In all of these cases, the creative work followed shortly after the move had been completed. Two of the women entered upon intensified creative work after the death of a spouse. A man took up crafts after the deteriorating mental and physical health of his wife had necessitated the giving up of their family home and the move to an institution. One informant began his art after an accident at work had forced a long and frustrating

convalescence. And the tenth individual created his first poem on a day of profound emotional significance, his fiftieth wedding anniversary. Most of the informants had clearly entered upon a new life stage at or close to the taking up of the new creative or expressive work. Even in the case of Captain Peddie who, although then close to the usual retirement age, returned to work after the interval of a year, the accident and subsequent convalescence marked a substantial change. The year of enforced inactivity after a broken arm refused to heal was to him a setback which required adjustment and adaptation.

Certainly folklorists have commented before on the relationship between personal trauma and creative activity. In his 1975 study of an Appalachian furniture maker, Michael Owen Jones drew obvious parallels between psychological factors and creative processes throughout the life of the craftsman.¹³ Edward D. Ives also examined the striking concurrence of suffering and creative productivity in the life of songmaker Joe Scott, but wisely noted the difficulty of substantiating this kind of presumption:

That suffering and sorrow are the soil from which art grows is one of the most firmly established and generally accepted ideas in Western culture, and while it is less in style now than it has been, it keeps turning up. As a general explanation of the genesis of art, it is, like all such sweeping formulations, highly suspect; but certainly no one will deny its applic-

¹³Michael Owen Jones, The Handmade Object and Its Maker (Berkeley: U of California P, 1975).

ability in specific circumstances. . . . What we are interested in is the possible relationship between a particular sorrow, a specific loss, and a subsequent intense period of creativity. To put it another way, were the songs part of Joe's strategy (conscious or unconscious) for working out his salvation?

The individuals studied by Jones and Ives, however, differ sharply from the informants in terms of personality and attitude. Both were loners, unhappy in personal relationships, isolated from society, marginal people growing increasingly bitter and discontent with age. In addition, the major emotional setback which inspired their period of high creativity also in a sense led to their downfall. The wildly original chair designs produced by Jones' furniture maker are not the products of a healthy mind; nor did this increased productivity lead him to exorcise his devils, for by the time the study was completed he had grown increasingly wary of the researcher and of society in general. Similarly Joe Scott composed his most widely popular songs after his fiancée had broken off with him to marry another man, but in this period he became increasingly withdrawn and alcoholic, and began to give evidence of the degenerative disease which was to eventually claim his life.

Perhaps, however, there is another clue to understanding the creative productivity which coincided with

¹⁴Edward D. Ives, Joe Scott: The Woodsman-Songmaker (Urbana: U of Illinois P 1978) 430.

or followed upon difficulty in the lives of the present informants.¹⁵ A close examination of these life histories reveals that many of these people had more than their share of trouble in life. They lost parents at an early age. They faced particularly severe financial hardships, within a provincial society which has been economically depressed throughout most of their lifetimes. As young parents they experienced the death of a spouse or child, or lived always with the shadow of critical illness, physical or mental. They were deprived of even the minimal educational opportunities which the majority of their age cohorts enjoyed. Yet they flourished as self-reliant, flexible individuals with a healthy sense of their personal worth and their place in society. Moreover, they survived into a contented and creative retirement or old age. Why? Could it be that the vicissitudes of life had forced them to find positive means of coping with difficulty at much earlier ages? And that the adoption of a creative activity represents just one more successful strategy for adjusting to change and trauma? This generalization is, of course, as hard to prove as Ives' hypothesis about Joe Scott. It could only be verified with a longitudinal study of the lives of individuals, and how

¹⁵In the discussion of this topic, I am indebted to the Gerontology Centre at Memorial University and particularly to Dr. A. Kozma and Dr. M. Stones. These ideas were generated during a March 1985 seminar on the topic of my research.

can we predict in advance which individuals are likely to become creative in old age? From evidence seen here in the lives of these people, it does seem a distinct possibility, especially given the fact that several of them, at no prompting from the interviewer, linked the start of their creative work to a stressful occurrence, or stated categorically that the one was undertaken as a means of coping with the other.¹⁶

At present the informants are practicing their arts and crafts in a variety of intensities. Some work only intermittently on spontaneous impulse. Some work fairly consistently, taking up creative work for at least a short while most days. One man speaks of his model boat building as a "full time job," and one woman pauses in her crochet work only to eat, sleep and visit.

While much diversity is evident in the motivations for and the patterns of practice of creative activities among the ten subjects of this study, there is greater uniformity on the deeper levels of meaning and significance. This matter is approached here, as was suggested at the beginning of the previous chapter, in terms of recurrent themes in their lives and their work. A thematic approach

¹⁶The editor of a recent book on elderly artists, both lifelong and of recent practice, has noted the same link between personal stress and intensified creative work. See Dana Steward, ed., *A Fine Age: Creativity as a Key to Successful Aging*, photography by Jeaninne Lamb (Little Rock, Ark.: August House, 1984) 106-107.

has been used before in ontological studies. As early as 1962, Hans Thomae's work then done, and added his own observations, drawn from interview-based study, of themes evident in the aging process, by which he meant predominant social and psychological concerns of aging people.¹⁷ Cultural scholars have recently examined themes as recurrent topics in prose or in visual art forms, topics which reveal central concerns or perceptions shaped by the individual's personal life experience and culture.¹⁸ In the discussion which follows, we will examine themes in the sense adopted by this new group of scholars.

It is, of course, simple enough to say that this study has revealed the presence of recurrent themes evident in the content of the crafts, or activities studied and in what the informants themselves say about their activities and their lives. However, it is not a matter of one informant/one theme even one activity/one theme, for the picture is much more complex than that. Some of the activities of some of the informants are fairly narrowly directed. But most, as shall see, have multiple meanings.

¹⁷Hans Thomae, "Thematic Analysis of Aging," Social and Psychological Aspects of Aging, ed. Clark Tibbitts and Wilma Donahue, 657-663.

¹⁸See, for example, Sharon R. Kaufman, "Identity in Old Age: A Cultural Perspective," diss., U of California at San Francisco, 1980; Jude Wilson-Powers, "Elder Artists: The Long Life and the Imagination," Gerontological Society of America and Canadian Association on Gerontology, Toronto, Nov., 1981.

or levels of significance which overlap, complement, and sometimes contradict one another.

The most obvious theme recurrent in the work of these informants is that of autobiography. In one way or another, half of the informants are telling in whole or in part their life stories. They may be painting scenes of childhood in a visual re-creation of early memories, as Captain Peddle and Mr. Squires have done. They may be recalling earlier life experiences in prose or in poetry, as Mrs. Green, Captain Peddle and Mr. Parsons are doing. The life history may take a three-dimensional form, through the reproduction in miniature form of what one has seen or experienced: clay figures of work in the fishery, models of schooners seen or sailed on. And in one case the three-dimensional form is a spatial setting: the recreation room which indeed re-creates the life of Mr. Squires.

The idea of elderly people wanting to tell their life stories is, of course, not new. One of the most common stereotypes of the elderly is that they like to talk about the past, and the general public is certainly well aware of the visual reminiscence of a painter like "Grandma Moses," who, as one critic put it, painted for the "autobiographical pleasure of it."¹⁹ Folklorists have spent considerable time

¹⁹John Canaday, Art and Life of Grandma Moses, ed. Otto Kallir (South Brunswick and New York: A. S. Barnes; London: Thomas Yoseloff, 1969) 16.

over the past two decades collecting and analyzing the life histories of informants, many of whom have been elderly, and have reached a variety of conclusions concerning the importance of what may be considered a separate oral genre.²⁰

Nor has the significance of autobiography gone unnoticed by gerontological scholars. Since 1963 when Robert N. Butler, working from Eric Erikson's earlier concept of ego integration as a developmental task of later life, coined the term "life review,"²¹ many researchers have published articles relating to reminiscence among the elderly. Most of these fall into one of two categories. In the first place, there are a number of articles dealing with reminiscence as a natural, healthy activity of normal people in later life. Arthur W. McMahon and Paul J. Khudick, for example, have examined the psychological

²⁰The most complete survey to date of material relevant to both oral and written biographies and autobiographies is found in Martin J. Lovelace, "The Presentation of Folklife in the Biographies and Autobiographies of English Rural Workers," PhD. thesis, Memorial U of Newfoundland, 1983.

²¹Robert N. Butler, "The Life Review: An Interpretation of Reminiscence in the Aged," *Psychiatry* 26 (1963): 65-76; Eric Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, rev. and enl. ed. (1950; New York: W. W. Norton, 1963).

benefits of reminiscing to the aging individual.²² They suggest that different personality types may use the activity in different ways: to maintain a sense of identity, to allay anxieties concerning death, to come to terms with one's past life. In a similar vein, Barbara Myerhoff has proposed that the self-awareness which results from the telling of one's life history can bring the individual to a "greater fullness of being," and can make him or her a "more fully realized example of the possibilities of being human."²³

A second set of articles deals with reminiscing of life history telling as a therapeutic tool for use with the elderly who are experiencing problems of a medical, emotional or social nature.²⁴ Myrna I. Lewis and Robert N. Butler suggest that the therapist can intervene

²²Arthur W. McMahon, Jr., and Paul J. Rhudick, "Reminiscing in the Aged: An Adaptational Response," Psychodynamic Studies on Aging: Creativity, Reminiscing, and Dying, ed. Sidney Levin and Ralph J. Kahana (New York: International Universities Press, 1967) 64-78.

²³Barbara Myerhoff, "Life History Among the Elderly: Performance, Visibility and Re-Membering," Life Course: Integrative Theories and Exemplary Populations, ed. Kurt W. Back, AAAS Selected Symposium 41 (Washington, D.C.: American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1980) 133-153.

²⁴Typical examples of this sort of study are Andrew D. Norris and Mohammad Abu El Eileh, "Reminiscence Groups: A Therapy for both Elderly Patients and Their Staff," Oral History 11.1 (Spring 1983): 27-30; and Allen Pincus, "Reminiscence in Aging and Its Implications for Social Work Practice," Social Work 15.3 (1970): 47-53.

positively in this natural process by suggesting a variety of ways in which patients can accomplish the so-called "life review."²⁵

In a 1980 review article, Sharan Merriam criticized the literature on reminiscence among the elderly for two basic reasons. In the first place, she found that there was no consensus among scholars as to the meaning of the concept, for the terms "reminiscence," "remembering," "life review," and "life history" were being used interchangeably. In addition, she suggested that, partly as a result of the lack of clear definition of the phenomenon, the research findings were contradictory and inconclusive.²⁶

Whatever may be the general weaknesses of the gerontological literature on this topic, the results of this project suggest several important points to note about the autobiographical aspect of the works of these retired and elderly people.

In the first place, in spite of the posited universality of this trait, only half of these informants

²⁵Myrna I. Lewis and Robert N. Butler, "Life Review Therapy: Putting Memories to Work in Individual and Group Psychotherapy," Geriatrics 29 (Nov. 1974): 165-169; 172-173.

²⁶Sharan Merriam, "The Concept and Function of Reminiscence: A Review of the Research," The Gerontologist 20 (1980): 604-608. A parallel criticism has been made by Jeff Todd Titon, who has reprehended folklorists for failing to distinguish between life story as fiction and biography as personal history. See "The Life Story," Journal of American Folklore 93 (1980): 276-292.

are manifestly engaged in the telling of their life's stories. Secondly, in their work there is no suggestion that they are reviewing their lives for purposes of evaluation in the sense of making a considered judgment of worth. They may be engaged in an appraisal of the content and significance of their experience, but there is no evidence of their making an assessment of its value. These two traits of universality and the evaluative function have been linked by several scholars. W. Boylin, S. K. Gordon, and M. F. Nehrke, for example, in a 1976 study of reminiscing by institutionalized veterans, begin by referring to the previously mentioned theories of Erikson:

... the proximity of the elderly individual to death precipitates a crisis during which he evaluates his experiences and accomplishments in terms of whether his major goals in life have been attained. Depending on whether the person is able to find order and meaning to his life, this reworking of the past will result either in the attainment of ego integrity or despair.²⁷

Similarly, in the previously mentioned article by Lewis and Butler, the authors speak of the life review as a "universal mental process brought about by the realization of approaching dissolution and death."²⁸

It is, of course, possible that the informants who are not obviously engaged in autobiography through their

²⁷W. Boylin, S. K. Gordon, and M. F. Nehrke, "Reminiscing and Ego Integrity in Institutionalized Elderly Males," The Gerontologist 16 (1976): 118-124.

²⁸Lewis and Butler 165.

creative work are in fact participating in the process by other means, such as through interpersonal communication with family and friends. It is possible that a self-evaluation is being conducted by some or all of them. But neither of these processes is in evidence when one reviews their work or their discussion of their lives and work. Certainly, all of the informants were willing to answer my questions about themselves, and to make evaluative comments in response to my queries. But I could detect no general desire among those not manifestly engaged in reminiscing to dwell on autobiographical material apart from my instigation, and no general feeling that later life was the time for an introspective appraisal of one's worth and experience. It is possible that some of the informants had gone through such a process before beginning their creative work, or at least before I became acquainted with them. It is also possible that some might come to it later in life, especially at a future stage when advancing years and declining health seem to presage death. However, with the broad range of ages represented in the informant sample, one might have expected to catch someone in a process which scholars deem so widespread. Moreover, the original passage in Erikson's Childhood and Society on which many of these later scholars base their concepts suggests that ego integrity is accrued over a lifetime, not suddenly achieved

as the result of a retrospective late-life evaluation.²⁹ One can only conclude that the whole question of the universal evaluative autobiography still needs considerable scholarly attention.

There is another consideration related to the theme of autobiography which again concerns gerontological literature on the subject. While scholars tend to look on the process as a natural one, they also tend to see it as one that is frustrated in modern society where cultural change has eliminated many of the traditional occasions for life history telling and reminiscence. Barbara Myerhoff and Virginia Tufte suggest that occasions now have to be created artificially for the elderly to tell their life stories, and these scholars, among others, have been active in setting up life history workshops and group therapy sessions.³⁰ Similarly, Lewis and Butler suggest that the therapist can intervene in this natural process to make it more "deliberate" and "efficient," especially by suggesting ways in which the autobiography can be achieved: through written or taped accounts; through making pilgrimages, either in person or through correspondence, to childhood haunts or to the homes of relatives; by participating in

²⁹Erikson 268.

³⁰Barbara G. Myerhoff and Virginia Tufte, "Life History as Integration: An Essay on an Experiential Model," The Gerontologist 51 (Dec. 1975): 541-543.

reunions of family, schoolmates, etc.; by developing an interest in genealogy; by preparing scrapbooks or organizing memorabilia; by making a summation of one's life's work; or by taking positive steps to preserve ethnic identity.³¹ In both cases, the scholars fail to consider the fact that the elderly may make their own occasions and devise their own methods. Many of the methods suggested by Lewis and Butler³² are being utilized by these informants: they are writing life histories, making "pilgrimages" by painting childhood haunts, writing genealogical works in creative ways, and creating "memorabilia" in clay, wood and other forms.

Before leaving the topic of autobiography, there is a secondary theme which may be a part of this process or may stand alone: that is the process of integration. Many of the above-mentioned scholars who have examined the question of the life review have also spoken of the sense of integration which follows from the individual's drawing together the various elements of his or her life experience. In studying identity in old age, Kaufman suggested that continuity is not found but actively created.³² Myerhoff has also suggested that part of aging well is being able to integrate the various conflicting aspects of life, and she noted this being actively done by her informants

³¹Lewis and Butler, 165-169.

³²Kaufman 169.

through such creative means as poetry and the writing of autobiography.³³ For the informants of this study who are engaged in autobiography, there is a sense of integrating personal history with cultural history. Mrs. Green is using her life history to pass on to her children and grandchildren a sense of life in the old country. For Captain Peddle, personal, family and regional history are inextricably linked in his visual and written record of navigation and the fishery in his home area. The same can be said for Mr. Squires' recreation room with its mementoes of home and career, and its touches of traditional Newfoundland interior decoration and furnishing; and for Mr. White's boat models which are very personal creations but also cultural symbols.

Integration seems to be taking place as well on other levels. Mr. Parsons has written only a few poems about his past life, poems which evoke the small fishing outport of days gone by; most of his poetry deals with the present. Thus while he is in part telling his own life history, he is also integrating past and present in his own life, and spanning a personal culture which reaches from the days of sail to the space age. In the work of yet another informant, one whose creative work does not reflect autobiography, we have another sense of integration. By devising crafts which combine skills from the male and female domain,

³³Barbara Myerhoff, Number Our Days (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1978) 217.

Mr. Willwood is integrating traditional sex roles in art, much as he has done in life during the years when he has served as both provider and nurturer in the face of his wife's illness. The variety of integrative elements in the works of these informants would suggest that this too is a factor of later life where the psychological and the cultural are intimately bound.

A theme which sometimes accompanies autobiography is that of legacy, and in these cases legacy of a cultural nature. For two of those involved in the telling of life history, Mrs. Green and Captain Peddle, the artistic recreation of the home culture is seen as an inheritance prepared for children and grandchildren. But Mr. Squires, who recreated cultural history as part of personal history in his basement room, has no children, and told his life history ostensibly for his own pleasure and for that of friends and neighbours. Mr. Parsons too has no direct descendants, but when he describes scenes from his past in poetry, there is the sense of passing cultural values on to his listeners or his readership. Mr. Tucker, on the other hand, does have children, and does depict traditional Newfoundland culture in some of his paintings, but has no sense of passing either the paintings or the perception of the culture to anyone, children or otherwise. And Mr. White does see himself as preserving a facet of local culture through his model schooners, but not particularly

for his descendants. Thus the relationship between autobiography and the preparation of a legacy is not a necessary one, and either element may stand alone.

In cases where this urge to formulate a cultural heritage was present, the motivation was clearly expressed by the informants. Mrs. Green and Captain Peddle spoke in terms of transmitting knowledge of the past to specific receivers, their children and grandchildren. Mr. White and Mr. Parsons saw themselves in the same role, but directed their efforts towards a broader, more vaguely defined audience, future generations. In all four cases, the informants perceived themselves as a link between past and present, or between the old world and the new, and felt a responsibility as a member of the last generation to have had direct personal experience of an almost forgotten way of life. The underlying motivation was the same whether the legacy centered on outpost life in the early decades of the century, the days of sail, the Labrador fishery, or life in a large British city in the inter-war years. Accustomed as we are to the idea of transmission of cultural knowledge from older to younger generations, folklorists usually picture this as a spontaneous process, not the self-conscious, purposeful one seen among these informants.

While it might be tempting to conclude that this motivation is peculiar to elderly Newfoundlanders who have witnessed such tremendous cultural change in their own

lifetimes, the urge to create a legacy of some sort has, in fact, been noted by gerontologists as a common characteristic of older people. Robert Butler and Myrna Lewis suggest that the legacy, which provides the elderly person with a sense of continuity transcending death, may be in the form of direct descendants, personal creations, material possessions, bodies or organs for research, or merely memories of themselves in the minds of others; and that the motivation may lie in pure generosity, a desire to be remembered, a wish to finish business before death, or to retain control afterwards.³⁴ For these informants, with or without direct descendants, the need to leave behind a work or personal creation generally dominates, and the motivation is altruistic--they want not themselves but the culture of home, family, community, and region to be remembered. This drive suggests another trait of the elderly identified by Butler and Lewis and termed by them the "elder function"--the wish to give advice to, or share knowledge with younger generations. They point out that not all elderly, however, have a nurturant feeling toward the young. The findings of this project would suggest that a strong nurturant feeling may be present, but not reflected in works of artistic creation; and also that even those who have never been

³⁴Robert N. Butler and Myrna I. Lewis, Aging and Mental Health: Positive Psychosocial Approaches, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: C. V. Mosby, 1973) 28-30.

involved in childrearing may in later life give evidence of strong nurturant tendencies on a cultural level.

The motivation for leaving a legacy and the sense of responsibility for preserving memories of an almost forgotten way of life were also present in the subjects of Barbara Myerhoff's research in the California Jewish community centre, but in a way that contrasts sharply and somewhat sadly with the situation under study here.³⁵ Her informants, immigrant Jews, were indeed the last generation to remember the life of the shtetls of Eastern Europe. But separated geographically, culturally, and emotionally from their upwardly-mobile children and grandchildren, they passed this knowledge on to each other and to the ethnographer, sorrowfully aware that their legacy was unwanted by younger generations. In contrast, the Newfoundland informants, resident in a province hungry for artistic reflections of its own culture, could slyly boast of offers for purchase, or proudly complain of family demands for the products of their talents.

Another theme which is reflected in the informants' attitudes to and discussion of their work, although it is not so much directly reflected in the creative products, is that of status maintenance and enhancement. It is important to note immediately that there is nothing in what

³⁵Barbara Myerhoff, Number Our Days.

they say or do which would suggest that they think that aging in particular robs them of status; nor is that belief evident in Newfoundland society in general. If we were to accept the "universals" of aging proposed by Donald Cowgill and Lowell Holmes in 1972, we might have expected a significant decline in the status of the elderly in Newfoundland over the past four decades, for they suggested that "the status of the aged is inversely proportional to the rate of social change."³⁶ We obviously need to balance this contention with the previously mentioned finding of Pamela T. Amoss, that Coast Salish elders were valued more highly in the face of modernization, partly because they were the last remaining cultural experts, and partly because, within the depressed economy of the reserve, they enjoyed financial security, thanks to the regular receipt of social security cheques.³⁷

The element of status maintenance reflected here is an underlying feeling that these individuals, through their work, take particular pride in their position as

³⁶Donald O. Cowgill, and Lowell D. Holmes, eds., Aging and Modernization (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1972) 322.

³⁷Pamela T. Amoss, "Coast Salish Elders," Other Ways of Growing Old: Anthropological Perspectives, ed. Pamela T. Amoss and Stevan Harrell (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford UP, 1981) 227-247. Similar findings had been reported in 1968. See V. L. Bengtson and D. H. Smith, "Social Modernity and Attitudes Toward Aging," The Gerontologist 8.3, pt. 2 (1968): 26.

independent, self-reliant people, and as skilled, capable people. It is not a matter of achieving status for the first time, nor of replacing one status, lost when wage-earning or childrearing ended, with another. It is rather a matter of deriving a heightened sense of position and prestige from the practice of the creative activity, and this sense can be attained in different ways. Economic gain through the practice of the art or craft is certainly an obvious way. Those who were selling paintings and ship models discussed the sales with obvious pride and revealed the prices earned. Even those who did not want to sell mentioned offers of money with evident pleasure. One informant was not realizing economic gain through the work, but was selling products for the cost of the materials; yet she too had a sense of satisfaction in the maintenance of economic stability and self-reliance, and pride in the fact of not being obliged to sell out of need.

Another avenue of status enhancement of importance to the informants was public display and recognition. Three of the informants had entered major competitions shortly after entering upon their creative work, and recounted with pride the awards earned. In addition, exhibitions and performances of work were important and were described in detail, whether this meant singing a recently-composed song before the local service club, practicing a craft at a display in a local shopping mall, or having a poem published

in the town newspaper. Seven of the informants, in large or small measure, had received some sort of public acclaim beyond the approval of immediate neighbours, friends and family members, and were very proud of it.

A final element of status enhancement was derived from the fact of giving, not taking. The most obvious example of this was in the performance of Mrs. Byrne for institutionalized elderly people, an activity which set her apart from the audience and enabled her to offer charity to others. The same element underlies the actions of Mr. Willwood and Mrs. Hiscock who offered handmade articles to the residence association to be sold for the benefit of the group at large. This same tendency was noted by Myerhoff among her subjects who, although very poor themselves, gave generously from their meagre pensions to Israeli charities. The act of giving fulfilled a cultural requisite, but also served as one of the few means available to them to maintain honour and self-respect. By giving to others they proved that they themselves were not charity cases.³⁸

Another theme underlying much of the creative activity of the informants is play. Generally it is solitary play, although sometimes communal: Mrs. Byrne's group singing, and Mr. and Mrs. Tucker's joint projects.

³⁸Barbara Myerhoff, Number Our Days 128-129.

Much of the work produced is characterized by whimsy and humour: Mrs. Green's collage, done as a send-up of modern abstract art; Mr. Squires' rake bird; Mr. Tucker's humorous paintings and his wife's comical verse. There is creative innovation and spontaneity reflected in the "original" crafts of Mr. Willwood and in Mr. Parsons' poetry, a delight-producing unexpectedness in some of Mrs. Green's clay figures and in Mr. Squires' mural. While the activities are very different, the spirit is one of playfulness and fun. Even in Captain Peddle's decisions about the scope of his work, there is the sense of setting goals which lie outside the realm of the "real" world--painting all the Newfoundland lighthouses of a certain era, tabulating all the schooners of one region--which has been noted as a characteristic of play by both Huizinga and Caillouis.³⁹ And the constant repetition of the same activity, seen in Mrs. Hiscock's crocheting, and in the making of models by Mr. Squires and Mr. White, suggests Piaget's form of "practice play," the exercise of activity for the pleasure of doing, a pleasure that had earlier been termed Funktions-

³⁹Johan Huizinga, Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture (1944; Boston: Beacon Press, 1955); Roger Caillouis, Man, Play and Games; trans. Meyer Barash (1958; New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1961).

lust by another scholar.⁴⁰

While anthropological studies of play have been numerous, especially over the past two decades, they are generally not of great help in understanding the kind of play apparent in the work and approaches of these informants. We are not dealing here with the kinds of ludic behaviour which have attracted most scholarly attention (structured play such as games and sports, and fantasy play such as make-believe and ritual), nor with the age group most commonly studied in relation to play--children. In addition, much of the definitive scholarship on the topic has been based on an explicit or implicit work/play, serious/frivolous dichotomy.⁴¹ The inappropriateness of such a simplistic approach becomes evident when one encounters an informant who refers to his activity as a "full time job," yet brims with unbounded delight as he recalls the joy of his first creation. Only recently have scholars in this domain extended their interest to a range of age groups, and begun to consider the two categories of work and

⁴⁰Jean Piaget, Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood (1945; New York: W. W. Norton, 1951); Karl Buhler, The Mental Development of the Child (New York: Harcourt, 1930).

⁴¹For a critical review which touches on this weakness, see Jacques Ehrmann, "Homo Ludens Revisited," Yale French Studies--Game, Play, Literature 41 (1968): 31-51.

play as other than mutually exclusive.⁴² While we await the elaboration of a new paradigm within which to study the ludic behaviour of mature adults, there are some qualities of the play of these informants which bear comment.

Stephen Miller and others have pointed out that play is not a behaviour as much as a context for behaviour, a mode of organizing activity, or a frame within which the activity takes place.⁴³ If so, it is a context within which elderly people like these informants are spending a large proportion of their daily lives. It is not a context which necessarily removes them from the real world, but one which confers added privileges, especially the privilege of acting autonomously within a framework they themselves have designed. This particular aspect of play could be an important factor in late-life creativity. It is the retired and elderly who have to cope with a growing loss of independence and a reduction in control over their lives. The playful framework of creative work may hold a particular attraction for this age group because it offers complete control in at least one sphere of life.

Miller has written also of the "combinatorial

⁴²A good study of the development of ludic behaviour in a workplace is described in Don Handelman, Work and Play Among the Aged (Assen/Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1977).

⁴³Stephen Miller, "Ends, Means and Galumphing: Some Leitmotifs of Play," American Anthropologist 75 (1973): 87-98.

freedom of play," a quality we see here in the recycling of objects by Mr. Willwood and in his blending of craft techniques, as well as in the new presentations of old themes in the visual crafts of Mrs. Green and Mr. Tucker. In play, the player does not have to subordinate the means to the end, as in a practical attempt to "get the job done," but is free to approach the chosen goal by whatever elaborate path decided upon or innovatively worked out along the way. Miller calls this activity "galumphing," and suggests that, maladaptive and inefficient as it might be within a utilitarian framework, it encourages the kind of personal flexibility which facilitates intelligent and innovative problem-solving in the non-play world. He is suggesting that in addition to the other commonly cited benefits of play, it serves the added function of developing individual adaptability, and that this benefit derives precisely from play's inefficient, undirected nature. Such an explanation would seem to apply to play among children and young people. But in order to understand the appeal of play to older age levels, we should perhaps be looking at this situation in reverse. Those whom the changing winds of fortune have already made flexible and adaptable may be more drawn to creatively playful activity late in life, and more capable of enjoying it. The spontaneous, unexpected quality of much of the work produced by these individuals would suggest that they had developed in their lives the

means to delight in process as well as in product. Perhaps they were more free to "galumph" because they had spent a lifetime improvising practical solutions to immediate problems.

A final characteristic of play and one which it shares with artistic creativity is timelessness. In both realms of activity, time is suspended as all motion and meaning centre on the act at hand. One is totally present to oneself and to the activity, and time is experienced "not as a precipitate rush of successive moments, but rather as the one full moment. . . ."⁴⁴ For the elderly person, it has been suggested that this experience of "the oceanic feeling"⁴⁵ has particularly positive benefits. In relation to creative activity, Lawrence Greenlegh posits that "timelessness, as one of the significant characteristics of the unconscious part of the personality brought into play in creative activity, serves to align the mental and emotional life of the creative person so that he attends less to time-bound events and consequently has less aware-

⁴⁴Eugen Fink, "The Oasis of Happiness: Toward an Ontology of Play," Yale French Studies--Game, Play, Literature 41 (1968): 19-30. This article consists of excerpts from the book Oase des Glücks. Gedanken zu einer Ontologie des Spiels, trans. Ute and Thomas Saine (Freiburg/München, 1957). Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi terms this state "flow." See his Beyond Boredom and Anxiety: The Experience of Play in Work and Games (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1975) 35-36.

⁴⁵Sigmund Freud, Civilization and its Discontents (London: Hogarth, 1953) 8.

ness--and therefore less exaggerated, handicapping concern--regarding his expended living time."⁴⁶ The informants of this study gave no evidence of being subject to excessive death anxiety, although this is admittedly a difficult matter to determine. Their lives and their work certainly asserted a deep involvement in life. However, here again, we could question the nature of the relationship between these factors. Does playful creativity, with its attendant factor of timelessness, promote a reduction in death anxiety, or is the person already relatively free of an overriding concern with time and therefore more free to play and to create?

Time is of relevance in relation to another theme evident in the work of the informants, the theme of compensation. This is a kind of "making up for lost time," but not in the sense of dwelling on regrets or trying to make up that which can never be regained.⁴⁷ It is the sense rather of taking advantage of present time to do something which was not done before, and thereby achieve a symbolic balance in life, a state of equilibrium. This element manifests itself among the informants in several ways and is generally

⁴⁶Lawrence Greenlegh, "Timelessness and Restitution in Relation to Creativity and the Aging Process," Journal of the American Geriatrics Society 8 (1960): 353-358.

⁴⁷According to Erikson, one of the traits of those who have achieved ego integrity is an "acceptance of one's one and only life cycle as something that had to be and that, by necessity, permitted of no substitutions." See Childhood and Society 268.

a factor they are at least in part conscious of. Mrs. Byrne has undertaken a late-life career of public performance after a lifetime of domestic duty and service to family which confined her to her own household for much of the time. Her present lifestyle is characterized by activity, sociability, and the diversion of song, music and dance, all of which stand in sharp contrast to her younger years.

Yet she has not turned her back on that earlier life, but has merely, without regret, found another way to express the values which continue to motivate her. Mr. White, the retired communications worker, can involve himself indirectly in an outdoor, male activity through the making of models of boats, after a career spent chiefly in indoor, "female" activity. Mrs. Hiscock can now forget the practical necessities of existence, as she never could when raising her children, and concentrate, through crochet, on the aesthetic, the luxurious, the trivialous. All three of these informants spoke of their work in terms of now having a chance to get involved in a sphere of activity they did not have the opportunity to experience before, as did Mrs. Green. Mr. and Mrs. Tucker, after spending their working years in cities, are enjoying country living and the sense of intimacy with nature that it brings. And Mr. Parsons, having spent his first forty years in an isolated outpost, uses his poems to sing the praises of the conveniences of modern life.

The theme of compensation may be related to the factor of "restitution" which has been recognized by psychologists as playing a part in artistic creativity. In the previously quoted article by Greenleigh, the hypothesis is offered that the creative process provides a "mechanism" which helps the creative person to avoid destructive reactions to physical and emotional stress by means of "restitution and symbolic replacement for losses."⁴⁸ As noted earlier, many of the informants had suffered some kind of disruptive stress, either minor or major, shortly before taking up the creative activity. It may be that the creative impulse, suddenly activated at this time of life, serves not only as a constructive reaction to immediate trauma, but also as a means of symbolically overcoming long-term imbalances in life. While Greenleigh and others suggest that the means of compensation functions on the level of personality, whereby the individual regains his sense of wholeness or "intactness," it obviously also operates on the cultural level, for some of these informants have been drawn to re-establish the equilibrium suggested by their natal culture between work and leisure, between male and female spheres of activity, and between the practical and the aesthetic.

Another theme which can be detected both in the

⁴⁸Lawrence Greenleigh 353.

content of the creative work and in the informants' utilization of the product or the activity is social and cultural involvement. Those involved in performance most obviously use the activity to engage others, the audience, in social interaction, but this is happening also with other skills. We have examples of the use of creative products in a teasing relationship. Mr. Squire's fake bird, Mr. Willwood's ship in the bottle, several of Mr. Parsons' poems which poke gentle fun at neighbours: all of these were intended by their creators to engage others in social intercourse. When Mr. Willwood showed me his bottle-bound ship and then revealed the secret of its insertion, and when Mr. White asked me if I could identify the material he had used to make the tiny wheel for his schooner model, I had the feeling that this conversation had already been carried on with many other individuals. The objects were certainly important in themselves, but they were also means to the end of heightened social interplay. Interpersonal relationships were also being strengthened by those informants who used their skills to make presents for family members: boat models, crocheted bedspreads, or family histories. In addition to these examples of social involvement, many of the activities reflect a sense of vital engagement in contemporary cultural life, whether the creators are finding sources of design in popular culture (depicting the Muppets in clay, for example), or commenting

on the passing scene in poetry, as in the songs of Mr. Parsons. In the case of Mr. and Mrs. Tucker, of course, the creative activities have not brought about any sense of community engagement, in spite of their hopes and expectations. They feel in fact that their skills are not valued, nor are they themselves. But this disappointment has not stopped them from continuing to practice the skills, an important fact to note lest we should think that successful social involvement is a necessary corollary to creative work.

What I have termed social and cultural involvement relates to Myerhoff's concept of the need for "visibility" among the elderly.⁴⁹ Myerhoff posited this as a vital necessity among the subjects of her study who were isolated from their families, and living among and socializing almost exclusively with other elderly people. Their way of life did not provide them with a normal "audience" for receptivity and feedback. Thus within the community centre they vied constantly with each other for attention in a public assertion of self through the only means left open to them. With the informants of this study, the kind of visibility sought by Myerhoff's subjects is not a pressing need. Life provides most of them with ample occasions for social interaction, and the majority of them live within a native,

⁴⁹Barbara Myerhoff, Number Our Days 143-148.

not an alien culture. However, the kind of public assertion of self which she discusses is suggested by the behaviour of one of the informants, Mr. Parsons, who performs and publishes his songs. Childless and living in a seniors' complex with a spouse who is exhibiting some signs of confusion, he is surrounded by age cohorts but without close kin. These circumstances may explain why he, more consistently than any of the others, has sought public visibility. Unlike Myerhoff's subjects, he has attained that goal without difficulty by choosing a culturally acceptable medium of expression, while they, in a subcultural ghetto, are locked into an ongoing battle with each other for attention and approval.

The final theme to be discussed here is strikingly evident in the work of only Mr. Squires and Mr. and Mrs. Tucker, but it is so marked in these two situations that it bears closer examination. It is the theme of creating a world of one's own design, a factor which reflects the autonomy of "separatedness" of the play context, but yet is something more. The basement recreation room decorated by Mr. Squires, with its furnishings and decorations reflective of the life history of its creator, as well as his family and cultural history, has already been described in detail. Entering this room conveys the sense of being transported, of entering another time and place, another frame of reference. A visitor to the property of

Mr. and Mrs. Tucker has the same sensation, for the house and outbuildings, inside and out, and even the lawns and gardens, are unmistakably marked by their hands. In fact, their domain is even peopled with life-size figures of their own making.

In both cases, the viewer experiences a world made by the informants, a world that is very stimulating physically in all its dimensions (colour, shape, texture, etc.) and also emotionally. The factor of heightened sensory stimulation is in itself interesting, given the element of sensory deprivation we usually connect with the diminished physical acuity of late life. Of course, the informants of concern here did the work in early retirement, not in advanced old age; but the world that they created was intended as a living environment for this life stage. This same sense of the deliberate construction of a heightened or altered reality is present in some yard art, especially in cases where the art is multi-form and where it features a variety of forms and images in complex patterns of juxtaposition.⁵⁰

But what are we to make of such creations? The

⁵⁰For Newfoundland examples, see Flights of Fancy: Newfoundland Yard Art, exhibition catalogue with introduction by Patricia Grattan and an essay on the topic by Gerald L. Pocius (St. John's: Art Gallery, Memorial U of Newfoundland, 1983). The retired maker of a similar world, created through yard art and poetry, has been discussed by Pauline Greenhill. See "Lawrence McGuire: Voice from a Community," Rotunda Summer 1985: 22-27.

process of selecting and perfecting or emphasizing certain chosen elements of the actual world would suggest the creation of a Utopia, freely fashioned by individuals liberated from workaday constraints and conventional aesthetic codes. My own reaction to each of these environments was in the realm of "affect" as the term is used by Robert Plant Armstrong.⁵¹ While Mr. Squire's recreation room was filled with personally and culturally meaningful symbols, it was in itself not symbol; it was actualization and presentation, rather than representation of meaning. Similarly the buildings, furnishings, and handmade or hand-decorated artifacts which structure the domain of Mr. and Mrs. Tucker may have symbolic content, but the configuration in its totality does not symbolize but is an "affecting presence."

As mentioned in the previous chapter, two of the informants, Mr. and Mrs. Tucker, were conscious of using their creative activities as a means of emotional expression, but this theme was not significant in the lives and works of the other subjects of this study. Even among those who were aware of the juxtaposition of the start of their creative work and a significant stress or change in their lives, there was no view of the activity as a vehicle for

⁵¹Robert Plant Armstrong, The Affecting Presence: An Essay in Humanistic Anthropology (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1971).

personal communication or an outlet for the expression of personal feelings. They were simply not given to analyzing their own lives and actions in those terms. Mr. and Mrs. Tucker who spoke of their works in terms of "therapeutic" value and as means of "personal growth" were exceptions. Their intellectualizing of the functions of their activities in terms of popularly known psychological concepts is no surprise, given their backgrounds, but it is a minority perception among this cross-section of people. And even with them the significance of their activities stretched far beyond simple emotional expression.

The recurrence of these themes in the lives and creative activities of these ten individuals is evidence of the particular significance of these elements to this life stage. It also points to broad implications for folklore studies.

In the first place, these findings suggest that folklorists in the past, by not considering the age factor, may have missed significant aspects of creativity in their analysis of the expressive products of elderly performers and practitioners. Several of the themes isolated here, for example, were noted by Gerald L. Pocius as common components of Newfoundland yard art.⁵² He also noted that the makers of yard art were often retired males. While he went

⁵²Gerald L. Pocius, "Newfoundland Yard Art," Flights of Fancy 6-11.

on to relate the skills of production to areas of male expertise, he drew no further connection between the age of the producers and the content of production, a connection that is strongly suggested by the findings here. This one example serves to remind us that folklorists can no longer afford to ignore or to treat in cursory fashion age-related dimensions of creative activities, for to do so may lead to a skewing of the research results.

Secondly, a review of the relative prevalence of the nine themes identified in this study reveals how limited our view of the elderly has tended to be.⁵³ Apart from the themes with very restricted application, emotional expression and creation of a personal domain, the two elements of least significance among these informants are those we most commonly attribute to elderly people: reminiscing about the past (autobiography), and maintaining and transmitting traditional culture (cultural legacy). The dominant themes are those which relate to the informants as distinctive individuals, rather than as stereotypical elders, individuals who are living in the present and directing their activities toward personal rather than group goals. In ascending order of prevalence, the dominant themes are integration; compensation; status maintenance and enhancement; social and cultural involvement; and play. The pre-

⁵³A schematic view of the distribution of the themes among the ten informants is presented in Appendix 2.

~~eminence of these~~ two final themes would suggest a healthy balance between self-interest and other-interest. On the whole, these individuals are strongly motivated towards using cultural materials for the maintenance and development of their personal and social selves.

Earlier in this thesis, I suggested the adoption of a developmental view of aging, and a conceptualization of traditional culture as a process of ongoing reinterpretation and re-creation. These individuals, mindful of local precedent but keenly engaged in present expression, make it difficult for the researcher to retain earlier, more static concepts of age roles and of tradition. In various ways and to varying degrees, they are, in the words of Eric Wolf, "using the materials provided by their culture to grow on,"⁵⁴ Their lives and their works remind us that continuity is not a given but something to be achieved; that role models can be fashioned as well as followed; and above all that culture is not a bounded entity to be transmitted intact, but an "emergent"⁵⁵ to be created.

⁵⁴Eric R. Wolf, Anthropology (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964) 47.

⁵⁵Wolf 52.

CONCLUSION

The conclusions which can be drawn from this research project are several. To judge from the limited selection of Newfoundland residents represented in the study group, creative activities in later life are not restricted to any educational, residential, or social subgroup within the province. Men and women equally are being attracted to creative work, and there is a wide variety in choices of means of expression and in time of adoption within retirement and old age. While some choices are deliberate, others are spontaneous.

The adoption of creative activity late in life does not depend on family or community antecedents, for these have been few. The creative senior appears to be an emerging rather than an existing model, whose development has postdated improved financial security for the retired and elderly. Among the total aging population, creative seniors are still a small minority.

The practitioners of arts and crafts studied here exhibit healthy and realistic emotional outlooks, and appear to gain positive emotional benefits from their productivity. Within this small group, there is a strong indication that the adoption of creative work is a constructive reaction to change or stress, and may indicate the presence in these individuals of an existing pattern, developed over

a lifetime, for coping with difficulty.

There are evident in the lives and activities of these individuals recurrent themes which indicate special areas of concern and interest. These are the following: autobiography; integration; preparation of a cultural legacy; status maintenance and enhancement; play; compensation; social and cultural involvement; and the creation of a personal domain.

Given the limited scope of this project and the small study group, the above conclusions cannot be taken as definitive of retirement and old age in general, nor even of old age within the province of Newfoundland. They do, however, point the way to areas of interest within the general field of creativity and aging which merit further attention, especially on the part of cultural scholars.

Folklorists should continue their intensive biographic studies of creative individuals, and do this not just with the elderly, but with people of all ages. It is only through micro-level analyses of the interplay between culture and various life stages that we can accumulate the data needed to understand the life cycle and the aging process. Longitudinal studies with specific informants would also be of great help here.

Surveys of various kinds would also be useful in determining how widespread specific creative activities are within a given population, or given age or sex group within

the population. The survey method could also be used productively to determine perceptions of old age and attitudes to the elderly among the general population, especially perceptions of what activities are appropriate to this time of life.

The themes isolated in this study need to be further examined. Are they present in the work of lifelong creative people? Are they being expressed by other means in the lives of the non-creative elderly? To what extent are they culture-specific?

The ten informants of this study have been isolated from their community contexts, and this method has served well as a means of delving into the subject and isolating areas of importance. But creativity of this sort does not happen in isolation, and is only one part of their lives. There is a need to conduct family and community studies in order to grasp the full picture of inter-generational interaction, and to see how creative activity articulates with local culture in the family and community setting.

Finally, special attention needs to be given to aging rural communities, both in Newfoundland and across the country. The sense of personal and cultural identity many middle-aged and older Canadians hold is closely linked to the image of the fishing outport or farming hamlet, the small settlement where relationships are close and stable,

and where old practices are gradually modified rather than abandoned. Yet in thousands of such communities the process of direct transmission of local culture has all but ceased, for there are few young people to listen and to learn. A major study of an age-homogeneous rural community is overdue, one that would help us to understand the interplay between aging and rural decline, and to determine whether the residents in such communities, like some of the informants of this study, are improvising new means of expression and transmission.

In a sense all folklorists have a role to play in gerontological studies. We circulate among groups of people often missed by other scholars: rural people, the working class, members of ethnic or occupational groups, the well elderly. We are concerned with subject areas, such as the creativity of common men and women, which are not of interest to other disciplines. Any contribution we can make to an understanding of the life cycle at any age level is a contribution to the study of aging. But this contribution can be enhanced by a recognition of the significance of age in cultural analysis, and an awareness of the accomplishments and the still unanswered questions within this field of research.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Identification of informant

What is your full name? What name are you usually known by? Where were you born? When? What is your present age?

Family background

What was your father's full name? What name was he known by? When and where was he born? Where did he live in childhood? Did he have siblings? How many? Of what sex? What was his education? His work history? At what age did he marry?

What do you know of your father's father? Place of birth? Residence? Education? Work history?

What do you know of your father's mother? Place of birth? Residence? Education? Work history? Marriage? Children?

What do you know of the origins of either of these families? Do you know any other details of family history? At what age did your grandparents die?

What was your mother's full name? (Continue with details as for father.) When and where did your parents marry? Where did they settle?

What was your experience of your grandparents? What can you recall of their activities during your childhood? Their personalities? What was the nature of your relationship with them? How frequently did you see them?

Did you spend much time with them? What was their living situation? 9

At what ages did your parents die? What was your experience of your parents in their later years? Describe their activities in later life. Their personalities? What kind of relationship did you have with them? What was their living situation in their later years? Did they maintain their own home, live with a relative, etc.?

Did you have close relationships with other elderly people in childhood or in adult life? Were you close to your aunts and uncles?

Informant's life history

How many brothers and sisters do you have? Where do you come in the family in terms of relative age? Are there severe age differences? What are your earliest memories of home life? What education do you have? Where did you receive it? How did you spend your free time in childhood? What relationships were significant?

Describe the pattern of your working career? What was your first job? Promotions? Career changes? Relocations?

When did you marry? Where did you meet your spouse? What were your ages at marriage? Where did you settle? How many children did you have? Describe their present careers and whereabouts. Do you have grandchildren?

Did you experience any difficult times or events?
Can you recall any particularly good times or experiences?
What kind of health have you enjoyed? At present? What
changes in residence have you made over the years?

Creative history of informant

Did you have an interest in your present activity
or in other creative activities earlier in life? Was it
expressed? Are there other family members with related
skills or specialties? Do you know of other family members
or friends who took up a new skill or activity late in life?

Give a complete description of your present skill
or activity. When was it begun? Why was it begun or
intensified at that time? Why did you not take it up
earlier? Why did you choose this activity and not another?

What was the earliest work you produced/your
earliest performance? How did you continue from that point?

What techniques do you use? What patterns?
Designs? How is a work begun? Completed? What is the
content of your work? Why do you prefer these themes, this
repertoire?

Have there been changes in your activity since you
first adopted it? Have the techniques or procedures
changed? Has your taste changed in terms of the content?

How do you plan a piece or item? Do you envisage
the completed product beforehand or make it up as you go?

Describe your present lifestyle. How much time a week is given to this activity? How many hours a day? What would your pattern of activities be over a typical week?

Where do you obtain materials? Ideas? How do you assemble information? Do you work from memory?

Has your work been displayed or exhibited? Published? Have there been sales of your work?

Informant's reactions to the activity

Why is this activity important to you? Can you say things through it you would not be able to express otherwise? How do you feel when you are practicing this activity? Do other activities or times or experiences give you similar feelings?

How does your family react? Your friends? Do you notice differences in reactions from varying ages of people? Have you met with any negative reactions in the past, or do you meet with any now?

Is there one piece of your work which means more to you than other items? Why? Is there one piece which says more about you?

Informant's general life attitude

How do you see yourself now? How do you think of yourself? As a father/mother? parent? elderly person? senior citizen? old? just as yourself? How do you react?

when someone refers to you as old, elderly, a senior citizen?

Are there things you have not done yet that you would like to do? What?

How is your health? Do you worry about it, or spend much time thinking about it? What specific worries?

Is religion important in your life? Has it always been? How do you look on death? Does thinking of it occupy much or any of your time?

Do you spend much time thinking of the past?

Have you changed since you were young?

Do you make plans for the future? What plans?

APPENDIX B: TABLE OF THEMES SHOWING RELATIVE PREVALENCE

RELATIVE PREVALENCE OF THEMES

*Informant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Themes:										
Autobiography		x	x	x	x			x		
Integration		x	x	x	x		x	x		
Cultural legacy		x	x		x			x		
Status maintenance and enhancement	x	x	x		x	x	x	x		x
Play	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Compensation	x	x			x	x		x	x	x
Social and cultural involvement	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x*	x*
Creation of a personal domain				x					x	x
Personal emotional expression									x	x

x* = desired but not achieved

