

THE BARRELMAN RADIO PROGRAMME, 1937-1943:

THE MEDIATION AND USE OF FOLKLORE

IN NEWFOUNDLAND

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The Barrelman Radio Programme, 1937-1943:
The Mediation and Use of Folklore in Newfoundland

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines a Newfoundland radio programme, The Barrelman, as a modeller and promulgator of regional folklore. The strategy of the programme's first writer and presenter, Joseph R. Smallwood from 1937 to 1943 -- "Making Newfoundland Better Known to Newfoundlanders" -- is discussed in the context of the political and cultural climate of the time. By a combination of modernist language and sensibilities, and traditional references and language, Smallwood established his reputation as a Newfoundland cultural expert. By selecting, clustering, foregrounding, and interpreting individual items of folklore, he recast meanings and built a national mythos.

The texture of performance by the Barrelman (including his language), and textual items of folklore and national imagery are examined, illustrating Smallwood's rhetorical techniques. A comparatively small generic range was broadcast by the Barrelman, and the genres transmitted, in particular legend, are discussed.

With access to the medium of radio, Smallwood was able to spread widely textual items and his interpretations of folklore and Newfoundland history. The programme's popularity set a stage on which he developed his later successful career as a politician. Smallwood's social milieu and supportive contacts are examined in the light of the politics of his cultural intervention.

Acknowledgements

At every stage during the production of this thesis, from the initial conception through to the submission, I have had help from others. It would take a great deal more space to explain the various help I have had, so I hope no one will be offended by an alphabetical list. I want to express my gratitude to: Mel Baker, Ray Bellew, Mary Bridson, Anne Budgell, Carole Henderson Carpenter, Anne Clift, Sharon Cochrane, Keith Coles, Chris Dennis, Cathy Dooley, Laurel Doucette, N. Frazer Ellis, Henrietta Ellis, John FitzGerald, Dale Russell FitzPatrick, Patti Fulton, the late Alan Gillingham, Clare "Tine" Cochiuss Gillingham, Anna Kearney Guigné, Herbert Halpert, Michael Harrington, Anne Hart, Gilbert Higgins, Eric Hiscock, Genevieve Hiscock, Geraldine Hiscock, Fred Holloway, Jane Hutchings, Lillian (Snelgrove) Hutton, Kirk Jamieson, Olaf Janzen, Suzanne Kergoat, William J. Kirwin, Frances Lambert, Malcolm MacLeod, Janet McNaughton, Marg Meikle, Mr. and Mrs. Con Moran, David Moores, Tony Murphy, Peter Narváez, Charlene Oake, Frank O'Leary, Karen O'Leary, Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Parrell, David Parsons, Len Penton, Stuart Pierson, Gerald Pocius, Barb Reddy, Bert Riggs, Joan Ritcey, Pam Roberts, Art Rockwood, the late Olive Lukens Dunne Rogers, Neil Rosenberg, John S. Rowsell, John A. Scott, Madonna Scott, Colleen Shea, Graham Shorrocks, Laura Skulason, Reg Smallwood, Paul Smith, Michael Staveley, Patti Thistle, Jack

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My supervisor, Dr. Neil V. Rosenberg, has been a helpful guide and a thoughtful editor. This thesis may be shorter than it might have been because he knows how to cut a thousand words to five hundred without losing anything. Peter Narváez read a draft of this thesis and gave me several helpful pointers. Herbert Halpert's interest in this thesis and his thoughtful suggestions have been encouraging and supportive. The very helpful suggestions by my internal readers, Larry Small and Jerry Pocius, and especially of my external reader, Carole Carpenter, have been incorporated into this final version of the thesis; I am very grateful to them.

Without the help, sympathy, and understanding of my wife, Cathie Horan, the thesis would have been impossible and to her I offer my greatest thanks. Only other writers,

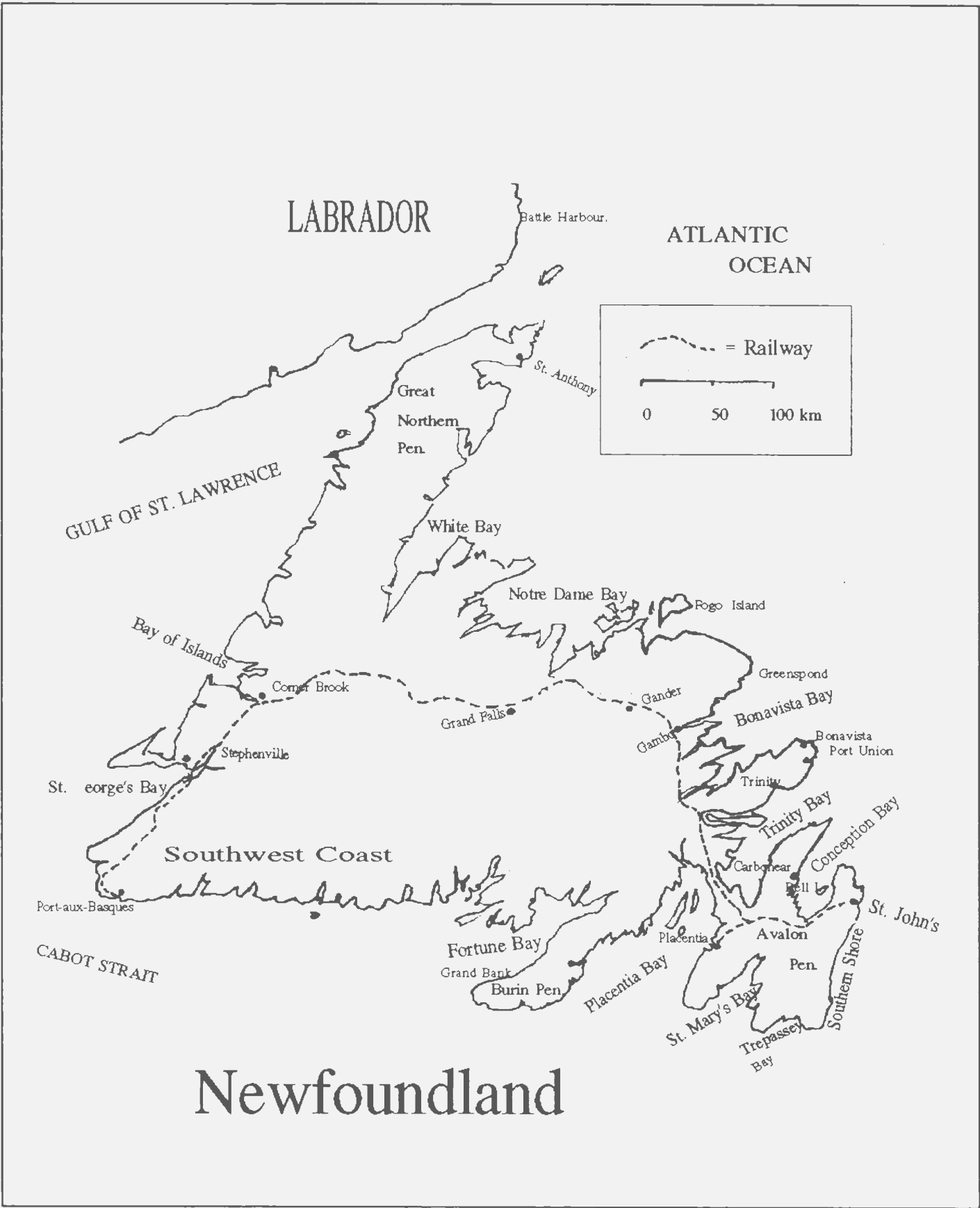
obsessed by their task, can appreciate fully her role; only their spouses know fully what that role entails.

Thanks to all, including those whom, in my haste, I have forgotten.

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Chapter One

Introduction

There are few persons in twentieth-century Newfoundland who can claim as much influence in the course of events and on the shaping of its ideas as Joseph Roberts Smallwood (1900-1991). This thesis examines one phase of his life, his Barrelman enterprise, in the context of Newfoundland culture then and since, and in the overall historical context of Smallwood's life.¹

My earliest memory of Joe Smallwood, though certainly not my first awareness of him, was in the election campaign of 1956. He was the Liberal Premier of Newfoundland at the time and we lived in St. John's, the capital city. I had just turned four years old, but I knew the man's name, voice and importance as well as any voter. When my best friend came running to our house one evening after supper to say that he'd just heard that "Joey" was going to hold a meeting only 150 metres from my door, I knew I wanted to be there.

As it happened my father was not one of Joey's men, but a Progressive Conservative, and in the following election he even ran for that party. I remember a sense of sneaking

¹ A short note on my orthographic conventions: I have throughout this thesis underlined the names of radio programmes when they are series' titles. As with articles in books, I have used quotation marks to indicate titles of episodes, and likewise have indicated only by capitalisation characters' names within the series. The Barrelman then refers to the radio series. When used without underlining, the word Barrelman refers to the character or the man.

away from the house but I can't remember whether my parents explicitly told me to stay away from Smallwood's gathering. In any case, my friend and I went to the spot at the corner of two residential streets, near the site of a new subsidised housing development, and waited. We waited well over an hour after the planned time, and it was getting dark when Joey's car arrived.

The crowd standing around in the falling dusk consisted of about forty children like my friend and me, and perhaps a dozen adults. Besides that little crowd on the corner, a few dozen more adults were able to hear him campaign for votes in their own homes; it was a warm night and their windows were probably open. Smallwood had a loud hailer powered from the car he was being driven around in and he gave a speech that made us all feel like responsible and well-informed voters. He took seriously the opportunity to meet the residents and I actually saw him kiss a baby.

The meeting did not last long, perhaps ten minutes, before he and his driver got back in the car and drove off to another corner in the district. I ran back to our house, excitedly telling my mother I had heard Joey speak and I thought he was a wonderful man.

It was hard not to be part of the admiring flow of public opinion about Joe Smallwood in that time. Money seemed to flow from government coffers and he was associated with every cent. The area of St. John's we lived in was a

new one, with new houses going up every week for people who had lived all their lives in downtown rows. It was no accident he stood on the edge of a housing development to ask for votes. He won every election he called in the 1950s and '60s, though with some decreasing conviction by the voters. But in those mid-1950s Joey was as close to God as any St. John's boy might imagine.

This thesis deals with an earlier phase of his fame, one on which his political career built and the one whereby, through his radio persona of the Barreelman, he first put his voice forward as a national spokesman for Newfoundland. Smallwood invented the Barreelman programme in 1937 and for over six years he was its presenter. In that period he was as well-known as any Newfoundlander in the country. Through his life Joe Smallwood was journalist, farmer, politician, publicist, and publisher. There are few points in his life when one cannot see at least two or even three of these careers in active play. As the Barreelman he managed to meld as many of these aspects of his life as he ever could, dishing out popular history, folklore, personal experience stories, and political opinion at every turn.

This thesis looks closely at the scripts of the Barreelman radio programme and the newspaper columns which preceded the radio show, investigating how Smallwood shaped his public persona by traditional and other expressive devices, and how he used stories of Newfoundland and local

history, "legend" in folkloristic terms, to help accomplish his goals. Those goals were political and cultural with an end of "Making Newfoundland Better Known to Newfoundlanders," as his show's informal subtitle, later made formal, put it. His efforts were to raise Newfoundlanders' consciousness of and pride in Newfoundland, her people and her intellectual products, so he used folkloric forms as much as he used other forms. I argue that at least some of these "other forms," for instance what Richard Dorson has labelled "literary legends" (in contrast to "oral, folk legends") are just as folkloric as any other. By virtue of use, context and goal, Smallwood's rhetorical tools were equally traditional. He clearly used some traditional devices and genres more than others, and this thesis investigates the most common.

Smallwood's work was never in a vacuum, either personally or nationally. In a chapter on the cultural politics of the Barrelman, I investigate the context and meaning of the issues raised and developed by the Barrelman in their historic and political context. Through his life Smallwood liked to foreground his outport roots and his popular connections, but I point out that his career path was guided by his urban, middle class contacts and milieu. The small intelligentsia of Newfoundland, congregated in St. John's, overlapped to a great extent with the somewhat larger but still small middle class. From an early age

Smallwood moved in these circles and, despite his apparent personal penury from time to time, was accepted as a member.

Information for this study comes from a variety of sources and materials, including archival collections of tape-recorded interviews with a variety of people associated with the programme, either at the production level or by virtue of having been listeners.² My own research on the topic extends back more than ten years. I began interviewing people associated with early Newfoundland radio in 1983, and out of that earlier work came my master's thesis which looked at several aspects of radio and folklore in Newfoundland.³

In the 1980s I continued my job as Archivist at the MUN Folklore and Language Archive (MUNFLA) and worked from time to time with other archivists on campus. I first became aware of the Barrelman collection at the Centre for Newfoundland Studies Archives when the Associate Director of MUNFLA, Peter Narváez worked on it, work out of which came the first scholarly approach to the Barrelman enterprise. I eventually had occasion to view the collection myself and, as an archivist, I was enthralled by its sheer size. The

² All my interview tapes have been deposited in the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive (MUNFLA). Some of the tapes have been catalogued already and, throughout this thesis, I include in my references to them the MUNFLA accession and shelflist numbers to the extent that cataloguing is complete. Some have not yet been catalogued and I refer to these by name and date alone.

³ "Folklore and Popular Culture in Early Newfoundland Radio Broadcasting: An Analysis of Occupational Narrative, Oral History and Song Repertoire," (St. John's: MUN, 1987).

huge collection (it fills eleven reels of microfilm) had remained virtually untapped as an archive of information about 1930s and '40s Newfoundland despite being part of the University's collections for three decades. I began in the early 1990s to look into the collection and some of the questions that led to the thesis were formed then.

Ever since working out some of the problems treated in my master's thesis, I have been interested in the relationships between on the one hand what we think of as "folklore" in all its forms -- unselfconscious knowledge, collected lore, and re-created or revived performance -- and on the other hand popular culture. This thesis extends the view of these to include the connections to the political life of a community, or at least in Newfoundland's non-electoral situation of that period of the Commission of Government, the quasi-political or sub-rosa political life. Smallwood the Barrelman was a once and future politician, and though his partisan politics never appear as text in his Barrelman scripts, they certainly appear as sub-text.

In folklore as in fact, religion and politics have long been comrades in Newfoundland public life and Smallwood's participation fits the mould of those before him and since. I explicate covert aspects of Smallwood's persona while he was the Barrelman, his association with the then-defunct Liberal political party and his association with the Protestant Loyal Orange Association.

Smallwood's milieu is rarely discussed in the historical writings on his long career. This thesis shows some of his multiple connections with other cultural players on the Newfoundland stage. In contrast to his later reputation of being a lone operator, Smallwood came out of a vibrant and aware cultural community. He built on its strengths and used its tools to construct his distinctive cultural enterprise. Through his informal and formal ties he was associated with public and private libraries, the national historical society, antique dealers and collectors, educators, the musical community of both public and private tradition, the journalists and publishers of the country, and of course the broadcasting community. He was well-connected and put his connections to use both for the collection of information and materials for his programme, and for the promulgation of his various enterprises.

Robert Georges has recently taken up the question of what it means to call oneself, or to be called by others, a "folklorist."⁴ He suggests that folklorists ought to be more narrow in their use of the term than they have been in the past when laymen working with the materials of folklore have been so labelled. It has been suggested that in his role as Barrelman, Joe Smallwood was de facto a folklorist,

⁴ Robert Georges, "Earning, Appropriating, Concealing, and Denying the Identity of Folklorist," Western Folklore 50 (1991), 3-12.

using some of the techniques of the folklore field-worker.⁵ He collected folklore of certain kinds and propagated those which he thought were appropriate to his intertwined commercial and political purposes. As I discuss later, he claimed that he had collected "all" of Newfoundland's folklore. I argue that Smallwood used folklore, language, and nationally meaningful icons in a purposeful cultivation of political ground. Use of these national signifiers was part of the political and cultural vocabulary of the time, not only in Newfoundland, but also in the United States and other countries.

Primarily a politician, Smallwood found in the Barreelman a corollary occupation during his country's political hiatus. The Barreelman mixed local traditions, some previously only oral, with documented and published historical accounts, and thus turned those hybrid knowledges into a new form of knowledge, spread wide and freely appropriate to all. What was local folklore and even restricted sometimes to individual families, became "Newfoundland folklore," a transformation by appropriation, accomplished only by virtue of the power and authority of someone like the Barreelman and some other publicisers of Newfoundland folklore in this century, notably Gerald S.

⁵ Peter Narváez, "Joseph R. Smallwood, The Barreelman: The Broadcaster as Folklorist" in Media Sense, ed. P. Narváez and M. Laba (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State U Popular P, 1986), 47-64; orig. publ. CFC 5:1-2 (1982), 60-78.

Doyle and Omar Blondahl.⁶ By the same token, what had been book history, became locally known and important, a process Smallwood would have seen as "education" but which is also a kind of cultural appropriation, and the other side of the same coin. Just as a "canon" of Newfoundland folklore is constructed by the foregrounding of "key texts" (as Rosenberg has pointed out⁷), so too a popular canon of Newfoundland history is constructed by the narration and repetition of stories from documentary history.

Throughout this century Newfoundland folklore has been seen as a ready vehicle for rhetorical devices of many sorts. Various writers have discussed the role of perceived Newfoundland folklore in advertising,⁸ commerce,⁹ and other cultural forms.¹⁰ Here we see folklore being called to the aid of an enterprise that combined commerce and -- in

⁶ Neil V. Rosenberg has investigated Doyle's perennial songbook: "The Gerald S. Doyle Songsters and the Politics of Newfoundland Folksong" CFC 13:1 (1991), 45-57, and in "The Canadianization of Newfoundland Folksong; or the Newfoundlandization of Canadian Folksong," J Canadian Studies 29:1 (Spring 1994), 55-73. Blondahl, who died in 1993, is the focus of Rosenberg's "Omar Blondahl's Contribution to the Newfoundland Folksong Canon," Canadian Folk Music J 19 (1991), 20-27.

⁷ Rosenberg, "Doyle Songsters," p. 46.

⁸ Paul Mercer and Mac Swackhammer, "'The Singing of Old Newfoundland Ballads and a Cool Glass of Beer Go Hand in Hand': Folklore and 'Tradition' in Newfoundland Advertising" C&T 3 (1978), 36-45.

⁹ Michael Taft, Travelling the Outports: Two Studies in Newfoundland Itinerant Culture (St. John's: MUN, 1981).

¹⁰ Peter Narváez, "Folk Talk and Hard Facts: The Role of Ted Russell's 'Uncle Mose' on CBC's Fishermen's Broadcast," in Studies in Newfoundland Folklore: Community and Process, ed. G. Thomas and J.D.A. Widdowson (St. John's: Breakwater: 1991), pp. 191-212.

supposedly non-political times -- subtle politics.

To me, as a young adult in Newfoundland in the early 1970s, Joey Smallwood had come to represent the very embodiment of what was bad in the political life of Newfoundland: the complaisant attitude to, even the courtship of wolfish foreign investors, a system of patronage that was bleeding the economy to death, and a lack of independent spirit that made Newfoundland the joke of the Canadian Confederation. For my generation of people who had not taken part in the Referendum debates of 1948, let alone heard his Barrelman, this may have been the only image of Smallwood. The politician Smallwood made deliberate decisions to follow economic and political courses that took him to that position. Revealed in the Barrelman scripts is another Smallwood, a Newfoundland patriot and independentist. Exactly how one of these Smallwoods was transformed into the other is not for this thesis to answer. But as I point out, Smallwood's last career was as producer of a huge Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador, an explicit continuation of his Barrelman enterprise but with much of the apparatus of a scholarly literature that had blossomed in the intervening decades. Smallwood all his life was a collector of traditions, an analyser, and a promulgator of them. His effect on the canon of Newfoundland folklore was not trivial. I discuss his role in the evolution of certain traditions especially with

regard to how he used them and to what ends.

As Sandy Ives has pointed out with regard to people interested in songs and singing, there are "enthusiasts" of different aspects of culture. "...[A] song tradition is not carried on by a group but by individuals within that group who for one reason or another take a special interest in songs."¹¹ Just as "old-timey song" enthusiasts exist, so too do "national culture" enthusiasts, people for whom every scrap of information, documented or undocumented, is consumed with delight. In Newfoundland such enthusiasts have existed at least for 150 years.¹² National culture enthusiasts actively search out, and passively collect, information, history, and traditions that are culturally congruent with their national gestalt. Just as song enthusiasts make an informal commitment to the song culture they want to help protect and even develop, national culture enthusiasts make a commitment to, or an affiliation with their nation. Having made that cultural affiliation, they appropriate anecdotes and legends, often without regard to source, only to congruency.

Since the Barreelman was not only a very popular broadcaster, but also widely known as an expert on

¹¹ Edward D. Ives, Lawrence Doyle: The Farmer-Poet of Prince Edward Island (Orono: U Maine P, 1971), p. 251.

¹² The Newfoundland Native Society was formed in the 1830s among other reasons to foster such knowledge; Phillip McCann, "Culture, States Formation and the Invention of Tradition: Newfoundland, 1832-1855," J Canadian Studies 23:1-2 (1988), 86-103.

Newfoundland history and historical traditions, his pronouncements might generally be expected to be taken as truth, at least when there was no sign that he was telling a tall tale. Certainly his pronouncements were congruent with the gestalt of national information he was building. Among enthusiasts for Newfoundland culture he was an important and respected source of information, not only generally about Newfoundland and its wider history, but specifically about their own communities. The personal appropriation of "national" traditions was probably just as easy as that of "local traditions"; in other words, it was just as easy for a listener, especially an enthusiast of Newfoundland culture, to take as his own, to incorporate into his repertoire, a story about the settlement of his family's hometown, as it was to incorporate a story about the French or Dutch raids in the seventeenth century.

The Barreelman's role as a purveyor and redistributor of local traditions was much more powerful than any similar media institution might have today. A high degree of media fragmentation has occurred in the past half-century; there are few media events that attract the audience share that a local radio programme could attract in the late 1930s.¹³ There were some other, less powerful, local radio stations

¹³ "Audience share," measured by percent, is the usual method in the 1990s of measuring how popular a programme is. Rather than try to compile actual numbers of listeners, audience researchers prepare figures showing, of those with their radios on, what percentage is listening to each available programme.

that listeners could listen to, and during the winter months foreign stations would have been audible during the Barrelman's time slot. But during most of the year, for most of the listening area of the radio station on which he broadcast, the Barrelman was the only show available when it was on the air. The audience share went unmeasured but, at least from time to time, it must have approached one hundred percent.

A question can be raised regarding what appropriation is happening when local traditions become available to a national population, when local traditions become national folklore. I suggest that there is a complex of relationships to the lore, representing appropriation of the same material by different operators, and for different reasons. The lore is being appropriated by the collectors, and used for their short-term purposes, pecuniary and political. And the newly informed audiences are appropriating others' folklore for their own hobby-like and nationalistic purposes. Even the local contributors to such enterprises as the Barrelman are appropriating and transforming local traditions, by their gathering, shaping and reporting. This thesis examines these complex questions regarding the phenomena towards a better understanding of what folklore is and how it operates in a complex world of active oral tradition, widespread literacy, and powerful electronic media.

Chapter Two

Joe Smallwood

Joe Smallwood's life was characterised by changes in direction: when he impulsively left school, went to United States, returned to become a political insider working for the Prime Minister, became a co-operative organiser, then a radio personality, then a farmer, and for the longest period of his life a successful politician. Through many of these turns, he left few traces except for his own accounts and others' accounts mainly derived from his own.

During the course of his life Joe Smallwood used at least three versions of his first name, as well as using his initials "J.R." as a first name. Only late in life did he begin to use "Joseph R. Smallwood." For some time during his career as Premier of Newfoundland he encouraged people to call him "Joey" and through that period the media normally used that designation. During the pre-Confederation period, with which this thesis is concerned, he was most commonly known as Joe Smallwood and it is this name I have used throughout.¹

The primary published sources for biographical information about Joe Smallwood are his autobiography, I

¹ Robert Paine notes that in late life he was known publically as Joey, but as Joe to his intimates; "The Persuasiveness of Smallwood: Rhetoric of cuffer and scoff, of Metonym and Metaphor," NS 1:1 (1985), 57.

Chose Canada²; and two biographies, Harold Horwood's Joey: The Life and Times of Joey Smallwood³ and Richard Gwyn's Smallwood: The Unlikely Revolutionary.⁴ None of these is satisfactory with regard to documentation, especially with regard to Smallwood's life before about 1948; all rely on his memory or (presumably) on unacknowledged oral reports. Only Gwyn gives so much as a listing of sources, but this is in the form of an acknowledgements note, rather than a detailed set of references. Ron Pumphrey's recent Last Days of the Last Father includes several anecdotes from Smallwood's earlier life, but mainly is based on Pumphrey's observations between 1979 and Smallwood's death.⁵ A collection, Just Call Me Joey, of flattering essays written by friends and associates was published in the 1960s; it was edited by James Thoms, one of Smallwood's political debtors. Like Smallwood, Thoms was a former radio personality-turned-politician, and he used his publicity talents in compiling that book. At least in part the essays were vetted and

² I Chose Canada: Memoirs of the Honourable Joseph R. Smallwood (Toronto: Macmillan, 1973).

³ Toronto: Stoddart, 1989.

⁴ Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, orig. 1968, rev. ed. 1972.

⁵ Ron Pumphrey, The Last Days of the Last Father, with a Who's Who Amongst Newfoundlanders At Home and Abroad (St. John's: Pumphrey Publications, 1994).

authorised by Smallwood.⁶

A tonic to the tone and mix of writings from similar sources is Stuart Pierson's comparative review of Gwyn and Horwood.⁷ Pierson shows the lack of credibility in each of the works by comparing their own texts against each other and against easily checked sources like newspapers.

A few other sources are useful: Smallwood was interviewed in late years about specific aspects of his life -- for instance Peter Narváez's 1982 interview discussed below.⁸ It was one source of information for Narváez's article "Joseph R. Smallwood, The Barrelman: The Broadcaster as Folklorist."⁹ Smallwood himself made reference to his earlier life a number of times in his "From the Masthead" column and on the air as the Barrelman. A lovely sketch of a 1925 midnight walk taken along the railway track during his year organising the railway workers appears there, as does a more braggid account of his four

⁶ Just Call Me Joey, James R. Thoms, ed., (St. John's: Creative, 1968; rpt as Call Me Joey, Cuff, 1991). That the volume, at least in part, was authorised is shown by Leo Moakler's report to Carole Henderson Carpenter in 1970 that before he gave his contribution about Smallwood's time as the Barrelman to the editor, he asked Smallwood to read it. Smallwood thanked him for "treating him so well." Leo Moakler, interviewed by Carole Henderson Carpenter, 18 March 1970, MUNFLA tape C3914/78-57, B590.

⁷ "Two Views of J. R. Smallwood," Newfoundland Studies 6:1 (Spring 1990), 111-121.

⁸ MUNFLA 82-185/C5844.

⁹ In Media Sense: The Folklore-Popular Culture Continuum, ed. P. Narváez and M. Laba (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State U Popular P, 1986), pp. 47-64; originally published CFC 5:1-2 (1982), 60-78.

years spent in Bonavista than that which appears in any of the full-length biographies.¹⁰

Smallwood trained himself from an early age as a writer. Despite popular opinions regarding some of his later books, like The Time Has Come to Tell and No Apology From Me, Smallwood wrote well and knew how to change his style to suit the audience, context and topic.¹¹ There is however a particular style of writing for which he was best known, perhaps because it was so much like his style of speech-making: simplified, vaunting, repetitive and seemingly artless.¹² The two 1979 books just mentioned are perhaps the best examples of this style of writing.

THE NAME SHOULD LAST AWHILE

I have had some things named after me:

Smallwood Lake (Reservoir) in Labrador, the third-largest man-made lake in the world, after Lenin Lake in the U.S.S.R., and Volta Lake in Ghana. Smallwood Lake is larger than the Province of

¹⁰ His essay on walking between Little River and Crabbe's Station is in his Daily News column of 11 April 1938. The account of his four years in Bonavista, catching and packing with his own hands 20,000 quintals of fish, is in that of 20 August 1937. This was not his only break into subtle hyperbole. In his column of 7 February 1938 he claimed to have many years experience as a teacher; he neglected to prevent the impression that this experience might have been gained in front of classrooms.

¹¹ The Time Has Come To Tell (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1979); No Apology From Me (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1979). The first of these is more narrative than the second containing, as well as the Smallwood prose, tidbits from his much larger autobiography of five years previous, plus some anecdotes that were not included in it. No Apology, on the other hand, reflects more fully the style of bombast that Smallwood was known for.

¹² Michael Harris says of this style (paraphrasing a perhaps-apochryphal supporter of Smallwood) that "he insisted on saying everything over and over again *ad nauseam*." Rare Ambition: The Crosbys of Newfoundland (Toronto: Viking, 1992), p. 147. Paine says it is "markedly ametaphorical," relying instead on the metonymic devices of counting and enumeration; "Persuasiveness of Smallwood," p. 68.

Prince Edward Island.

Smallwood Mine, the first mine ever to operate in Labrador. About 200,000,000 tons of iron-ore, worth approximately \$1 3/4 billion have been taken from it.

Smallwood Collegiate in Labrador

Smallwood Academy in Gambo.

Smallwood Drive in Mount Pearl.¹³

Now, in those same 30 years [1949-1978] Ottawa paid a lot (I mean a lot) of money directly to the Newfoundland people, over and above what they paid to the Newfoundland Government.

\$12,000,000,000.

Twelve *billion* dollars.

Twelve thousand *million*.

That's the vast sum of money that Ottawa paid directly to our Newfoundland people in the 30 years.¹⁴

Now and again this peculiar style appears in his Barrelman writings, perhaps more frequently as a newspaper columnist than as a "columnist of the air." On the last day of 1937 he used his radio programme to make note of the publication of a special issue that day by his other employer, the Daily News:

I'd like to offer very hearty and sincere congratulations to the editors, business staff, printers and pressmen of the **Daily News** for the magnificent journalistic achievement which today's issue of their paper represents. It was by far the mightiest issue of a daily newspaper ever published in Newfoundland. It contains the amazing number of 72 pages, eight pages more than the previous record, which record was also held by the same paper. I am quite sure that 99 per cent of the people who managed to secure one of the 12,000 copies of today's issue of the Daily News hadn't anything more than a faint idea of what a prodigious achievement this was. Its 72 pages

¹³ The Time Has Come To Tell, p. 84.

¹⁴ No Apology From Me, p. 32.

contain no less than 576 columns. The reading matter alone amounts to nearly half a million words, and this is as much reading as you'll find in ten novels of average length. Besides this colossal amount of reading matter there were, of course, a large number of splendidly composed advertisements, as well as 72 illustrations. It required ten tons of newsprint paper to print these 12,000 copies. To make one ton of newsprint something like one and two thirds cords of pulp wood are required. The average stand of growing pulp wood in Newfoundland is around seven or eight cords to the acre, which means to say that nearly seventeen acres of growing timber had to be denuded of wood to make enough paper to produce this mammoth edition of the Daily News. If all this paper could be made into one gigantic sheet it would be a sheet that would blanket nearly 30 acres of land. Or if it were made in the form of a tape of one inch width it would stretch from St. John's across the Atlantic Ocean, across the British Isles, across the North Sea, across Denmark and Germany, and all the way to the heart of Moscow in Russia -- a distance of 2,884 miles.¹⁵

He neglects to say that it was he who wrote much of the special year-end edition of which he writes.¹⁶ We must also excuse his weak arithmetic on the acreage question.

This kind of blusterous writing, though hinted at from time to time, is fairly rare in the Barrelman. Instead Smallwood there used a style of writing which might be called narrative or narrational; he liked to tell stories and did so well. It was this style that predominated his

¹⁵ Barrelman script, 31 December 1937.

¹⁶ If the text of a longish article on Carbonear in the year-end edition is compared with his own columns and broadcasts on Carbonear history, especially that of the legend of Princess Sheila, it is clear that he was responsible for it. Other communities have special sections and they, too, bear his marks.

Barrelman writings. In his seventies he wrote his autobiography, I Chose Canada, his longest book, and it too was written for the most part in such an inobtrusive style. Nonetheless boasting, it tells stories in an efficient and catching manner.

Biographical sketch

Joseph Roberts Smallwood was born at Gambo, a sawmill town in Bonavista Bay, 24 December 1900. His father's father, David Smallwood, had established a sawmill in Gambo capitalising on the large stands of virgin timber up the Gambo River almost thirty years before. David Smallwood, a recent emigrant from Prince Edward Island, thus helped change the face of the Gambo area from a seasonal salmon-fishing in-draught of Bonavista Bay to a central, railway-connected industrial and commercial centre. In rare contrast to the almost ubiquitous fishing settlements of Newfoundland, Gambo was an industrial town in 1900, growing from the single Smallwood mill in the early 1860s to a half dozen such mills in the first years of the twentieth century, feeding a population of about a thousand within about ten miles of Gambo.¹⁷

David Smallwood was also one of the introducers of the Loyal Orange Benevolent Association (L.O.B.A.) to

¹⁷ Janet E. M. Pitt, "Gambo," ENL II, (St. John's: NBP, 1984), pp. 464-468.

Newfoundland. In 1863 he and another Prince Edward Island businessman, Thomas Leeming, founded the Royal Oak Chapter in St. John's.¹⁸ It was typical of the rise of Orangeism in Canada and Newfoundland in the second half of the nineteenth century that businessmen, especially travelling men, would found Orange Lodges -- they were an easy entrance for itinerants into new communities.

Although most editions of the Newfoundland Who's Who do not mention Joe Smallwood's membership in the L.O.B.A., the 1967 edition lists it among his other memberships; his entry in the 1967 edition is much more detailed than others. In a newspaper column in early 1938 Smallwood mentioned that he thought there was not a man in Newfoundland who was not a member of a fraternal organisation, if not several.¹⁹ Presumably he included himself in this. In his M.A. thesis on the events surrounding the 1948 Referenda, John FitzGerald notes that Smallwood claimed in 1965 to have been a member of the Orange Order for thirty-five years, placing his initiation at about 1930.²⁰ When, in the mid-1930s,

¹⁸ Elinor Senior, "The origin and political activities of the Orange Order in Newfoundland, 1863-1890," unpublished MA thesis (History), Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1959. On the formation of the Royal Oak Lodge see especially Senior's Chapter One. The Orange Order is known by several colloquial names and abbreviations, including L.O.B.A. and L.O.A.

¹⁹ Figuring on the existence of 160 different organisations in Newfoundland, he suggests that, after Americans, Newfoundlanders are the "world champion joiners", "Masthead," 7 April 1938.

²⁰ John Edward FitzGerald, "The Confederation of Newfoundland with Canada, 1946 - 1949" (MA thesis, MUN, St. John's, 1992), p. 25. FitzGerald's source is a speech Smallwood gave 25 August 1965 at the

Smallwood started a fishermen's union, he explicitly borrowed an idea from the L.O.B.A., that of inaugural "lectures" at every meeting; the members would recite in catechism-style the beliefs of the organisation regarding the economy of Newfoundland and the relationships among fishermen, merchants, and government.²¹ In later years, he liked to use the federality of such groups as the L.O.B.A. as a fetching metaphor for the structure of Canada. As a local lodge retains certain portions of its revenue, but passes on some to its Grand Lodge, and as it retains certain rights and powers, but defers in others to the Grand Lodge, so too would Newfoundland have powers and revenues within Canada.²²

Smallwood's main political mentor was Richard Squires, who in a period of enforced political retirement, got himself elected Grand Master of the Newfoundland L.O.B.A. Fred Rowe, political heir as well as historian, suggests this astute bit of covert political activity resurrected Squires's soiled reputation and got him re-elected in 1928.²³ Later Squires was elected Supreme Grand Master of British North America, a position he held for more than one

opening of the LOA Cancer Hostel, CNS Smallwood Papers, file 3.29.138.

²¹ I Chose Canada, p. 189.

²² I Chose Canada, p. 236.

²³ Frederick W. Rowe, A History of Newfoundland and Labrador, p. 383.

term.²⁴ A lifelong member of the L.O.B.A. himself, Joe Smallwood later put his family and personal ties to Orangeism to use as a politician, too. A notable example is the so-called "Orange Letter" which circulated during the second 1948 National Referendum campaign and which seems to have swung the vote in Smallwood's favour.²⁵ Smallwood himself gives much space to the Orange Letter in I Chose Canada.²⁶ John FitzGerald points out that several of Smallwood's colleagues, including his most powerful co-worker, Gordon Bradley, were also members of the Order. Several contemporary copies of the letter exist, including one at the CNS Archives apparently in the hand of Bradley. The exact circumstances of its composition are unknown but FitzGerald suggests Bradley may have been dictated the letter by Smallwood.²⁷ Peter Neary reports contemporary rumours that the pro-Confederation Governor at the time, Gordon MacDonald, instigated it.²⁸

²⁴ "Re-Elected as Head of Grand Lodge," Daily News, 25 June 1938. The re-election was at an Orange meeting at Fort William, Ontario, 24 June.

²⁵ The letter was a short directive from the Newfoundland leader of the Orange Order, pointing out that the Catholic hierarchy had taken an active position against Confederation and that it behove every Orangeman to work ever more actively in its favour.

²⁶ See pp. 309-312.

²⁷ FitzGerald, "Confederation." See the transcription of the letter in Appendix II, p. 318.

²⁸ Neary, Newfoundland in the North Atlantic World, p. 323. MacDonald was well-despised in the St. John's area and for a variety of reasons. When he left Newfoundland three weeks before Confederation, an acrostic poem was published in the Evening Telegram. Although it

Joe Smallwood's attachment to the Orange Order was strong and reflected the admiration he bore for his grandfather. Smallwood liked to think his energy and abilities came from his grandfather rather than from his own father, with whom he had a strained and less influential relationship.²⁹ As the Barrelman, Smallwood liked to tell stories about his grandfather's kindness and canniness. He was operating under the pseudonym the Barrelman, so no mention was ever made of his personal relationship to the Smallwood of the stories. Besides starting a sawmill at Gambo, David Smallwood was an outport merchant, a "planter" at Greenspond, a fishing island further out in Bonavista Bay than Gambo.³⁰ In early 1938 the Barrelman told how David Smallwood, while a shopkeeper in Greenspond, was rewarded by Providence for extreme kindness, kindness unsupported by his own wife. During "the winter of Indian meal and molasses" (a label which is unexplained except to say there were few supplies available), Greenspond was blocked in by ice, making deliveries by ships from St. John's impossible. As the winter dragged on his shop became empty, leaving only

superficially sang his praises, the first letter of each line spelt "The Bastard" (Smallwood, "Acrostic, Celebrated," ENL I, p. 3).

²⁹ Smallwood, I Chose, p. 27: "I revered my grandfather"; on young Joe working in his grandfather's gardens, pp. 59-60. See also Gwyn, Unlikely, pp. 2, 5.

³⁰ Gwyn does not mention David's business at Gambo presumably because he had, some time before Joe's birth, passed it on to other owners. Instead he plays up the Greenspond business connections and the St. John's footwear businesses, a factory and a retail shop, pp. 3-4.

the flour supplies his wife had put aside for the family. David Smallwood was unable to resist the pleas of his customers, and shared even those personal supplies with townsfolk. His wife knew nothing until they too ran out of flour. She got very angry with him for selling their own food; he responded, "The Lord will provide." That same day a channel opened up ahead of his supply ship which was then able to relarder his family, and to resupply his store for the rest of the season.³¹

In telling a story which he attributes to a listener in Catalina, about David Smallwood's boot business in St. John's, the Barrelman only notes that he had "heard it before." Apparently Smallwood's Boots were advertised as being of the highest quality available. A customer returned boots, cracked after only a single season of wear; Smallwood would take no blame, saying, "You smothered them with grease!" The man replied he'd put no grease on them all summer. Smallwood was then able to say, "Ah - you didn't grease them!"³²

Another sign of Smallwood's admiration for his grandfather was that while he was Premier, a Provincial Park

³¹ Scripts, file 1.01.004, pp. 257-258. Contributed by Alexander Smallwood, of Mount Royal Ave., St. John's. Smallwood had a brother Alexander, but this man seems to be his uncle. His brothers and sisters are listed in I Chose Canada, p. 12. That he is probably Joe's uncle is deduced from a question sent by Alexander Smallwood of Mount Royal Avenue and aired by the Barrelman 27 June 1938; he asked whose was the first steam-powered saw-mill in Newfoundland. The Barrelman's answer is that it was operated by the correspondent's own father, David Smallwood.

³² Script, 7 December 1937.

was established at Gambo and named the David Smallwood Provincial Park.³³

David's son Charles was Joe's father. He married Minnie-Mae DeVanna in St. John's on December 21st, 1900, and she gave birth to their first child, Joseph, three days later in Gambo.³⁴ It was an accident that they happened to be in Gambo -- David Smallwood no longer owned the mill there. Charles had gotten a job surveying lumber for the new owners.³⁵

When Joe was still very young, his family moved to St. John's where his uncle Fred managed the thriving shoe factory started by Joe's grandfather some years before.³⁶ Joe's immediate family lived in several neighbourhoods, finally settling on the Southside, a neighbourhood separated from the rest of the City by the Harbour on the one hand and the railway yards on the other. He went to a number of small schools during his first years, but at about age twelve was enrolled in Bishop Feild College, the most upperclass of the schools available in Newfoundland to

³³ The Park was established in the late 1960s. I heard a rumour in the 1970s from some lower-level provincial parks employees that the park had been planned to have a name like "Gambo Provincial Park." Smallwood, however, gave a speech at the official opening and surprised all present by announcing it would be named after his own grandfather. I have not tried to establish the historicity of the rumour.

³⁴ This is according to Horwood, pp. 5-6. Smallwood's account is somewhat cannier: they had been married "earlier that year" (p. 12), without saying how long they were married.

³⁵ Smallwood, I Chose, p. 12; Horwood, Joey, p. 5.

³⁶ Horwood, Joey, p.12; Smallwood I Chose, p. 34.

Protestant boys. Instead of travelling the distance, about three miles, between his home and the school on Bond Street each day, he was boarded at the College, one of a small number of boys so treated. This was a direct result of his uncle Fred's intervention.³⁷

By his account, he came to rely more on his uncle and aunt than on his own family for support, sometimes moving in with them. His own father was an alcoholic and young Smallwood had disagreements with him. At fifteen, he left home altogether and after some altercation with the schoolmaster, school, too.³⁸

He needed a job. Since his abilities seemed not to indicate a manual trade, and he wanted to be a writer, he looked for work at newspapers. His first job was manual labour, as a printer's apprentice at one of the small newspapers operating at the time in St. John's. Rising in the newspaper hierarchy, he switched papers a couple of times before he got a job at the Evening Telegram as a reporter. He had already been writing pseudonymous pieces for the Fishermen's Advocate but his job at the Telegram was a break from the printing and commercial operations of the newspaper business, to the creative and editorial side.³⁹

³⁷ Horwood, Joey, p. 14; Smallwood, I Chose, p.69.

³⁸ On Charles' alcoholism, see I Chose, pp. 28-32, and 66. On leaving Bishop Feild College, pp. 88-89.

³⁹ Smallwood, I Chose, p. 98.

This was in late 1918, as he approached his eighteenth birthday.

During his two years with the Telegram, Smallwood was both a regular city-beat reporter and a features editor. In the latter role he several times travelled out of the city to report on topical stories. In his memoirs he mentions covering the internationally reported trans-Atlantic flight competition of 1919, and the British Navy's raid on Bonavista Bay moonshiners at Flat Islands in 1920.⁴⁰ As a young boy boarding at Bishop Feild College, he used to cross Military Road to view debates in the House of Assembly, but it was at the Telegram that Smallwood began to meet with and observe closely the political and commercial classes of Newfoundland by whom he had been fascinated for several years. His editor thought highly enough of Smallwood's abilities that he paid him, according to Smallwood's own report, more than any other reporter in the country earned, and made him acting editor of the paper while he himself holidayed.⁴¹

It was also while at the Telegram that Smallwood first attracted the attention of (later Sir) Richard Squires,

⁴⁰ Smallwood, I Chose pp. 101-104. Smallwood's account of the Flat Island incident is detailed, but highly personalised; another account is George Story's "The Flat Island Newfoundlander," Canadian Forum 53 (March 1974), 24-25. Another first-hand account is that by Arthur S. Butt (Telling It As It Was, Glovertown: Glovertown Literary Creations, 1990); Butt was 12 years old, living at Flat Island, at the time.

⁴¹ I Chose Canada, pp. 100, 108.

leader of the Liberal Party; Squires liked Smallwood's writing style and tried to woo him away to a short-lived paper of his own. Smallwood declined the offer when he received a better one from his own editor.⁴² Smallwood's interest in politics found its first outlet in the General Election of 1920 when he studied the parties and their platforms and tactics. Later he attributed his involvement in that election, if only from the side, as the factor which formed his nationalist feelings and drew him back from abroad.⁴³

In 1920 Smallwood left the Evening Telegram wanting to work on what he saw as the great socialist papers of New York City, in particular The Call.⁴⁴ Despite his left-leaning interest, it is clear that his stint at the Telegram represented Smallwood's initiation into the middle classes of St. John's.⁴⁵ When he left the city he travelled with letters of introduction from his editor in St. John's, William Herder, and from the powerful journalist-politician Sir Patrick McGrath. Armed so, he worked his way south, at

⁴² Smallwood, I Chose, p. 106.

⁴³ See the quotation from his autobiography, below.

⁴⁴ I Chose, p. 110

⁴⁵ An interesting account of Smallwood's leaving the Evening Telegram is in Francis G. Hollohan's Albert Perlin: A Biography (St. John's: Jespersen, 1985). After leaving high school Perlin found a job waiting for him at the Telegram when Smallwood left. He was a contemporary of Smallwood, and they remained lifelong friends.

papers in Halifax, Boston and New York.⁴⁶

In his autobiography, Smallwood explains the effect on his nationalism of living in New York: he became aware of its existence.

I hadn't been in New York long when I began to realize that something had happened to me, something that changed the course of my life. I hadn't thought it out particularly before leaving Newfoundland; but in a very general kind of way, I came to America not only to follow my romantic ambition to be a writer on the Socialist daily, but probably to settle down there and even become an American citizen. Many Newfoundlanders did this, though perhaps most of them eventually went back to Newfoundland. Probably I would have remained in America had I left Newfoundland a year or so before I did, before I had got in the middle of a General Election in Newfoundland and had become involved with the Labour movement. In short I had become a Newfoundlander before leaving for America -- almost, you might say, a professional Newfoundlander. That, I suppose, was why I carried a huge map of Newfoundland with me to hang in my rooms in Halifax, Boston and Manhattan. And perhaps that is why I went every week to Greenpoint in Brooklyn to meet the Red Cross boat from St. John's, in hope of meeting some Newfoundlanders whom I might know and get the latest news from home.⁴⁷

Smallwood remained in New York, with several visits back to St. John's, for almost five years. In that time he wrote for The Call and its successor The New Leader. Near the end of his time in New York, he campaigned in the 1924 Presidential election on behalf of Eugene Debs, the

⁴⁶ Horwood, Joey, p.29; Smallwood, I Chose, p. 110.

⁴⁷ I Chose, pp. 124-125.

Socialist candidate.⁴⁸ Smallwood remained an admirer of Debs throughout his life. In his autobiography he lists witnessing the speech by Debs on his release from prison (Smallwood does not date this event, but it was in 1921) as the fourth item on a list of twelve emotional peaks in his life.⁴⁹

His move back to Newfoundland came in early 1925 when he was hired by an American paperworkers union to rebuild its membership at Grand Falls. In a few months he did so. Then he organised a short-lived Newfoundland Federation of Labour, moving in turn to all the large industrial communities on the island -- from Grand Falls to Bell Island, St. John's, and finally Corner Brook.

It was in 1925 at Corner Brook that he met Clara Oates, whom he married in Carbonear in November.⁵⁰ Within five years they had three children despite Smallwood's long separations from her and their young children. To his first biographer, Richard Gwyn, Smallwood admitted being a poor husband. Gwyn wrote:

"From the time I got married," he has said, "until I went to work as the "Barrelman" in 1937, I

⁴⁸ Gwyn, Unlikely, pp. 30-34. Smallwood's own memory seems to place his campaigning for Debs in the 1920 election, but Debs was still imprisoned then on his 1919 conviction on sedition charges. Debs was not released until President Harding pardoned him 1921. Gwyn uses contemporary newspaper accounts, including those from The New Leader as references, underlining the fact that it was 1924 that Smallwood covered the Debs candidacy. See Smallwood's account, I Chose Canada, p. 120.

⁴⁹ I Chose Canada, p. 528.

⁵⁰ Gwyn, Unlikely, p. 37.

earned precious little and lived from hand to mouth. And I must say quite candidly that I had very little sense of parental responsibility or husbandly responsibility. I was married, but still carefree and footloose and quite impractical in money and material matters."⁵¹

In his own autobiography, Smallwood wrote, "I was then, and have continued for most of my life since to be, the most undomesticated of husbands."⁵²

Smallwood had spent most of 1925 organising industrial workers, an enterprise that culminated in a trip, mainly by foot, along the entire length of the railway tracks, putting together an organised opposition to a planned cut in wages paid to sectionmen. In this effort he was successful, and following the success he settled in St. John's. He started a paper for the hundreds of unionised workers he had met and organised that year, but it lasted only three months, until he found more lucrative work as the editor of the St. John's daily paper, the Globe. Smallwood's own memory was that his job at the Globe began a month before his wedding.⁵³ Gwyn, on the other hand, has him getting married on his way into St. John's to start the workers' paper.⁵⁴ Horwood has him begin his workers' paper in St. John's, "dash off" to Carbonear for his wedding, and carry Clara back to a rented

⁵¹ Gwyn, Unlikely, p. 38.

⁵² Smallwood, I Chose, p.163.

⁵³ Smallwood, I Chose, p. 163.

⁵⁴ Gwyn, Unlikely, pp. 37, 39.

apartment in St. John's.⁵⁵ As Stuart Pierson has pointed out, unverified and unreliable "factoids" such as these abound in the literature on Smallwood.⁵⁶

During this time Smallwood began work on his Who's Who of Newfoundland in partnership with his publisher, Richard Hibbs. But in mid-1926 he decided he wanted to travel to England, so he sold his part to Hibbs who published the finished volume the following year. The money gained from that sale went to the trip to England, and to moving his wife and, by then, one child back to Carbonear to live with her parents.⁵⁷

In England he moved in Labour circles. Ramsay MacDonald had, just two years before, formed the first Labour government in Great Britain (and in the English-speaking world), and Smallwood wanted to be in on that action. He went to as many public meetings as he could, while spending what other time he had visiting the British Museum and antiquarian booksellers, adding to his collection of Newfoundland books and knowledge. While there, he wrote his first book, Coaker of Newfoundland, which was published by the Labour party press.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Horwood, Joey, pp. 48-49.

⁵⁶ Pierson, "Two Views," p. 111.

⁵⁷ Smallwood, I Chose, p. 167.

⁵⁸ Smallwood, I Chose, pp. 172-3. Coaker of Newfoundland: The Man who Led the Deep-Sea Fishermen to Political Power (London: Labour Publishing Company, 1927) is a short book, less than a hundred pages,

He returned to Newfoundland in the summer of 1927 and went immediately to Corner Brook where he felt he had friends and contacts. He got a day-job with the paper mill company, working with a mineral survey crew in the Gander River region. When he found time he started his own weekly newspaper, the Humber Herald. It was quite succesful until he tried to expand too quickly, became encumbered by too many debts, and sold it to the paper company, which owned his competitor, the daily Western Star.⁵⁹

In his autobiography Smallwood says he used the Humber Herald to build a constituency in order to run for the Liberals in the General Election expected in 1928. Although he had worked for campaigns and campaigned in Newfoundland, the United States, and England (where he had worked for a Labour candidate in a by-election), he had not run in one himself. When the Newfoundland General Election was declared in September 1928 he got ready to declare himself a candidate. Unfortunately for him, his district was seen as such a safe seat that the leader of the Liberal party, Sir Richard Squires, wanted it for himself. Smallwood stepped aside in his favour, and Squires won the seat. Smallwood

and by Gwyn's account he wrote it in three days; Unlikely, p. 40. The book suffers from the lack of attention paid its manuscript.

⁵⁹ Horwood, Joey, p. 51.

was rewarded by being appointed Justice of the Peace.⁶⁰

Smallwood was also rewarded a little more than a year later when, after the Humber Herald became financially and editorially onerous, Squires offered him an editing job in St. John's.

According to Gwyn, it was between 1928 and 1930 he wrote The New Newfoundland, an introduction to the geography, economy, and present political state of Newfoundland for Newfoundlanders and for tourists or potential economic developers.⁶¹ From the kinds of information that fill the book, it seems likely that most of the book's research and writing took place in St. John's rather than in Corner Brook. When- and wherever it was written, it was published in New York in mid-1931.⁶² Interestingly, and foreshadowing his later interest in poetry and folklore, this book contains a locally written poem, "Jenkins the Fisherman" by F. J. Templeton.⁶³ Most of

⁶⁰ Gwyn covers this in some detail, Unlikely, pp. 41-42. Smallwood gives a slightly different view, leaving out his reward, I Chose, pp. 176-178. See also Horwood, Joey, pp. 51-52, 57.

⁶¹ Gwyn, Unlikely, pp. 42-43. The New Newfoundland: An Account of the Revolutionary Developments which are Transforming Britain's Oldest Colony from 'the Cinderella of the Empire' into one of the Great Small Nations of the World (New York: Macmillan, 1931). This mostly-ignored book is an early example of Smallwood rhetoric and certainly is one of the most important events in the pre-history of the Barrelman.

⁶² Gwyn quotes a review in New York Times Book Review 2 August 1931, Unlikely p. 43. Smallwood doesn't mention the book in his autobiography. Horwood does; he says, wrongly, it was published in 1928, Joey, p. 51.

⁶³ New Newfoundland, pp. 265-267.

the rest of the book is narrative and tabulation of figures and facts, written in Smallwood's newsreel style, about aspects of life in Newfoundland, the fisheries, mining, education, broadcasting, etc. It was the beginning of an enterprise of beating the drums of Newfoundland, making -- as its subtitle says -- "An Account of the Revolutionary Developments Which Are Transforming Britain's Oldest Colony from 'The Cinderella of the Empire' into One of the Great Small Nations of the World." It is an early example of the style of writing and speech-making for which Smallwood later became well-known.

If Squires required a hagiographer in that time, Smallwood was it. The book blamed what ills there were on Squires' political enemies, praised Squires as the source of all that was good in the country, and glossed over the great scandal of six years earlier, when Squires was caught stealing public funds, as being too much written about elsewhere to mention.

Horwood says of the following period, "During Squires's last two years in office (1930-32), Joey was constantly at his side."⁶⁴ One would think that his was a position within the Prime Minister's office, a kind of "executive assistant" as it would be known today, but his duties were more political than executive. Squires "was relying on him more

⁶⁴ Joey, p. 54.

and more to help run Liberal Party affairs."⁶⁵ None of the three writers, Gwyn, Horwood, or Smallwood, speaks of whose employ Smallwood was in at this time. Six years later Smallwood wrote that he had never in his life been paid by a government:

Never in my life did I receive any money from the present or any preceding government in any shape or form, good, bad or indifferent. I make this statement without reservation.

He adds one reservation: once he was paid twenty-five dollars for some research notes he had compiled in connection with the publication of his book New Newfoundland.⁶⁶ One would think then that he was in fact in the employ of the Liberal Party -- and probably therefore living out of Squires' pocket.⁶⁷

During this time, 1930-1932, the Squires government saw its political fortunes dissipate. The financial situation in the country was very poor. Government income was low and deficits were high. Unemployment soared and a St. John's riot in April 1932 left Squires politically scarred. He

⁶⁵ Horwood, Joey, p. 54.

⁶⁶ "From the Masthead by the Barrelman," Daily News, 29 June 1938, p. 5.

⁶⁷ Apparently based on "one of the endless conversations" that Horwood had with Smallwood "during the 1940s" (Joey, p.40), Horwood says, "...there was no distinction between Squires' 'own pocket' and the Liberal Reform Party treasury. Squires was not only his own party treasurer, but ran the treasury literally as a series of cash transactions. All political contributions went into his pocket, and all expenses came out of it" (p. 42). The Liberal Reform Party was a short-lived phenomenon of the years just after the First World War, but what was true then might just as well have been true a decade later.

called an election for June, and Smallwood ran in Bonavista South. His campaign, he remembered in his autobiography, was not based on support for Squires. Rather it was based on a theme he would continue to show support for five years later in his newspaper column, "From the Masthead": that Newfoundland should give up political government altogether for a time, and be given "a rest from politics."⁶⁸ Despite thus distancing himself from the unpopular Squires, he was not elected.⁶⁹ Nor were many of Squires' Liberals -- only two were elected and neither one was Squires.

The conservative party that was elected did just what Smallwood said he had campaigned for: ask the King for a Commission of Government. It was granted in February 1934, and the Commission ran Newfoundland affairs for fifteen years, from 1934 until 1949.

The 1932 election, all but wiping out the Liberal Party, and the suspension of democratic government sixteen months later, were pivotal in Smallwood's life. In his first political career, Smallwood had worked abroad for

⁶⁸ Smallwood, I Chose, 187.

⁶⁹ Herman Quinton beat Smallwood, 3528 to 812 votes (Bertram C. Riggs, "Elections," ENL I, p. 718). In a conversation 24 July 1994, John S. Rowsell, then of New York but a resident of Bonavista in 1932, told me a rhyme circulated at the time of the 1932 election: "Vote for Quinton who'll put you on the "whack"; vote for Smallwood for a ride on his back." The "whack" was the dole which had successively been reduced by the Squires government. As Smallwood was a small man, the reward of riding on his back was not seen as much of one. An irony is that Quinton's party, the United Newfoundland Party (a nonce-name for the Conservatives) under Frederick Alderdice reduced social expenditures even further than the previous Squires government had.

Socialist and Labour Party causes and candidates. In his second he worked for the Newfoundland Liberal Party. With the end of elected government and party politics in Newfoundland, came the end of Smallwood's second political career. He spent much of the next fifteen years in another kind of political action, one unallied to political parties and normal electoral activities. At least in part, this was in the cultural politics of trying to build what he referred to repeatedly as "national consciousness," "national pride" or "public opinion."⁷⁰ During that period he organised and operated a union and several local cooperatives, returned to his prior career as a journalist, and finally ended up campaigning for confederation with Canada in an election to the National Convention (1946-48) and the two national Referendums (1948) on Newfoundland's future. The one hiatus was a three year period raising pigs to supply the large airport military base at Gander from 1943 to 1946.

Between 1932 and 1936 Smallwood and his family were based in Bonavista where he tried more or less unsuccessfully to organise a national union of fishermen and a related series of local cooperative producer-consumer societies. Smallwood attributes whatever success his union and co-op movement had to his 1932 election campaign's

⁷⁰ These are each terms he used over and over again in his year-long Daily News column, 1937-38, "From the Masthead by the Barrelman."

prediction of the end of elected government.⁷¹ He signed up hundreds of members but never got the cooperatives working to the extent he wanted.⁷² During this time he had at his disposal a boat (purchased with what he calls, in quotation marks, "a loan" from St. John's lawyer, real estate developer and co-politician, Leslie Curtis, the quotation marks leaving the impression that he never paid it back) with which he travelled the coast, and to and from St. John's.⁷³ He made the claim that during this time he was a fisherman but, though he certainly bought and sold fish, it is unlikely he spent much time actually fishing and making fish.⁷⁴

Of this period, Horwood says:

For a while he also had a thirty-six-foot boat with a one-cylinder gasoline engine and sails. Wisely, he never tried to run it himself. He left the navigation to a retired skipper and the

⁷¹ I Chose, p. 188.

⁷² Smallwood, "The Co-operative Movement in Newfoundland," The Book of Newfoundland, I (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1937, rpt. 1968) pp. 276-278. See also the accounts by Horwood, Joey, pp. 59-60; Gwyn Unlikely, pp. 49-50; and the account by Smallwood 45 years later, I Chose, pp. 188-190, 202.

⁷³ I Chose, p. 189. Les Curtis was, like Smallwood, part of the inner circle of Sir Richard Squires' government, having practiced law with Squires. In all but one of Smallwood's post-Confederation governments, Curtis was Attorney-General and Minister of Justice. See Ettie Gordon Murray, "Honourable Leslie Roy Curtis," ENL I (St. John's: NBP, 1981).

⁷⁴ The claim of having spent four years fishing is in his column of 20 August 1937. That he probably spent little time fishing is based on his never referring again to this fishing episode in his life; none of the biographies mention it. He may have waxed a little hyperbolic, ballooned somewhat by the apparent anonymity of his still-new column's byline.

operation of the engine to a young fisherman.⁷⁵

In one of his short autobiographical vignettes as the Barrelman, in 1938 he spoke of the man who was his skipper:

And that [talk of a man in his eighties still working] reminds me of the fact that the skipper of that boat of mine I told you about before was a man of eighty years. He was Captain George Miles, of Bonavista. He had been for many years a captain of various schooners coasting around Newfoundland, but during the last fifteen or twenty years of his life he was fishing single-handed out of Bonavista, where his little punt and peculiar sail were a very familiar sight -- Captain Miles at eighty would be out fishing in this tiny open boat by himself on days when much younger men thought twice and sometimes thrice before venturing out in fine large trap-skiffs with eight and ten horsepower engines and three and four hands. I'll always remember the pleasure Captain Miles got from sailing my boat as her skipper. He could handle her as few men anywhere could handle a boat. The only trouble was his eyesight -- he knew every rock and shoal on the coast, and every landmark, but his sight had grown so bad that he couldn't recognize them when we came near them. We sailed and steamed something like two or three thousand miles in her that summer, and half the pleasure of being in her was to witness the way in which this wonderful old Newfoundland sea-dog was at home on the sea. Captain Miles has passed to his eternal rest now, but I just know he can't be happy in Heaven if there are no sailing craft there.⁷⁶

The St. John's fish merchant W. J. Bursey mentions in his autobiography The Undaunted Pioneer meeting Smallwood and his aged one-man crew at that time. Smallwood's boat had broken down and they were flying a distress flag; Bursey rescued them from disaster, though not from a little

⁷⁵ Joey, p. 59.

⁷⁶ Scripts, file 1.01.005, 7 February 1938.

ignominy.⁷⁷

After four years in Bonavista Smallwood resigned and moved his family back to St. John's to work on a project funded by St. John's businessman Chesley Crosbie. This was The Book of Newfoundland, "a handsome, exhaustive encyclopedia of our country," as he put it.⁷⁸ The Crosbie family biographer, Michael Harris, put the move from Bonavista another way:

By 1936, the arrangement that saw the Smallwood family living off group contributions of vegetables and firewood in rural Newfoundland in exchange for his services as a union organizer came to an end when the fishermen no longer had any surplus to contribute. For the next several years Joe made a dollar where he could, and Ches Crosbie was always there to smooth the way, whether the project was pigs or encyclopedias.⁷⁹

(Harris quotes an undercover police report from early 1937, just before the publication of the Book of Newfoundland:

Smallwood is a mysterious man, getting along so to say solely on his wits. Actually I cannot say anything about him by way of a criminal nature, but he is what we usually term a 'shady character.'⁸⁰)

Besides the boat, Crosbie had funded at least one earlier project of Smallwood's, an offshoot from his Bonavista

⁷⁷ W. J. Bursey, The Undaunted Pioneer ([St. John's: the author, 1977]), p. 25.

⁷⁸ I Chose, p. 202.

⁷⁹ Harris, Rare Ambition, p. 176.

⁸⁰ Harris, Rare Ambition, p. 175. A fuller account of this note, written by a police agent named Mahoney, is given in James Overton, "Riots, Raids and Relief, Police, Prisons and Parsimony," in Leyton, O'Grady and Overton, Violence and Public Anxiety, p. 289.

fishermen's union, a cooperative society at Pouch Cove, north of St. John's. Unlike other societies, this one was successful.⁸¹

Ches Crosbie and Joe Smallwood had a complicated relationship, but one that lasted until Crosbie's death. Crosbie did not support Confederation; in fact like many "Water Street merchants" he campaigned actively against it. Crosbie's own campaign was for "Economic Union" with the United States. Harris passes on the story that after Smallwood visited the Crosbies' home just after winning the 1948 Referendum, Crosbie's wife had the chair he sat in fumigated.⁸² Harris also repeats Smallwood's story that, recognising the political and economic strength of Crosbie, Smallwood offered Crosbie the job of Premier in the new province in exchange for his support; Crosbie declined the offer.⁸³ They remained friends and, after Confederation, Crosbie's construction and engineering companies did well by government contracts, many of which were let without public tenders. When Crosbie died in late 1962, Smallwood called

⁸¹ Smallwood, I Chose, p. 202; Horwood, Joey, pp. 60-61. The exact nature of the funding of a cooperative venture of local fishermen by a businessman is not explained, either from Smallwood's side by him or his biographers, or from Crosbie's side by Harris. It may have taken the form of a capital loan or the low-rent use of a building.

⁸² Rare Ambition, p. 4.

⁸³ Rare Ambition, p. 183. Smallwood's version is I Chose, p. 250.

him "a great Newfoundlander and a great friend."⁸⁴

Certainly Smallwood never forgot Crosbie's favour of underwriting the first two volumes of what became a six-volume work. When Smallwood published volumes three and four, in 1967, and again when he published volumes five and six, in 1975, he paid tribute to Crosbie's memory.⁸⁵

Leaving aside Crosbie's support for Economic Union with the United States, for at least thirty years he had an unbroken friendship with Smallwood. Like others in the Economic Union camp (Don Jamieson and Geoff Stirling, who did well with broadcasting licenses starting in the early 1950s), Crosbie prospered with Smallwood's support.⁸⁶

For the Book of Newfoundland project, Crosbie gave Smallwood a set of offices in a building he had near the west end of the business district of Water Street. Smallwood moved his already impressive library of books and manuscripts of Newfoundland history into the office and set to organising the two volume work: getting writers to contribute essays from their areas of expertise, editing

⁸⁴ Rare Ambition, p. 232. Harris points out that Smallwood would say something like that: Crosbie had dutifully given \$25,000 to Liberal party coffers whenever called on.

⁸⁵ See for example the preface to Volume Five, Book of Newfoundland, V (St. John's, Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1975), p. 8.

⁸⁶ Oscar G. Hierlihy's recent autobiography outlines some of the chronology of Jamieson and Stirling's foray into broadcasting: Memoirs of a Newfoundland Pioneer in Radio and Television (St. John's: Breakwater, 1995), pp. 44-47.

contributions, and writing a couple of essays himself.⁸⁷ Michael Harrington, who worked with Smallwood on the project, remembered that the long unsigned section of "Poetry and Ballads of Newfoundland," which ends volume one was put together by Smallwood himself.⁸⁸ The section begins with the poem he had used in The New Newfoundland, "Jenkins the Fisherman," by Frank Templeman, and includes 75 poems and songs.

Gwyn refers to one self-composed essay as Smallwood's "apologia for his failure in Bonavista."⁸⁹ In it Smallwood blamed the failure on fishermen, who merely saw the cooperative as a means to drive up the prices being offered by local merchants.⁹⁰

The Book of Newfoundland was no immediate success. Less than half of the ten thousand sets printed were sold, and Crosbie bore the loss for five years, until he was able to sell the remaining six thousand sets to American and Canadian servicemen stationed in Newfoundland.⁹¹ Smallwood

⁸⁷ Smallwood, I Chose, p. 202-204. On the size of the personal library at that time, see my interview with Michael Harrington, 11 August 1994.

⁸⁸ Neil V. Rosenberg, "Folksong in Newfoundland: A Research History," in Conrad Laforte, ed., Proceedings of the International Conference on Ballads and Folksongs (Québec: U Laval/CELAT, 1989), pp. 45-52. The section in The Book of Newfoundland, I, is pp. 456-486.

⁸⁹ Gwyn, Unlikely, p. 52.

⁹⁰ Smallwood, "The Co-operative Movement," p. 277.

⁹¹ Gwyn, Unlikely, p. 53; Smallwood, I Chose, p. 204; Harris, Rare Ambition, p. 177.

claims he "had drawn no salary whatsoever out of this venture, from beginning to end"⁹², but nowhere is it explained how he kept his family alive during that period. Presumably there was some cash from Crosbie, perhaps not in the form of salary. The police report quoted by Harris is a reflection of the mystery with which Smallwood, then as later, liked to enshroud some details of his life.

During the six years following the publication in mid-1937 of The Book of Newfoundland, Smallwood was a full-time journalist again. This was first with the Daily News, which published his newspaper column, and then with Radio Station VONF, airing his daily broadcast, The Barrelman.

At the Daily News he appears to have been a kind of roving reporter again, contributing stories not under the Barrelman by-line, but not under his own name either. In late February 1938 a story appeared in the Daily News about a man who walked 106 miles from New Perlican to St. John's to get a berth on a sealer.⁹³ The style of writing of this unsigned story is that of "Staff Reporter" who appears to have been Joe Smallwood. Stories by Staff Reporter were "human interest" stories: a local mechanical knife inventor, 14 February 1938; Danish novelist Aksel Sandemose visiting St. John's and travelling to the ice, 11 February

⁹² Smallwood, I Chose, p. 204.

⁹³ "Walked 106 Miles [to] St. John's Hoping to Secure a Berth," Daily News 23 February 1938.

and 24 February 1938; a legless survivor of the 1931 Viking explosion opening a store on Harvey Road and living in a room in the back, 2 March 1938; an old man readying to go to the Labrador for his 72nd summer, 7 May 1938; and the 77th birthday of a woman who was one of the original settlers of Blaketown, 23 May 1938.

Two other stories that without by-lines appear to have been written by Staff Reporter were published on the same day, 3 June 1938, and deal with men from Hodge's Cove, Trinity Bay. In one story a man had carved with a penknife a model of a warship. In the other a group of local men ingeniously had killed a marauding bear by setting a trap in which the bear shot himself. A story, 21 February 1938, about the fair-like atmosphere of Saturday morning markets on George Street was likewise unsigned, but seems to be his. Each of these stories is of the sort that would have fit perfectly in the "Masthead" column. Evidence that they were written by Smallwood lies in the fact that after the Barrelman left the Daily News at the end of June 1938, Staff Reporter no longer contributed stories.

During his time as Barrelman, particularly on the radio, he travelled extensively around Eastern Newfoundland and at least once with a coastal steamer up the North-East Coast as far as Battle Harbour, Labrador.⁹⁴ While his

⁹⁴ See the introductory notes written in 1958 by his friend and travelling companion Nimshi Crewe to Smallwood's notebook carried on their summer 1941 trip on the steamer Northern Ranger, "The Barrelman

travelling companion Nimshi Crewe collected old furniture on these trips, Smallwood indulged his own antiquarian interests by collecting nineteenth century lustreware.⁹⁵ For two decades already he had been a collector of books and printed ephemera about Newfoundland, browsing bookstores in every city he visited.⁹⁶ He soon quit collecting lustreware but he continued to collect Newfoundland publications for the rest of his life.

His job as the Barrelman was countered by his avocation as a farmer, a would-be gentleman farmer like so many of the St. John's merchant class, such as the MacPherson family who owned Royal Stores, or the Bairds who owned a successful fish and retail chain throughout the country, both of whom had summer homes and farms on the edge of St. John's. He began building and operating a small farm on Kenmount Road, at the northwest edge of the city, in the late 1930s, after his income from the Barrelman enterprise allowed him to buy the land. Nonetheless, farmers did not see him as part of their class; he was more pitied than blamed for his inability to feed an emaciated pony he led around the city

Notebook," Smallwood Papers, CNS Archives. For another account of a trip on the new Ranger, see that by the second Barrelman, Michael Harrington, "Offbeat History: Voyage on S.S. Northern Ranger Recounted by Correspondent," Evening Telegram 19 February 1994, p. 62.

⁹⁵ I Chose Canada, pp. 209-210. See also scripts for his shows 1, 9 and 10 September 1938.

⁹⁶ Horwood states what Smallwood claimed many times himself, that by the 1960s he had "the largest array of Newfoundlandia in existence," Joey, pp. 49-50.

doing farm chores in the early 1940s.⁹⁷

In 1943 he abruptly quit his radio programme and for three years retired from public life. He became full-time what he had been for several years part-time, a farmer. During this period, 1943 to 1946, he operated a piggery in Gander, again a project funded by Ches Crosbie. It is doubtful that he planned this turn in his career path as some have suggested, quitting his St. John's job in order to have a winnable seat in the National Convention elections he knew would come. Smallwood was a career opportunist for years before the Barrelman and it is most likely that he simply followed the opportunities of greater reward, financially and egoistically. Many of his acquaintances were doing well by supplying the military in the St. John's area with their services; his move was likely a personal decision to derive some personal profit from the huge changes being incurred by Newfoundland during the War. But whatever his reasons for going to Gander, his six years on radio were a boon to him when he re-entered politics in 1946.

It was during his time in Gander that Smallwood met the young American folklorist Herbert Halpert who happened to be there on military business. As in other communities, Halpert looked up people in Gander who might be able to tell

⁹⁷ Interview with Gordon Parrell, farmer from Portugal Cove Road, at the northeast edge of the city, 4 May 1994.

him some local folklore. Directed to Smallwood and told that he had a programme of tall tales on the local radio station VORG, Halpert arranged to meet him. Smallwood was very helpful about bibliographical matters, writing out a list of important books about Newfoundland. But when he found out that Halpert wanted to collect folklore, he told him there was no point in the endeavour -- he had already collected it all himself.⁹⁸

Smallwood's piggery at Gander supplied the Royal Air Force with pork. By Smallwood's account, it was a grand success, and indeed it appears to have been a large venture, attracting a great deal of interest even from visitors to the Gander base.⁹⁹ By Harris's account, it was a sloppily run affair that was in danger of losing all its animals at the point when Smallwood left it.¹⁰⁰ The precipitating factor of his leaving Gander may have been problems on his farm.

Whatever Smallwood's reason for leaving Gander, he did so when an election was announced for members in the National Convention, the body that would discuss and decide Newfoundland's future constitutional course. This was in 1946, and Smallwood decided he would run on the platform of

⁹⁸ Interview with Dr. Herbert Halpert, St. John's, 12 January 1994, MUNFLA 94-036. I have seen no other evidence of a Smallwood programme on VORG.

⁹⁹ Smallwood, I Chose, p. 217; Harris, Rare Ambition, p. 178.

¹⁰⁰ Harris, Rare Ambition, pp. 178-179.

Confederation with Canada. Though not without bumps, his road was straight, and his ideas won enough converts to carry the National Referendum held on the subject. On 1 April 1949, immediately upon Newfoundland's Confederation with Canada, he was appointed the first premier of the new Province of Newfoundland, a position he was confirmed in by every election he called until 1971.¹⁰¹

Despite the tightness of his Referendum win, Smallwood's Liberal government won large majorities, nearly wiping out the opposition seats. During the twenty-two years of his government, Smallwood wielded near-absolute authority in Newfoundland. At least in the early years, as Horwood puts it,

He had boundless popularity, the backing of the federal government, and what seemed to be limitless money in the treasury.¹⁰²

Smallwood's government carried out many of the cultural changes he had been calling for over the previous decades. Government support of cultural institutions remained consistently part of Smallwood's politics through his years as Premier of the province of Newfoundland. Under his government the educational system of Newfoundland grew quickly and a professionalised museum began to operate and

¹⁰¹ Neary, Newfoundland in the North Atlantic World, pp. 340. His first Provincial Election was held on 27 May 1949 (Neary, 341). The reasons for and events leading to his being appointed interim premier, April - May 1949, have not yet been written about by historians.

¹⁰² Horwood, Joey, p.163.

take control of historic affairs in the province.¹⁰³

Likewise the Historic Sites Commission grew in its public profile, and a provincial archives was established.¹⁰⁴ It is certainly true that he used almost every facet of these cultural institutions as places for patronage appointments. Nevertheless, by his government's efforts, he carried on the nurturance of Newfoundland culture that he began as a journalist in the 1930s.

Still, his popularity declined over the years, and after losing the 1971 election, and a couple of years of perfunctory attempts to remain politically active, Smallwood returned in the late 1970s to his first profession of writer. During his time as Premier and politician he had published a number of small books on topical issues. Essentially political tracts, they were distributed free or very cheaply.¹⁰⁵ In 1978 he began work on the Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador, intending it to be what the Book of Newfoundland was not, an alphabetically arranged compendium of all significant knowledge about Newfoundland. He likened it to work he had started over forty years

¹⁰³ Paul Kenney, "Museums," ENL, III (St. John's: NBP, 1991). Frederick W. Rowe, Education and Culture in Newfoundland (Toronto: U Toronto Press, 1976).

¹⁰⁴ Melvin Baker, "Memorial University's Role in the Establishment of a Provincial Archive for Newfoundland in 1960," Newfoundland Studies 9:1 (Spring 1993), pp. 83-84.

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, To You With Affection From Joey (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1969).

before, and based on an idea he had had ten years before that. In an unpublished 1982 interview with Len Penton, then a reporter for the St. John's Evening Telegram, Smallwood said:

Well, you know, really I started that Encyclopedia more than fifty years ago -- the idea came to me more than fifty years ago. ... As I delved into Newfoundland history -- remember that for six or seven years I was on the radio six nights a week, for fifteen minutes, with my Barrelman programme. That programme was, according as it said every night, "F. M. O'Leary Ltd. presenting The Barrelman in a programme of making Newfoundland better known to Newfoundlanders." That was the purpose of the programme. And of course, I wrote it myself, every word of it, and that meant endless digging, digging, digging into documents, and old magazines and newspapers, and speeches and lectures and government reports and books and everything I could lay my hands on, about Newfoundland and because I had to present a new programme every night, six nights, fifteen minutes. And that, that made me realise the great riches of Newfoundland's story, of Newfoundland's history, and Newfoundland's tradition, Newfoundland's heritage, historical heritage. And as I did so, it dawned on me gradually that what I was doing night after night, six nights a week, for six years, making Newfoundland better known to Newfoundlanders, was something that really ought to be done in a more enduring form than merely radio broadcasts. Those broadcasts were enormously popular and they had a very great audience and following. But they were only broadcasts. And today, this current day, now, you know -- what? 35 years after the last of them -- how many people are alive today who remember much more than merely that I was known as the Barrelman and that I broadcast about Newfoundland and Newfoundlanders? But what I did broadcast is lost, is forgotten. So the thought kept insinuating itself in my mind that it ought to be done in more enduring form, more lasting form. In other words, the Barrelman, more refined, more precise, more exact, and in more enduring form.

That's what the Encyclopedia is.¹⁰⁶

Between early 1979 and 1982 he built up a staff until he had hired a dozen researchers, writers and editors; they wrote the bulk of the entries in the Encyclopedia which was projected to five volumes.¹⁰⁷ Some larger or more specialised articles were farmed out to scholars and others who knew the areas well. Volume One was published in 1981 but soon after Volume Two was published in 1984 the project's funding collapsed and the project was suspended.

In the mid-eighties, Smallwood had a series of debilitating strokes and a sympathetic public raised enough money to restart the project. But Smallwood had nothing to do with the new Encyclopedia project which was operated by Harry Cuff Publications, of St. John's. In late 1991 Joe Smallwood died after several years of poor health, including a loss of his faculty of speech. Volume Three had been published. In 1992 Volume Four was published and Volume Five, the last, in late 1994.

Despite all the changes in his life's direction, from a very early age Smallwood was an active member of the St. John's middle class. There was no single ruling class in

¹⁰⁶ Interview by Len Penton, with J. R. Smallwood, at the Encyclopedia offices, St. John's, December 1982; MUNFLA 94-436, tape #48; transcribed by PH.

¹⁰⁷ Personal observations; my wife, Cathie Horan, was in early 1979 one of the first researchers hired by Smallwood and, as Editor, the last to be let go when the operation folded in 1984.

Newfoundland in the 1930s. There was an old-monied class, with a great deal of power both economic and political. They represented a class of men that could exist only in a country like Newfoundland, with little or no income and inheritance tax, and effectively isolated from capitalist incursions from outside.¹⁰⁸ But their power effectively diminished through this century and especially after Confederation. Smallwood's ties for the most part were to another class of newer power, best represented by Frank O'Leary, who grew rich partly by Smallwood's efforts as the Barrelman. O'Leary supported Smallwood in his nationalist and populist endeavours but Smallwood's efforts to bring Newfoundland into the Canadian confederation and thus open up the country to capitalist competition undermined his interests. Smallwood's old friend and patron, Ches Crosbie, deserted him at that time, too. But by then Smallwood no longer needed the support of local capital.

In his thirties, he was an active member of the "M.C.L.I.", the Methodist College Literary Institute, a

¹⁰⁸ S. J. R. Noel shows the extent to which government coalitions of merchants would arrange tariffs to protect their narrow interests, and to shift the bulk of tax revenue onto the wider populace (Noel, Politics in Newfoundland, pp. 181-183). A short-lived income tax was introduced by the Unionist-influenced coalition government in power during the first world war; the government of merchant William Monroe abolished it in 1925. Squires's government re-introduced it in the late '20s, probably a contributing factor to the vituperation with which his government was attacked by the conservatives who brought about his last downfall in 1932; Noel, ibid., and Neary Newfoundland in the North Atlantic, p. 9. Neary says, "it was thereafter kept within strict and narrow limits by the small but politically well-placed, monied class that could be expected to pay it" (p. 9). Thanks to Olaf Janzen and Mel Baker for pointing out sources on income tax.

high-profile debaters' club that argued many of the issues of the day.¹⁰⁹ Later he was a member of the executive council of the Newfoundland Historical Society and in both these groups he met regularly with members of the intellectual classes of St. John's. As a teenaged, working journalist he filled in as Editor of the Evening Telegram and got to know and move with the politicians of the time. When he moved away from Newfoundland, he went with letters of introduction from powerful members of that class, and regularly met with representatives not only of the Newfoundland middle classes but those of the very elite such as Lord Edward Morris former Prime Minister of Newfoundland and by then a member of the House of Lords in London. Though Smallwood all his life liked to cast himself in a working-class frame, it is clear that throughout his young adulthood he moved in a circle that included the economic, political, and intellectual elites of the country.

Like most members of his circle, Smallwood had what might be called multiple identities: he was a journalist, a politician, an antiquarian, an intellectual and even a would-be gentleman farmer. Such a multiplicity of roles and contacts probably allowed him the leeway he needed to redirect his talents from time to time as new opportunities

¹⁰⁹ See his initialled reports (by "J.R.S.") of debates on the need for a government broadcasting system (Daily News, 7 January 1938) and improvements to the national highroad system (Daily News, 11 February 1938).

arose, or old ones disappeared.

Smallwood's life was spent in a complicated mix of political threads and occupations. Perhaps his one non-political interest, farming, kept his undivided attention for only three years. Although he liked to suggest to all who would ask that he was not a religious man, the politics of religion runs deep in Newfoundland and he used it for political purposes. His nationalism, journalistic skills for publicity (or propaganda), and his direct quests for political power were present throughout his life. Of these, his desire to praise Newfoundland and Newfoundlanders, and to make his fellow countrymen more aware and prouder of their country's (later, province's) achievement, was the facet of his personality that remained longest, and took the most forms. When in the mid-1930s he turned his attentions to that design, and eventually became the Barreelman, it was more than just an occupation, it was in a sense his life's work.

Chapter Three

The Masthead and the Beginning of The Barrelman

When The Barrelman is thought of, the radio programme of that name is usually recalled. It began in September of 1937 and was broadcast until December 1955, more than eighteen years later. For the first six years, until November 1943, Joe Smallwood was its compiler and presenter. But the radio programme had a predecessor, a daily newspaper column invented and written by Smallwood, with a name very similar to that of the programme: "From the Masthead, by the Barrelman." His column had been published for just two months when he began his radio series in September 1937, and he continued the column for almost ten months while carrying the radio broadcasts as well.

The column began Monday 19 July 1937 in the St. John's morning paper, the Daily News.¹ He planned a breezy, daily column, filled with anecdotes and facts he had gleaned over the previous two years producing, editing, and to some extent writing his two-volume Book of Newfoundland.²

My column consisted of anecdotes about Newfoundland, bits and pieces and scraps of information about the country and its people, and in general was devoted to a sort of glorification

¹ Smallwood's memory in 1982 of when he began the column, reported in Narváez's "Barrelman" article, is inaccurate, as is his memory of the length of time the column was published before the radio programme began.

² Horwood, Joey, p.63.

of Newfoundland and everything good within it.³

The first column began with the statement that the famous Newfoundlander Captain Bob Bartlett was so little known (or perhaps aroused so little curiosity) in his own native country that he had recently been able to walk "the length of Water Street without being recognised, or hailed, except by one man," presumably the author of the column. It went on to name the "four most famous Newfoundlanders" -- Bartlett; Sir William Goode, a career civil servant and "long the virtual dictator of Hungary"; professor William Boyle, "physicist and inventor"; and John Murray Anderson, the New York City impresario. Making a little joke about the five great banks that supported the Newfoundland economy (four being savings banks, but the greatest being the Grand Bank) he segued into some facts and figures about the fisheries and about the costs of international rearmament.

Being the first, it was an experimental column, but in many ways it was very much a typical one. Although he only rarely referred again to contemporary political and military happenings, like rearmament, outside Newfoundland (except as comparison to Newfoundland's situation), he continued to print anecdotes, short and long, about famous Newfoundlanders (or those he felt should be more famous than they were in their home country), and facts about

³ Smallwood, I Chose Canada, p. 205.

Newfoundland's economy, history and culture.

The newspaper column turned into a dialogue with his readers, a dialogue that grew increasingly political in content and tone. Gradually the anecdotal, light-hearted material for which he had by then become famous on the radio diminished in the newspaper column. When he wrote his last Daily News column, at the end of June 1938, the radio show and the newspaper column had diverged so much that he had not written a single column in over a month that was not entirely political in nature. Politics of that sort, specific criticisms of government policy and popular opinion, rarely intruded on the radio show.

Although many of his newspaper columns contained topical and political statements, many of which read like speeches he gave for almost a half century afterwards, a great deal of folklore was to be found there, and especially examples of the narrative genres. In particular, local legends, personal anecdotes, tall tales, riddles, conundrums, and short joke-like tales were mixed in with historical information. Although Smallwood would sometimes introduce an obvious piece of facetiae with a statement of the sort "I can't vouch for the accuracy of the following", it was more often difficult to tell what was being passed on as instructive bits of *bona fide* history, and what was not. Letters appeared in print -- both in his columns, and on the

Editor's page -- calling to doubt some of his stories.⁴

He wrote the column, ranging in length from about five hundred words to about fourteen hundred words but most often very close to a thousand, almost every day the paper published between 19 July 1937 and 30 June 1938. Each column dealt with from one to a dozen items; the longest columns usually were ones that dealt with a single item.

Smallwood liked to claim that he never missed a day, but in fact he did miss four days, not one of which was explained in print that day or the following. The days on which the paper published but the Barrelman did not appear were Tuesday 29 March 1938 (when his absence might have been explained by the fact that a terrific snow storm hit the city; despite the storm the paper was printed), Thursday 26 May 1938, Wednesday 1 June 1938, and Monday 6 June 1938. Each of the last three absences might have been due to Smallwood's increasing interest in his radio programme to the detriment of his newspaper column. Perhaps he or the editor decided, after three missed deadlines in less than two weeks, that the time was right for him to leave the Daily News. Whatever the explanation, he clewed up his column at the end of June 1938. Although while he was being published by the News, letters to the Editor (as well as letters to his own column) often mentioned him and his

⁴ For example, letters to the Editor by Warwick Smith, 19 October 1937, p. 10; and from M.J. James, 30 October 1937, p. 16, and 2 November 1937, p. 5.

columns both in print and "of the air", after his departure there was no mention of him either by his editor, or by published letters to the Editor. Perhaps he was not missed in print being so well-known by then on air. More likely the Editor felt it to be bad policy on his part to make note of his loss of a columnist to the other journalistic medium.

The public's imagination clearly had been caught very early by the Barrelman. Not only were letters from readers appearing in print, but references to the Barrelman made it into topical newspaper advertisements. An ad for the local real estate agent and surveyor, Stan Condon, on 27 October 1937 included a cautionary tale about the need for home buyers to insist on a survey of their new property; the ad was entitled, "One for the Barrelman."⁵

Taking the "Masthead" to the Air

The summer of 1937 in which Smallwood got his Barrelman enterprise underway was an interesting one with regard to the public's appetite for cultural information and cultural backslapping. Early in the summer the Newfoundland government's Tourist Development Board began a thrice weekly radio programme of "Interesting Facts" for Newfoundlanders and tourists.

Under the auspices of the Newfoundland Tourist Development Board, designed to create wider interest in the immense possibilities of the

⁵ Daily News, 27 October 1937, p. 1.

Tourist Trade in Newfoundland,
 INTERESTING FACTS OF NEWFOUNDLAND
 ARE DISCUSSED OVER STATIONS VONF AND VOGY
 Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday Night at 8.15
 p.m. Programme: Monday -- Signal Hill. Wednesday
 -- Fort Townshend. Friday -- Roads on the Avalon
 Peninsula.⁶

This series of mainly historical programmes may well have been the inspiration for Smallwood's own radio programme. The Board's president was Angus Reid, and when the series was over, the Barrelman congratulated him in an "Open Letter" included as part of his own column.⁷ Smallwood's friend Oliver "Al" Vardy was the host and main presenter of these shows. Vardy was better known by the pseudonym he had come to be famous with -- the N.B.C. News Commentator -- but Smallwood congratulated him by name after the series ended.⁸ Moved by the success and potential of Vardy's programmes, by the end of the summer Smallwood was thinking in print of putting his own column on the radio.

⁶ Advertisement, Daily News, Saturday 3 July 1937, p. 1. Some later lists of topics were: "Cupids, Placentia and Newfoundland Firsts" on July 10th; "Catering to Our Tourists, Scenic Attractions in Newfoundland, and Tourism in General" on July 24th; and "The Southern Shore, Carbonear Island, and St. John's, the Oldest City in North America" on August 16th. Only rarely are presenters' names given, though Dr Stanley L. Brookes is listed several times. Smallwood may have been the presenter of at least one of these lectures: soon after the "Carbonear Island" programme aired, he printed a column on the same topic.

⁷ "From the Masthead" 2 September 1937.

⁸ See advertisements placed each Monday, Wednesday and Friday on page 1 of the Daily News through the summer. The Barrelman himself refers to the "interesting programmes" of Vardy in his column of 7 September 1937, just two weeks before he started his own radio programmes. Vardy compiled and read the world news each night for the Newfoundland Butter Company, thus his sobriquet "N. B. C. News Commentator."

I want to see more -- much, much more -- of the excellent sort of thing the Tourist Board got up this summer. I refer to those splendid broadcasts.

In these broadcasts Mr. Vardy gave, not vague generalities and pious aspirations, but hard, practical, inescapable facts to open our people's eyes to a realization that we have indeed a beautiful and interesting country from the physical standpoint.

If you realize the vital need (and I mean the word "vital" quite literally) of stimulating a tenacious national pride, you have got to feed to the people the fuel which will inevitably produce the happy result.

You have got to SHOW them the thrilling story of past heroism, past daring, past patriotism, past idealism, past achievement.

When I say show them, I mean that you have got to get the facts, dress them up attractively and appealingly, and then in a wide variety of ways "sell" them to the public.⁹

In 1982, during his interview with Peter Narváez, Smallwood remembered the sequence of events as follows.

Well, when I had been publishing this column in the Daily News for, I don't know -- it might have been a year, it might have been less than that; I don't remember -- the thought occurred to me [that] radio was beginning to be interesting, see? And I began to play with the idea of doing a broadcast of this column rather than writing it. Certainly it would have a wider circulation than for what you write. You like to be well circulated. And that was the way to do it. And, then, I would probably get more money out of it. Ah, I was getting, I don't know -- it might have been fifteen or eighteen dollars a week for a six-day column in the Daily News. And Frank O'Leary, when I went to him, well, what I did in fact was to go to Bill Galgay, the manager of the Broadcast Corporation¹⁰ and suggest the idea to him. And he

⁹ "From the Masthead," 7 September 1937.

¹⁰ In fact the radio station VONF which Galgay managed in 1937 was still owned by the Dominion Broadcasting Company, a subsidiary of the Avalon Telephone Company. The phrase "Broadcast Corporation" usually refers to the Broadcasting Corporation of Newfoundland, a national

said he didn't mind, that is I would go on each night for a week with a view to introducing my broadcast while I was trying to get someone to sponsor it. So he quite agreed, and when I had it on about two nights running, and I had it running smoothly, I then went to Frank O'Leary. He was the first, indeed the only one I did go to and ask to sponsor it. And he said that he'd listen and he listened that night and the next night. And after a couple of nights -- that would be maybe my fourth night on -- I went to see him and he said yes, he would, he would sponsor it. And he did and I got all of thirty dollars a week.¹¹

It is interesting in the light of this account of a smooth introduction into radio to read his contemporary account of his first radio programmes, as told in his "From the Masthead" column.

Some of my readers might have been listening in to my broadcasts Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday nights this week. If so, I hope they enjoyed them more than I did. I was in a sweat all the way through. It's surprising how a microphone can cause the brain to stop functioning. On the platform, facing an audience, I've never been stuck for a word, and speech came easily and naturally. In front of the 'mike' your whole nervous and mental system seems to be paralyzed: you can't think: the sweat pours out and you're in an agony of apprehension lest everybody listening in think you an arrant fool.

That ten minutes, from ten minutes to seven until seven o'clock, is an ordeal equal to a day's hard work. Perhaps I'll get better as I go along. If there is any change at all, it will have to be

corporation -- owned by the Newfoundland Government which took over the assets of the Dominion Broadcasting Company in 1939. Galgay retained management of the station through both owners, indeed until his death in 1965 after sixteen years of Canadian Broadcasting Corporation ownership. On Galgay's attitude to aspects of his broadcasting station's presentation, see Philip Hiscock, "Folk Programming versus Elite Information: The Doyle Bulletin and the Public Despatch," Culture & Tradition 12 (1988), 41-59, especially pp. 55-58.

¹¹ Interview by Peter Narváez, 10 August 1982, MUNFLA C5844/82-185, transcript by Pam Roberts (edited by PH).

a change for the better -- it wouldn't be possible for me to be worse!¹²

What appears to be the script for his second broadcast, has a slightly different account of his first programme, including the confession that he was so nervous he jumped into his script before he was properly introduced by the station announcer.¹³

Based on the O'Leary collection of scripts at the Centre for Newfoundland Studies, and on Smallwood's own memories, Narváez stated the programme began in October of 1937.¹⁴ However, it seems clear that the first Barrelman programme was aired Monday 21 September 1937. No doubt F. M. O'Leary, Ltd. began to sponsor the programme in late October 1937, and the first dated script in the file, reflecting this fact, is for 25 October 1937. Many of the scripts for the programmes before that date seem to have survived, but they were not given the same careful attention that those sponsored by the company received.¹⁵ Although it is not possible to determine with any certainty how many

¹² "From the Masthead," Thursday 23 September 1937.

¹³ CNS COLL 028, 1.01.001, p. 1.

¹⁴ "Barrelman", p. 47.

¹⁵ At least later, five carbon copies were made of every script. Michael Harrington explained this as one each for the reader, the station, O'Leary, and the two Canadian manufacturers whose products were advertised; interview, 11 August 1994. Harrington also mailed carbon copies of his scripts to interested parties; Abel Wornell, of St. John's, has in his possession a script from 13 January 1955, in which his father is mentioned. Whether the extra copy was Harrington's own or one of the others (perhaps a sixth), I do not know.

scripts precede the first dated one, it appears there are fourteen extant.¹⁶ The first script fragment appears to be that of the second show, not the first, so it is likely at least fifteen shows were broadcast before O'Leary starting picking up the tab.¹⁷

It is also of interest to note that his first programmes, those unsponsored by O'Leary, were only ten minutes long. An undated note with the earliest scripts is a notice to listeners that henceforward the programme would start five minutes earlier, run for fifteen minutes, and be sponsored by F. M. O'Leary, Ltd.¹⁸ A handwritten note appended to the end of another script reminds listeners that now it is starting five minutes earlier:

Will listeners please note that this column comes
on the air at quarter to seven these nights -- not

¹⁶ This estimate of fourteen undated scripts and script fragments is based on a count of script sheets which seem, by virtue of opening with the formulaic greeting "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen", to begin a programme. CNS COLL 028 1.01.001, pp. 1-47.

¹⁷ Some Barrelman materials have been identified in the Smallwood Papers collection at CNS. That collection, acquired since Smallwood's death, has not yet been catalogued (although that part of Smallwood's papers given the University before his death have been completely catalogued and described by Bert Riggs and Linda Russell, The Smallwood Papers Collection, MUN, 1984). Barrelman materials include a notebook carried by Smallwood when he went on a trip to parts of Newfoundland in the summer of 1941. Perhaps more information about the pre-O'Leary scripts will turn up once that collection is fully catalogued.

¹⁸ CNS COLL 028 1.01.001, p. [0]. It is not clear at what point in the Barrelman Papers' evolution the pages were given page numbers. They are incomplete and not fully in order. This undated sheet is in the file before page 1, so I have called it p. [0]. It is intriguing to guess why the length of the show increased at the time of sponsorship: perhaps it was a matter of negotiation among O'Leary, Smallwood, and the radio station; Smallwood may have agreed to increase the time in order to get the payment he wanted.

ten to seven, as before?¹⁹

The End of the "Masthead"

The daily newspaper column continued until it had run for almost a year. The last column was published on 30 June 1938. The folksy and folklore-laden style of his early columns was a thing of the past. For some time he published only political comment in his "Masthead" column; in fact the last column that had anything other than political dialogue with his readers and correspondents was in early June, three weeks before his last column. By that time his format, too, had changed; instead of most columns being a patchwork of notes, jokes, and stories, his later columns were single pieces of a "human interest" nature. In early June 1938 he wrote columns about the miserly dole ration, about an old woman who at 82 was blind but still active and loved by all, about an art exhibit at the Gosling Building, and about the Blind Association's building.²⁰ His final three weeks' columns deal entirely with matters pertaining to the Commission of Government and whether or not there existed a "public opinion" in Newfoundland, a question which in more recent terms would be about political apathy. By then he had transferred his folksy style to his radio show

¹⁹ CNS COLL 028 1.01.001, p. 35, no date.

²⁰ These four columns are dated respectively 2, 3, 4, and 7 June 1938.

and, presumably, he found it not only more remunerative but also more satisfying.

Gradually he built an oral, broadcast style that was somewhat different from the newspaper style, but for some time he recycled old columns. Many of his early radio scripts are literally cut-and-paste compilations of clippings from his newspaper columns. As more letters came in from his listeners, so he had more fresh material for the radio shows, and so too he relied less on what he had already written.

Barrelman motifs through Smallwood's life

As Peter Narváez pointed out in his 1982 article on Smallwood's radio programme,

Without labelling such materials "folklore," the Barrelman collected and broadcast an abundance of Newfoundland oral traditions and this folkloric content provided entertainment and grass roots interest for his listening audience.²¹

At least for the first half of its existence, the daily newspaper column, "From the Masthead" was not very different from this description of the radio programme by Narváez, and that given above by Smallwood. Narrative motifs and political ideas that appeared in 1937-38 in the "Masthead" (and some even earlier), continued to appear in Smallwood's work through his life, in Barrelman programmes, in books he wrote at various times in his life, and in his political

²¹ Narváez, "Joseph R. Smallwood, 'The Barrelman'," p. 55.

life. Many examples can be given, and this thesis documents some of them, but just a few examples are the following.

Several times in the "Masthead" he refers to the extreme annoyance of receiving letters from foreign lands, in particular from the United States, addressed to "Newfoundland, Canada."²² The point had already made two appearances in his 1931 book The New Newfoundland.²³ It appears at least once in the Barrelman and again in his 1973 autobiography:

In those days, and right up to Confederation, nothing annoyed Newfoundlanders more than to get letters addressed "St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada."²⁴

Although the concern is relegated to the past, after all Newfoundland had been a part of Canada for over twenty years, it clearly was something that he carried with him for a long time.

A narrative motif so pervasive in his newspaper column as to defy counting was strong man stories.²⁵ Beginning very early in the column's life, he included stories of

²² "From the Masthead," 25 Sept 1937, 16 October 1937 and 7 Jan 1938.

²³ The New Newfoundland, pp. 175 and 210.

²⁴ I Chose Canada, p. 115.

²⁵ Without knowing the richness of the Barrelman collection in this regard, Penelope Houlden pointed out the widespread nature of strong man stories within Newfoundland, and out, in her unpublished paper, "The Strong Man Tradition in Narrative Tradition: The Newfoundland Configuration," a version of which was delivered to the 1980 meeting of Folklore Studies Association of Canada (MUNFLA 80-057).

great endurance and extreme strength of individual Newfoundlanders, whom he named whenever he was told their names. As Narváez points out such stories were a mainstay of the radio programme, particularly early in its life.²⁶

A political theme that appeared in the "Masthead" and that stayed with Smallwood for almost a half century was the development of Mortier Bay (Marystown) into a trans-shipment point operating out of an international free port of the sort that Danzig/Gdansk was before the Second World War. It appeared in the form of an interview with the capital promoter in the newspaper column²⁷ and the theme returned several times in his political life, notably as a part of his political platform in the Liberal Party Leadership election of 1969.²⁸

For almost ten years before beginning the column, Smallwood had been a good friend and close political ally of Sir Richard Squires. Seeing Commission of Government as a narrowly Tory action, Squires and other Liberals had opposed its institution in 1934. Although Smallwood early on made

²⁶ Narváez, "Barrelman," p. 61.

²⁷ 20 October 1937; on following days there are reactions and reprises.

²⁸ See for example his fulsome praise for Mortier Bay as a trans-shipment point for Alaskan oil in his 1969 manifesto To You With Affection from Joey (St. John's: Action for Joey Committee, 1969), pp. 107-115.

public his opposition to the Commission²⁹ and probably thus underscored his previous connections to the then discredited Squires, within a few years of its establishment he had become decidedly cagey in talking about it and in fact about all his overt political opinions.

The column's partisan as well as general political bent was mostly tacit but, early on, it was made explicit from time to time. The question of his partisan stand, for or against Commission of Government, seemed later to become the principal matter for a time in his column. In his 1973 autobiography, Smallwood says that in the two years before the institution of Commission of Government he was "passionately convinced that the House [of Assembly] should be done away with altogether for a number of years."³⁰ In his newspaper column four years after the institution of Commission of Government, he made it clear over and over again that he thought the Commission of Government was not doing a good job, especially with regard to its cultural

²⁹ See for example the extract from a speech Smallwood gave in early 1935 to a crowd at the Majestic Theatre in St. John's, complaining about the "dole flour" being issued by the Commission, a brown flour for better nutrition, but seen widely as a poorer quality substitute for white flour. He called it "cattle-feed"; Malcolm MacLeod (Bridge Built Halfway, p. 153) quoting from a 1986 unpublished paper by Elliott Leyton, W. O'Grady and Jim Overton, "Violence and Popular Anxiety: A Canadian Case," pp. 550-51. The irony of this is that three years later Smallwood, as Barreman, was praising the high quality of bread made from the same brown flour: "Masthead" 28 May, and 31 May 1938. A letter to the Editor from J. B. Maher, of one of the local bakeries, complained that he had actually slurred the healthful qualities of white bread (1 June 1938). Another letter to himself from an unnamed reader complained that his praise of dole flour was merely "scratching the back of the Commissioner for Public Health and Welfare" (16 June 1938).

³⁰ I Chose Canada, p. 191.

obligations -- libraries, art galleries, schools, and archives. On the matter of the Newfoundland Museum, which had been dismantled as one of the first moves by the Commission in early 1934, he wrote in October 1937:

It is nothing short of criminal the way in which, during the past fifty years, so many invaluable relics of this kind ... have been allowed to disappear.... But what's the use of talking? We allowed the heavy hands of the Philistines to scatter our museum, and we never even murmured in protest at this inexcusable vandalism.³¹

Nonetheless Smallwood's position was not that of a political faction that would lead the country directly back to elected government. He argued over and over against a return to Responsible Government because the underpinnings of "real democracy" did not exist in Newfoundland. The most important job of the Commission of Government, he wrote, was to build up a national consciousness in Newfoundland; the most important job of the people was to begin a lively debate on all aspects of life in the country. Before these were accomplished, it was pointless to return to the mere trappings of democracy.³²

For Smallwood, the cultural politics of the column were just one facet of his attempt to instill a national pride in his country, a pride he found sadly, painfully, and costly

³¹ "From the Masthead, by the Barrelman," Daily News 26 October 1937, p. 5.

³² Although this argument was expressed many dozens of times throughout late 1937 and early 1938, he makes a summary argument in his final column, 30 June 1938, p. 5.

lacking. The phrase "Making Newfoundland Better Known to Newfoundlanders" was the subtitle of the radio programme which developed from his column; it was never used in the newspaper but it might have been. He continually listed great men, heroes, feats of endurance, wonderful endeavours, and works of unusual creativity or magnitude, all by and for Newfoundlanders. He continually harrangued the government of the day to build on the cultural and historical strengths of Newfoundland, never pulling his punches at the government for forsaking Newfoundland's future. Hardly a week went by without a rail against the "criminal vandalism" of the dissolution of the Museum.

The kind of pride, or rather the degree of intensity of pride, I have in mind is such as would have caused a fury of protest at the mere suggestion of a brutal disbandment and scattering of our Museum. As a Newfoundlander I blush every time I remember that we allowed the Museum to be touched.³³

He praised the development of the Public Libraries Board, argued in favour of a national art gallery, and applauded benefactors of Newfoundland's public parks.³⁴

³³ "From the Masthead," 7 September 1937.

³⁴ For example his "open letter" to Sir Edgar Bowring congratulating him on his recent gift to the City of St. John's of several statuettes commemorating explorers of Newfoundland and early political figures, 17 September 1937.

The Forms and Volume of the Barrelman

The Barrelman was not only a radio programme that lasted almost two decades. It was a cultural and commercial enterprise that took several different forms. The sponsoring company, F. M. O'Leary, Ltd., knew that it was a successful advertisement for its products and so used it in whatever ways it could as promotion.

It began as a newspaper column that mixed Smallwood's interests in politics, history and other cultural elements for political purposes, to foster national pride in Newfoundland and an active interest in the current affairs and direction of the country. In the column he averaged about a thousand words a day, six days a week, for about 50 weeks -- a total of around 300,000 words, which is about the volume of a couple of middle-sized books.

After having published his column for several weeks, he began the radio series he became famous for, the Barrelman, and remained with it for about six years. During this time he wrote about 2000 words every day for his broadcast. He took a month off each year, so he broadcast about 290 nights a year, or about a half million words each year. Over the course of his six years, this amounted to well over three million words, or about the equivalent text to a dozen good-sized books. This was a lot of literary output.

Michael Harrington carried on the endeavour for twelve years after Smallwood quit and the final count on the volume

of text produced for the Barrelman radio programme must be well in excess of nine million words. Despite the claim by Smallwood in his interview with Peter Narváez in 1982 that Harrington merely recycled Smallwood's scripts, it is clear from the documentary record that Harrington wrote entirely new programmes based on new material.³⁵ In a telephone conversation in May 1994 Harrington told me, "I didn't recycle a thing of Smallwood's," and pointed out that he changed the style of the show, introducing new themes and contests.³⁶

The scripts generated at St. John's were also parlayed into programmes airing from VOWN, Corner Brook, after that station went on the air in mid-1943. These scripts, like those from the St. John's programmes, comprise part of the Centre for Newfoundland Studies' Barrelman Collection. As Harrington said in May 1994, what recycling of scripts was done, of both Smallwood's and Harrington's scripts, was by Stan O'Leary, the "West Coast Barrelman."³⁷

For almost the entire life of the radio series, its commercial sponsor, F. M. O'Leary, Ltd., published a monthly

³⁵ MUNFLA tape C5844/82-185; Narváez repeats it in his article "Joseph R. Smallwood, the Barrelman." In her finding aid to the Barrelman Collection at the Centre for Newfoundland Studies Archives, Gail Weir repeats it too.

³⁶ Telephone conversation, 18 May 1994.

³⁷ "Frank O'Leary appointed his brother Stan O'Leary as the West Coast Barrelman and he recycled scripts." Telephone conversation, 18 May 1994.

newspaper which was primarily an advertising medium, but which also carried selected texts from the radio scripts, lightly edited for the print medium. Typically it was a 24-page, full-size newspaper, about half of which was advertising, and the rest stories from the Barrelman programme along with columns of poetry and songs compiled partly from the letters of readers and listeners. The paper began its life under the name The Barrelman but was changed to The Newfoundlander, a name it retained for about fifteen years until it, with the radio series, folded at the end of 1955.

In 1940 Smallwood, with his friend Leo E. F. English, prepared a book for the Newfoundland Department of Education, Stories of Newfoundland: Source Book for Teachers.³⁸ It contained forty-five stories from Newfoundland history, of the sort that were thought to be able to capture the interest of schoolchildren. Almost all are legends or biographical sketches Smallwood had used in one or another of the forms of the Barrelman previous to the publication of the book. Some were stories the Barrelman had received from his radio listeners.

In the mid-1940s and early 1950s, Michael Harrington encouraged his listeners to write and submit poetry. As a student of English at the new Memorial University of

³⁸ The book gives no date, but 1940 is indicated by internal evidence. It was published in St. John's by the Newfoundland Gazette.

Newfoundland he had contact with literary scholars whom he asked to judge the poems.³⁹ From this endeavour came the annual O'Leary Newfoundland Poetry Contest, the fruits of which were published as a book in 1953.⁴⁰ Containing sixty-one poems, it represented the thirty-three prize-winning contributors to the contest between 1944 and 1952.

Michael Harrington used Barrelman materials in his 1958 book, Sea Stories from Newfoundland.⁴¹ Eighteen stories comprised the 172-page book. Compared to Smallwood and English's 1940 Stories of Newfoundland, these stories were more developed as narrative, with greater attention to apparent historicity. This same difference held when comparing the two men's Barrelmen. Where Smallwood preferred "romance," Harrington preferred "history." Where Smallwood's style may have been hyperbolic and embellished, Harrington's was prosaic and substantial. The difference between the two books is very much like that between Smallwood's Barrelman and Harrington's Barrelman. Although Sea Stories is not a work of reference -- it gives no sources and casts each story in a dramatic narrative frame to allow for descriptive narration and characters' speech --

³⁹ Memorial University College was established 1925. In 1949 the Memorial University Act was proclaimed, changing the College's name and upgrading it to a degree-granting University. Malcolm MacLeod, A Bridge Built Halfway, pp. 35, 231.

⁴⁰ Michael Harrington, ed., Poems of Newfoundland (St. John's: F. M. O'Leary, [1953]).

⁴¹ With illustrations by H. B. Goodridge (Toronto: Ryerson Press).

it presents names and dates as if the stories came straight from an authoritative history book.

Harrington has continued for four decades to publish small books of the same sort -- short dramatised accounts of events from Newfoundland history, many of which derive from texts used on the Barrelman radio programme. In 1988, for example, he published twenty-four such stories in Offbeat Mystery in Newfoundland and Labrador.⁴² The title of the book is derived from a weekly newspaper column he wrote in the St. John's daily Evening Telegram, of which he had been editor-in-chief for twenty-three years until his retirement in 1982. The column, entitled "Offbeat History," followed in his own footsteps as the Barrelman. It presented interesting stories of events and people from Newfoundland's past, sometimes based on obscure documentary sources, but as often based on the personal accounts of his correspondents.

The managing editor of The Newfoundlander was Leo Moakler, and in late life he, too, began to put some of his own personal Barrelman files to use, publishing a couple of short essays in The Newfoundland Ancestor, the publication of the Newfoundland and Labrador Genealogical Society. In 1989 and '90 he published collections of humorous headstone epitaphs, partly derived from Barrelman sources.⁴³

⁴² St. John's: Cuff, 1988.

⁴³ The first of these was Leo F. Moakler, "The Last Word (Epitaphs and Tombstones)," The Newfoundland Ancestor 5:2 (Spring 1989), 52-53. Moakler died in 1991.

All of these redactions of Barrelman materials served to spread the output of the Barrelman, already broadcast by radio and a free newspaper, ever more widely. Several other popular writers have used some of the same materials: Leo English and Ron Pumphrey in the 1950s⁴⁴; P. J. Wakeham in the 1950s through 1980s⁴⁵; Jack FitzGerald in the 1970s and 1980s⁴⁶; and Art Rockwood in the 1990s.⁴⁷ Each of these writers and compilers used materials which had earlier been filtered through the Barrelman's sieves.

Smallwood, too, used his experience as the Barrelman in later years, when he set the Encyclopedia project running. In 1982 he told Len Penton that he had been developing a master list of topics for the Encyclopedia for several decades, ever since the Barrelman programme.⁴⁸ It was this master list which was the start and backbone of the Encyclopedia.

No cultural endeavour in Newfoundland has had the long-

⁴⁴ Ron Pumphrey and L. E. F. English, Strange Facts about Newfoundland (St. John's: Guardian P, [1952?]).

⁴⁵ Wakeham published a dozen novels and collections of short stories between the early 1950s and his death in 1990. Notably his Princess Sheila is based partly on Smallwood's version of the story; see below, Chapter Six. Wakeham's magazine Newfoundland Stories was a similar processor, developer and promulgator of folklore.

⁴⁶ A prolific writer, FitzGerald has published over a dozen popular books of Newfoundland history and legend. See the main bibliography for a listing of those which are most in the Barrelman tradition.

⁴⁷ Art Rockwood, Art Rockwood's Newfoundland and Labrador Trivia (St. John's: Cuff, 1993).

⁴⁸ MUNFLA 94-436, tape #48.

lasting and thorough-going impact that Smallwood's Barrelman has had, seen, as it must be, as having been carried on by all these other writers. Smallwood's intent to raise the self-consciousness of Newfoundlanders, and culturally to empower them was clearly and strongly successful.

Chapter Four

Models and Sources

A facile distinction between folk culture and other kinds of culture ("popular" and "elite") might be based on whether or not it derives from earlier creative forms. By such a distinction, the closer to unique a performance is, the "higher" the grade of culture it represents. Such a distinction, though easy, would of course be untrue because all cultural creations must be derived from others in order to be "read" and understood by their audience. All performance is built on previous models, and it is these traditions of performance which are stylistic markers and as traces, in a postmodern sense, are imbued with meaning regarding the outlook and affiliations of the producer/performer, and the readings by the audience.

Joe Smallwood did not invent the Barrelman and its texts out of the air. As novel as it was, and as much as it represented peculiarly the work of Smallwood himself, it also was in the stream of traditions of journalism, radio production, and folk talk. In this chapter I investigate his possible models and his actual sources with regard to these traditions and their relations to the Barrelman.

Models

In starting his Barrelman enterprise, Joe Smallwood had few exact models. There were no newspaper columns or radio programmes precisely of the sort that he started in 1937, though some facets of his programme seem to have been influenced or suggested by other popular culture media and programmes. There was a distinct period of evolution at the very beginning of the Barrelman's life, particularly as it went from newspaper to radio. Following this transition period, Smallwood fell into a pattern that he retained, with some periodic topical changes, for his six-year tenure. Likewise, there were some changes when Michael Harrington took it over in 1943, but Harrington's format remained more or less the same throughout his tenure as the Barrelman.

In the previous chapter I discussed how Smallwood admired the presentations made in the summer of 1937 by the Newfoundland Tourist Development Board. Smallwood's friend O. L. "Al" Vardy hosted the programmes, aided by some of Smallwood's associates in the community of Newfoundland history enthusiasts, several of whom, like Smallwood, were members of the executive of the Newfoundland Historical Society. Vardy's series led directly to Smallwood's taking his newspaper column on to radio. His column had already been in existence for a couple of months. It had grown out of his general and long-standing interest in Newfoundland history and the making of a record of modern-day or living-

memory history. His research for the two-volume Book of Newfoundland had left him with a store of knowledge about Newfoundland, its history and its historical record, that he felt could be put to use in a salaried way: thus he sold his newspaper column to John S. Currie, the Daily News editor at the time, for a living wage.¹

Smallwood wrote "From the Masthead" under a pseudonym, the Barrelman. The name was chosen for its nautical flavour, a reference to the seaman whose job it was to sit in the "barrel" at the top of the main mast and "spy" for land, seals, or whales, according to the purpose of the voyage.² Denotatively, he might just as well have called the column something like "From the crow's nest, by the spotter," but it would not have had the immediate attachment to Newfoundland through the connotations of the local term "barrelman."

When he took the column to the air, he increased the nautical flavour by using an actual ship's bell to introduce each programme and to punctuate between items. On board a sailing ship the various watches, or shifts, were announced by a particular number of rings on a bell. The evening watch was announced by three pairs of rings, "six bells,"

¹ The living wage was \$20 a week according to his autobiography, I Chose Canada, p. 205. That he probably wrote other pieces (likely for more cash) under the name "Staff Reporter" has already been noted.

² I Chose Canada, p. 205. See also his interview with Narváez in 1982 in Narváez, "Joseph R. Smallwood, the 'Barrelman,'" p. 48.

and it was this signal he gave to open the show each evening. He made a single sound of the bell between items, and before and after advertising plugs.³

The use of sound effects as aural signals was a major part of the art of radio; as Ian Rodger has noted, "naturalism had to be concocted."⁴ On local radio in St. John's, the very popular series The Irene B. Mellon had been using sound effects to induce nautical and other scenes for over three years when the Barrelman began.⁵ Although it appeared on a competing station, most of the Barrelman's audience would have been familiar with the Mellon, which used a bosun's whistle and a ship's bell among other effects.⁶ Smallwood himself was familiar with the other show, making a joke about an actor who had applied for work on a sailing ship claiming experience on the Irene B. Mellon.⁷

Once Smallwood started broadcasting, he right away began and continued always to refer to himself as "the" Barrelman. His correspondents often used other forms, such

³ On the use of a ship's bell as Smallwood's aural equivalent of the dashes separating items in his newspaper column, see Narváez, "Joseph R. Smallwood: The Barrelman," p. 50.

⁴ Radio Drama (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 32.

⁵ Hiscock, "Folk Process in a Popular Medium," pp. 181-185; see also Hiscock, "Folklore and Popular Culture," pp. 112-172.

⁶ Interview with Pat DeBourke, 6 December 1983; MUNFLA tape C6957/83-236.

⁷ "Masthead," 13 November 1937.

as just "Barrelman" as a personal name, and "Mr. Barrelman." One reader made a joke that because he knew Mr. Barrelman was married with children, and because there seemed to be no female Barrelmen around, then he must have married a real person. The children then must have been "half-barrels."⁸

The use of a pseudonym does not seem to have been an attempt to hide his identity. In fact it seems clear from the number of personal conversations he reports in the columns that the Barrelman was widely known to be Joe Smallwood. As he remembered it in 1982, forty-five years later, in an interview with Peter Narváez, it was simply the fashion to write columns of opinion without using one's name. He gives the example of "R. U. Wright" being a pen-name for A. A. Parsons, and "The Wayfarer" being one for A. B. Perlin, both of whom were editors of the respective newspapers in which their columns appeared.⁹ In fact, in the same daily paper in which "From the Masthead" appeared, there were several other pseudonymous, or initialed columns appearing regularly in mid-1937. These included regular reports from the Holy Cross Literary Society, signed "M.F.H." (who clearly was Michael Harrington), and irregular columns of historical information about Newfoundland, often

⁸ "From the Masthead," Thursday 24 March 1938. A "half-barrel," or "half-drum," was a technical term of the dried cod and pickled herring fisheries, made to legal specifications; see DNE II, at "half-barrel" and DNE at "half-drum."

⁹ MUNFLA C5844/82-185, A040.

entitled "Interesting Facts" and signed "P.K.D." by P. K. Devine, who had earlier that year published his book on Newfoundland folklore and language.¹⁰ Local sports news was contributed in a gossip column called "Current Gossip From the Stove by the Stoker". Whether that title was a pun on the author's name ("Stoker"?) was not indicated, but the suggestion of a pun is also present in a successor sports column entitled "Sparks from the Stove League," which may have been written by someone "Sparkes." The possibility exists that Smallwood was even making a small conceptual pun on his real name: a barrel is made from small pieces of wood.¹¹ In any case, pseudonyms were common in the public press, as well as on radio, at that time and the choice of one for Smallwood's column was not exceptional. It is interesting that the syntax of Smallwood's title ("From the -- by the --") is close to that of the sports column which had preceded him by some months in the Daily News ("-- from the -- by the --"). It is likewise interesting to see the images conjured by these column titles; both sports columns suggested a group of friendly gossipers around a stove while Smallwood's -- as he pointed out -- suggested a traditional kind of Newfoundland seer.

¹⁰ P. K. Devine, Folklore of Newfoundland in Old Words, Phrases and Expressions (St. John's: Robinson, 1937).

¹¹ In his memoirs (I Chose Canada, p. 73) he remembers, with apparent fondness, being known at school as "Splits" exactly for this reason: "splits" is a local term for kindling.

About a half year before Smallwood began the "Masthead" column, the author of the "Stoker" column wrote the following about his anonymity:

The Sports Editor of the **Daily News** tells me that a few people have asked him who I am. Thanks for your curiosity, but does it make much difference[?] All I will say is that I am not who you think I am. I would have my picture at the top of the column but for the reason that if I did everyone would spend so much time admiring me that I would be wearing a glow that might well be mistaken.¹²

A week later the Stoker continued the same thoughts, mentioning that a female fan had written requesting a signed photograph. "I am very careful," he replied, "about what I sign and if I must say so myself, too cute to show my phisog to the world."¹³ Smallwood never mentioned his own name and seemed actively to hide his own family connections, but he never played this sort of "Catch Me" game with his audience.

At the time it was more common for radio announcers to use "radio names" than their own given ones. Aubrey MacDonald started as a part-time sports reader in the mid-1930s on radio station VONF, and rather than use his real name he called himself Ted Baker.¹⁴ And when, a couple of

¹² "Current Gossip from the Stove League, by the Stoker," Daily News, 11 February 1937, p. 7.

¹³ Ibid., 19 February 1937, p. 7.

¹⁴ On the use of radio names in St. John's radio in that time, including Aubrey MacDonald's names, see Philip Hiscock, "Folklore and Popular Culture in Early Newfoundland Radio Broadcasting: An Analysis of Occupational Narrative, Oral History and Song Repertoire," MA thesis, MUN, St. John's, 1987, pp. 17-18.

years later, it was decided that the Barrelman needed another voice to round out the show, a young woman was hired who used the radio name "Doris Day."¹⁵

Besides local models for what became the Barrelman there were other likely influences from outside Newfoundland. For about a decade the local daily paper had carried Robert Ripley's very successful "Ripley's Believe it or Not," a daily text-and-drawing syndicated piece of purportedly true but nonetheless astounding facts about history, the world, and the people and animals that live in it. In the mid-1930s Ripley's pieces were also being heard on radio from the United States. Ripley was popular enough in the St. John's area, where his piece was seen each day, that when he visited the city in 1932 he was fêted and written about in the papers.¹⁶

Smallwood seemed very careful never to use the phrase "Believe it or not" which was a copyright phrase by Ripley, but many of his pieces were of the same sort -- real events

¹⁵ Doris Day auditioned for her job on the air in December 1939 and her first appearance as the Palmolive Girl was 15 January 1940. Her real name, Florence Mercer, is given by Leo Moakler in his article, "The Barrelman: Making Newfoundland Better Known to Newfoundlanders," in James Thoms, ed., Just Call Me Joey (St. John's: Creative, 1968), pp. 18-27.

¹⁶ "Mr. Ripley will be Broadcast To-night," Daily News 9 September 1932, p. 3: "Radio owners are in for a treat to-night at 7.15 when they will hear Mr. Ripley of "Believe it or not" fame on the air over station V.O.G.Y. Mr. Ripley has been heard before over some of the American stations but when he speaks to-night many will hear him for the first time. His address should be of great interest." Ripley even addressed the Rotary Club: "Addressed Rotary," Evening Telegram 8 September 1932.

that seemed so out of the ordinary that people might ordinarily doubt them. Readers and listeners seemed to equate the efforts of the two, as for example in mid-December 1937 when his column carried a question contributed by a reader who thought either the Barrelman or Ripley might be able to answer it: who was the oldest person present at the coronation in May of that year?¹⁷ The Barrelman declined to try.

Another similar effort to Smallwood's was the Answer Man, a weekly series of fifteen-minute programmes from the CBS radio station in New York, widely popular throughout North America. It went on the air during the same year that Smallwood began his Barrelman, 1937, and within a few years was so popular that it was not only syndicated around the United States and Canada, but was also franchised for local production in many centres.¹⁸ On the show, Albert Mitchell (the Answer Man) answered questions posed by listeners, with authoritative answers provided by his research staff and the New York Public Library.¹⁹ Radio historian John Dunning

¹⁷ "Masthead," 17 December 1937.

¹⁸ John Dunning, Tune In Yesterday: The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio 1925 - 1976 (Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ), 1976, p. 37. For some reports of Eastern Canadian listeners and the fact of being locally produced as a franchise in Montreal, see Marg Meikle's Return of the Answer Lady (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1993), pp. 1-3.

¹⁹ Dunning suggests a staff of "up to forty" (p. 37) but, more realistically, Frank Buxton and Bill Owen report a staff of one besides Mitchell -- producer Bruce Chapman. Buxton and Owen tantalisingly call it an "often-parodied program." The Big Broadcast 1920-1950 - A New, Revised, and Greatly Expanded Edition of Radio's Golden Age: The

says of the show that it was "marked by Mitchell's rapid-fire answers, creating the illusion that he had the answer to anything at his fingertips."²⁰ That it was heard in Newfoundland is attested by a letter from a pseudonymous "Bell Island Listener" who wrote the Barrelman to alert him to the version of a story told previously by the Barrelman and recently told by the Answer Man, a story about a nineteenth century Newfoundland sealing ship that was precariously upended while at the ice in order to effect repairs to the rudder.²¹

It is possible that Smallwood's interest in doing such a show as the Barrelman was amplified by his knowledge of the Answer Man. Nonetheless, none of the standard histories of American radio tell in which season of 1937 the Answer Man came on the air -- it may have actually followed Smallwood's enterprise. However, in early June 1938 a segment of the Barrelman programme every night was dedicated exactly to his answering questions sent in by listeners. This seems to have been modeled after the format of the American Answer Man. If the Barrelman was unable to answer

Complete Reference Work (New York: Viking, 1972). Harrison B. Summers makes no note of the Answer Man in his Thirty-Year History of Programs Carried on National Radio Networks, 1926 - 1956 (Columbus: 1958; rpt. New York: Arno, 1971) but his survey looked only at programmes on air in mid-January of each year. The Answer Man ran until the 1952 season (Dunning, p. 37).

²⁰ Dunning, Tune In Yesterday, p. 37.

²¹ Letter, "Bell Island Listener," CNS COLL 028, microfilm 11.

a question (usually there was one such stumper every night), O'Leary's gave that listener a one-pound package of tea. It was introduced with the following:

You might have noticed during the past two or three months that a lot of listeners seemed to have the idea that the Barrelman is a sort of general information bureau -- at least it seems so if we can judge by the number and variety of letters people have sent in asking for information on all possible subjects, often for the purpose of settling an argument. That fact has suggested to Mr. O'Leary and myself the idea that maybe a lot of other listeners would like to submit questions to be answered, and are held back, perhaps, by the thought that it would be imposing too much on our time. I'd like you to know, however, that so far from not wishing to receive such enquiries, I welcome them. I said as much to Mr. O'Leary, and he said: "Yes, but suppose they began coming in in large numbers?" "The more the merrier," I said. "Yes," he persisted, "but suppose they send you a lot of questions you can't answer?" "When it comes to that," I replied, "it's a queer question that somebody can't answer." And so we talked it over, pro and con, and here's the decision we came to: that we would invite all our listeners to send us question to be answered -- any question you like, except that it must be a Newfoundland question. And if I can't answer it, Mr. O'Leary will send one pound of Lyon's eighty-cent tea to the listener who asked the question. When he made that offer it gave me a bit of a chill -- I had a mental picture right away of dozens and dozens of pounds of Lyon's tea being mailed out every week, and as I would be the one to be blamed for not answering the questions, where would I fit in? I said as much. "Not getting scared, are you?" was Mr. O'Leary's dig at me, and just for spite I had to put a brave face on it and agree to the idea. But I still had a little fear, so I asked him to put a time limit on the plan -- say till the end of July, and to this he agreed. So now everything's ready for the questions. Send me any Newfoundland question you like, and if I don't answer it on the air Mr. O'Leary will send a pound of Lyon's eighty-cent tea to the listener who asked it. It's got to be a Newfoundland question, and the whole scheme is to last only till the end of July -- and as I don't want to cost Mr. O'Leary

too much Lyon's tea by my failure to answer your questions, I'm glad it does end then. And, incidentally, if I give a wrong answer, and you can show that my answer is wrong, Mr. O'Leary will send you a half-pound package of Lyon's tea. That means that a pound package will have to be sent to the man who asked the question in the first place, and another half pound to the first listener who sends in a written correction of my answer if my answer is wrong. The more I think of it the more nervous I become -- the only people who are going to benefit from this question-and-answer plan, it seems to me, besides those who bowl me over and receive the Lyon's tea, are the Lyon's people in England who grow the tea -- I have an uneasy feeling that I'm going to get a lot of black looks before the end of July. However, I suppose it's just as well to be hanged for a lamb as for a sheep -- so get out your pencil and paper, write your question, and send it in. If I can't answer it, a pound of Lyon's tea for you.²²

The segment, which consisted of Bob MacLeod and the Barrelman in scripted repartee, began the following evening, 7 June 1938, as a three- or four-minute piece at the end of the programme. Within a week it had expanded to most of the programme, about ten or twelve minutes of most shows. The final questions-show was a special forty-five minute programme, from 7.45 to 8.30 p.m. on 1 August 1938. It was proudly stated at the end of that programme, the last before Smallwood's first month-long holiday, that during the weeks of his answering, he had answered 562 questions, getting stumped on fifty-three others.²³ The rule of being relevant

²² Script, 6 June 1938, pp. 611-612. The first pound of tea was awarded on 8 June. The proverb "Hanged for a lamb .. sheep" is usually said the other way around from that said by the Barrelman here.

²³ Script, Monday 1 August 1938, p. 806.

to all Newfoundlanders (which was to say, not so local that the Barrelman could not answer it by virtue of his supposedly general knowledge of Newfoundland) was adhered to strictly. That criterion became a lighthearted way of dealing with some difficult questions. Never was the term "Answer Man" used.

The Answer Man programme was a unique one on American radio. Buxton and Owen categorise it as an "Information" programme; in their encyclopedia of almost a thousand radio series they use this category for no other show.²⁴ Some series began similarly but quickly became quiz shows, either with house contestants or, for prizes, with guest contestants. After 1938 the Barrelman never returned specifically to the same format, though he continued to be a source of information about Newfoundland. In later years, Michael Harrington began a "Quiz Kids" segment in which a local girl (known on air just as "The Quiz Kid") answered questions about Newfoundland posed to her by the Barrelman.²⁵

In 1940 Smallwood had a series of items about unclaimed inheritances relating to Newfoundland and Newfoundland families. That this motif arose may be traceable to the popularity during the previous radio season of an American

²⁴ Buxton and Owen, The Big Broadcast, passim.

²⁵ Lillian Hutton (former Quiz Kid), telephone conversation, 25 May 1994.

programme called The Court of Missing Heirs.²⁶ It began on CBS in 1939 and continued for several years, tracing heirs to small and medium-sized estates. There is a rich oral tradition in Newfoundland about unclaimed fortunes and Smallwood's use of this motif played on and perhaps amplified the tradition.²⁷

There was a long and popular tradition of folklore writing by local enthusiasts, most currently by P. K. Devine in the 1930s. Smallwood saw these authors as uncovering an important aspect, otherwise ephemeral, of Newfoundland history in the form of its oral traditions. A small Newfoundland folklore literature existed in the 1930s, consisting of a couple of song collections by scholars, and a few short articles on language and lore.²⁸

Despite the preponderance of local popular musicians in some shows, radio in Newfoundland in the 1930s was not being used by collectors and popularisers of folklore. In 1938 the folklore collector Helen Creighton began a series of

²⁶ Buxton and Owen, The Big Broadcast, p. 62. See also James F. Waters, The Court of Missing Heirs (New York: Modern Age Books, 1941), pp. 3-19. Waters hosted and wrote the series.

²⁷ On the tradition of family legends of lost fortunes and unclaimed inheritances, see Clara Murphy-Rutherford, "The Structure and Function of Family History Legends in Newfoundland," unpublished research paper, MUN, 1985, MUNFLA 84-204.

²⁸ Notably, Maud Karpeles had published her Folk Songs from Newfoundland in 1934, as had Greenleaf and Mansfield their Ballads and Sea-Songs of Newfoundland. Patterson's articles from the 1890s were published in the Evening Telegram after being published in JAF. Smallwood no doubt had access to each of these.

radio programmes in Halifax, Nova Scotia, of folksong singers from that area.²⁹ But her work, both dealing with another genre of folklore, and following the Barrelman by a full year, cannot be seen as a model. As noted elsewhere in this thesis, Smallwood did not see himself as a collector of folklore, but rather as a cultural publicist, so even if radio models of folklore promulgation existed, he probably would not have been as affected by them as he was by the radio presentations of the Newfoundland Tourism Board the summer before he began his show. It is not clear what he would have thought of such programmes, but it is clear that he saw the Tourism Board programmes as a kind of universal training or adult education for tourism development, something with a clear political and economic end.

For Smallwood, folklore collection was not an end in itself. Rather, his purpose was to provide examples for the instillment of national pride. If some folklore also drew in a larger audience for his programme, then it was all to the good, both for the commercial aspects of the show, and for the purpose of providing stories to that great audience.

Sources

Radio is not always a one-way communication medium. Many radio shows encourage a feedback mechanism, if only to

²⁹ Jeff A. Webb, "Cultural Intervention: Helen Creighton's Folksong Broadcasts, 1938-1939," CFC 14:2 (1992), 159-170.

gauge the success of its advertising. In an interview with Carole Henderson Carpenter, F. M. O'Leary, Jr., and Leo Moakler pointed out this function of letters to the Barrelman programme.³⁰ Likewise, the Barrelman himself, from very early in his O'Leary sponsorship, called on listeners to write to show the sponsor that it was worth his while to continue paying for the show. Over the years various methods were used to draw in listeners' letters. The very fact of reading their letters, and saying their names on the air must have been a draw. But he would also engage the listeners with challenges to top stories and to find information to prove or disprove the claims of his other corresponding listeners. In early 1938 he gave the story of Mrs. George Goobie, who with her deceased first husband, Mr. Cluett, fished on the Grand Banks. She claimed to be the first woman to do so. The Barrelman issued the challenge:

Well, there's the claim -- that Mrs. Goobie, formerly Mrs. Cluett, was the first woman to fish on the Banks. Can anybody disprove it?³¹

In compiling the Barrelman, Smallwood had many sources but the source he found most congenial to his efforts was his audience's letters. Reading them on air served the dual purpose of engaging his audience, and of providing him with new and fresh material. As mentioned above, the "Masthead"

³⁰ Carpenter interview, MUNFLA tape C3915/78-057.

³¹ Script, 7 March 1938.

column grew specifically out of a desire to put to pecuniary work the knowledge about Newfoundland history and its economy that he had amassed during the research for his 1931 book, The New Newfoundland, and for his Book of Newfoundland project, 1935-37. Most of his information in these publications came from documentary sources of historical information: the secondary sources of historical writers, the primary sources of archival records, and even the current records of government and business. Smallwood was seen by "establishment" powers at the time as a capable researcher of Newfoundland history, and this is evidenced by his commissioned family history of the Job family and by the fact that the Newfoundland government paid him for information he compiled about trade and production in the country in 1931.³²

He read widely and collected publications of all sorts on Newfoundland. He claimed that by old age he had amassed the best private collection of Newfoundland books in

³² Smallwood was commissioned by R. B. Job to research his family's history (I Chose Canada, pp. 211-212). Job eventually published a book on his genealogy drawing heavily on Smallwood's work for him, quoting him in some sections by name and in others silently: John Job and His Family: A Story of his Ancestors and Successors, and their Business Connections with Newfoundland and Labrador, 1730-1953 (St. John's: Telegram, [1953]). R. B. Job was a descendent of Sir William Carson, and Smallwood's research on that family led him into a fascination with Carson, going so far as to produce a typescript of primary materials about Carson's life. That 1938 typescript ("Dr. William Carson: His Life, Letters and Speeches") is deposited in the Centre for Newfoundland Studies at M.U.N. Forty years later Smallwood's own company published his Carson book as The Great Newfoundland Reformer: His Life, Letters and Speeches: Raw Materials for a Biography (St. John's: NBP, 1978). Around the time he took the Job contract, he took on a similar job for Cyril Carter, researching his forebear Robert Carter (I Chose Canada, p. 212).

existence. Even as a young middle-aged man he had acquired or read a large proportion of the literature on the country.³³ Besides using the one public library in the country, the Gosling Memorial Library, he was also a frequent user of private libraries in the city. Gilbert Higgins, son of lawyer, later Judge and Senator John G. Higgins, reports that Smallwood was a regular visitor to his family home in the late 1930s, with an open invitation to come in and use Mr. Higgins' library.³⁴

Smallwood's use of various sources and his identification of them can be quantified to some extent. A typical week with regard to his sources was that of Monday 7 February through Saturday 12 February 1938. I have identified some thirty-eight segments in the six programmes (some segments between bells are multiple item). Fifteen items were from named correspondents. Eleven were from unnamed letter writers, including those who were willing to allow their initials to be used. Six items came from named oral sources (in contrast with written letters), and one from an unnamed oral source. Only one item is apparently from a published source (a legend of a Newfoundland captain

³³ Michael Harrington's first memory of Smallwood is of meeting him in the summer of 1935 at the suite of offices supplied by Ches Crosbie for the Book of Newfoundland project. Harrington went there to get work writing for the project. Smallwood was surrounded by more books than Harrington had seen in an office before, the fruits of twenty years of collecting; Harrington, interview, 11 August 1994.

³⁴ Interview, Gilbert Higgins, St. John's, 6 May 1991.

capitalising on a hot summer in Boston by shipping ice from St. John's at a good profit). Finally four items were based on the Barrelman's personal experiences -- famous people he had met while working out of the country. At least twenty-five of the thirty-eight items (two-thirds, more if one counts the multiple items) are from named sources. Of the other fully anonymous items, some are tall tales and requests for information; most of the items that appeared to be truthful or historical accounts of happenings in Newfoundland were submitted by named contributors. This is congruent with Smallwood's professed populism, and with the tactics of the programme, to draw his audience into the show and make them full contributors to its production, if not to its performance.

Letters to the Barrelman

The Barrelman preferred to use in his broadcasts material he received from his audience. From the very beginning of his newspaper column in mid-summer 1937, the Barrelman received letters from his readers and, when he started broadcasting a couple of months later, he got them from his radio audience. These letters, from 1937 to 1955, now form Series Two of the Centre for Newfoundland Studies "Barrelman Papers," comprising in that series a total of 186 files, most of which contain letters received in single

months.³⁵ Based on a rough estimate of about thirty letters per file, there are about six thousand letters. It is not known how many letters were not preserved, but it seems clear that most letters from the Barrelman's audience were filed and like the rest of the collection transferred to the University in the early 1960s. Smallwood claimed in his last programme, before he handed the show over to Michael Harrington, that he had received 60,000 letters in the preceding six years, a figure that is no doubt exaggerated. Leo Moakler, in his capacity as secretary of the F. M. O'Leary Company, personally retained some letters: in 1982 he gave Dr. Herbert Halpert a few original letters that told of mummers' plays in Newfoundland outports. Subsequently they and some other Barrelman letters Moakler possessed were put in the M.U.N. Folklore and Language Archive.³⁶ The mummers' texts had been available to scholars before that time, and are referred to in Halpert and Story's 1969 Christmas Mumming in Newfoundland.³⁷

Particularly in the first year or two of the broadcast, the Barrelman exhorted his listeners at the end of many

³⁵ Most files are a single month, but a few contain parts of months, or several months. See Gail Weir, "Papers of the Barrelman Radio program, COLL-028," Centre for Newfoundland Studies Archive, March 1992, pp. 26-28.

³⁶ MUNFLA 82-246 (mummers' play texts), and 83-339 (songs).

³⁷ See Herbert Halpert and G. M. Story, "Newfoundland Mummers' Plays: Three Printed Texts," in their Christmas Mumming in Newfoundland (Toronto: U Toronto P, 1969), pp. 186-207. The texts used were not directly from the original letters; instead they were as published in the Newfoundlander monthly, December 1949 and January 1950.

programmes to send letters to his sponsor, both to provide him with the material for his shows and to assure the sponsor that people were listening:

Ladies and gentlemen, I'd be very grateful if you'd drop a line to F. M. O'Leary Ltd. telling them what you think of this program -- that is, if you like it. For goodness sake, don't write if you don't like it.³⁸

Once again, ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to say how thankful I am for all the encouraging letters you've sent me. This program would have ended weeks ago without the help from you. It's not only the letters that give material that can be used in the broadcast, but also the letters which are written in just to say what you think of it -- whether you like it and would like it to continue or not. A newspaper can tell by its own sales whether it's popular or not -- or just how popular it is with the public. The only way of telling whether a radio program -- any radio program -- is popular is by counting the number of letters that come in, and studying their content. If you want F. M. O'Leary Ltd. to continue sponsoring the program -- and that's the only way to keep it on the air -- do please drop a line or card to the Barrelman in care of F. M. O'Leary Ltd., who will send you a free sample of Palmolive and Pepsodent.³⁹

From time to time he would remind listeners that their letters should be addressed to the offices of the O'Leary company, and not to those of the radio station. He liked to point out that he was receiving many letters. Already in November 1937, before the programme had been regularly on the air more than a month, he thanked the "hundreds of

³⁸ Script, 28 October 1937.

³⁹ Script, 17 January 1938.

listeners" who had written.⁴⁰ In the extant collection of letters received by the Barrelman, only about a dozen and a half can be safely dated to before that date.⁴¹

In early 1940 it was decided that the show needed another voice to announce the advertising "plugs" and the introductory and closing tags. Leo Moakler has pointed out that it was in typical large style the person was hired: "he made it a carnival event."⁴² Rather than quietly hire someone they held public auditions on the air, with the contestants using assumed names.⁴³ Listeners voted on whom they liked best for two weeks by mail and cable. In the first few days, as he tabulated the votes, the Barrelman said only a few dozen ballots had come in each day. But his reported numbers rose quickly so that by the last day of counting over eleven thousand votes were said to have been cast. On the day after "Doris Day" was announced to be the winner, he claimed that a further four thousand votes had come in without upsetting the order of the candidates.⁴⁴ It seems very likely that the outcome of the "election" was

⁴⁰ Script, 4 November 1937.

⁴¹ See CNS COLL-028, 2.02.001.

⁴² Moakler, "The Barrelman," p. 25.

⁴³ The contest took place through the first half of January 1940, with the winning contestant announced on 15 January 1940.

⁴⁴ Doris Day was Miss Florence Mercer who stayed with the show for two or three years until she moved with her American serviceman husband to the United States. She was replaced as the Palmolive Girl by Lillian Snelgrove. Lillian (Snelgrove) Hutton, May 1994.

determined in advance and that the numbers were inflated for dramatic purposes.

In his 1970 interview with Carole Henderson Carpenter, Frank O'Leary, Jr., told how Smallwood determined what his audience was. Early in the show's history, he asked people to write simply to say that they were listening and, according to O'Leary's account, he received only "about fourteen letters." Using "a complicated mathematical formula" Smallwood deduced that 98% of the Newfoundland populace were listening to his show.⁴⁵

The pseudonym "The Barrelman" was used in print and on the air, but Smallwood was well-known enough that some letters came addressed to his own name, Mr. J. R. Smallwood. He liked in later years to cultivate a political persona of connection to his electorate, in part by using the name "Joey," but he was not widely known by that name in the 1930s. The mid-1960s authorised collection of adulatory essays called Just Call Me Joey reflected his later persona.⁴⁶ Mrs. Olive Dunn, a St. John's shopkeeper during the 1930s and '40s, and a friend of Smallwood's, said he was always known as "Mr. Smallwood," never as "Joe," and especially not as "Joey."⁴⁷ Similarly, Leo Moakler who

⁴⁵ Carpenter interview, MUNFLA tape C3914/78-57.

⁴⁶ James R. Thoms, ed., Just Call Me Joey (St. John's: Creative, 1968); reprinted and expanded as Call Me Joey (St. John's: Cuff, 1991).

⁴⁷ Interview, 15 November 1993.

worked closely with Smallwood from about 1935 until 1943, called him Mr. Smallwood unless he were being "deliberately colloquial," when he would call him "Joe."⁴⁸

Most of the letters he received, for instance, in 1937 were addressed to the Barrelman (or variations like Mr. Barrel Man). Those few addressed to Smallwood himself are interesting for what they tell about Smallwood's role in the lives of the people writing him.

One such letter, from a man who became a regular supporter of the Barrelman, sending him stories frequently, was written 12 October 1937 by T. G. Ford of Harbour Grace. Ford read the Daily News Masthead column regularly and listened to the broadcast. In his first letter to the Barrelman he contributed a story now lost, and inquired if it were Joseph R. Smallwood he was addressing, and if it were, then please return the photograph he had lent him sometime before for possible use in the Book of Newfoundland.⁴⁹ Leo Moakler spoke of Smallwood's propensity to hold on to property that the owners thought was merely lent to him. Photographs, papers, and especially books would be lent to him and "that would be the last that person would see of it."⁵⁰

Having lived for several years in Bonavista, Smallwood

⁴⁸ Carpenter interview, MUNFLA C3914/78-57.

⁴⁹ CNS COLL-028, 2.02.001.

⁵⁰ Carpenter interview, MUNFLA C3914/78-057.

was especially well-known in the area of that town and bay. In the winter of his first year on the air he received several letters from men asking for financial help in getting through the bad winter. One such letter was signed Albert R. Keel of Middle Cove, near Gambo, in Bonavista Bay. Written on the 28th of December 1937, it is a pitiful request for second-hand clothing, either for children or for adults, which Keel could put to use in clothing his family that winter.⁵¹ Another was from Mrs. Sarah Brown of Trinity, Bonavista Bay, dated 30 September 1937, reporting that all she owned had been lost in a fire and she would like to receive "clothing or anything." In a letter from Bonavista dated 24 January 1938, Hezekiah Keel congratulated Smallwood on getting "a great job." Then, pointing out that "it is far worst than ever & times are very Bad around here," he asks for Smallwood's help in getting jobs for his two sons, suggesting that Grand Falls (where a large paper mill operated) and the Newfoundland Airport (at Gander) might be good places to try. In particular he thinks Smallwood might be useful in getting his sons a berth on a sealing ship later in the winter. "As you know this [h]as been four Bad summers [fishing] & this was the worst of all."⁵²

Such letters were common that winter of early 1938.

⁵¹ CNS COLL-028, 2.02.001.

⁵² File 2.02.002, January 1938, item 12.

Similar ones were received from two men in Renewals,⁵³ a man in Elliston,⁵⁴ and another in Catalina,⁵⁵ among others.

Not every begging letter from his old acquaintances was tragic. In a letter dated 13 February 1939 from Bonavista is the following which makes a joke about Smallwood's speaking style on air, apparently different from his personal style known to the writer. Leo Moakler wrote that Smallwood's radio delivery style was "the declamatory" and perhaps it is this same tone that the writer finds distracting.⁵⁶

Dear Mr. Smallwood,

You will be surprised to hear from me and I haven't much time to write now as the train is just about going and I want to catch the mail.

I'll have a few items of interest to send you later on for your broadcast hour. You can select what's good and the rest throw in the waste paper basket.

My wife and I enjoy your nightly broadcast. I have a powerful receiving set and can get you almost when you are not broadcasting and that's going some.

I have been laid up for the past 3 weeks with my old leg. Was out in a snowstorm so I'm now paying the piper.

My object in dropping this short note is to ask if you have any old magazines laying around -- if so would you be so kind as to ship me a few express or mail collect -- even though they are 6 months old or even older they would be appreciated as while I'm in the house time hangs heavy on my hands. I've quite a collection of books but they

⁵³ Patrick Pittman, Jr., and Vincent Johnson, 5 February 1938; file 2.02.003, item 8.

⁵⁴ Samuel White, 7 February 1938; file 2.02.003, item 10.

⁵⁵ Baxter King, 9 February 1938; file 2.02.003, item 12.

⁵⁶ Moakler, "The Barrelman," in Call Me Joey, pp. 20, 22.

are old and have been read a dozen times. I do not want books. But if you have an hour or 10 minutes to spare at any time and old magazines in your way then I'd be your uncle for ever and a day if you'd send them to me collect. Thank you a thousand times. My wife is continually improving and hopes soon to be completely recovered. She says to tell you she enjoys listening in to your broadcast because your voice sounds like a preacher's. But I don't like preachers of any kind or description and would rather your voice sounded like I believe it really does -- ie., like that of J. R. himself.

Cheerio and please forgive me for mentioning the old magazines -- but I'd like to get them whether you forgive or not.

Yours at last,
respectfully,
Hubert J. Fisher.⁵⁷

For the most part begging letters seem to have been ignored by the Barrelman, at least on the air, but the fact that they repeatedly came in may have been because at least once he did not ignore such a plea. At the beginning of the sealing season in March 1938 he invited into the studio Edward Dinn, who had walked from Renews to St. John's looking for a berth on one of the sealing ships.⁵⁸ The following evening the Barrelman was pleased to report that Dinn had found one aboard the Imogene. Clearly his audience saw a connection which some tried to repeat for themselves. The fact was that the Barrelman (and his alter-ego "Staff Reporter" on the Daily News) regularly wrote of men who walked from their home communities to St. John's on speculation of getting a sealing berth at the Harbour. In

⁵⁷ File 2.02.018, February 1939.

⁵⁸ Script, 3 March 1938.

early November 1937 he had told, for example, the story of Robert LeDrew of Roche's Line who walked with his kit bag on his shoulder the sixty miles to St. John's for such a purpose.⁵⁹

As often as he was able, the Barrelman gave the names of his correspondents, and it was with some apparent glee that he read on radio or wrote in his column the names of correspondents who were well-known and prestigious people, like former politicians, members of merchant families, famous sea captains, and relatives of such people. In this last category are letters from Kenneth Whiteway, son of former Prime Minister William V. Whiteway,⁶⁰ Captain Robert "Bob" Bartlett,⁶¹ Arthur English, retired geologist,⁶² Cyril Parkins, local manufacturer and radio station owner,⁶³ Ern Maunder, craftsman and artist,⁶⁴ and Diamond Jenness, the

⁵⁹ "Masthead," 6 November 1937. See also the story, Daily News 23 February 1938, p. 3.

⁶⁰ Kenneth Whiteway wrote a letter and asked to remain anonymous. When he used the anonymous letter the Barrelman spoke so forcefully of how important and well-known a man the writer was, two days later Whiteway consented to the use of his name; "Masthead," 20 and 22 June 1938.

⁶¹ "Masthead," 13 September 1937.

⁶² "Masthead," 1 November 1937, and 5 January 1938.

⁶³ "Masthead," 20 September 1937. Parkins operated, for a short time, VOKW in the early 1930s. In 1993 his widow gave to MUNFLA his collection of disks marked with airing dates on VOKW.

⁶⁴ "Masthead," 5 November 1937 and 2 March 1938.

Canadian anthropologist.⁶⁵ He also had regular correspondents, whom he unfailingly named and thanked. Two early correspondents were T. G. Ford of Harbour Grace, who contributed several accounts of life and work on the Newfoundland Railway⁶⁶; and W. D. Dooley of Boston, who sent in many stories about the lives and careers of Newfoundland newspapermen, and Newfoundlanders who had lived in Boston.⁶⁷

His contributors were sometimes illiterate, dictating their contribution, or nearly illiterate, writing in unpractised hand and non-standard script. But most of his contributors were quite literate, with practiced, even fine hands, and in many cases sending him typewritten letters some of which sported the printed letterhead of their offices and companies. The Barreelman was not tapping a homogenous tradition of illiterate and isolated Newfoundland outporters; instead he received submissions from all walks of Newfoundland life, including the less educated, but perhaps especially from the literate and educated segments who were comfortable with writing.

⁶⁵ "Masthead," 9 December 1937. Jenness wrote to thank one of the Barreelman's correspondents who had sent him information about Inuit burial grounds near Cape Chidley. The information had been included in an earlier "Masthead" column.

⁶⁶ "Masthead," 2 and 30 November 1937, 2 December 1937, and 20 April 1938. An entire column, 22 February 1938, was devoted to the anecdotes of T. G. Ford, and on 27 April 1938 Ford wrote a letter to the Daily News Editor praising the Barreelman.

⁶⁷ "Masthead," 17 and 25 August, 13 September, 16 October, 17 and 22 November, and 13 December 1937.

Among the Barreلمان's contributors were people who became folklorists' informants years later. They were forthcoming people in the sense that they were active participants in their traditions, people who were not only aware of their folkloric traditions, but who also desired to promulgate them and make them more prestigious. They had an initiative regarding their traditions, shown by their taking the time to write to the Barreلمان, or otherwise pass information on to him.

MacPherson Eveleigh still today takes an active interest in the folklore not only of his community (Newstead, Notre Dame Bay), but of Newfoundland as a whole. In 1990, for example, after seeing a piece I had written in a newspaper, he wrote me with information about fairy lore in Newstead. He went on to become an informant of Barbara Rieti for her book on Newfoundland fairy lore.⁶⁸ More recently in 1993 and 1994, he has contributed letters to the newspapers on topics like the uses of the word, "Newfie."⁶⁹ More than fifty years earlier, in 1938, he had written the Barreلمان with stories about the history of Newstead, specifically mentioning the same Fairy Ground Tree he wrote

⁶⁸ Strange Terrain: The Fairy World in Newfoundland (St. John's: ISER, MUN, 1991), pp. 60, 73.

⁶⁹ See his letter, "Servicemen Dubbed Islanders Newfies", Evening Telegram, 3 April 1994, p. 5. He contributed a letter about the history of Newstead to The Downhomer 7:2 (July 1994). p. 14.

me about in 1990.⁷⁰

Barnabas "Barney" Moss was already a regular contributor to the Barrelman when in 1939 he sent the fragmentary words of a mummers' play (he called it a mummering lesson") from his childhood in Salvage, Bonavista Bay.⁷¹ Moss's text was published in the January 1950 issue of The Newfoundlander, and as a result of this publication of his text, he was contacted and interviewed in the early 1960s by folklorist John Widdowson.⁷²

The list of regular contributors to the Barrelman would be a long one. In common were their ability and willingness to select information for him, and to present it in a way congruent with his needs. Not all were strangers to Smallwood: some were people who already knew him either through his or their own public lives. Edmund J. Wornell was one such contributor. Some fifteen years older than Smallwood, Wornell first met him through their mutual memberships in the Loyal Orange Association.⁷³ Wornell was

⁷⁰ Script, 28 February 1938.

⁷¹ Script, 23 January 1939. The words of the "lesson" as read on the programme that evening do not exactly correspond to the later "Salvage text" (from Moss) used in Halpert and Story, Christmas Mumming, pp. 202-207.

⁷² Halpert and Story, "Newfoundland Mummers' Plays," p, 202. Barney Moss was interviewed by Widdowson in the mid-1960s and again in the early 1970s; MUNFLA 65-1, 65-2, 65-14, 65-17, and 73-87.

⁷³ Information about E. J. Wornell is from an interview, 1 June 1994, with his son, Abel C. Wornell, also a contributor to the Barrelman, and later a political ally of Smallwood. A. C. Wornell became one of Smallwood's "101 vice-presidents" of the Confederate Party in 1948, and from 1966 until 1971 sat in the House of Assembly as the

from Greenspond in Bonavista Bay, and by the 1930s lived regularly in St. John's. Both Wornell and Smallwood had been Justices of the Peace, and Wornell spent two decades travelling each year to the Labrador Coast as Stipendiary Magistrate. A poet himself, his first contribution to the Barrelman was a patriotic poem written by his son Abel; Smallwood read it and declared the author to be "a real poet."⁷⁴ Both Wornells became occasional contributors to the show. Neither father nor son Wornell was a passive conduit of cultural information. As poets both were conscious creators of culture. In May 1994 Abel Wornell, now in his late seventies, contributed a tape-recording of his reading a poem about a Twenty-Fourth of May fishing trip in the 1930s to CBC radio, showing his continued outgoing nature with regard to his creations.⁷⁵ As contributors to a radio programme, both men were conscious selectors, amplifiers, and disseminators both of their own creations and of those things which by observing and recording for the Barrelman, they crystallised in a form of their own making.

Every person who contributed to the Barrelman had his

Liberal member for Fortune district.

⁷⁴ A. C. Wornell included it as the first poem in his book, Rhymes of a Newfoundlander (St. John's: Guardian, 1958); it is entitled "To Newfoundland." Smallwood makes reference to E. J. Wornell in his "Masthead" column of 25 November 1937, in telling a story of Wornell's having invented a kind of telephone made of tin cans and taut string.

⁷⁵ His tape was played on the CBN Morning Show, St. John's, 20 May 1994, the day before the "24th" long weekend. It was as a result of that broadcast that I contacted him.

or her own reason for doing so. No doubt some, like the younger Wornell, were partly motivated by their literary aspirations. No doubt others like Thomas Noseworthy of Markland, Alf Hoffe of Change Islands, and Genevieve Dolan of the Codroy Valley were motivated by a desire to have history record what they knew was otherwise unrecorded. Each of these people played a role in their communities as mouthpieces with regard to local history. It is not known to what extent this role predated their associations with the Barrelman, or was ascribed as a result of having their cultural products read on the air, but it is clear that the fact is often remembered in families and communities. Leander Peach of Heart's Delight is remembered by his family as a contributor to the Barrelman and that fact is recorded in an essay written by his grandson fifty years later.⁷⁶ In early 1994 the MUN Folklore and Language Archive received a set of clippings put together by Pastor Burton Janes.⁷⁷ They were writings of his father Eric Janes, and included a copy of a letter he had sent to the Barrelman in 1943. It told the story of prayer opening a channel in ice; attached to it was the statement that it had been used on the Barrelman

⁷⁶ MUNFLA ms 94-013 is an essay by Leander Peach's grandson, Jason Simms. I am indebted to Neil Rosenberg for drawing this essay to my attention.

⁷⁷ MUNFLA ms 94-262.

28 April 1943.⁷⁸ Not simply remembered by the family, the fact has been used to give greater value to one of the pieces of writing by their father.

Folklorists have tried to categorise their human sources, partly with an effort to help new fieldworkers decide early in their work which people may be helpful to their project and which may not. Thus Kenneth Goldstein developed von Sydow's distinction between active and passive bearers of traditions into a distinction between attitudes held by individuals to items of their repertoire.⁷⁹ Goldstein notes that a reductive form of the distinction divides the folk into the haves and have-nots of folklore; his own distinction lies in the current and changing status of items in the personal repertoires of individual informants. Nonetheless this leads him away from the fieldworker's useful distinction between people who will help and those who will not or cannot. For Goldstein both these categories of people can be helpful to the researcher;

⁷⁸ In fact this date is incorrect; the story is not included in the script dated 28 April 1943. No doubt the story was aired, but likely human memory of the event has changed the date. Providential breaking of ice is a common motif in Newfoundland local legends. Notice the similarity to part of Smallwood's story of his own grandfather in Greenspond; on the day he ran out of food after unselfishly serving the needs of the entire community, saying that God would provide, the ice mysteriously opened up and allowed delivery of more food.

⁷⁹ Kenneth S. Goldstein, "On the Application of the Concepts of Active and Inactive Traditions to the Study of Repertory," in Américo Paredes and Richard Bauman, eds., Toward New Perspectives in Folklore (Austin: U Texas P for the American Folklore Society, 1972), pp. 62-67; originally JAF 84 (1971), 62-67. Goldstein is drawing on C. W. von Sydow, "On the Spread of Tradition," in Laurits Bødker, ed., Selected Papers on Folklore (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1948), pp. 11-43.

the researcher's approach must differ because of their contrasting contexts of normal, traditional expression.

An attempt to get at the differing contexts of performance and transmission has been that derived from Edward D. Ives's distinction between public and private traditions.⁸⁰ By this scheme some people traditionally are performers in public assemblies, others in more intimate, private groups. Applied here to the situation of what is represented by the material sent to the Barrelman, a weakness may be that those contributors who consented to have their names used might be considered active or public performers, while those who preferred to be anonymous might be seen as passive or private bearers. The individual and private act of writing to a radio performer whom you have never met, but who is palpably contactable by that simple act of sending a letter, is at once private and public. Such an informant wants to share his or her knowledge, and thus bask in some of the light of having contributed in a direct way to a most public of modern media. But by writing, and not publically performing what they know, they are remaining at a distance from the performance, deliberately remaining private.

All of the Barrelman's informants were active bearers

⁸⁰ Edward D. Ives, "Lumbercamp Singing and the Two Traditions," Canadian Folk Music Journal 5 (1977), 17-23. On the development of this idea, and an application of it to French Newfoundland tale telling, see Gerald Thomas, The Two Traditions, pp. 41-54.

of tradition by the clearest definition -- in the public context of a radio programme they contributed what they knew of selected traditions. By their anonymity, or their request for it, some informants showed a different attitude, if not to the material they transmitted, then to the medium of transmission. But they were all informants, for better or for worse, and the best of them actively contributed a great deal to the show.

The problem of "good informants" does not always arise in other kinds of cultural fieldwork: oral historians look for people who took part in events; anthropologists often "observe" all members of a group. Michael Agar suggests that there is a peculiar species of insider in the form of those people who first approach and aid the ethnographer.⁸¹ He calls them "stranger-handlers" and notes they are indeed deviant from their peers. It is often they who make the first moves in contacting the ethnographer once he appears on the scene. Beyond that category, Agar suggests no other: the ethnographer should simply look for articulate people with good recall. Another anthropologist has suggested that a "well-informed informant" is what is needed in the field.⁸²

The Barreelman's sources were "well-informed informants"

⁸¹ Michael H. Agar, The Professional Stranger: An Informal Introduction to Ethnography (New York: Academic P, 1980), pp. 84-89.

⁸² Kurt W. Back, "The Well-Informed Informant," Human Organization 14 (1956), 30-33.

with the self-confidence that they could be of use to the collector, or as Agar would say, the "stranger." Like Agar's first contacts, the Barrelman's contributors made the first moves -- in their case by writing or otherwise contacting him. Despite his connections to political and economic power in Newfoundland, and unlike Agar's stranger, the Barrelman was not an extreme outsider. As Paine points out, "Smallwood ... had little trouble with the stigmatic label 'stranger'" partly as a result of his oral style and "educated outport" accent.⁸³ In his Barrelman role Smallwood was carving out a niche that was more "inside" than any other. By sending information about Newfoundland, in particular about their own part of it, to the Barrelman, contributors were acting the same way they might in telling a cousin or a niece a family story: the audience was part of the family. Thus we find a complex set of "insider-outsider" and "public-private" factors, no one of which fully characterises the Barrelman contributors.

In their handbook for organisers of folk festivals in the United States, Wilson and Udall suggest there are two main kinds of performers who put themselves forward as "folk performers": those raised in the culture, and those who

⁸³ Robert Paine, "The Persuasiveness of Smallwood: Rhetoric of *cuffer* and *Scoff*, of Metonym and Metaphor," *NS* 1:1 (1985), p. 63. On Smallwood's accent, Paine is quoting William J. Kirwin; note 6, p. 74.

adopt the culture elements of which they perform.⁸⁴ They further divide each of these categories into three more, based on performers' levels of creativity and attunedness to wider ("higher") aesthetic considerations.⁸⁵ Most of the Barreلمان's informants were people of the first category, telling him about aspects of a culture in which they were born. However, it was not always so. Genevieve Dolan, one of Smallwood's favourite reporters of legends and anecdotes, was born in Ireland, moving to Newfoundland only about seven years before she began supplying him with material from her new home in the Codroy Valley, reporting it with care and accuracy.⁸⁶ Although she knew she had some relatives in Newfoundland, she did not know them, and she falls into Wilson and Udall's second category, having "adopted" the culture of the Codroy Valley. Reading her manuscript letters one gets a certain sense that she had by that time become fully an "insider" in her community, writing intimate little vignettes of real local people and their ancestors, in a style that retained its oral character.

Whatever their reasons and their roles in the

⁸⁴ Joe Wilson and Lee Udall, Folk Festivals: A Handbook for Organization and Management (Knoxville: U Tennessee P, 1982), pp. 18-23.

⁸⁵ Wilson and Udall do not use the term "higher" culture. They use other periphrastic terms. In their discussion of the "evolved traditional performer" they refer to the fact that "the aesthetic and materials of the dominant culture have largely supplanted those of the [folk] group" (p. 21).

⁸⁶ See her undated letter in CNS COLL-028, file 2.01.001.

communities from which they sent information, Smallwood had a wide range of articulate contributors in his correspondents. Although he cast his net widely, telling his audience that they should send him stories with no regard for spelling, punctuation, and "good English," in fact he encouraged those with a flair for descriptive storytelling whom he praised with effusion. Genevieve Dolan was one of these. He read her stories on air (and had them printed in The Newfoundlander) often with complimentary introductions. She continued sending him letters even though she did not get every issue of the newspaper, and only rarely heard the programme due to poor reception in her area.⁸⁷

The Barrelman acquired his material from a mixture of documentary, contributed, and observed sources. The documentary sources included old newspapers, archival documents and collections, and books in a variety of libraries around the city. The contributions came mainly in the form of letters, but included phonecalls, telegrams, and personal visits to his office. And he observed daily the goings-on around him, recalling his own experiences, and those that had been recounted to him by others during his own life. The majority of his items were reliant on living memory, that of his listener/contributors and of himself.

⁸⁷ She complained about these failings from time to time in her letters; file 2.01.001.

With that living memory material, traditional in many respects, he mixed the literary memory of the country. That entire lot was thus transformed into a rich mixture of traditional and traditionalised history, a mix that was popular in both senses of the word -- widely enjoyed, and reworked for transmission in a popular medium.

Smallwood's informants were active participants in his process of gathering information: they contacted him; they mailed and phoned him, or stopped him in the street. His programme struck a pleasant chord in the ears of many listeners who either were already interested in their country's historical and cultural traditions, or became so through listening and participating in the show. Thus he built on and built up an audience for the show, serving its cultural, political and commercial purposes all the better.

Chapter Five
The Structure, Texture, and Composition
of the Barrelman Performances

As Martin Joos pointed out with regard to language, except in its the most frozen forms, performance is by its nature variable.¹ Part of what we perceive as the tone or style of an individual performer comes from the structure of what is performed, and part of it from its texture. Every performance, no matter its medium or its cultural "level,"² varies from another performance by its texture. It is in the composition of the performance that decisions towards these styles are made by the creator or performer, some decisions being deliberate and purposeful, some less so. These decisions control what William Bascom called the "verbal art" of performance.³

We have very few aural artifacts, sound recordings, of Joe Smallwood's Barrelman, but almost every one of his scripts is extant. As such they are almost the only artifacts of his performance. By investigating the Barrelman's written scripts, aspects of the verbal art of

¹ Martin Joos, The Five Clocks (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1967). Joos's "clocks" are styles of speech, from the most intimate to the most frozen like certain prayers.

² There is no superordinate term for the levels commonly referred to as "folk", "popular", and "elite" culture.

³ William R. Bascom, "Verbal Art," JAF 68 (1955), 242-252.

his performance can be seen. In this chapter I explore those aspects.

Structure of texts and performance has been examined by several different folklorists from quite different directions. Vladímir Propp brought together a body of material and showed the super-organic, or supra-textual patterns that ran through them.⁴ Much updating of this work has continued through the almost three decades since its revised publication in English, culminating in the eclectic but grounded work of Bengt Holbek.⁵ Likewise, David Buchan's analyses of the structures in ballads and the patterning of roles of actors within them, are part of the post-Proppian examination of texts.⁶ Influenced by Propp, but studying a very different body of material, Alan Dundes went a different direction with more abstracted structural units and less attention to the roles within them.⁷

All of these are textual studies with attention to the narrative elements of individual texts. None investigates the relationships among texts in performance contexts.

⁴ Vladímir Propp, Morphology of the Folktale, 2nd ed. (Austin: U Texas P, 1968).

⁵ Bengt Holbek, Interpretation of Fairy Tales: Danish Folklore in a European Perspective (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1987).

⁶ David Buchan, The Ballad and The Folk (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972).

⁷ Alan Dundes, "Structural Typology in North American Indian Folktales," Southwestern Journal of Anthropology 19 (1963), 121-130; rpt. in Alan Dundes, ed. The Study of Folklore (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1965), pp. 206-215).

My study of the structure of the Barrelman scripts investigates the patterns within the texts that make up the scripts. I also look at the patterns formed by the texts themselves in relation to each other, and in the context of the stated themes of the Barrelman and the cultural interests of Joe Smallwood. Rather than develop a typology of themes, motifs and patterns, I suggest in a straightforward deconstruction the dominant models present. These show compositional patterns that allowed Smallwood to produce and assemble the huge task of writing fifteen to twenty thousand words a week for several years.

Composition

In writing a script for each Barrelman programme, Smallwood sometimes appeared to those around him to compose it in just a matter of a few minutes. In an interview with Carole Henderson Carpenter, Smallwood's secretary Leo Moakler and F. M. O'Leary's son Frank O'Leary, Jr. discussed this:

LM: It used to amaze me, yeah, how he did it. He'd get at that typewriter and without stopping or thinking he'd just be punching away until he had his 3000 words finished, and he'd fold it up, put it in his pocket and go and read it over the air.

FMO: It took him fifteen minutes to read it and it probably took him half an hour to write it.

LM: Yes, sometimes, about a half an hour. He used to time himself sometimes.⁸

⁸ Interview by Carole Henderson Carpenter with Frank O'Leary, Jr., and Leo Moakler, 18 March 1970, St. John's; MUNFLA tape C3915/78-57. Aubrey MacDonald similarly: "I remember him having nothing written for

Smallwood may have been that rare kind of writer, able to allow a script to steep in his mind and then, in one rapid pour, also able to produce it as a full cup, a final copy without drafts. It is clear from an examination of the scripts themselves that a number of structural elements allowed him to envisage programmes as syntagmatic complexes, into the elements of which individual items could be plugged. The elements of construction in part consisted of narrative themes, motifs, formulas, sound punctuation, advertising spots (or "plugs"), invocations to listeners to contribute to the programme, and other useful building blocks.

A radio programme is tied to the clock; it must begin and end at exactly the right time, give or take only a few seconds. Some kind of variable-length buffer is usually required to make the show fit those timings. Some radio programmes use a musical theme for this purpose; it can be extended or curtailed as needs demand. The Barrelman programme had no such theme music, but it did have a variable-length unit at the end of each show in the expressions of thanks to correspondents and the calls for new letters without which, the Barrelman would say, his show could not survive.

his programme twenty minutes before air time, but he'd peck away furiously on his broken-down typewriter and be on the air at the appointed time. Incredible!" ("My Portrait of Joey," in Thoms, Call Me Joey, p. 30.)

Smallwood would likely approach the construction of a script with such a combination of deliberate, conscious elements, and other somewhat less conscious, implicit ones. The need for a buffer near the end of each programme and the need for breaks for his plugs were both probably very clear in his mind. But the use of certain formulas, like those discussed below, may not have been so consciously foregrounded.

Structure of Two Scripts

In the script for Thursday 23 December 1937, the Barrelman used most of the techniques referred to above.⁹

After his opening formula of "Ladies and gentlemen -- good evening," he began the first item, a long one (about 1000 words). It was taken from a letter from a listener, Mr. S. Loder, in Thoroughfare, Trinity Bay. His introduction to the item grounds it in the everyday and the local by describing Mr. Loder as a schoolteacher, out of the ordinary only for having taught in the same school for 30 years. This, he says, is "a record that is unique in the whole teaching profession of this country."¹⁰ In one stroke he is thus able to make exceptional the life of a man who is -- by virtue of being a local scion in one of many local communities -- otherwise unexceptional.

⁹ Script, file 1.01.003, pp. 202-204.

¹⁰ Script, p. 202, lines 5-6.

Two methods are being used here to make the mundane heroic. One is the sheer fact of talking about Mr. Loder on the radio, a medium of prestige, a medium that is ordinarily used to talk about the un-ordinary -- kings, generals, politicians, and the like. Mr. Loder, by virtue of being talked about on radio, is put in that same company. The second method is pointing out how Mr. Loder's life varies from what one might expect of a teacher in a Newfoundland outport: he is, by virtue of apparently having taught longer than anyone else in a single school, a leader among outport teachers.

He continues with the introduction to Mr. Loder's story underlining that its events are "thoroughly commonplace in this country of ours."

And to my mind that is what makes it so very much worth telling. In other words, the real story is the one behind this story -- namely, the fact that such occurrences as I'm about to describe are, in fact, so tragically common in Newfoundland history, both past as well as present. It's not at all unlikely that when you pick up your papers tomorrow morning, or listen to the Gerald S. Doyle news bulletin tomorrow night, you will hear or read an item of news exactly the same character as this one.¹¹

Telling stories of bravery and tragedy on the radio is a process of making heroes and myths. Smallwood explicitly

¹¹ Ibid, lines 19-25. On the Gerald S. Doyle News Bulletin, see Philip Hiscock, "Folk Programming versus Elite Information: The Doyle Bulletin and the Public Despatch," Culture & Tradition 12 (1988), 41-59; a slightly different version (entitled "The Public Despatch and the Doyle Bulletin: Two early Newfoundland News Services") is in Richard Lohead, ed., Beyond the Printed Word: The Evolution of Canada's Broadcast News Heritage (Kingston: Quarry Press, 1987), pp. 115-122.

pointed out this deliberate function of the programme, one in which he might be said to be developing a cultural charter.¹²

When Malinowski wrote that the myths of a people are a charter for their lives, he was referring to the sacred stories of past eras, not the kind of patterned historical legend that the Barreلمان presented.¹³ Malinowski distinguished myths from, among other kinds of tale, legends and historical accounts. Of the latter group, he wrote:

They all refer to subjects intensely stimulating to the natives; they are all connected with activities such as economic pursuits, warfare, adventure, success in dancing and in ceremonial exchange. Moreover, since they record singularly great achievements in all such pursuits, they redound to the credit of some individual and his descendants or of a whole community; and hence they are kept alive by the ambition of those whose ancestry they glorify.¹⁴

This is precisely the intent of the Barreلمان. In his autobiography Smallwood wrote that the Barreلمان programme was "intended to inspire [Newfoundlanders] with faith in their country and in themselves, and to destroy what I continually denounced as our inferiority complex."¹⁵ The lives and exploits of the characters were made larger than

¹² Smallwood talked about this function in his interview with Peter Narváez, MUNFLA tape C5844/82-185.

¹³ Bronislaw Malinowski, "Myth in Primitive Psychology," originally 1926, rpt. in Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1954), pp. 93-148.

¹⁴ Malinowski, "Myth in Primitive Psychology," p. 106.

¹⁵ I Chose Canada, p. 206.

life, or than life seemed to be, by the telling on a privileged and privileging medium.¹⁶ Ironically by playing down the uniqueness of Loder's story, the Barrelman performs an important function, a tactic in his strategy of eradicating "the cursed inferiority complex" of Newfoundlanders.¹⁷ By this means he intends to have his audience imbue their own lives with a kind of mythic strength, based on the congruency of their lives with those of the people he told of. Or to put this more plainly, other outport people might hear the story Mr. Loder tells, and think more proudly of similar stories from their own community.

He tells Loder's story of four brothers thrown into icy waters by a seal reviving in their boat in 1875. Two of the brothers died as a result of the incident. The survivors were picked up by two men, both of whom are not only named but also familiarised to the audience by means of personal information, in one case about a family member:

One of them [the men who saved them] was Thomas Hodder, father of Mr. J. G. Hodder, former deputy minister of Posts & Telegraphs, and the other was Richard Bailey, an old fisherman of St. John's who died only ten years

¹⁶ Here I use "privilege" as a transitive verb, a comparatively rare usage outside law until recent "post-modern" writers found it a useful term to highlight the normally tacit unbalances in culture. See for example the Stephen A. Tyler's uses of the term in his essay "Post-Modern Ethnography: From Document of the Occult to Occult Document," in James Clifford and George Marcus, Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography (Berkeley: U California P, 1986), pp. 122-140.

¹⁷ On the "curse" of Newfoundlanders' "inferiority complex" see for example "Masthead," 20 January 1938.

ago.¹⁸

The item ends with a reference to the fact that the Newfoundland Museum had had a framed photograph displayed of Silas Loder, the four boys' father, as "the typical Newfoundland fisherman." This fact underscores the legitimacy of the implicit mythologisation of the Loder family, but it also serves a separate, topically political purpose of Smallwood: that of questioning the recent (1934) destruction of the Newfoundland Museum.

A large framed photograph of Silas Loder hung for years on the wall of the Newfoundland Museum until it was scattered to the four winds two or three years ago. And while we're at it, isn't there some way of finding out whether that photograph of John [sic] Loder is still in existence and in safety, so that it may be rescued from its present obscurity and restored to the position of honor it so worthily deserves?¹⁹

The scripts of the Barreلمان appear palimpsest-like today, with layers of corrections and changes. In this item we see some changes which reflect later uses of the story. For instance, the sentence beginning "It's not at all unlikely..." making reference to radio news and the daily papers, has been crossed out, presumably for use in the Barreلمان (or later the Newfoundlander) newspaper copy. Such topical references as these seem systematically to have been removed for that purpose. Near the end of the item the two sentences with overt political content about the Museum

¹⁸ Lines 56-58.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 203, lines 8-14.

have also been struck for the newspaper. These changes likely reflected the editorial difference between Smallwood and Moakler, who was responsible for the monthly newspaper, reflecting especially a preference on Moakler's part not to mention the name of the commercial competitor, Gerald Doyle.

Frank O'Leary, Jr. told Carole Henderson Carpenter in 1970 that a clear distinction was made by his father between the newspaper, which clearly was his, and the name "Barrelman" which was Smallwood's. Smallwood had started both the Daily News column, and even the radio show, without O'Leary's sponsorship, and O'Leary recognised this. In order to keep the entities separate they changed the name of their monthly paper from The Barrelman to The Newfoundlander early in its lifetime.²⁰

Moakler was a direct employee of O'Leary, and remained so until his retirement in the 1970s. His editorial decisions would have been guided by O'Leary's business needs. Again quoting from Carole Henderson Carpenter's 1970 interview with Frank O'Leary, Jr., and Leo Moakler:

FMO: Now it happened to have a commercial benefit. Over the years, that was the point of the thing. But that doesn't lessen the value.

LM: There's nothing like the monetary incentive to get anything out, for that matter, is there? that's how it all started. It all started with the monetary incentive.

FMO: Well, of course if you didn't have it, nobody

²⁰ O'Leary suggests it was only a matter of a few months, but in fact the newspaper was called The Barrelman for almost three years. It was published as The Newfoundlander from early 1941 until it folded, with the programme, in late 1955.

would've been able to hire Smallwood to do this, and Mike Harrington, and [to LM] yourself, all through the years, to do it, other than it had some commercial value.²¹

Because of the programme's "commercial value," political and commercial controversy were clearly things which O'Leary and Moakler would have preferred to avoid.

The second item in the 23 December 1937 script was about 110 words, about 30 to 40 seconds, "plugging" a special Christmas gift package of Gillette's Blue Blades. Smallwood told Peter Narváez that he neither wrote nor read the advertising plugs.²² There is no evidence that he wrote them, but it is clear from the few extant recordings that he did, at least sometimes, read them.²³

Following the plug, the Barrelman reads a story he "was told today," a phrase indicating oral transmission, especially since he mentions no letter. He says it is "as good an example of nerve and gall as I've heard for quite a time."²⁴ The story is of a young man who got a job more by bluff than by qualification, and who retained it "more

²¹ MUNFLA tape C3915/78-57.

²² MUNFLA tape C5844/82-185.

²³ See for example MUNFLA 79-007, NAC-CBN collection, tape 132D, an undated programme from 1939 in which the Barrelman reads advertising copy for Buckley's Mixture. The copy seems to have been written for a Canadian market and amended, perhaps by himself as he read it, to include Newfoundland: "It's easy to see why Buckley's Mixture is Canada's number one selling, and Newfoundland's too, number one selling cough mixture."

²⁴ Script, p. 203, lines 26-27.

securely" than most others because of his personality, "general intelligence and other qualifications" [lines 41, 49-50]. The ending of the story has been crossed out and updated for use in the Barrelman newspaper; a handwritten note reads: "This was 2 years ago. A few months ago he was promoted to the directorship of the firm."

Practical jokes, bold frauds, bluffs and tall tales ("lies") all have in common the necessity to have someone believe that which is untrue. All of these forms and motifs were stock in trade for the Barrelman in his Daily News column and on the radio. This particular story, a kind of contemporary legend, fits his genre perfectly, especially as the "liar" is shown in the end to be not only acceptable, but exemplary. In the job-poor environment of St. John's before the second world war, this exemplum is a metaphor for Smallwood's cultural programme for Newfoundland -- of raising its confidence and promoting success. What the unnamed and perhaps apochryphal poseur did in a Water Street business, the Barrelman would have Newfoundland do on a larger stage.

The Barrelman had a stock of formulas which indicated his attitude to what he was reading, established his "sound" or "voice," and which helped his audience follow his arguments to their conclusions. The next item is introduced with such a three word formula. With no source given, it seems to indicate it is a joke: "Here's one about...." The

story is about 200 words, or about two minutes long when read in a leisurely, narrative fashion. It tells many details of the "truck system" relationship between a fisherman and a merchant. A fisherman reneges on his promise to deliver his fish at the end of a season to the merchant who had fitted him out in the spring. In return the merchant threatens to seize all the fisherman's goods, including his bed. Its punchline hinges on the different value of a man's bed to someone who buys it complete and to someone who makes his own, including the mattress stuffed with hay. The fisherman merely says, "Begar,... I'll have to go out and mow another one."

The most obvious meaning of the story, and the "first" humour of it, lies in the dialect form of the fisherman's smart response. His apparently natural, quick wit left the merchant at a loss for an answer, putting him "in his place."²⁵ A subtextual meaning of the story is that Newfoundland fishermen are free to sell their fish anywhere if they decide to stand up for their own rights. Smallwood was based in Bonavista for four years in the early 1930s organising fishermen to do just this. It is likely he heard the story, or indeed invented it as an exemplum, during that time. It is one which fits well his strategy (overcoming

²⁵ An alternative reading is that the fisherman is too "stunned" to realise the trouble he has gotten himself into. I have no idea what Smallwood's reading was -- this is one of the cases when a sound recording would be helpful.

Newfoundland's "inferiority complex") and his radio personality traits (in this case one which approves of a weak fisherman getting one over a merchant).

Throughout his political career, Smallwood used as a rhetorical and political device the common image of Newfoundland's fish merchants as conservative forces in the Newfoundland economy. This story served his political purposes, but it may have served his sponsor's purposes, too. Frank O'Leary, an aggressive and successful businessman, was not involved in the fish business at the time, but two years later he used the charitable Fish Appeal, discussed below, to gain an entry into it. A suggestion that fishermen might trade with whomever they pleased would suit an upstart merchant hoping to break into the tight fish market.

The final item in the script on that night is a story introduced with "I'm told that over in Bay Roberts some years ago an old fellow had a pig...", a formula (the first three words) which at once gives a news-like tone, and gives distance, by anonymous attribution. The story is a tall tale -- the old man's pig was poorly cared for while he was away and when he returned and slaughtered it, it was so thin he had to send out to the store for fatback pork to fry up some of the fresh pork. In this we see Smallwood introducing an item probably of oral currency as if it were a piece of news. Contemporary legend scholars have shown

this to happen over and over again with that genre.

Another typical programme is that of Monday 14 March 1938. Like every show, it began with "Ladies and gentlemen, good evening," his opening formula. The first item, about 350 words, consisted of some non-typical facts extracted by a listener, A. C. Wornell, from the statistical accounts of the Newfoundland seal fishery by William Chafe.²⁶ Wornell suggested only a few sealing ships had ever been able to make a third voyage in a single year, and the Barrelman repeated Wornell's findings regarding them. The last such event had been that of the Walrus in 1880, and he notes that at least one member of that crew is still alive in St. John's. He wonders aloud if any others are alive. This attempt to draw his listeners into the broadcast as contributors is typical of his style. Here he is not reporting an item of fiction, or even near-fiction, but one of historical research, a series of facts that he expects his audience will want to know. Although the traditionality of such items is not as simple as that of, say, a current joke or contemporary legend, they still represent a tradition of folk talk. Such modern phenomena as books of

²⁶ Recently reprinted in a new edition by Shannon Ryan (St. John's: Breakwater, 1989), the original editions of Chafe's Sealing Book were annual reports during the first forty years of this century; Linda Parsons, "Levi George Chafe," ENL I (St. John's: NBP, 1981). Fifty-six years later, Abel C. Wornell remembered owning a copy of Chafe's book, indeed still owned it, but did not recall putting together figures for the Barrelman; interview, 1 June 1994.

records, newspaper columns of trivia, and call-in radio quiz shows, all illustrate the popular desire for such information, and are a public form of a folk tradition of conversation. Enacting such discourse, Smallwood is feeding the tradition.

The next item, about 300 words long, begins, "I heard a good one Saturday night." This opening suggests a joke, but in fact it is a fairly straight "human interest" story of a family of hockey players. Only their father is named and the Barrelman suggests he is widely known for his letters to newspaper editors. His five sons formed a hockey team and challenged any other team to beat them; none could. The item ends with: "And who do you think managed the Archibald team? You'll never guess. Their manager was their mother, Mrs. Herman Archibald. Beat that if you can." It is not clear from reading the script what the "good one" in this was -- the fact that a team of brothers beat all comers, or the fact that they were managed by their mother.

The next item is a traditional riddle:

Here's a letter from Carbonear that tickles me.
It's from a school-boy in Carbonear, Alfred P.
Pike, and what tickles me is the tone of stern
command he's managed in his first sentence. Here
it is: "Dear Sir - Solve this problem. As I was
going to St. John's, I met a man with 20 wives,
Every wife had seventeen sacks, Every sack had
eighteen cats, Every cat had thirty kits - Kits,
cats, sacks and wives, How many were going to St.
John's?" I agree with this Carbonear school-boy:

how many were there?²⁷

Neither the correspondent, nor the Barrelman answered the riddle, and in the following days it was not referred to again. The Barrelman did not include riddles with any great frequency, but he enjoyed them and probably used whatever he received. In his second newspaper column eight months earlier he had used a similar riddle to this one. After talking about several large families he knew of, he wrote:

I knew an old man in St. John's who, whenever asked how many children he had, would answer: "I have eleven sons and each one of them has a sister." Actually, he had one daughter.²⁸

In that radio programme of 14 March 1938 a short item of about a hundred words followed the riddle; it was based on a letter from Robert Skiffington of Musgravetown, Bonavista Bay, in response to an item some nights before in which a listener claimed "the largest fish in the water" was the squid. The writer tells of a giant squid with forty-foot tentacles found by his father's uncle and which when cut up filled eight puncheons.

Typical of his time, Smallwood had a difficult time believing in the existence of the giant squid, which was

²⁷ This riddle is not included in the one published collection of Newfoundland riddles: Elisabeth Greenleaf, "Newfoundland Riddles," Marshall Review 1:3 (1938), 5-20; rpt. in Edith Fowke, ed., Folklore of Canada (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), 130-142. Rather than giving specific references, Helen Creighton describes a variant (going to St. Ives), from the Lunenburg area of Nova Scotia, as "General" by which she means "in general circulation": Folklore of Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1976; orig. National Museums of Canada Bulletin no. 117, 1950), p. 118, item no. 19.

²⁸ "Masthead," 20 July 1937.

commonly called the "devil fish." Smallwood's respect for the lore of outport fishermen did not extend to the acceptance of their reports of sea monsters. Not long before, he had suggested that the account by a Port Union correspondent of meeting one in 1902 was a tall tale.²⁹ During the previous summer, of 1937, there had been several whimsical references in the news columns of the Daily News to a "sea serpent" having been sighted that season; none took the sightings very seriously.³⁰ The Newfoundland Fisheries Board in fact employed a scientist, Nancy Frost (Button), working on the mystery of the giant squid, the basic biology of which had been worked out by the mid-1930s.³¹ Smallwood clearly had no contact with her despite the fact she had published reports on the subject.

Next the Barreelman dealt with a question sent by an unnamed listener in King's Cove, Bonavista Bay, who asked if

²⁹ "Masthead," 9 November 1937.

³⁰ See, for example, "Sea Serpent's Message for Mankind," Daily News 12 October 1937, following news accounts in both that paper and the Evening Telegram in August.

³¹ Alison J. Earle, "From Natural Philosophy to Natural Science: A Case-study of the Giant Squid," MA thesis, MUN, 1978. Frost, later Button, had actually published two reports on the Newfoundland giant squid by this time, both in the series of Reports of the Newfoundland Fishery Research Laboratory (RNFRL): "Notes on a Giant Squid (Architeuthis sp.) Captured at Dildo, Newfoundland in December 1933," RNFRL 2:2 (1933), 100-114; and "A Further Species of Giant Squid (Architeuthis sp.) from Newfoundland Waters," RNFRL 2:5 (1935), 89-95. The giant squid was later found by F. A. Aldrich to appear in Newfoundland waters in approximately thirty-year cycles, one of which peaked in the 1930s; Frederick A. Aldrich, "The Distribution of Giant Squids (Cephalopoda, Architeuthida) in the North Atlantic and Particularly about the Shores of Newfoundland," Sarsia 34 (1968), 393-398.

the first member of the House of Assembly for that district, Bonavista Bay, were not the great-grandfather of K. M. Brown of that town.³² The Barreelman agreed that it was indeed William Brown, K. M. Brown's great-grandfather.

The plug that follows this item is somewhat longer than most plugs, about 150 words, and suggests that the "Irradiated" nature of Pet Milk means "an extra supply of the priceless sunshine Vitamin D" in each can.³³

An item of about 250 words follows as an "example to prove the stamina of the Newfoundlander"; it is about Patrick Ellard of Torbay, but no source is mentioned -- perhaps Ellard wrote himself. As a young man he had walked from Torbay to Kelligrews to buy a cow which he walked back to Torbay, a total walk for himself of over fifty miles. He milked his cows and proceeded to walk another four miles to his girlfriend's house to take her to a dance. It was four o'clock next morning when he got back home but, rather than sleep, he started off on his milk deliveries in St. John's.

³² Kenneth Brown had been a labour organiser and successful politician. Later he was to be a political enemy of Smallwood's, arguing against Confederation with Canada, but -- except for two years he spent in a Conservative administration, as Labour Minister in the government that brought about the introduction of Commission of Government -- for twenty years they had been travelling on much the same path. See Bertram Riggs, "Kenneth McKenzie Brown," ENL I (St. John's: NBP, 1981).

³³ "Irradiated" did not have the same connotations in the pre-nuclear era of the 1930s as it has today but Smallwood evidently felt uncomfortable about some of the ad copy he had to read. Frank O'Leary, Jr., told Carole Henderson Carpenter in 1970 that on a national television programme in the 1960s Smallwood was asked about the sponsorship of his Barreelman programme. Caught for a moment without words he sputtered out that he read ads for "awful stuff" like cough syrups that were nearly poisonous; MUNFLA tape C3915/78-57.

The motif of long walks is a recurrent one throughout the Barrelman scripts. Again, there is a metaphorical quality in it: despite normal tiredness and obstacles, the common Newfoundlander heroically continues on to improve his situation.

The next item is longer than others that evening, about 500 words and has the hallmarks of a contemporary legend as well as of a tall tale. As it shows Smallwood's joking attitude to his audience, and how he relied on contemporary themes, in this case that of Chicago gangsterism, it is worth presenting in its entirety.

Something in the vicinity of forty or fifty different people in various parts of the island have sent this story, so I suppose I must break my resolution and tell it to you -- don't blame me, blame the listeners who insisted on sending it in. If I don't tell it it'll only keep coming in to me -- and it's worth telling it, if for no other reason than to put an end to it once and for all. It's our old friend, the story of the rooster. The old man liked a drink, and practiced the making of moonshine for his own use. The old lady, sensibly enough, hated the sight and smell of it -- so the old man had to be pretty cute about it. He used to hide the 'shine so his wife'd never lay hands on it. He was having a swig out of a bottle in the barn one morning when suddenly he heard his wife approaching. Quickly he thrust the bottle into a sack of crushed corn, but the stopper worked out and the shine emptied into the corn. The old lady shortly afterwards discovered her prize rooster lying quite dead beside the sack, and with moaning and lamentation she picked him up and carried him into the kitchen, where her economical soul soon rebelled at the thought of incurring a 100% loss. In short, she plucked all the feathers off Mr. Rooster, and laid his body in a pantry to be removed next day. And next morning she heard a terrible racket downstairs. She got out of bed and hurried down to the

kitchen, where to her astonishment there was Mr. Rooster, naked as a new-born babe, crowing to wake the dead. You know, of course, what had happened -- the rooster had eaten the whiskey-soaked corn and had got dead drunk. So the old lady had to knit a nice little woolen suit for the rooster to wear till a new crop of feathers sprouted out to keep him warm. And the next listener who sends this story, or the one about shooting at a fox with a ramrod or a five-inch nail, and nailing him by the tail so that he jumped out of his skin, is in for serious trouble. I've brought a couple of Chicago gangsters down just to deal with them, and you don't need to be told that these gangsters would just as soon bump a man off as look at him. So don't say I didn't give you fair warning.³⁴

Not only does he make explicit reference to matters of contemporary interest (American gangsters), but he also uses phrases of contemporary slang: "bump off" and "don't say I didn't give you fair warning" are phrases no doubt learned from movies and radio dramas about gangsters. Although it is difficult to date collocations like the latter, the earliest known use of "bump off" is in 1910.³⁵

After a plug for which there is no script, but instead a note that it is the "Announcer's Plug" (rather than the Barrelman's), the final item follows. It is about 300 words and comes from a letter from the Barrelman's regular correspondent in Boston, W. M. Dooley, a retired journalist. Dooley reports a legend from the area around Port Saunders.

³⁴ Barrelman script, Monday 14 March 1938.

³⁵ Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th edition, 1993. See also the citation quotations in the OED II which show a marked increase in the use of "bump off" in the 1920s; the phrase was in its prime in the 1930s when Smallwood used it.

It is, he says, "an almost incredible, but nevertheless true story of our northwest coast." An illiterate fisherman made a lot of money over the years, converting it into gold coins, which he hid in the walls of his house. When his house burned down all the coins were melted into a big thirty-pound nugget which he thought was worthless as it was no longer coin. A pedlar, whom Dooley calls a "prince of rogues", bought the nugget for a hundred dollars and made \$9000 by it. The pedlar "was not a Newfoundlander, but a foreigner", the point of which presumably is either that there was nothing to be done about the crime, or that a Newfoundlander would never stoop to steal the savings of an "illiterate" (and thus defenceless?) man. Dooley is reporting to the Barrelman a historical legend which, typical of such stories, bears dialogic meaning: it is a story of past times when simple fishermen could accumulate great wealth but, as they were simple, they might not know the value of gold separate from its value as coin. On top of this the story bears a moral lesson about trusting outsiders.

Carrying so much subtextual meaning, it is clear why Smallwood retold the story. Suggesting past economic glories is tacitly to raise the possibility of similar glories in Newfoundland's future. In referring to the dangers of economic dealings with untrustworthy "foreigners", he likewise makes the tacit warning that

Newfoundland's futures might be endangered by entrusting them to outsiders. With that potent mix, he ended that programme of 14 March 1938.

Texture

In an important article that, despite the decline of descriptive folkloristics in the 1970s, has retained its utility, Alan Dundes suggested three levels of analysis for folklore: texture, text, and context.³⁶ The last of these became, for many folklorists in the 1970s and '80s, the only important level of analysis.³⁷ No folklorist would deny that the second of them, text, had been the chief concern for too long. Recently texture has come into its own in folklore studies and been recognised as a central class of factors in all performance.³⁸

The Barrelman scripts can be analysed at each of these

³⁶ "Texture, Text and Context," Southern Folklore Quarterly 46 (1964), 251-265. A recent work calling attention to the usefulness of Dundes's distinctions is Neil V. Rosenberg's opening remarks as JAF sound reviews editor: "From the New Sound Recordings Editor: Collecting Our Thoughts," JAF 104 (Winter 1991), pp. 92-94.

³⁷ Not to say, of course, that no one was working on "text" in those two decades: Roger Renwick's English Folk Poetry: Structure and Meaning (Philadelphia: U Pennsylvania P, 1980) and David Buchan's The Ballad and the Folk (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972) were both ground-breaking works on textual analysis which were published in this period.

³⁸ In the United States, the works of Dell Hymes (for example his collection of essays, "In Vain I Tried to Tell You": Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics [Philadelphia: U Pennsylvania P, 1981]), Keith Basso and others are examples of studies in textural analysis. In Britain, Gillian Bennett has done so from another direction. Dennis Tedlock's work has been towards a method of textural transcription; see for example his The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation (Philadelphia: U Pennsylvania P, 1983).

three levels. The text of the scripts includes the items reported and read by the Barrelman. Viewed as folklore, this includes the variety of genres and types that were performed on the programme: jokes, anecdotes, tall tales, personal experience narrative, poems, etc. Topical genres not always thought of as "folklore" but certainly recognised as some of the grist for the popular press mills are also here: stories of monsters, extraordinary pets and wild animals, of men and women with extraordinary experiences, of supernatural events, and other such topics.

The context of the script collection includes the life history of Smallwood, the social and cultural milieu in which he moved, and the political situation in Newfoundland and those parts of the world it interacted with in the 1930s and early '40s. To be considered here, too, is the nature of radio broadcasting at the time, its general form, formulas, and received styles. Both the context and text of the Barrelman are treated elsewhere in this thesis in chapters on the use of legend, and on the cultural politics of the Barrelman. In this section I deal with texture.

By the texture of the Barrelman I mean the constellation of stylistic devices used by the Barrelman to construct his radio persona and to establish his rapport (and thus his credibility) with his audience. This constellation includes his colloquial yet formal speech; his engaging, tongue-in-cheek attitude to his listeners, who

were also his collaborators; his use of formulas, localisms and apparent localisms; his articulate voice and bookish knowledge; his use of very up-to-date words and collocations; and his role as "answer man."

Textural Devices

As mentioned above, the script collection -- the Barrelman text itself -- bears a palimpsest-like nature as it has come to us, with layers of editorial and archival notations, representing original and later work by Smallwood or Harrington, further work by another person (perhaps Stan O'Leary, the "West Coast Barrelman"), and later work still by Frank O'Leary and perhaps Leo Moakler.³⁹ Certain of these changes in the text of the scripts were performative operations initiated by the broadcaster himself, in an effort to control the texture of his programme. He used underlining, dots, exclamation marks and phonetic representations of words in order to remind himself of ways of saying words and sections of items. By paying attention to these diacritical elements, which are both a key to the reader (himself) and a record of his performance, we gain insight into that performance.

Below are examined several textural devices used by Barrelman that helped forge his personality.

³⁹ Not to mention archival marks and re-arrangement by two generations of archivists at Memorial's library.

Formulas

The Barrelman used a number of formulas over and over again, establishing his "voice" with his audience. This was not the only function of formulas: by means of them he was able to lead his audience to points of interpretation and to communicate his attitude towards the items that he read. Superficially, the difference between a hero tale (about, say, a great sealing captain) and a tall tale (about, say, a less-known hunter who killed a large number of animals) can be subtle. The audience no doubt came to expect certain comments about the stories he told, indicating whether they were "true history" expected to be believed, or tall tales expected to be laughed at. His formulas were part of his kit of tools to express these ideas to his audience.

Every programme of the Barrelman was introduced in his own voice with the formula, "Ladies and gentleman, good evening." In later years an announcer preceded this formula with "F. M. O'Leary, Ltd. presents the Barrelman, Making Newfoundland Better Known to Newfoundlanders." However the programme was introduced, "Ladies and gentlemen, good evening," were the Barrelman's first words. This phrase was also his usual way of addressing his audience, no matter when in the course of a programme he needed to do so. In his handwritten emendations to the scripts, that is, those changes he made before going to air, he would often shorten

the phrase into "l. and g."⁴⁰ The use of a shorthand form like this indicates a conscious use of the phrase, one he would have picked up from his political speech-making days, and carried over into radio. It was a formula that helped establish a formality, or a stage formality, like the cries of a circus hawker.⁴¹ Being his own way of opening every show, it was associated with him, becoming his own tag. Many radio announcers of the time had such tags, either at the beginning of the programmes, at the end, or both.⁴²

Another formula used by him was "which goes to show" followed by something to the effect that Newfoundlanders were as good or better than any other "race" of people with regard to strength, ingenuity, courage, or whatever quality was exemplified by the story in question. Newfoundlanders, he would say, "have got what it takes."

I love to come across stories of Newfoundlanders who have gone out and faced the world and conquered it. These cases prove my contention that Newfoundlanders have got what it takes,

⁴⁰ Such emendations included pleas for more mail, announcements of changes in format, special advertising copy inserted to introduce newly advertised products, and the like.

⁴¹ Or an American preacher: Bruce A. Rosenberg, The Art of the American Folk Preacher (New York: Oxford U P, 1970), pp. 52-56.

⁴² See the remarks in "Announcers" in Buxton and Owen, The Big Broadcast, pp. 15-16. Lowell Thomas named both volumes of his autobiography with words of his opening and closing tags, "Good evening, everyone, everywhere" and "So long until tomorrow." His first volume was Good Evening Everyone: From Cripple Creek to Samarkand (New York: Morrow, 1976) and his second was So Long Until Tomorrow: From Quaker Hill to Kathmandu (New York: Morrow, 1977). The local announcer Aubrey MacDonald (aka Ted Baker in the 1930s) always signed off his sports programme with "Don't forget: if you can't take part in sports, be a good one anyhow" (Philip Hiscock, "Folklore and Popular Culture in Early Newfoundland Radio Broadcasting," pp. 42-43).

whenever they get the chance.⁴³

In his programme of 21 December 1937 he spent the entire fifteen minutes listing Newfoundlanders who had become rich, powerful, or well-known in other parts of the world, and summed up the whole show with:

After giving you all this, and it is only a part list, I don't see how you can disagree when I say that no matter what field you choose, Newfoundlanders have got what it takes, every time they get the chance.⁴⁴

The Barrelman used this phrase, "have got what it takes..." to exemplify the bravery, strength and intelligence not only of Newfoundland men and women, but of Newfoundland dogs and horses, too. This in turn led to a listener's parody in the form of a story of a hen that followed its owner's trail two hundred miles along the railway track, suggesting that even Newfoundland hens "had what it takes."⁴⁵ The Barrelman parodied it himself two days later after telling the story of a local man he had witnessed putting his tongue on a red-hot poker with no harm. He ended the story with, "All of which goes to show you once again, ladies and gentlemen, that Newfoundlanders can lick anything that comes up against

⁴³ Script, file 1.01.001, p. 19, undated but (from other evidence) probably early October 1937.

⁴⁴ Script, 21 December 1937.

⁴⁵ Script, 20 December 1937.

them."⁴⁶

On reading in the newspaper that a Newfoundlander had been arrested in Truro, Nova Scotia, for stealing a 350-pound safe, he said,

From this you will see that even when it comes to stealing, Newfoundlanders have a way of being distinguished. It isn't every Canadian or American who can put a 350-lb. safe on his shoulders and walk home with it.....⁴⁷ Kidding apart, Newfoundlanders abroad, as in their own country, have a most remarkable record for their lawful living....

He then goes on to note that the Boston Chief of Police claimed that no Newfoundlander had ever been convicted of a heinous crime.⁴⁸

Sometimes the lack of attribution was enough to call into question the historicity of a tale. In the following story he gives no source, no name of place, no date, and no names of protagonists. The **absence** of key information that would document a historical story, served as a formula would -- to flag the item as a fictional piece, a jocular tale.

⁴⁶ Script, 22 December 1937. Here the Barrelman may be playing partly on the localism of the meaning of "lick", to stick one's tongue out (DNE, 'lick', v.). The trick of putting a red-hot object against one's wet tongue is a traditional one that I saw performed in 1970 or '71 in St John's by a teenaged friend who put a lit cigarette out on his tongue with no damage.

⁴⁷ Here, as elsewhere, Smallwood used a string of dots in his original text; it does not represent an elision on my part. It probably was a cue to himself to pause in his reading.

⁴⁸ Script, file 1.01.001, p. 37, undated but actually 18 October 1937. The date is deduced from a birthday greeting to Mrs. Ellen Carroll later in the show: her 112th birthday would be the following day. Mrs. Carroll was fêted by the Barrelman on her succeeding birthdays and died at 115 in late 1942. Her birthday fell on October 19th; Janet E. M. Pitt, "Ellen B. Carroll," ENL I (NBP, St. John's, 1981).

In the place of key identifiers we find stylised markers of fiction: "a small and isolated outport... a good many years ago." Since he continually asked his listeners to include as much of these kinds of specific information as possible, it must have been clear to them that this was a joke:

Here's a story of a conversation between two women in a small and isolated outport in Newfoundland that happened a good many years ago -- a conversation that obviously couldn't happen in these later days of increased enlightenment and wider knowledge. These two women were standing in a potatoe [sic] field in their settlement, and as they stopped for a few moments to gossip the old coastal steamship "Fiona" passed along the coast. "That's the 'Fiona'," remarked one woman. "Yes," agreed the other, "that's the 'Fiona'. I guess she cost at least \$100." "Yes," said the other woman, positively, "and another hundred, and a hundred, and a hundred." "Hold on, there," protested the first woman, "not too many hundreds!"⁴⁹

With only a little more source documentation, but accompanied by a lot of tall tale detail, another story is told with clear textual cues to the audience not to believe it:

A listener up in Calvert, on the Southern Shore, sends a story that takes the gold-encrusted cake, as I think you'll agree when you hear it. It's about a man in Calvert a few years ago who had the name John. He used to travel in the country about fourteen miles every spring, looking for goose-eggs. This particular spring he went in on the 3rd of May. Now, the place where he was accustomed to get the goose-eggs was on an island in a pond. The island was about one hundred yards from the shore of the pond. But when he came to the pond this time he found that it was lightly caught over with ice, so he decided to wait until later in the day in the hope that the

⁴⁹ Script, 16 December 1937.

sun would melt it. It didn't melt, however, so at four o'clock in the afternoon he undressed and plunged into the water to swim out. He had to break the thin ice with his chest all the way out, but he did reach there and secure a dozen goose eggs. His chest was raw and sore when he got back to the settlement, but that was nothing to the disappointment he felt when he discovered that there was no broody hen to hatch out the eggs -- not a broody hen to be found anywhere. So what did he do? He took to his bed, and for 22 days he couldn't be got to stir out of it, even for his meals. The last week he was in bed, so my informant says, he got so saucy that even his wife couldn't go in the room where he was. And at the end of the 22 days down he came with a magnificent brood of a dozen of the finest young geese you ever laid an eye on.⁵⁰

Told in a straight-forward manner, nevertheless this story has many insider cues that it is a tall tale, not the least of which is the reference to how broody, like a hen, the man became. Even to those not fully initiated into the telling of such stories, the opening, that it "takes the gold-encrusted cake" is a clear warning that the Barrelman himself did not believe it.

Colloquiality. At the same time that he was employing a studied formality or perhaps a parodied formality, by using phrases like "ladies and gentlemen" and giving full attribution of most sources, the Barrelman developed and used a colloquiality of everyday phrases, emotions and states of mind. More than just an artistic device of rhetoric, it is also a device of politics bringing him

⁵⁰ Script, 19 January 1938.

"down" from a level of authority and formality, to the vernacular level of his perceived audience.⁵¹ His colloquiality was part of how he engaged his listeners; he challenged them to provide him with more information on a topic, or contradictory evidence of a claim he had made or passed on. After telling with some care and apparent affection for detail the story claimed by "that well-known sportsman, Mr. Claude Hall," of catching a flying duck with the hook of his trouting line held in the air as he crossed from one pond to another, the Barrelman said,

Beat this record, some of you trouting fans, if you can. Claudie Hall is absolutely convinced that he holds a record that isn't soon going to be beaten.⁵²

The command is a colloquial challenge to his listeners to carry on a bragging contest.

The most obvious form of his colloquiality is the use of informal contractions in his script, contractions which no doubt he articulated as spelt. His speech was not that of the news-readers and speechifiers also heard on the radio. His was the informal, yet articulate speech of local people. Despite his encyclopedic knowledge of Newfoundland history and people, an important part of his persona, the Barrelman wanted to project, not a stuffy teacher's image,

⁵¹ This technique is hoary in Newfoundland politics, and one which Robert Paine documents in several speakers in the 1979 provincial election campaign; Ayatollahs and Turkey Trots, (St. John's: Breakwater, 1981), passim.

⁵² Script, 19 January 1938.

but a one-of-the-boys image. After telling a story sent in by a listener (Mr. Dawe) about fog so thick several men rowed for an hour before realising they were still tied to the wharf, the Barrelman said, with a 'tis":

Well, 'tis a fairly good tall story -- but I don't want to start telling tall stories, so don't send any more, Mr. Dawe, please.⁵³

The very next item is introduced with the following, including a "'twould":

Now, here's a true story, sent in by Mr. Reuben Bursey, of Clarenville, who at 76 years of age, is the oldest fisherman of that settlement. I'm afraid I can't tell all the story that Mr. Bursey has written -- 'twould take too long.⁵⁴

Especially in the first year of his scripts, the use of "'twas" is likewise frequent. One certainly expects to see informal contractions like "don't" and "here's" in a script of this nature; he is writing for oral presentation, albeit in a normally fairly formal medium. But his deliberate use of rather archaic contractions like "'tis" and "'twould" suggests his desire to appear not only informal, but old-fashioned.

Smallwood used "phonetics" fairly frequently in order to avoid tripping up on oddly-spelt names like Aloysius (spelt "Alo-wish-us" in the text⁵⁵) or that of an opera

⁵³ Script, 19 November 1937. Thick fog is a common motif of tall tales; items 36-42 in Michael Taft, Tall Tales of British Columbia, pp. 26-28, 82-83.

⁵⁴ Script, 19 November 1937.

⁵⁵ Script, 13 December 1937.

called "Lucia" (in the margin he has "Lootch-~~EE~~-ah" which is crossed out and replaced by Loo-CHEE-ah"⁵⁶). With these and contracted spellings, he is being his own director, indicating to himself that he should speak in either the "correct" or more informal ways indicated. As he became more comfortable with his radio voice, the scripts show less of this self-direction; by mid-1938 the phonetics, like the contractions, are rarely used.

Although the Barrelman liked to encourage a view of himself as being far-sighted and almost omniscient, he was not averse to letting other aspects of his personality appear more human, introducing a colloquial, even intimate side of his personality. In reporting certain stories he would claim a kind of squeamishness. After telling a story which involved the repeated killing of a cat which seemed to keep returning, he said he could never kill a cat.

Well, Mr. Laite, it's not a bad story, even if there's not a word of truth in it. And I've got to admit that you've got a lot more nerve than I ever had -- I'd let a cat take charge of the house before I'd even think of killing or drowning it.⁵⁷

In this way he presumably not only projected a certain informal image, but also distanced himself from the rather incredible tale he had just told. In one stroke he had made a somewhat intimate confession of his qualmishness, and cast

⁵⁶ Script, 9 December 1937.

⁵⁷ Script, 26 November 1937.

doubt on a tallish tale.

Another example of his squeamishness is his refusal to utter what is apparently the word "guts" in a letter from a listener. Instead he breaks from his quotation of the letter and gives a broad collocation for it:

"How's that for night school, private study and"
 -- but I mustn't repeat the word he uses, but
 it's a word that relates to the intestinal organs
 of the human body, and is a very pungent synonym
 for real Newfoundland determination.⁵⁸

It is difficult to interpret such apparent prudishness because the scripts leave out a very large measure of texture in the form of the sound of his voice as he read them. It seems clear, however, from the scripts that he dealt with many of his correspondents with a tongue-in-cheek attitude that would have been readily transparent to his listeners. He received letters regularly from girls and young women, many of whom he seems to have held in a teasing relationship which today could be read as a kind of contempt. There are signs, particularly in the "Masthead" columns, of the Barreelman's passive, if not active misogyny in which women only appear as the subject of "noodle stories," as criminals or the insane. But once he appeared

⁵⁸ Script, 26 November 1937. The word "guts," in this meaning of "grit" or "determination," is often marked "slang" or even "vulgar" in popular twentieth century dictionaries. See for example the Living Webster Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language (Chicago: English-Language Institute of America, 1972). More recent and modern dictionaries (eg. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th ed., 1993) rarely mark words "vulgar." Dorson notes the substitution by girls (presumably of finer taste than boys) in Upper Peninsular Michigan in 1946 of "skin" for "guts" in a local taunt; Bearwalkers and Bloodstoppers, pp. 194-196.

on radio, he seems to have been aware of the fact that a fair proportion of his audience and correspondents were women and girls. I do not think that teasing his listeners was an example of his apparent misogyny; rather it was a culturally appropriate masculine interaction with women and girls.

From the files of correspondence to the Barrelman it is clear that listeners wrote mistakenly to him when they meant to write to one of the musical performers on VONF, in particular to the "Gospel Singer," Max Young.⁵⁹ In one rather drawn-out example of this, two girls had asked the Barrelman to sing for them on a certain date, two songs. He noted the request as follows:

If Miss Emmie Keats, of Musgravetown, Bonavista Bay, is listening in tonight, I'd like her to know that her letter reached me quite safely, and that I have read it most carefully, and given it the most prayerful consideration that I've been known to do for quite a long time past. And I want her to know how very, very sorry I am I can't grant her her most reasonable and moderate request..... [sic] Ladies and gentlemen, all this may sound very mysterious to you, but it's really very simple. So you'll understand what it's all about, I'll read you her letter: "I have been listening in every night to your stories. I enjoy them quite well. I was wondering if you would sing this song for me on Thursday night - 'It's Just a Year Since You Told Me

⁵⁹ See many such notes in Smallwood's hand in the correspondence files (Series 2 of the Barrelman Papers, and especially 2.01 and 2.02), noting receipt of letters from named listeners, whose requests have been passed on to the Gospel Singer. It is not explicitly noted, but apparently these notes were read on the air. Max Young was a radio operator at the same radio station, VONF. His repertoire of hymns became useful in his part-time career as Gospel Singer, his weekly programme. See my November 1983 interview with the late Melvin Rowe, chief radio operator at the time that Max Young was the Gospel Singer; MUNFLA C6954-55/83-236. See also Doug Brophy and Derm Breen, Newfoundland Radio in Pictures (St. John's: Radio Publications, 1952).

You Loved Me.' My friend girl would like you to sing for her 'It's the Picture of My Mother Hanging On the Wall'." Now, as I told Miss Keats, ladies and gentlemen, I've given this very moderate and reasonable request my most careful consideration before deciding the [sic: to?] decline giving myself the pleasure of singing the two songs. In the first place, although this may surprise her somewhat, I have no recollection whatever of telling her a year ago, or any other time, that I loved her. I haven't even seen her. And it's more than five years since I was last in Musgravetown. I rather think Miss Keats was a very wee girl five years ago. In the second place, I don't know what my sponsors, or you either, ladies and gentlemen, would say if once I broke out in song. In the third place, I haven't had anything stronger than Cacolac to drink for the past three years -- before that I had coffee -- and that's a free advertisement for my friend Al Vardy. No, I don't mind reading an occasional poem, but I must, I really must, draw the line at singing.⁶⁰

A week later he returned to the tongue-in-cheek teasing after a letter arrived with a poem on the topic.:

When, a week or so ago, I declined with the best grace I could the honor of acceding to the request of a young lady in Musgravetown, in Bonavista Bay, to sing her a couple of songs entitled "A year ago you told me you loved me," and "It's the picture of my mother hanging on the wall," I had an uneasy feeling that I was displaying something in the nature of cowardice. Though I hoped my listeners would accept my lame explanations of why I declined to sing these two songs, I nevertheless felt that if I really had a Newfoundlander's nerve I'd sing those songs, or die in the attempt. Apparently, however, my fears were quite groundless, for I have a letter from a correspondent who seems to think that it wasn't cowardice, but bravery on my part to refuse to sing the songs requested by the young lady. In fact, this correspondent waxes most enthusiastic about my refusal, and does so in rhyme. This is how she puts it:

I am glad you displayed so much gumption
When requested to render a song.
It really would be most disconcerting

⁶⁰ Script, 2 December 1937. Cacolac was a chocolate milk product advertised on VONF by O. L. Vardy.

If your sponsors should give you the gong.⁶¹

But I fear you may change your decision,
And fall for those feminine charms,
We have yodellers and crooners a-plenty,
So, darling, please stick to your yarns.

Please don't change the tune of your program -
Don't heed any love-lorn fan,
There are dozens of tenors and basses,
But there's only one Barrel-man.

Your broadcast is highly instructive,
With history and humor galore,
We listen-in spell-bound each evening,
Sob-singers to us are a bore.

We've our quota of men who've made niches,
Of heroes we've more than our share,
And when it comes to high-class announcers,
We got what it takes on the air.

Now that I've read you this poem I still
have an uneasy feeling that the lady who wrote it
was trying in her politest and most complimentary
way, not to praise me for my courage so much as
to make it forever impossible for me to sing you
any songs.⁶²

On another occasion a young listener suggests that the Barrelman is completely truthful, but that some of his correspondents must be lying to him as his stories don't ring true to her ear. He diplomatically thanks her for her support and says he is very glad that she is trying to

⁶¹ This is a reference to the very popular radio programme heard on American network stations, Major Bowes' Original Amateur Hour, which originated on WHN in 1934 but which was a network programme by the following year. The programme was so popular that after Bowes' death in 1946 it went through several revivals including a 1970s television series called The Gong Show. John Dunning, Tune in Yesterday: The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio, 1925-1976 (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1976), pp. 387-389.

⁶² Script, 9 December 1937.

believe him.⁶³

Likewise he treats other complaining fans with a seemingly disingenuous, but transparent, respect. When a listener suggests his story of a cat adopting baby chicks is impossible, and a sign he knows nothing of cat psychology, he admits it may be true and asks that no more cat stories be sent him.⁶⁴ This leads to more cat stories in the following weeks.

When he broadcast a story about an incredibly smart dog, a child wrote and pointed out he must be telling lies as she had read the story in her schoolbook and one detail of it was different from the Barreelman's. He congratulated her on her discovery and told her always to believe her textbooks before what people tell her.⁶⁵

Another part of his studied colloquiality was his grounding of every possible story in the family and local networks of his listeners. It is often pointed out, particularly by Newfoundlanders themselves, that upon meeting someone they will try to establish connections: "who are you?" means "to whose family do you belong?" A

⁶³ Script, 25 November 1937.

⁶⁴ She tells instead a story of a hen adopting kittens; script, 24 November 1937. A reprise of this argument appeared the following night and a week later, 30 November 1937.

⁶⁵ Script, 30 November 1937. The letter is from Frances Hynes of Clarenville who quoted her schoolbook, Learning to Read and Write, vol I, p. 61. She was complaining of the accuracy of his story of 25 November 1937, file 1.01.002, p. 130.

first conversation with someone can bring out names of a dozen relatives. This is a commonplace of speech that turns up, for example, in Ray Guy's 1977 review of E. R. Seary's Family Names of Newfoundland:

Newfoundland is still a small enough place that one person first meeting another will say, "You're not anything to the Whites belonging to Trout River, are you? I knew a Sandy White...." The conversation continues until, to the satisfaction of both parties, it is discovered that one's grandfather on his mother's side is related by marriage to a second cousin who once sailed with a friend of the other's great uncle.

What a boost Seary's book will give to this traditional game!⁶⁶

The Barrelman rooted his stories' characters by means of a monologic version of such conversation, channelling knowledge of characters in his stories through other known characters. A story about a man who became successful in the United States is introduced by way of "everyone's" knowledge of his brother, a caretaker at a public building in St. John's.⁶⁷ A woman who killed an angry wolf with a poker from her fire, and who is cast as a great Newfoundland hero to Newfoundland's womenfolk, is named giving her maiden name (Kelson), as well as her married name. She is then

⁶⁶ Typescript of review by Ray Guy of E. R. Seary and Sheila Lynch, Family Names of the Island of Newfoundland (St. John's: Memorial U of Newfoundland, 1977), in the M.U.N. Centre for Newfoundland Studies "Review File: Seary." There is no publication source given in the file for this review, but it may have been a radio script, about 1977; Guy also published a much shorter review, of about three paragraphs compared to this one of about 600 words, in the Evening Telegram.

⁶⁷ Script, 11 December 1937; Jimmy Duggan was the local man who became successful in the United States.

explicitly said to be a relative both of "the Trinity Kelsons" and the wife of a man he characterises as well-known.⁶⁸

An extended example of this technique of channelling knowledge and thus bringing a character nearer the acquaintance circles of his individual listeners is the following, with which he opened the programme of 11 March 1938:

I had a very big disappointment today. Last night I was told that Russell Patterson, the very famous commercial artist and magazine illustrator, was a native-born Newfoundlander. I don't know if the name means much to you but I know that when I heard it stated that he was a Newfoundlander by birth it had me all excited. Russell Patterson is in the very top of his profession in America -- one of the five greatest of all commercial artists in the United States, one of the really big ones of the world. His work appears in all the top-notch magazines in the United States -- probably you've often seen his paintings on magazine covers without noticing his name signed down at the bottom corner. If you're familiar with the magazine "Esquire," it'll give you a good idea of Russell Patterson's standing when I tell you that his work appears in it frequently. Just now he is doing work for the movies -- I think it's the Paramount people he's with at the moment. And here's the disappointment: he's not actually a native-born Newfoundlander, though in every other respect he must certainly be claimed as a son of Newfoundland. His father and mother were born in Newfoundland. He himself spent many of his younger years in Newfoundland, though he was actually born in Chicago, where his parents happened to be at the time. His father was the late William Patterson, of St. John's. His mother was a sister of Mrs. Richard Maher, wife of the well-known tinsmith of Duckworth Street east here in the city. Dr. Kennedy the dentist

⁶⁸ Story of Mrs Fanny Kelson Buckle, script, 10 December 1937.

and his brother, Key Kennedy, the automobile man, are cousins of the famous artist. In other words, all of the facts concerning Russell Patterson are Newfoundland facts -- all but one, the place where he happened to be born. His brother, Thomas Patterson, who is his business manager, was born at Placentia, where their father was working with the Newfoundland Railway. Their only sister died in infancy in Newfoundland. The last time Russell Patterson was in Newfoundland he was on a visit to his first-cousin, the late J. P. Maher, the well-known auctioneer.⁶⁹

The tone is not gossipy, but it is very homey. As often as he can, he connects people to their genealogy or extended family. Often he ends a story with the suggestion that there are probably descendants of the person in his story living here today; would they please drop him a line?

In an item on the single-handed sailing of a ship from the West Indies to Boston by Captain Edward English, the Barrelman made these connections several ways. The story had been given to him by the retired geologist Arthur English of St. John's, and the implication is that he is a relative of the protagonist. In the script he mentions that the Captain English in question is not to be confused with his son, also a Captain, and also named Edward, who was well-known in his own right for skippering the coastal boat the S.S. Ethie. Another unnamed relative living in New

⁶⁹ Script, 11 March 1938. The standard histories of magazine cover art do mention Patterson, though in retrospect, to call him one of the five greatest cover artists of the 1930s seems excessive. See for example, Patricia Frantz Kery, Great Magazine Covers of the World (New York: Abbeville, 1982) in which Patterson rates a single reference in the text and two reproductions of his covers: Life (9 December 1926) and Ballyhoo (September 1934); pp. 240, 289, 308.

York, he informed his audience, would be contributing some more information about the story. And in a handwritten addition to the script, presumably for broadcast, he wrote that Captain Edward English was "Jack English's grandfather." Jack English was apparently well-known enough to the audience at the time to leave that statement as is.⁷⁰ In another programme, the Barrelman extolled the patriotic virtues and adventurous life of his correspondent, Arthur English.⁷¹

Besides giving a homey tone to his broadcasts, and linking listeners to the protagonists of his stories, such a technique of telling had a commercial aspect. Smallwood liked to tell the story of Judge Prowse, that he put as many portraits of living people and their dead relatives as he could into his History for the simple reason that it might encourage them to buy a copy. The same was said of Smallwood when in the late 1970s he published The Faces of Newfoundland, a book of photographs of individuals and groups from all parts of the province. As the Barrelman, he and his sponsor no doubt thought that such a technique would increase their audience, exposing more people to their

⁷⁰ Script, 13 December 1937. Originally intended for the programme of 11 December 1937, on p. 174 of which another version is included. Both Arthur English (1878-1940) and Edward English, Sr. (1847-1923) warranted entries in the Dictionary of Newfoundland and Labrador Biography (St. John's: Cuff, 1990). Edward English was Harbour Master at St. John's from 1891 until his retirement in 1919; his son Edward, Jr., succeeded him. Robert H. Cuff, "Edward English, Sr." DNLB.

⁷¹ Script, 2 December 1937.

commercial appeals.

Boosterism The word "boost" was a nineteenth-century American invention and by the last decades of the century it was being used by writers from the Eastern United States still in its quotation marks to refer to the commercial methods of developing the West and its population.⁷² In the early years of this century the word was extended into the abstract noun "boosterism" to refer to the activities and attitudes of the people who used exaggerations and carnival-like sales methods to draw people out to the West. In his writings on the history of the American expansionist culture, Daniel Boorstin has popularised the term in this sense.⁷³

Smallwood often openly admired the United States of an earlier era. Many times he likened the Newfoundland predilection for tall tales to what he thought of as a by-then-unfashionable American literature:

...I had to lighten the program with some humour;
and here, almost by accident, I hit on what was

⁷² See for example the quote at "boost" in the OED from Harper's Magazine November 1883, p. 941, regarding "the 'boost' to California ... so fondly dreamed of."

⁷³ See for example Daniel Boorstin, "From Charity to Philanthropy," in The Decline of Radicalism: Reflections on America Today (New York: Random House, 1969), pp. 40-68; and The Americans: The Democratic Experience (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), pp. 74, 274 and *passim*.

then, though it was no longer so much so,⁷⁴ the common vein of Newfoundland's humour: the tall tale. This depends upon vast exaggeration, and once it had been the kind of humour that Americans liked, back in the last quarter of the previous century and the early part of the present. The great masters of the art were Mark Twain, M. Quad, Josh Billings, and Finley Peter Dunne.⁷⁵

He told similar things to Peter Narváez in his 1982 interview, as well as to an American Air Force writer in 1944:

The Barrel Man spoke, on his program, of the folklore, history, geography, and politics of his native land, brightening his narrative with tall tales, a form of humor currently popular in Newfoundland, which, he says, is roughly parallel to the wit of the Mark Twain and Josh Billings style which prevailed in the United States in the latter part of the last century.⁷⁶

His belief that the tall tale had fallen from grace in the United States ignored, among other signs to the contrary, the huge popularity, just five or six years before his own programme began, of Lowell Thomas's "tall stories" on American network radio. Thomas had stumbled on the genre. His job in the late 1920s was reading news on a programme sponsored by The Literary Digest; part of that job was to

⁷⁴ Here Smallwood is making the common, and widespread, popular comment about folklore that it existed more strongly in another time. Alan Dundes, "The Devolutionary Premise in Folklore Theory," JFI 6 (1969), 5-19. See also Barbara Rieti, "Always Going and Never Gone?" in Strange Terrain, pp. 1-14.

⁷⁵ I Chose Canada, p. 207.

⁷⁶ Sgt. Neale Reinitz, "Newfoundland 'Barrelman' Raises Pigs," Propagander (Quarterly magazine published by U.S. Army Air Base, Gander), Fall 1944, p. 7.

read excerpts from the Digest. One night, not for levity, he read an article on mosquitos around the world.

Then, in the fan mail, which is an accompaniment of the radio act, I began to receive true enlightenment on the subject of mosquitoes. The well-known and justly famous Jersey skeeter was duly honored. There streamed in a rich assortment of whoppers about the skeeters, whopping ludicrous yarns with a gasp and a laugh in each.⁷⁷

For several months Thomas received such tales in his mail and continued duly to report them on the radio, along with his Digest news. He eventually put them together in the form of a book, Tall Stories. Thomas was a popular broadcaster in Newfoundland as well as in the United States: local broadcaster Aubrey MacDonald, who got his first job reading sports news in about 1935, wrote to Thomas asking advice on how to get work in radio.⁷⁸ As one might expect, many of the stories which Thomas printed in his book circulated in Newfoundland. While this reflects a wide and vibrant North American folk tradition of tall tales, it is also true that his radio programme was one of the media of transmission for tall tales in the late 1920s and early 1930s. No doubt some radio listeners in Newfoundland heard

⁷⁷ Lowell Thomas, Tall Stories: the Rise and Triumph of the Great American Whopper (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1931), p. 1. Mosquitos are a popular topic of tall tales throughout North America, as Herbert Halpert has pointed out in his article on their widespread distribution, particularly in the 1940s; "Mosquitoes on the Runway," Western Folklore 49 (1990), 145-161.

⁷⁸ See my "Folklore and Popular Culture in Early Newfoundland Radio Broadcasting," especially Chapter Two, "Narratives of a Retired Radio Announcer," for information on Aubrey MacDonald's life.

his tall stories.

Thomas was not the only American of that time interested in the tall tale in his country, and counting on its popularity. Smallwood's interest in it was rather part of a new vogue for the tall tale, one which had as its by-product a mushrooming of academic interest in popular literature. Folklorists such as Richard Dorson and Herbert Halpert were turning their attention to the field of tall tale as a key theme in their studies of American folklore.⁷⁹

Smallwood likened his brief on the Barrelman to that of Florenz Ziegfeld's aim to popularise the "American Girl." An American reporter for the internal magazine at the military base in Gander wrote in 1944:

Smallwood represents his seven-year radio task as the Barrel Man as that of 'glorifying Newfoundland,' much in the manner of Florenz Ziegfeld's efforts on behalf of the American girl.⁸⁰

This is exactly where his attitude might be called Newfoundland boosterism.

My [newspaper] column consisted of anecdotes about Newfoundland, bits and pieces and scraps of information about the country and its people, and in general was devoted to a sort of glorification of Newfoundland and everything good within it.⁸¹

⁷⁹ See for example Halpert's "Liars' Club Tales," Hoosier Folklore Bulletin 2 (1943), 11-13; Dorson's Jonathan Draws the Long Bow (1946) and Bloodstoppers and Bearwalkers (1952) each represents work in the 1940s and both contain a high proportion of tall tales.

⁸⁰ Reinitz, "Newfoundland 'Barrelman' Raises Pigs," p. 7.

⁸¹ I Chose Canada, p. 205.

The Barrelman [radio] program was ... a peculiar blend of Newfoundland history, geography, and economic information, with stories of courage, endurance, hardship, inventiveness, resourcefulness, physical strength and prowess, skill and courage in seamanship, and a hundred other aspects and distinctions of our Newfoundland story -- all of them "making Newfoundland better known to Newfoundlanders" and intended to inspire them with a faith in their country and in themselves, and to destroy what I continually denounced as our inferiority complex.... I took no offence when someone called me a blind patriot.⁸²

Boosters took with zeal the task of improving their local areas, attracting population from elsewhere and developing their local economy. They admired the growth of private capital, but they likewise admired philanthropy. Smallwood often called attention to local philanthropists, even going so far as to make a list of the greatest benefactors to Newfoundland.⁸³ In Daniel Boorstin's term, Smallwood was a booster of Newfoundland. He had been that for at least six years already when he started the Barrelman enterprises, and he continued it for some time after. Invention and innovation were central to the idea of boosterism and Smallwood used his various endeavours to make what he saw as the creative spirit of Newfoundlanders known.

⁸² I Chose Canada, pp. 206-207.

⁸³ His list of the ten greatest benefactors was compiled over the course of two months. See for example his "Masthead" columns of 10 August, 21 September and 13 October 1937. The 21 September column is particularly interesting as it presented some of the fruits of his research on Robert Carter, research he had conducted under contract to the local businessman Cyril Carter. No doubt that curried some favour. (On his family history research contract from Carter, see I Chose Canada, p. 212.)

The Barrelman series in particular was useful in this; as he told stories of Newfoundlanders who invented cod-traps, gas-masks, anti-torpedo shields and many other things, listeners contributed more. Like the brave frontiersmen of the American West, Newfoundlanders had to continually re-civilise their environment; the process was the same, but repeated and unceasing in Newfoundland. The sea was Newfoundland's proud West.

As did the American boosters, Smallwood admired people who could turn something ordinary into profit. He told stories of entrepreneurial acumen: for instance, that of a man who sold a previously unsaleable lot of Newfoundland postcards to the troops on an American warship that called into Trepassey to be present at a trans-Atlantic flight in 1919.⁸⁴ Only accidentally, as it was an alphabetic list, the American self-promoter Horatio Alger led his 1979 list of about two hundred "authors who made life rich for me."⁸⁵

He made a point of always calling men who had been skippers on boats by their title, "Captain." This was both literally and figuratively a process of entitlement; by using the title he was invoking a maritime tradition of

⁸⁴ "Masthead", 3 August 1937; he later told this story on air. In his 1979 book The Time Has Come to Tell he poor-mouths the story of a near-fortune made at Trepassey -- the Newfoundland Government printed up a special issue of an airmail stamp; he neglected to buy any at a dollar apiece and -- to his eventual regret -- the price went to \$25,000.

⁸⁵ The Time Has Come To Tell (St. John's: NBP, 1979), p. 228.

honour and deference that only existed in religion, education and certain professions in non-maritime traditions. Thus Newfoundland men with very little education might be given an honorific of the same sort that doctors and professors bore in other walks of life. Whether or not he deliberately set out to do so, by making a point of always preceding these men's names with "Captain," he valorised, or boosted life in Newfoundland.

The Barrelman's Language One of the methods by which the Barrelman established a "voice", both on the air and in his newspaper column, was by his particular use of language. Just as he used an overall colloquial attitude to shape his audience's view of himself, so too he used archaisms, rare words, neologisms, and localisms to effect. The Barrelman used language for entertainment; puns and other humorous forms of language were important to the overall tone of the column and the radio programme. The use of mildly archaic forms like "'twould" and "'tis" has been discussed above. Neologisms served to identify him with the most modern of movements and trends, balancing his clearly antiquarian attitude to Newfoundland's past. His colloquialisms underlined the approachability of his beliefs despite their apparent underpinning by modern theoretical ideas.

His use of localisms took this one step further; by using terms known or thought to be, or purporting to be

peculiar to Newfoundland, he was building on the idea of Newfoundland's linguistic separateness. Already by this time there was a strong local sense of what has since come to be known as "Newfoundland English." The very earliest publications on Newfoundland folklore had dealt with language; in the 1890s George Patterson's series in JAF began and ended with "Notes on the Dialect of the People of Newfoundland."⁸⁶ Local readers had access to these articles when they were reprinted by the St. John's Evening Telegram. Self-conscious glosses to local words appeared as footnotes in some publications. The self-publishing poet John Burke rarely glossed his use of local words, but the high incidence of them suggests a likewise high awareness of local language.⁸⁷ Smallwood himself reviewed the newly published work by P. K. Devine, the first extended glossary of Newfoundland words. That he had personal criticisms of the compilation shows that he too was very conscious of the differences between Newfoundland speech and standard English.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ JAF 7 (1895), 27-40; 8 (1896), 19-37; 10 (1897), 203-213. These are reprinted in E. Fowke and C. Carpenter, eds., Explorations in Canadian Folklore (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985), 38-59.

⁸⁷ Burke published many broadside poems and songs in his lifetime, not to mention dozens of songsters. A recent compilation is William J. Kirwin, John White's Collection of Burke's Ballads (St. John's: Cuff, 1982).

⁸⁸ P. K. Devine, Devine's Folk Lore of Newfoundland in Old Words, Phrases and Expression: Their Origin and Meaning (St. John's, Robinson, 1937). Devine notes (pp. 5-6) the help he had in compiling his 1937 glossary from two earlier enthusiasts of Newfoundland speech, W. A. Munn

It was partially by this technique, of calling attention to the mundane and unnoticed items of local language, that the Barreلمان valorised, or mythologised, aspects of Newfoundland life. By using certain words and phrases of popular speech, he associated them with the usually more formal medium of radio, and with the likewise usually more formal subject of history. Placing otherwise invisible items (words, collocations of various sorts) in a prestigious medium is to make them visible, a reification of culture. The choice of what is to be thus made visible is, further, a kind of invention of culture, an invention through compilation of self-conscious culture. By using previously unnoted Newfoundland culture in his programme, Smallwood was inventing it for his audience.

The term "invention of tradition" was made popular in the mid-1980s by the publication of an influential collection of papers under that title.⁸⁹ Edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, two social historians, it

and Rev. Moses Harvey. Smallwood's review was in his "Masthead" column of 12 November 1937. Munn died in 1940, but Harvey had already been dead almost forty years, dying in 1901 (DNLB).

⁸⁹ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. The Invention of Tradition (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1983). Hobsbawm's use of the term "invention" probably drew on Roy Wagner's symbolic anthropological treatment of ethnographic description and writing, The Invention of Culture (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975). Wagner, rather than using the term to refer to what "natives" do with their culture, referred to what anthropologists did -- an ethnographer coming to terms with a strange culture, finding concepts and then vocabulary to handle them, is "inventing a culture" (see p. 4, for example). "We create nature, and tell ourselves stories about how nature creates us!" (p. 140). Wagner's original usage is thus closer to what Smallwood was doing.

brought together recent work by a half dozen historians, each of whom had been investigating the nineteenth century European and colonial growth of pomp and symbolic circumstance in public life. The essays dealt for the most part with what Robert Redfield called the "Great Tradition" (or that of governments and institutions) rather than the "Little Tradition" (that of small local, often widespread, folk groups).⁹⁰ Despite that original limitation, folklorists have recognised the utility of the term in their own investigations in the "little traditions" of folklore. Discussions of "authenticity" on the one hand and of "revival" on the other have benefited from its use in folkloristics.

Smallwood's enterprise might be seen as "revival" but it is better to see it as a medium of folklore distribution. With some exceptions, he was not renewing the vitality of traditions that had been lost or weakened. He was taking traditions from local areas and individual people, not to mention from documentary sources otherwise untapped by most traditional means, and literally broadcasting them to a wider population who felt affiliation with the national entity to which he was ascribing the traditions. Rather than revival, his Barrelman enterprise was authentic invention of national culture.

⁹⁰ Robert Redfield, Peasant Society and Culture, (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1956), pp. 41, ff.

In a survey of what the term "tradition" has meant in Eastern European ethnology and folkloristics, Tamás Hofer points out that many European nation-states reached a crossroads in tradition development after the two world wars.⁹¹ Emerging nations found themselves in the position of choosing a time period in their history from which a "suitable past" might be constructed.⁹² Smallwood, in choosing linguistic localisms to highlight by use, and in choosing historical episodes to highlight by telling, was "choosing a past" for Newfoundland. The choosing of a past is not the invention *ex nihilo* of culture, but it is nonetheless invention, by collocation rather than by manufacture.

Of course, Smallwood, as the Barrelman, was not the first to invent Newfoundland culture. When he reviewed Devine's glossary he was quick to point out the inclusion of certain words and phrases which -- identified by Devine as Newfoundland speech -- were not at all peculiar to Newfoundland.⁹³ His criticism was not cast in the discourse of authenticity, but some of his points certainly could be.

⁹¹ Tomás Hofer, "The Perception of Tradition in European Ethnology," JFR 21:2-3 (1984), 133-147.

⁹² p. 138. The phrase "choosing a suitable past" is borrowed by Hofer from McKim Marriott, "Cultural Policy in the New States," in C. Geertz, ed., Old Societies and New States (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), 27-56.

⁹³ Barrelman 12 November 1937. He complains about the inclusion of "bamboozle," "hustings" and "flummo."

His contention was that Devine mistook jargon and widespread colloquialisms for localism.

The process of identifying (or inventing) Newfoundland culture continues to this day, and never without some degree of contention such as the Barreلمان raised with regard to Devine's book. Cultures thrive on contention -- argument over cultural form and meaning is an integral part of cultural life in every living, evolving culture. By such argument, cultural adaptation or evolution is made possible.

We see contention in Newfoundland culture today in many forms. The argument that appears from time to time in the press over the use of the *blasons populaires* "Newfie" and "Newf" is a case in point.⁹⁴ In 1945, 2nd Lieut. Herbert Halpert visited Newfoundland as part of his military tour of duty with the American Army Air Transport Command (ATC).⁹⁵ His job was to visit American bases connected with the North Atlantic Division of the ATC. At both Stephenville (Harmon Base) and Gander he interviewed enlisted men about their problems with the situations of their bases and informed them of military policy. As part of his duty, and

⁹⁴ On *blason populaire* see J. D. A. Widdowson, "Language, Tradition and Regional Identity: Blason Populaire and Social Control," in A. E. Green and J. D. A. Widdowson, eds. Language, Culture and Tradition (Sheffield: CECTAL, U Sheffield, 1981), pp. 33-46. A set of local *blasons populaires* and the history of the term itself are discussed in Gerald Thomas, "Some Examples of *blason populaire* from the French Tradition of Western Newfoundland," Regional Language Studies - Newfoundland 7 (1976), 29-33.

⁹⁵ Interview with Dr. Herbert Halpert, 12 January 1994. This information was not filtered through a half century of memory: Halpert read some of these fieldnotes aloud during the interview.

reflecting his folklorist's eye, he took detailed cultural notes at both places. In Stephenville on 9 May 1945 he noted that the Americans often called the Newfoundlanders on the base "Newfies," and that it was "slightly derogatory." The term "Newf," he found, was even more so.

The term "Newfie" aroused discussion in late 1955 when it was argued about in the St. John's press after it appeared in an article in Time magazine about the local rum, "Screech."⁹⁶ The then-Barrelman, Michael Harrington took sides in the matter, if not on the side of the term, then against getting upset about it. He suggested there were far worse names for local people; "Mancunian" and "Liverpudlian" were two he would not want, but which are worn with pride by their owners, and neither, he said, was any better than "Newfie".⁹⁷

By the 1970s and 1980s the *blason* "Newfie" was being worn by many Newfoundlanders without any sense of derogation. It was used in joke books published by

⁹⁶ See, for example, the anonymous letter, signed "A Newfoundlander," published under the title "No Harm Meant" in the Daily News, 12 December 1955, p. 4; and under the title "Newfie Not Acceptable To Some" in the Evening Telegram, 14 December 1955, p. 4. The Daily News responded with an editorial, "Objectionable Term," on 14 December 1955, p. 4. A letter signed "Yellim" and entitled "Time's Newfie," in the Telegram 16 December 1955, p. 4, asked why there should be so much vituperation against Time when the article had been submitted to Time by a Newfoundlander who included the term in his report from St. John's.

⁹⁷ Script, 15 December 1955.

Newfoundlanders⁹⁸, by musicians, especially those who had emigrated from Newfoundland⁹⁹, and by restaurants and grocery stores.¹⁰⁰ Among my acquaintances in St. John's during this time, the reverse of what Halpert had found in 1945 was now true: "Newf" was fairly acceptable, but "Newfie" was thought to be derogatory.¹⁰¹ In St. John's a restaurant opened in mid-1993 with a large street sign advertising its name: Le Chateau Newf. The owner liked the pun on the name of the French wines Chateau Neuf-de-Pape, but such a stream of criticism came that she changed it in late 1993 to Le Chateau Newfoundland. The owner said, "It's been mostly St. John's people who found it offensive. Most

⁹⁸ For example, the series of eight booklets (Newfie Jokes, More Newfie Jokes, etc.) published by Bob Tulk, and by his family after his death, from the early '70s till the early '90s.

⁹⁹ In Michael Taft's Regional Discography (1975) are listed three songs beginning with the word "Newfie" including "Newfie Bound" (on the Ducats' album You Can't Take the Country from the Man (Marathon MS-2116, 1972) in which "Newfie" refers to the place, Newfoundland; "Newfie Boy" (on Roy Payne's album Newfie Boy, RCA Cambden CASX-2568, 1972); and "Newfie Girl" (written by Bill Sweeney and recorded both by Dick Nolan on Fisherman's Boy, RCA CAS-2576, 1972, and by Edison Williams on The Roving Newfoundlander, Audat 477-9014, 1972. In addition, Roy Payne recorded the song "Goofy Newfie" on his album by the same name, Marathon ALS-247, ca. 1969. The Ducats' album was recorded in Nashville, Tennessee; each of the others in Toronto, Ontario.

¹⁰⁰ In Canadian cities with large populations of expatriate Newfoundlanders it is common to have one or two "Newfie stores." For example there is one associated with the offices of the magazine The Downhomer, in Etobicoke, Ontario.

¹⁰¹ In January 1994 I informally checked this sense with several educated, under-forty St. John's people, and found they agreed. In an interview published in the St. John's Evening Telegram on Sunday 20 January 1994, Newfoundland musician Kim Stockwood, based for a year in Toronto, called herself without any apparent derogation, a "Newf."

people from out around the bay just laughed at it."¹⁰²

As Narváez noted, the earliest known use of the word "Newfie" is in a contribution to the *Barrelman*, aired 10 March 1938. The *Barrelman* read the following:

And Mr. Arthur B. Walker, of Charlton Street, sends another story to illustrate the wit of the Newfoundlander -- I'm afraid it's a bit rusty by now, but anyway here it is: It happened in New York, where a group of men who happened to be of different nationalities were congregated one day, a Newfoundlander being one of them. They were boasting of their respective countries, and the topic turned to feats of fast workmanship, especially in the building line. After they'd all had their say the American turned to the Newfoundlander and remarked: "Nothing like that in your country, eh, Newfy?" "Why that's where we have you Americans beaten to a standstill," retorted the Newfoundlander, and then, as the American demanded to know what he meant, he explained: "On my way to work at quarter to seven one morning down in St. John's I saw a crowd of workmen excavating the foundation of a big new apartment building. At quarter past six that same evening I was returning the same way from work, and saw the tenants of that new building being turned out for failing to pay back rent!"¹⁰³

The use of "Newfy" here does seem derogatory. "Retorted" suggests an offence taken and the *Barrelman* seems himself to make a point of referring to the man as a "Newfoundlander."

¹⁰² Sue Hickey, "Lots in a name for former Le Chateau Newf," *The Express*, 5 January 1994, p. 1. On the regional CBC radio programme, *The Doyle Bulletin*, 20 March 1994, host Marjorie Doyle demanded an apology from a member of the editorial staff of the Toronto *Globe and Mail* for using the word "Newfie" in an editorial cartoon during the previous week. He pleaded ignorance of its deprecatory connotations. A recent pro-Newfie argument is Walter Lane's "Newfoundlanders & Quebecers -- Two Distinct Societies," *The Downhomer* 7: 3 (August 1994), 17.

¹⁰³ Script, 10 March 1938, p. 392. Quoted in Narváez's original article, published in *CFC* in 1983, the spelling of "Newfy" is as in the original radio script. In the reprint version, in *Media Sense* in 1986, the spelling has been changed to the more usual modern one, "Newfie."

Cultural contention is something that is always present in societies and, as the Barreelman, Smallwood took sides on cultural issues. Though he may have appeared to some of his listeners as a kind of culture expert, one who knew the answers, and indeed he encouraged that impression, he was still a working journalist, working with problems of inexplicit and inadequate sources. At the same time, he was a covert politician, or at any rate a once and future politician, working with plans and policies of political parties and movements that were essentially underground. Political side-taking was something he was comfortable with and he no doubt used contention for increasing the entertainment value of his programmes.

Not everyone who heard the Barreelman programmes was enthralled with them. Some people saw them as "a bunch of hoakum"¹⁰⁴ and others thought Smallwood was misrepresenting Newfoundlanders' aspirations and opinions.¹⁰⁵ After reading and hearing what he thought were too many tall tales in the Barreelman's columns and "columns of the air," well-known sealing Captain Abram Kean, a Newfoundland hero in his own right, wrote a long letter to the Daily News explaining his

¹⁰⁴ Gus Coultas, interview, 5 July 1993, MUNFLA 93-261. Coultas sang regularly in St. John's church programmes, and for a couple of years before World War II, contemporary with Smallwood's first years as the Barreelman, he had a regular VONF programme from the same studio as the Barreelman.

¹⁰⁵ See many letters to the Daily News during the year that the Barreelman was carried as a newspaper column in that paper, July 1937 - June 1938. See especially those which Smallwood included in his columns in May and June 1938 as strawmen in order to argue back.

aversion to this kind of entertainment. In it he said,

The Barrelman no doubt has many friends in his desire to uphold Newfoundland and Newfoundlanders and in so far as he deals in truth he is mixing himself with good company. The Apostle Paul gloried in the fact that he was a citizen of no mean city. Sir Walter Scott said, "Breathes there a man with soul so dead who never to himself hath said, this is my own, my native land." But I think, Mr Editor, you will agree with me in all such glorying we should keep within the bounds of truth when we relate deeds of daring and bravery as we have heard of late so easily refuted. [T]here is bound to be a reaction and the time is not far distant when the truth that we may tell will be discarded on account of the many of the tall stories which we have heard of late sent broadcast over the radio and in print. In saying this I do not want to make it appear that I belong to the goodie goodie class that cannot enjoy a good story. Some of our best men have fallen for that: notably Abraham Lincoln: his friends defended him on the plea that many of the stories he told were more for their wit than their smut, but in the end they admitted he would have done better had he not indulged in the habit. But to bolster up some of the stories we have heard of late as being true is going from the sublime to the ridiculous.¹⁰⁶

The Barrelman's response to such criticism was either to ignore it or to issue a tongue-in-cheek apology and promise to improve. In August of 1937, while he was still finding a general tone of his Barrelman persona, he included several jokes of the sort later to be known as "Newfie jokes," or more generally "noodle jokes."¹⁰⁷ In a flurry of

¹⁰⁶ Abram Kean, Letter to the Editor, Daily News, 28 March 1938, p. 10.

¹⁰⁷ The only published article on "Newfie jokes" is Gerald Thomas's compendium, "Newfie Jokes," in Edith Fowke, ed., Folklore of Canada (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), 142-153. Christie Davies includes some discussion of Newfie jokes in his Ethnic Humor Around the World: A Comparative Analysis (Bloomington: Indiana U P, 1990), especially pp. 46-48 and 93-94. There is a strong literature on ethnic jokes and joking: Alan Dundes recently published a compilation of his essays on the topic, Cracking Jokes: Studies of Sick Humor Cycles and Stereotypes (Berkeley, California: Ten Speed Press, 1987). See also

such stories, he told a story of twelve men having been brought in from the outports to serve as jury; while in town they were put up at the Newfoundland Hotel, the large railway hotel in the East End of the city, and a very modern and well-appointed institution. On his first night one of the men stopped a bellhop in the lobby and asked where he might get a drink of water; he was directed to the men's room nearby. Upon coming out, refreshed, he told the bellhop, "Damn fine wells you've got around here." The Barrelman added, "I doubt there's a word of truth in it, but it makes a good story."¹⁰⁸

Letters arrived soon afterwards at the daily papers of St. John's complaining of the tastelessness of the joke, and the aspersions cast by it on the character and intelligence

Robert B. Klymasz "The Ethnic Joke in Canada Today," Keystone Folklore Q 15 (1970), 167-173; rpt. in Fowke and Carpenter, Explorations in Canadian Folklore, pp. 320-328.

¹⁰⁸ "Masthead," 21 Aug 1937. He liked this story so much he opened his column with it. This is a traditional tale in Newfoundland - at least two variants have been collected. In one an old man was in hospital and had never seen a toilet before. When he started to cry one night, the nurse came to comfort him. He said, "Hold your tongue for God's sake, someone only shit in the well" (MUNFLA ms 76-8, "Folklore from Robert's Arm and Pilley's Island, NDB," collected by Jim Payne and Susan Hopkins, pp. 137-138). In the other the story is told of a man from a Northern Peninsula outport, visiting the Bowaters' company hospital at Deer Lake. In the middle of the night he is told to take a paper cup from the bathroom wall and to drink as much water as he likes. On returning to his room he said, "Me bi, dat's a dinky fine well dat dey got in der" (MUNFLA FSC 80-265, collected by Doreen Ball). Although not listed specifically in Stith Thompson's Motif Index of Folk Literature, nor in Ernest Baughman's extension of Thompson, Tale Type and Motif Index of ..., this story would fall comfortably in the section 'J1742 The Countryman in the great world', perhaps specifically in 'J1742.5, Countryman misunderstands the comforts of the city' (which includes mistaking a latrine for a kitchen). The MUNFLA draft revision of the Motif Index would suggest placing this story in 'J1749 Absurd ignorance', specifically in the suggested category 'J1749.5 Absurd ignorance of modern inventions'.

of outport Newfoundlanders. One such letter of complaint appeared in the competing daily, the Evening Telegram, two days later. Signed "Decency," it began with a general approval of the Barrelman and his stories. But continuing, not so his recent story of the dozen outport men:

Well, if this is Mr. Barrelman's idea of a good story, it may be alright in a Bar-room but for sheer downright vulgarity, I claim it is the most vulgar story seen in print for a long time and displays very poor taste in Mr. Barrelman's sense of humour. In addition to this it is a reflection on the intelligence of our decent outport citizens and further I feel assured that the story was not enjoyed by the readers of Barrelman's column. Please Mr Barrelman, No More Vulgar Stories.¹⁰⁹

The following day another letter appeared in the Daily News defending the Barrelman against Decency's letter.¹¹⁰ The Barrelman's only response was in turn the next day when he appended to his column a short note to Decency: "Will try to do better in future."¹¹¹

The Barrelman also fomented discussion about the "correct" pronunciation of the name "Newfoundland." First in his newspaper column of 31 July 1937, and again on his radio programme almost two years later in late March 1939, he brought up the variant, and "wrong" pronunciations of the word. I deal with this issue in greater detail in the discussion of his cultural politics in Chapter Seven.

¹⁰⁹ Letter to Editor, signed "Decency," Evening Telegram, Mon 23 August 1937, p. 10.

¹¹⁰ "Defence of Barrelman," Letter to Editor, signed C.V.M., Daily News, Tuesday 24 August 1937, p. 9.

¹¹¹ "Masthead," 25 August 1937.

Localisms

The Barrelman used localisms in three main ways. The first was his unselfconscious, or seemingly so, use of items of local lexis, usually without quotation marks, gloss, or other means of calling attention to it. Many of the words he used in this way referred to the traditional activities and environments of rural Newfoundlanders: "smokers" (meaning sea spray), "skinny woppers" (for skin boots), and "tow" (seal carcasses being pulled over the ice by a sealer) are such words. Not all the words refer in this way to rural ways of life; his use of "up South", and "tea-time" for "supper-hour" do not call attention to rurality, but no doubt were referential of a commonly understood past.

As local words disappear from common parlance they often slip into specialised modes. It has been noted that as ethnic groups lose their native languages, dialect words and accented speech can become suffused with humour.¹¹² Folktales can slip from more public performances to rather more intimate ones.¹¹³ So too, local language takes on an intimate tone as it slips from public performance and reminds listeners of family and childhood. The

¹¹² Klymasz, "The Ethnic Joke in Canada."

¹¹³ Geraldine Barter suggests this happened to the folktale tradition in La Grand' Terre, Newfoundland ("Sabot-Bottes et P'tite Galoche': A Franco-Newfoundland Version of AT 545, The Cat as Helper," Culture & Tradition 1 (1976), p.8. On the retreat into a private tradition, a phenomenon he suggests is part of a healthy cycle of revitalisation of the tradition and not a sign of its moribundity, see Gerald Thomas, The Two Traditions: The Art of Storytelling Amongst French Newfoundlanders (St. John's: Breakwater, 1993), p. 43 ff.

unselfconscious use of such localisms by a public-tradition performer increases his personal ties to his audience by these connotative links.

From time to time the Barrelman called attention to Newfoundland dialect as an object of interest by itself. This took several forms. In one case he pointed out that a certain Newfoundland medical doctor was practicing in Britain, and was continually being taken for an Irishman because of his speech.¹¹⁴ In another he quoted at length the non-standard-English curse of an "old fisherman" whose accounts had been fiddled by a corrupt accountant.¹¹⁵ On another date he said that in "one northern outpost" the people use the word "mis'able" as an intensive, or as he says, "in an admiring way"; thus they might say "mis'able fine day" and "mis'able good cup of tea."¹¹⁶

Part of the stock in trade of the Barrelman was the retail of stories in which humour was made of the unsophistication of characters. One way of making clear the

¹¹⁴ "Masthead," 20 November 1937.

¹¹⁵ "Masthead," 22 October 1937.

¹¹⁶ "Masthead," 30 August 1937. He may have been drawing on his own experience, or the folklorised experienced of others in this. But it is equally as likely that he had read one of George Patterson's compilations of Newfoundland Folklore and Language from forty years before. In his 1895 JAF article Patterson even uses one of the same examples: "miserable fine cup of tea" (pp. 27-40). The use of peculiar adverbial intensives in Newfoundland is a matter of traditional remark among Newfoundlanders: I have heard in the past twenty-five years separate discussions of the use of "ugly", "hugeous", and "some", each as an adverbial intensive. His mention of that use of "mis'able" fits the same pattern.

lack of sophistication of his characters was by means of language. As has been shown with regard to the literary and stage uses of dialect, there are conventional forms which make the dialect writer's job and the interpretation by his audience easier.¹¹⁷ The conventional forms are not necessarily congruent with the real-speech forms of dialect speakers. The Barreelman makes use of conventional forms, including malapropisms, in highlighting the speech of characters he wishes to imply are unsophisticated.

A story that the Barreelman got from "the late Bernard Walsh" recounted an answer Walsh made to a girl who looked in at the furniture factory where he worked. She was looking for the laundry next door and asked, "Is this where they does up shirts?" He replied, "No, but this is where they does up drawers."¹¹⁸ The light humour of the story is brought together by its being a purportedly true story, with the usual legend pedigree, as well as having both a quickly thought-up pun, and local language.

On the same day he printed a story for which he gives no source, about a man seen by his employer to be doing

¹¹⁷ On the use of Newfoundland dialect in literature, see my "Dialect Representation in R.T.S. Lowell's Novel, The New Priest in Conception Bay," in Harold Paddock, ed., Languages in Newfoundland and Labrador, 2nd ed. (St. John's: MUN, 1982), pp. 114-123. Recently Graham Shorrocks and Beverly Rodgers have investigated literary dialect, "Non-Standard Dialect in Percy Janes' House of Hate," Canadian Literature 133 (Summer 1992), 129-141; rpt. in Gunnel Melchers and Nils-Lennert Johannesson, eds., Nonstandard Varieties of Language: Papers from the Stockholm Symposium (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell), 1994.

¹¹⁸ "Masthead," 17 August 1937.

nothing while his boat was being loaded. Called into the office he is asked what his job is; "I'm one of the cooks.... Mr. Harvey bakes the bread and I boils the water."¹¹⁹ This is a reference to hard bread or hard tack, which was manufactured by Harvey and Company, and prepared for eating by being soaked in boiling water. There is a thread here of a smart answer being given, so the man's unsophistication is balanced by his wit. As in the previous story, he uses the convention of the suffix -s on a present indicative verb, other than third-person singular, to indicate non-standard English. This is probably the most commonly use marker for those imitating non-standard Newfoundland speech, but it is not the only one. Here the use of a nominative pronoun in a dative slot indicates the same:

One summer the "Empress of Britain", on her way to Montreal, passed through the Straits of Belle. It was very foggy, and she got off course.

She came perilously close to a tiny fishing settlement on the northern side of the Straits, and it was a fisherman there who went aboard and told the captain where he was and what course to take to get on his right path again.

An American tourist happened to be in the settlement, and he expected that the handful of fishermen would be wonderfully impressed, indeed over-awed, by the gigantic ship. The largest ship any of them had seen before was the "Kyle", which would make only a fair-sized tug for the "Empress of Britain." Little however, did he know our Newfoundland fishermen. It takes a lot to impress them.

The only comment expressed by any of the fishermen, as they gazed on the monster ship,

¹¹⁹ "Masthead," 17 August 1937.

came from one man who said: "I'd like to have the paint they put on she!"¹²⁰

A drunk gets similar treatment with a malapropism:

A reader tells me of an incident that occurred in one of the city restaurants not long ago.

A man went in and sat at one of the tables. He was at that state of inebriation where a man is befuddled. The waiter came up to him and asked for his order. The drunk looked stupidly up at him barely able to open one eye -- it took too much effort to open both.

He mumbled something that couldn't be understood, and then spread his elbows on the table, dropped his head on them, and relapsed into what everybody around thought was unconsciousness.

At the next table two men were just finishing their meal. As the waiter came up to them, one of the two pointed jokingly at several slices of bread he hadn't eaten, and remarked: "I haven't eaten this -- shouldn't I get a rebate?"

The drunk at the next table raised his head, fumblingly beckoned to the waiter, and muttered: "Tha's what I'll have -- bring me two rebates."¹²¹

The Barrelman's use of dialect, malapropisms, and "ungrammatical" language is not always clearly to identify speakers as unsophisticated, and at any rate not to separate them from the audience. Instead it seems that sometimes he calls attention to non-standard language in an effort to highlight the perceived differences between "polite" language and that spoken in the normal course of events by ordinary Newfoundlanders. In his newspaper column of 20 April 1938 he told a story of two "refined guests", both of whom he named and one of whom was a religious minister, at a

¹²⁰ "Masthead," 1 October 1937.

¹²¹ "Masthead," 6 October 1937.

dinner in Brigus, Conception Bay. A local gentleman, presumably not as refined, proposed the toast, "Bloody decks to 'en!" This offended the minister despite, as the Barrelman says, there being no offense meant.¹²²

Contemporary language Smallwood lived for several years in New York and for about a year in London. In these metropolitan cities, he sought out circles which he thought were connected to the most modern of issues and movements. He met and interviewed such people as Ramsay MacDonald, leader of the first Labour Government in Britain; Bertrand Russell, the philosopher (of whose lecture he said he understood not a word¹²³); and Eugene Debs, the perennial Socialist candidate for American President. He saw himself as a modernist, although his interests ran to the antiquarian with regard to books and antiques. He claimed to be a constant reader, reading dozens of books a year. His language reflected these influences, with examples of modern usages, both colloquial and educated.

Smallwood's awareness of recent thought in psychology and other fields of knowledge was probably not very unusual among men of his middle class. Newfoundland in the 1930s

¹²² "Masthead," 20 April 1938. Cynthia Lamson used this traditional toast to the sealers as the title of her "Bloody Decks and a Bumper Crop": The Rhetoric of Sealing Counter-Protest (St. John's: ISER, MUN, 1979) and included a photograph of it being used in a store window in St. John's in early 1978, p. iv.

¹²³ "Masthead," 1 December 1937.

was connected by many contacts with the big centres of high culture in the United States and Great Britain.

Newfoundland being a node in the trans-Atlantic cable systems, St. John's papers carried fresh news from both sides of the Atlantic.¹²⁴ Contact with London, Boston and New York was commonplace, with regular steamer routes touching in at St. John's every week. The daily papers carried regular advertisements for the steamers, and the social columns noted the comings and goings of local people travelling to and from foreign ports. At least one reading club, The Old Colony Club, had been established in St. John's in the 1910s; its aim was to keep members abreast of recent literary and intellectual developments throughout the English-speaking world.¹²⁵

One of the terms Smallwood used all his later life, and used throughout his term as the Barreelman was "inferiority complex." Especially in his more politically toned "From the Masthead" column, he took every opportunity to point out the hangdog attitude that he thought Newfoundlanders had about their country, and their propensity for running their

¹²⁴ Melvin Rowe, "In Quest of Foreign News," unpublished address, 20 April 1976, on deposit at the Centre for Newfoundland Studies, MUN. See also Rowe's "Newfoundland: A Centre of World Communication," in Smallwood's Book of Newfoundland IV (St. John's: NBP, 1967), pp. 361-368.

¹²⁵ Not to mention its role in supporting universal suffrage and the establishment of public libraries. See [Agnes Marian Ayre] "Current Events Club -- Women's Suffrage -- Newfoundland Society of Art," in Smallwood, Book of Newfoundland I (St. John's: NBP, 1937), p. 199; and Vincent P. Burke, "Adult Education in Newfoundland," Book of Newfoundland I, p. 296.

own people down and not expecting much success. By contrast, he thought Newfoundland had a great deal to be proud of, and by parading these points of pride, he thought he might do something about ending the "national inferiority complex." This phrase "inferiority complex" derives from Freudian psychoanalysis. It is a comparatively recent addition to the English language, having appeared for the first time in print in English in 1922.¹²⁶

A very similar phrase, deriving from modern psychology, is "split personality" which he used in mid-1938 to refer to the governing Commissioners.¹²⁷ The Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary gives the earliest date for this phrase as 1927. Smallwood's use of neologisms like this suggests an up-to-date outlook on his part, both in his reading and, no doubt, his listening to radio.

The American slang term "bump off," at its acme of popularity in the 1920s and 1930s, has already been discussed.¹²⁸ "Corking good" is a slang phrase that came into existence in the last few years of the nineteenth century and spread from there. He used it to refer to a

¹²⁶ Merriam Webster Collegiate, 10th edition, 1993. OED II notes a first use, still in quotation marks, in 1922, but a use without them in 1924. Its first appearances were in Britain, but by 1925 it was being used in the United States.

¹²⁷ "Masthead," 22 June 1938.

¹²⁸ It was used in the script for 14 March 1938.

"corking good yarn" sent by a reader.¹²⁹ Although the term evidently has not had very widespread use in Newfoundland, the fact that its cognate "corker" appears in the titles of two local song from Conception Bay, shows that it was not a peculiar usage by Smallwood.¹³⁰

Conclusion

Smallwood developed for the Barrelman a voice and persona built up from many elements. His use in balance of both up-to-date slang and scientific terms, and fairly marked localisms and apparently antique phrases made his speech a living complex that despite being not far removed from his own native speech, was certainly not the voice he was known to use casually.¹³¹ For some years before his Barrelman enterprise, Smallwood had been a politician and community organiser, accustomed to casting his voice over a crowd, and accustomed to manipulating the impressions that he would leave with his listeners. As the Barrelman he continued the use of those skills with a new medium, and with new ends.

¹²⁹ Script, 5 March 1938.

¹³⁰ "Wabana, You're a Corker" is one song; Peter Neary, "Bell Island Ballads" Canadian Literature 66 (Autumn 1975), 41-47. "Lobelia, You're a Corker," is an ironic song about stranded fishermen being passed by the ship Lobelia; it was collected by William Hamlyn at Western Bay, April 1967 (MUNFLA 67-6, pp 11-13).

¹³¹ It has already been noted that both his secretary Leo Moakler, and at least one old acquaintance of his from Bonavista noticed the differences.

He used formulas both of his own making and from current speech in developing that persona. In so doing he mixed and exemplified the interaction between what folklorists have called "the two traditions" of folklore. In his public performances of a variety of cultural items, he used some of the hallmarks of more private traditions. Each of these two "traditions" of folklore worked then to reinforce the other -- as he used old-fashioned speech, for example, he underscored his expertness as a performer of Newfoundland stories. As he developed his reputation as expert in Newfoundland history and legendry, his product became more credible for individual listeners to consider remembering and adding to their own repertoires.

By familiarisation and local channelling of stories, he brought home to individuals and communities their connections to the extraordinary people of which he spoke. By exceptionalising the more mundane people and events he spoke of, that is by talking about them on the privileged medium of radio, he made them worthy of talk, and gave them a mythic power they otherwise did not have. Again, this power worked both ways, working to his own advantage as a growing notable in the Newfoundland cultural polity, an arena that was especially important in Newfoundland since the setting aside of a real polity in 1934.

Chapter Six

Legend in the Barrelman TextsGenres of Folklore in the *Barrelman*

As the Barrelman, Joe Smallwood was not trying to collect folklore, despite his later claim to Herbert Halpert that while in that role he had collected all of Newfoundland's folklore.¹ Narváez points out that Smallwood worked as a folklorist would, establishing rapport with his audience/informants, collecting a wide range of materials of interest to him, preserving them, and even making some analytical statements about their relevance to Newfoundlanders.² His primary intentions were literary, in the sense that he was writing to entertain an audience, and rhetorical, in that he wanted, for his own and his sponsor's sake, to keep and develop that audience. To the extent that he saw folklore of certain types as grist for a mill to produce a higher national regard for things Newfoundland his rhetorical intentions were also political or social.³ In his 1982 interview with Narváez, he stated this quite explicitly: "My programme was very political."⁴

¹ See above, p. 50.

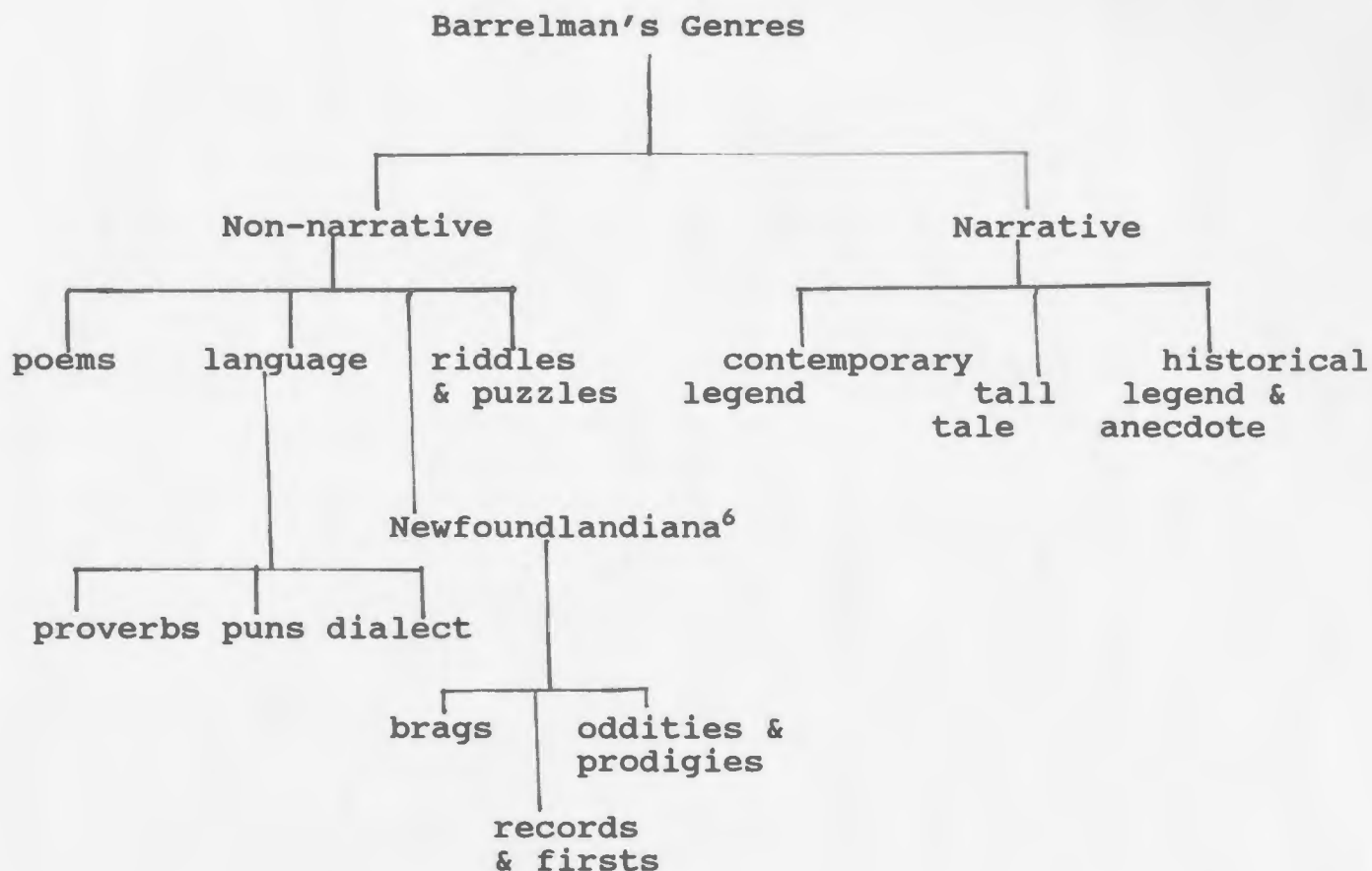
² Peter Narváez, "Smallwood, Barrelman...", pp. 55-56.

³ I Chose Canada, pp. 205-207.

⁴ Explicitly if not succinctly: he goes on to use about 200 words to say that. See Narváez, "Smallwood, Barrelman," p. 52.

Not being a folklorist, he made distinctions among the genres of folklore that folklorists would not normally make. Thus his encouragement of folklore collection and reporting by his listeners was restricted to a few genres, and he virtually ignored others. Although folklorists today tend to collect only narrow ranges of genres, in his time most folklorists, especially those with regionalist bents, cast their nets widely.⁵ Among the genres he seems never to have been aware of, or interested in, are children's games and rhymes, folk beliefs of most sorts, and living traditions of material culture, like housing, cooking and clothing.

⁵ Thanks to Peter Narváez for pointing this out. Helen Creighton in Nova Scotia, and Harold Thompson in upstate New York are two such wide-swath harvesters of regional folklore.



Genres of the Barrelman's items

As Narváez suggests, the Barrelman found the narrative genres, in particular legend, anecdote and especially tall tale, most interesting, or useful. Among the other narrative genres in the Barrelman corpus are personal experience narratives by contributors (as well as by himself), nonsense tales or recitations, and what appear to

⁶ Smallwood never used the term "trivia" which would fit here but which in this sense of "general knowledge facts" is a comparatively recent usage. His term "Newfoundlandiana" includes most of what we would call "trivia" today.

be contemporary legends.⁷ Non-narrative categories included poems, puns, proverbs, lists and reports of "records"⁸ and firsts, amazing oddities, brags, riddles and puzzles, practical jokes, and information of the sort that today is sometimes called "trivia," in particular Newfoundland trivia.⁹ Often this last sort involved taking questions from his audience, much like the American radio programme of

⁷ For example, he told a contemporary legend of Newfoundland's former Prime Minister Sir Edward Morris who was known for carrying umbrellas. One day he accidentally picked up the umbrella of a woman next to him on the train and she accused him of trying to steal it. Next day on the same train, he happened to be carrying three umbrellas (which he had had repaired) and she said, "My, you've had a good day, haven't you?" ("Masthead," 10 September 1937). Alan Mays has pointed out to me that this story appears as a joke in Powers Moulton, 2500 Jokes for All Occasions (New York: New Home Library, 1942), p. 44. Clearly it was in circulation around that time. On another occasion the Barrelman tells the story of a plain-clothes policeman delivering an insane man to the Mental Hospital, but being booked himself, despite his pleas, as he had allowed the patient to carry the committal papers ("Masthead," 28 July 1937). Stories that also may have been circulating as contemporary legends or legend-like beliefs of the time are that the Ford Motor Company would give a free new car to the owner of a Ford motorcar still running after twenty-five years ("Masthead," 14 August 1937); that a man on the Labrador had amassed a small fortune, buried it and then drowned without telling anyone where it was ("Masthead," 7 October 1937); that Newfoundland blueberries were shipped to Boston to be made into strawberry pies and -- the same day -- that a certain man invited a sea captain to a bar, ordered two rums, both of which the captain drank; he then asked, "Aren't you having one yourself?" ("Masthead," 22 October 1937); that a young boy played "postman" with his mother's old love letters, found in a trunk in the attic, delivering one each to all the neighbours (script, 5 September 1940); and that a cat slept on a warm bread pan filled with rising dough and in the morning was completely covered in sticky dough, unable to move (script, 16 November 1943).

⁸ The Barrelman regularly used the word "record" in the sense of "an unsurpassed statistic" (MW 10), a sense which is attested only since the end of the nineteenth century (OED II). Here again this is an example of his using up-to-date, modern language.

⁹ A board game by Cliff Brown was successfully marketed under the name "Newfoundlandia" in the mid-1980s; distributed by Tudorbrook Enterprises, St. John's, its colloquial name was "Newfoundland Trivia." In late 1993 Art Rockwood, host of the popular phone-in show called "Trivia," (on Radio Noon of radio station CBN, St. John's) parlayed information for and from his periodic "Newfoundland Trivia" special programmes into a book, Art Rockwood's Newfoundland and Labrador Trivia (St. John's: Cuff, 1993).

the same era, The Answer Man.

Much of what appeared on the Barrelman was "amazing facts" or reports of prodigious events. In the 1930s Robert Ripley's "Believe it or Not!" had graduated from a decade of newspaper success to radio, a move that attested to the widespread popularity of such information in the media.¹⁰ The popularity of information of this sort clearly extends back at least a couple of centuries; Increase Mather's Remarkable Providences of the late seventeenth century was similar in a number of ways to the Barrelman.¹¹ Not only were they both compendia of unusual events in their regions, they were both seen as deliberate attempts to develop a regional culture.¹² There are obvious rhetorical differences (Mather's primary brief was religious, not nationalistic nor one of entertainment), but there are likewise similarities: the need for names, dates, and places, to ground their stories in evidential values,

¹⁰ Frank Buxton and Bill Owen, The Big Broadcast (New York: Viking, 1972), p. 26.

¹¹ Reprinted several times since then, Remarkable Providences Illustrative of the Earlier Days of American Colonisation has retained its interest. Dorson used an 1890 edition published in London (Jonathan, p. 163, fn. 14). A facsimile edition based on the 1856 (London: J. R. Smith) edition was issued several years ago (New York: Arno, 1977). Peter Narváez includes a publication history of the work, originally called Illustrious Providences, in footnote 1 of his "Increase Mather's Illustrious Providences."

¹² See for example the mid-nineteenth century introductory comments by George Offor, reproduced in the Arno edition of Remarkable Providences, in which Offor suggests that Mather "laid the foundation upon which Washington, Franklin, and their compatriots established the vast and extending empire of the United States of America" (p. x).

and the concomitant desire to connect less-known people to their better-known relatives.¹³ As discussed in the previous chapter this was one of the textural devices of the Barrelman.

In the twentieth century folklorists have normally shown a cultural relativistic respect for the materials they collect, report on, and analyze. As an insider, and an activist one, in the cultural field he was working in, the Barrelman felt no such compunction. When he -- rarely -- included an item of folk belief, for instance a chain letter in early 1938, he made it clear that he had no particular respect for its power, and thus intimated he wanted no more of them.¹⁴ He had somewhat more respect for customary practices, though often styling them "quaint, old customs" and thus diminishing their credibility. Over the course of two weeks in June and July 1938 he received and reported references to the then widespread custom, new to him, of carrying a wooden cross at the head of a funeral procession.

¹³ Mather: "We shall begin with that remarkable sea-deliverance which Mr. Anthony Thacher did experience at his first coming to New England. A full and true relation whereof I find in a letter directed to his brother, Mr. Peter Thacher, then a faithful minister of Christ in Sarum in England (he was father to my worthy dear friend Mr. Thomas Thacher, late pastor of one of the churches in this Boston)" (p. 2, Arno edition). Or, in a story of a ship's crew originally consisting of an old man, a young boy, and a sick man (a very Barrelmanish situation -- see below): "Not long after, another of the company, viz. Caleb Jones (son to Mr. William Jones, one of the worthy magistrates in New-Haven), fell sick and died also..." (p. 42).

¹⁴ The chain letter was read in its near entirety, perhaps entirely, 25 March 1938.

He never neglected to call it an old or quaint custom.¹⁵

The categories just given are not completely congruent with any standard generic breakdowns, such as Dorson's four-way scheme (oral, material, customary, and performative) or Halpert's much more comprehensive "Genre Classification System for Individual Student Collectors."¹⁶ Instead they reflect the output of the programme. Taken in conjunction with the breakdown of subjects, below, they can be seen to reflect conversational forms.

Sources, genres and verisimilitude

John van Maanen has suggested that culture, including folklore, is by its very nature, "emergent, contested, and ambiguous."¹⁷ Members of a cultural community never fully agree on what constitutes their culture, nor on the meaning and form of any part of it. It is on these factors that much cultural evolution lies. The lack of concord has as its corollary an appetite in certain individuals for more of what they see as their culture; the two factors together mean a constant reevaluation and reproduction of "emergent" culture.

¹⁵ See the programmes of 24 June 1938, 27 June 1938, and 18 July 1938.

¹⁶ Richard Dorson, Folklore and Folklife, pp. 3-5; Herbert Halpert, "Genre Classification System for Individual Student Collectors," Department of Folklore, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1971.

¹⁷ Tales From The Field (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1988), p. 127.

In the Barrelman scripts we see these factors at work. The Barrelman would call for more information from his listeners, who would supply more facts, more background, new interpretations, and wholly new stories. He played an active role in the production of this emergent canon of Newfoundland stories. He took every opportunity to show his own expert knowledge while calling on listeners to help out with theirs, usually a more local kind of knowledge.

...Mr. Harold Lacey writes from the Sanatorium asking me to settle an argument about the steamship "North Star," a tourist boat owned by Clarke Steamship Company and running between Montreal and Corner Brook. One of his fellow patients, John L. Byrne, claims that she is ten thousand tons. Well, I'm afraid Mr. Byrne is wrong -- she is three thousand and fifty-five tons. And, before I forget it -- another listener wants to know if I can say who had the first radio receiving set in Newfoundland. I don't know myself, but perhaps some listener can give us the information.¹⁸

Typically, letters and phonecalls, as well as contacts in person and by wire, arrived when the Barrelman asked for more information. They also arrived when he did not ask for them. Listeners' contributions might contradict him, clarify what he had said on air, or expand on it. The following letter arrived some time after the original item was aired:

Bell Island
Feb. 16th 1939

Dear Mr Barrelman,

Perhaps you might remember a story you received & read last year, about the 3 boys from

¹⁸ Script, 24 May 1938.

Bell Island who went swimming in March (1936). The names of those boys were omitted then, but if you have that story still in your possession would you kindly read it again including the names which are as follows.

Gerald, Jim and Ned Shea were the name[s] of the boys and the young man who found them swimming was Bill Miller.

I remain,
"Ramona"¹⁹

Part of the Barrelman's reasoning behind asking for follow-up information from listeners was to engage the audience, thus giving individual listeners a stake in the show and livening up the programme. But clearly another part of it was to establish what modern folklorists would call "context." He wanted his listeners to be as careful as "Ramona" had been about including names, dates, and places. In late February 1938 he scolded a contributor much as a teacher might scold a student:

An unsigned letter from Brigus says that in the fall of the Big Gale on Labrador -- that would be a good many years ago, of course -- a vessel came into Holton. Where she came from my correspondent doesn't say, but the point of interest about her was that her crew consisted of her skipper, who was a very old man, her mate, who was almost as old, and a young boy.²⁰ On the Saturday of the gale she left, and wasn't gone long before the terrible gale sprang up and wrecked dozens of schooners and hundreds of boats up and down the coast of Labrador. Nothing was heard of the schooner for a long time, and then it was

¹⁹ CNS COLL-028 file 2.02.018.

²⁰ This is a recurrent motif in the Barrelman, that of a man in the company of one or more old men or young boys, or other men who because of illness or injury are no longer fully able to pull their weight, who must practically single-handedly operate a sailing vessel. Increase Mather tells a very similar story from seventeenth century Massachusetts; see above, footnote number 13.

discovered that she had run across the Atlantic in eleven days to Gibraltar. ...[sic] My main reason for telling this story is to illustrate how unsatisfactory a story can be when all the particulars are not given by the listener who sends it. This story, of course, should give the schooner's name, the names of those aboard her, where she belonged, and what she was doing in Holton. I hope that all listeners who write in will take the hint to give as many particulars of this kind as possible.²¹

A few days later he took this a step further and seemed deliberately, for humorous effect, to obfuscate a listener's meaning:

And, from Flat Islands, Placentia Bay, comes a telegram that has me guessing. It has no signature, so I don't know who's sent it. Here's how it reads: "Born to Mr. and Mrs. F. W. Diamond a son on second day of March. First boy in family for forty years." What do you make of this, ladies and gentlemen? When the word family is used, does it refer to one married couple and does it mean that forty years ago they had a baby boy, and now a second one? Or does it mean that forty years ago they had a son, and probably some daughters subsequently, and that this forty-year-old son was subsequently married, and that both he and his married sisters have had children, but all girls, until the present boy was born a couple of days ago. It's all a little confusing, but perhaps, ladies and gentlemen, you can figure it out better than I've done. Anyway, hearty congratulations to the parents of the new baby.²²

He opened his programme of Monday 30 May 1938 with another scolding:

Ladies and gentlemen, good evening. "What do you think of this for a walk?" asks a city listener who signs himself "A.B.C." "Two girls, one of

²¹ Script, 28 February 1938.

²² Script, 4 March 1938.

Burke Square and one of Sebastian Street, left on May the twenty-fourth for a walk, and where do you think they walked? Right to Bay Bulls Middle Pond and back. They left at seven o'clock in the morning and got back at eight o'clock in the evening. Mr. Barrelman, what do you think of that for a walk?" Now that, ladies and gentlemen, is a pretty good example of how unsatisfactory a letter can be. While I naturally appreciate the interests of the listener who wrote the letter, I can't help pointing out how much better the story would be if he had given the names of the two girls, as well as their ages. These are the little details that make a story. Why did they walk so far? How many miles did they walk? What did they do when they got there -- and so forth and so forth. A perfectly good story can be ruined by leaving out details such as these.

A function of such detailed accounting of events is to increase the appearance of truth in his narrations. Halpert has shown how verisimilitude can act as an aesthetic quality in folksong.²³ Similarly in the Barrelman, the greater the verisimilitude, the more applicable a story would be to Smallwood's plan of increasing popular confidence in Newfoundland and Newfoundlanders. Nonetheless, even with full accounting of names, dates and the like, a range of verisimilitude appears in the Barrelman's items. There are items which read now (and presumably sounded then) very much like excerpts from history textbooks. Now and again he will give a historian's name as authority for such stories,

²³ Herbert Halpert, "Truth in Folk Songs: Some Observations on the Folk Singer's Attitude," in John Harrington Cox (ed. H. Halpert), Traditional Ballads Mainly from West Virginia (New York: National Service Bureau, 1939), pp. ix-xiv.

"Judge" Prowse, for example.²⁴ Reprinted in facsimile in 1972, Prowse's History of Newfoundland is often, still today, cited orally as authority for points of popular Newfoundland history, especially in the presentation of legends.²⁵ Many oral reports of Princess Sheila, for example, claim, "That's in Prowse's history."²⁶ As with the form of such statements, the authority carried by claims like this is similar to that of "Bible of the folk" legends (for example, that regarding the alleged biblical allusion to a certain mark on pigs arising from a run-in with the devil: "It says so in the bible"²⁷).

A step down, as it were, from full historian's authority is the credited oral report. Of all the sorts of items the Barrelman reported on his programme, this is the most common. Stories of dangerous trips, wrecks and other events at sea; of long walks undertaken by Newfoundlanders; of contributors' relatives and friends who left Newfoundland and became successful or famous in foreign places; anecdotes about past politicians, doctors, lawyers, and

²⁴ Daniel W. Prowse, A History of Newfoundland from the English, Colonial and Foreign Records (London: MacMillan, 1895; rpt. Belleville, Ont.: Mika Studios, 1972).

²⁵ George Story notes the common belief that Prowse's History is "the one indubitable source of accurate information about Newfoundland, as the definitive history." "Judge Prowse (1834-1914)," Aspects 3:4 (April 1971) (= Newfoundland Quarterly 68:1 (Spring 1971), 19).

²⁶ See my discussion, below.

²⁷ MUNFLA Folklore Survey Card 69-006E/106.

journalists; wily tricks played on people; and other topics of local and national interest are among such reports.

Finally there are items which clearly were marked as jokes and not to be believed, except by the most credulous of listeners. In this category are the more outrageous tall tales, some jokes, and items clearly made up for the sheer fun of nonsense.

Listeners were no doubt attuned to some of the Barrelman's performative differences among the several levels of verisimilitude and thus they are able to make decisions for themselves about whether to believe different items. The Barrelman sometimes made explicit warnings of the sort, "I am not sure that I believe all of this...." More often he would not be so explicit; instead, he would read the item as received, with no textual caveat regarding its possible untruth, but perhaps relying on the tone of his voice to suggest that his credulous performance was tongue-in-cheek. Clearly, though, listeners disagreed on whether or not to believe stories and on whether the Barrelman himself believed or expected them to believe the stories.

That the Barrelman liked the ambiguity of satire, and the possibility of fooling some listeners, is suggested by his use, at least three times, of a story from his friend W. M. Dooley, a former Newfoundland journalist living in Boston. The story was of an anonymous column Dooley wrote in the Corner Brook daily paper Western Star; the column

was called "Bottle Cove Notes" and it was a spoof of rural life. Bottle Cove is an isolated community just outside the Bay of Islands for which Corner Brook is the main commercial centre. In one column Dooley had made mention of plans to build an opera house in Bottle Cove. The following day the newspaper editor received an earnest letter from the community explaining that someone had pulled the wool over his eyes and that there were no plans to build an opera house there. This was thought to be amusing both by Dooley and the Barrelman.²⁸

The diagram that follows shows sample sources and topics along the continuum of verisimilitude found in the Barrelman texts. Verisimilitude is the likeness, appearance or likelihood of truth, not -- like historicity -- objective truth itself. It should not be construed as being like Scott Littleton's 1965 "scheme for the classification of narratives," which was based on matters of historicity, rather than verisimilitude.²⁹

²⁸ He used it at least three times: "Masthead" 22 November 1937; in the Barrelman newspaper, issue #1; and on the radio programme in late September or early October 1937 (undated script, file 1.01.001, p. [20]).

²⁹ C. Scott Littleton, "A Two-Dimensional Scheme for the Classification of Narratives," JAF 78 (1965), 21-27. Littleton's scheme appeared in the same issue of JAF as William Bascom's "Forms of Folklore," which came at classification from a functional point of view and had long reaching effects; Littleton's came as a quasi-structuralist work but, rooted in the traditional and problematic idea of using historicity as a factor in typology, it was in the main ignored.



Continuum of verisimilitude in Barreman texts with examples of the topics and sources

At the extreme left side of the diagram are items which are delivered in a straight-forward manner, oftentimes with a published source reference given, and containing historical accounts of Newfoundland's past: census figures; interactions with other countries; and the actions of wars, natural disasters, politicians and other public men. In the middle of the diagram are stories delivered again in a usually straight-forward manner, and with named individuals given as sources, usually by their written correspondence and sometimes by their oral accounts: they might have dropped in to the Barreelman's office, or he might have met them in the street. Many of these stories are living-memory accounts of the same kinds of events that could -- were the source published -- be treated as the previous sort: experiences in court and during wars and natural disasters are typical. Many are more private experiences, in less public circumstances: local stories of strong men and other prodigies, both human and natural, for example. And finally on the right side of the diagram are segments of his programmes representing obvious facetiae on his or his contributors' parts, clear impossibilities and obvious nonsense. Most of these came from named sources, but patent pseudonyms and simply withheld names were fairly common.

Legends fall into the range from the extreme left to somewhere to the right of the middle. Memorates, or personal experience narratives, fall into the central area.

Tall tales fall more to the right of centre. And nonsense tales fall at the extreme right hand.

From time to time stories of "pirate gold" were told with local, oral credentials. Like contemporary legends, such stories (for instance of strangers coming ashore, digging in a certain spot, and leaving during the night with only a hole in the ground behind them) seem to lack the likelihood of historicity to the folklorist who has heard them before.³⁰ But in the context of the programme, and given their credentials, such stories probably seemed true:

A very interesting pirate gold story comes from Trinity -- and that's a coincidence because that other gold story I told last week also came from Trinity. This present story took place some ninety-five or a hundred years ago. It isn't quite as completely documented as last week's story, but as its author is the late Canon Lockyer I think we may accept it as quite true in every respect.³¹

The week before he had told the story of a man who in the early nineteenth century left his employment as a fishing "youngster" at Trinity, eventually finding his way to the

³⁰ Joyce Coldwell, "Treasure Stories and Beliefs in Atlantic Canada," (PhD diss., MUN, 1977) has many instances of this type of story from around Atlantic Canada. See especially pp. 231-238. On 17 August 1994 a coin and stamp dealer in St. John's told me that some years before he had invested in a scheme to bring up "kegs of coins" from a wreck near St. John's. The ship, back in the days when foreign currency was as common as official currency, was contracted by the Newfoundland government to take to Europe as many "old, foreign coins" as could be found in the colony. But it went ashore, losing its cargo. The dealer believed that the divers he funded found a fortune in these coins but he never saw any of it. They had "disappeared off to Montreal" and he received nothing for his investment. His story is similar to the legend, showing the motif still to be very much in circulation.

³¹ Script, 9 March 1938.

Quebec-Labrador North Shore where he fell into a cave filled with icicles of gold. He secretly transported them to Quebec City and made a fortune large enough to set himself up in business back in England.³² Dorson notes that the Astor family fortune is said by Maine legend to have been founded when an Astor cheaply acquired a pirate treasure found in a cave on Deer Isle, Maine.³³ Coldwell notes two versions of the Newfoundland cave of gold icicles, both clearly related to that told by the Barrelman.³⁴

Verisimilitude and belief

Although it is convenient to apply a continuum of verisimilitude to the Barrelman's stories, it is likely that listeners merely reacted in one of three ways: true, could-be-true, and false. Just as likely, some of the middling stories were believed by some and disbelieved by others.³⁵ As already pointed out, there were people, perhaps many, who

³² Script, 3 March 1938. The motif of a Treasure in Underground Cave is N512; Thompson, Motif Index of Folk Literature.

³³ Dorson, Jonathan, p. 178.

³⁴ Coldwell, "Treasure Stories," pp. 222-223. The two similar texts are on MUNFLA tape 74-195/F1691 and in the St. John's Evening Telegram, 21 October 1974 ("Offbeat History: 'Youngster' Stumbles on Wealth"), p. 6. Coldwell, not knowing the Barrelman version, does not mention that the latter was written by Michael Harrington, former Barrelman, who was Editor at the Telegram at the time. Coldwell does note that the informant for the former text (74-195) thought it had been published in a "weekly" newspaper some time before; this may have been the Barrelman/Newfoundlander newspaper (a monthly).

³⁵ Kenneth Goldstein made a similar point about credit given to traditional beliefs in Scotland in his "The Collection of Superstitious Beliefs," Keystone Folklore Q 9 (spring 1964), 13-22.

did not put much faith in the truth of the Barrelman's output.³⁶ To "tell more lies than the Barrelman" became a familiar epithet in at least one Newfoundland community, lasting until a time when those using it no longer knew who the Barrelman was.³⁷

Recently folklorists have tried to plumb the meaning of "belief" with regard to supernatural elements and superstitions.³⁸ It has been found that belief -- especially belief in items or classes of items known to be contentious -- is rarely a binary opposition of yes or no, belief or disbelief. Rather more often it is a matter of negotiation among participants in a performative event.³⁹ Gillian Bennett notes the existence of "partial belief" and the deliberate use of "face saving ambiguity" by users.⁴⁰ Herbert Halpert notes the apparently anomalous situation of his Newfoundland students reporting a local attitude of

³⁶ See for example my interview, 5 July 1993, with Gus Coultas, MUNFLA tapes C13936-7/93-261.

³⁷ MUNFLA Folklore survey card 66-13/53, from Grand Bank in the mid-1960s, by a student who grew up in the 1950s and '60s; the student wrote, "I have not been able to find out what or whom the 'Barrelman' is." In turn, the epithet is based on a variable one, "To tell more lies than ____" where the blank is a local person's name: see "More lies than Harold Osborne" (of Upper Island Cove), in MUNFLA ms 76-333.

³⁸ For example, Gillian Bennett, Traditions of Belief: Women, Folklore and the Supernatural Today (London: Pelican, 1987) and Gary Butler, Saying Isn't Believing: Conversation, Narrative and the Discourse of Belief in a French Newfoundland Community (St. John's: ISER, MUN, 1990).

³⁹ See for example, Butler, Saying Isn't Believing, pp. 2-3.

⁴⁰ Bennett, Traditions of Belief, p. 27.

belief in tall tales, thus making tall tales a species of legend; in Halpert's experience most performances of tall tale are that of fiction.⁴¹

By way of explaining this kind of anomaly, Barre Toelken gives a nice example of how complex the situation of telling exaggerations and tall tales can be in an American village. Tellers may appear to corroborate one another's story, while local youths, not fully conversant with the form, laugh at the jokiness of the stories. Meanwhile outsiders are merely annoyed that they are so obviously being lied to.⁴² One might surmise that Halpert's students, being young and not yet fully integrated into the local cultures of tall tale telling, are still mistaking the verisimilitude for historicity or belief.

Whether or not the stories of pirate treasure seemed credible to the Barrelman's listeners, they fall in the central range of verisimilitude. Less obviously "true", and thus falling closer to the "untrue" end of the scale, is the tall tale. Most tall tales are not legends in the strict sense; rather they are "tales", but the difference between the two classes is not sharp. Part of the subtlety of telling tall tales is the inclusion of exactly the kind of information that the Barrelman wanted: dates, names and so

⁴¹ Halpert, "Definition and Variation...", p. 51.

⁴² Barre Toelken, The Dynamics of Folklore, p. 112. Toelken has a good bibliographical survey on the American regional tall tale teller, p. 118.

on. This performative grounding in reality has been recognised by non-folklorists and folklorists alike. Lowell Thomas wrote: "The tall-story tellers customarily embellish their narrations with a wealth of grave circumstance."⁴³

Richard Bauman says of the same telling technique:

The more common story of personal experience, told straight-forwardly as truth, contextualizes the tall tale; it contributes to the latter's humorous effect by establishing a set of generic expectations that the tall tale can bend exaggeratedly out of shape.⁴⁴

Bauman goes on to point out that "the effect is reciprocal" drawing the traces of the lie around the contextual frame of historic fact. The Barrelman continually thought it necessary to counter his reputation as "liar" and, as noted above, writers like Abram Kean found it necessary to warn him against a boy-that-cried-wolf reputation.⁴⁵ If it were always clear what in folkloristic terms purports to be legend, and what tale, such a problem would never arise. But the Barrelman used that ambiguity to advantage, increasing the entertainment value of his programme.

That it is sometimes difficult to see the lines between truth and fiction has been stated before, with regard to the Barrelman by Peter Narváez, and to other bodies of tall

⁴³ Tall Stories (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1931), p. 3.

⁴⁴ Story, Performance, and Event: Contextual Studies of Oral Narrative (Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture; Cambridge: CUP, 1986), p. 20.

⁴⁵ See Chapter Five, "The Texture of the Barrelman", pp. 179-180 (fn. 106).

tales, for example by Gustav Henningsen.⁴⁶ Part of the poetics of the tall tale is to include enough realistic detail to make the story indubitable or so slightly suspect that the more credulous will believe. In the context of the Barrelman's plan to broadcast stories of Newfoundlanders who seemed larger than ordinary life, extraordinary events were normalised. Some Barrelman items seem to be straight reports of what had recently happened in a community: a man may have lifted a large load, but not so large as to seem impossible to the uninitiated or to any person who does not know well what, say, a barrel weighs. It is difficult to say with any certainty that such an item was meant as a tall tale as it fit in nicely with the clearly meant-to-be-believed stories of daring, courage and ability. Some stories began with perfectly plausible detail, and grew only slightly more implausible.

Polly Stewart suggests that the long-standing (deriving from the Grimms) attribution to legends of a "non-poetic" nature is quite wrong. The Grimms wrote in the introduction to their German Legends: "The fairy tale is more poetic; the legend is more historical."⁴⁷ More than a century later, through von Sydow and others following the Grimms,

⁴⁶ Narváez, "Smallwood, Barrelman"; Henningsen, "The Art of Perpendicular Lying," p. 218.

⁴⁷ Jakob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, ed. and trans. Donald Ward, The German Legends of the Brother Grimm (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1981; orig. 1816-1818), vol. 1, p. 1.

the statement had become a convention of folkloristics.⁴⁸

To the contrary, Stewart clarifies the poetics of legend-telling -- its crucial techniques are those to make it seem as much as possible like one is not telling a "story."⁴⁹

She points out that neither belief nor form has been able to provide folklorists with a clear definition of the legend genre over the years; rather, performance provides the defining characteristics. The simplest words and forms of words are preponderant: past tenses, finite verbs, active voice. One of the stylistic features is a near-approximation of everyday speech (this contributes to believability), so literary forms such as metaphor, hyperbole, simile are missing. "The strongest surface feature of legend style is understatedness" (p. 4). Legends are "more consultative and interactive than other kinds of oral narrative" and unlike the joke, they "do not require the building of suspense" (p. 6).

It is interesting that in analysing the political speeches of Joe Smallwood, Robert Paine comes to many of the same conclusions about his rhetoric: it was direct, almost

⁴⁸ Von Sydow found the Grimm's distinction "unsatisfactory" only for the reason it did not distinguish enough among the single-episode and multi-episodic narratives, and the complex contexts in which they are told; "On the Categories of Prose Narratives, in Selected Papers, pp. 86-88.

⁴⁹ Stewart, Polly, "Style in the Anglo-American Legend," Motif 6 (October 1988), 1, 4-6.

metaphor-free, and it approached everyday speech.⁵⁰ Only Stewart's understatedness stands out as not being compatible with Paine's analysis. Smallwood the Barrelman, who used legend to such an extent, and Smallwood the politician were rhetorically very close.⁵¹

Stewart claims that unlike tale, legends have no "discernible pattern of openings and closings" (p. 5). This is probably true for historical legends, but on this point we might distinguish the tall tale and contemporary legend from the historical legend: the asseveration often forms an opening or closing formula. By asseveration I mean that class of introductory and/or closing statements which plead credibility, usually by an appeal to the authority of previous tellers. Although not a textual formula, it is a structural element whose inclusion can be seen as a quasi-formula.

The Grimms to the contrary, the legend is artistic in its telling: the understated performance is a requirement of the genre and a well-told legend is one told in this credible fashion. Indeed, some of what Stewart suggests about legend proper can be said about the tall tale; it is this performative similarity to the legend that has made the

⁵⁰ Paine, "The Persuasiveness of Smallwood," pp. 67-68.

⁵¹ Paine also notes the use of the "cuffer," a Bonavista Bay term for tall tale, which was one of Smallwood's favourite genres as the Barrelman. Paine is drawing on James Faris, Cat Harbour (St. John's: ISER, MUN, 1972), pp. 28 ff.

tall tale a species of tale in some folklorists' estimation and a species of legend in others'.

At the other extreme end of the continuum of credibility, and here we might add historicity, are examples of obvious nonsense of the sort "One bright day in the middle of the night...." The Barrelman's audience sent him several of these and they served the function of calling attention to the lying nature of less obvious exaggerations, parodying them. A letter from "D. Trooth" in February 1938 complained about those listeners who cannot tell the difference between tall tales and true ones.

Now, here is a true story, as anyone can tell by just listening to it -- you may have heard it before, because the same thing happened to my twin brother, if I had one. It happened quite a while ago, perhaps before you were born. I was just a boy of 72 at the time; just 174 years ago this coming 32nd of December.⁵²

The story continued with frogs' legs, frozen in the St. John's harbour, harvested by means of a lawn mower and sold on the French market at a huge profit.⁵³ The Barrelman, in the same tone of obvious folly, offered a free ring on the bell to whomever would bring in the writer's scalp.

Although the use of nonsense from time to time lightened the show and may have -- from Smallwood's point of

⁵² Script, 27 February 1938.

⁵³ This motif, of mowing frozen frogs' legs and turning the harvest to fortune, is migratory; it turns up, for example, in the collection of Alberta tales, Johnny Chinook by Robert Gard (Toronto: Longmans, Green, 1945), p. 207.

view -- helped underscore the historicity of the "true" stories, just the opposite was happening with some listeners. The deliberate ambiguity of some tall tales and the obvious facetiae, like D. Trooth's, made the question of truth, the degree of verisimilitude, a difficult thing to measure for some listeners.

Topics of stories

The Barrelman's stories cut a wide topical swath through Newfoundland life, but several topics were more likely than others to appear. The activities of men at work were prime: sealing, fishing, sailing, mining, and woods work each provided a large number of stories. Other occupations that Smallwood was familiar with, or had contact with were likewise common topics: politicians, journalists, railwaymen and cab-drivers.

It is a commonplace among journalists that cab-drivers are good first sources for information about a community. Not only were many of the Barrelman's stories about cabbies, but many stories on other topics came from cabbies. Horwood suggests that it was while he was Barrelman that Smallwood was first able to afford a car.⁵⁴ He gives no date for the purchase, but from the frequency of cab-driver stories, which eventually declines, it was probably after the first year. In Smallwood's autobiography, I Chose Canada, he too

⁵⁴ Joey, p. 60.

makes reference to his acquisition of a "second-hand car" around that time, but again no date is given.⁵⁵

Sports and recreational activities were common topics; wrestling and boxing were his clear favourites, but hockey, baseball, skating, race running, trouting, and the St. John's Regatta were all included. As Smallwood had walked a lot himself, and liked to brag of it in his programmes, he received and made many reports of long walks, walks under extreme conditions, and walks by old people or by women. He was especially likely to tell stories of men who walked hundreds of miles to find work. When challenged on 28 March 1938 to walk from St. John's to Bell Island over the sea ice in three hours, he proudly enumerated his many long walks, but also hinted that he was not in practice.

Among the topics not mentioned with any frequency in the Barrelman programming was, oddly, the occupation of whaling, an important part of the economy of southern Trinity Bay. Although a sizeable portion of his audience were women he rarely made reference to them in his stories, except when they grew old and were still active in their community, knitting goods for charity, going to church and the like, or if they'd had a large number of children. His valorisation of 115-year-old Mrs. Ellen Carroll is sometimes hailed as one of the most remarkable events of his time as

⁵⁵ I Chose Canada, p. 208. By late 1942 he certainly owned a car as he mentioned it in his programme; see for example, his narrative about meeting Tom Dormody, toy-maker; script, 2 December 1942.

the Barrelman.⁵⁶

But activities of women's daily lives such as laundry or baking were not matters for the Barrelman's broadcasts. From time to time he received and reported on letters pointing out this gender failure.

Miss Ada Chaytor of Chamberlain's, near Topsail, has evidently been listening to this program. And evidently she doesn't think it's entirely fair and square for me to be always cracking up the men of Newfoundland. What about the women, she asks. And then, to prove that Newfoundland women are not one bit behind the men in industriousness and the power to do hard work, Miss Chaytor outlines some of her own work. Last summer, she says, she tilled the land herself -- her own land -- and here's what she raised on it: one hundred and twenty barrels of potatoes, two tons of parsnips, thirteen hundredweight of carrots, thirteen hundredweight of beet, two hundred pounds of tomatoes, three hundred vegetable-marrows and pumpkins, seven barrels of apples, as well as a quantity of lettuce, and flowers -- and on top of all that she harvested about twenty gallons of gooseberries and black currants, raised six pigs, seventeen young turkeys, and a hundred and twenty chickens. And on top of that again, during the summer she catered to several boarders. Every morning she'd be up at dawn, and working every evening till after dark -- and never a soul to help her, she working all this time single-handed. Miss Chaytor winds up by saying that 'twould be worth anyone's while to drop in, next time they're at Chamberlains, and see her gardens. I think I'll do that, Miss Chaytor, next time I'm out that way. If you raised all you've mentioned in that list, it's a gold medal you should get.⁵⁷

Although Smallwood already had a strong interest in

⁵⁶ See for example Janet Pitt, "Ellen B. Carroll," ENL I (St. John's: NBP, 1981); Narváez, "Smallwood, Barrelman," p. 53. Smallwood's own account is in The Time Has Come to Tell (St. John's: NBP, 1979), pp. 233-234.

⁵⁷ Script, Tuesday, 28 June 1938.

gardening and farming, he had not yet acquired his farm on the outskirts of St. John's when this item was aired in mid-1938. Miss Chaytor's achievements were notable both from the point of view of Newfoundland agriculture and from that of women doing "men's work." Again without hearing Smallwood's oral delivery of the item, it is impossible to get a full picture of his tone regarding her achievements. But, like the exception that proves the rule, this example of a woman doing "men's work" only underscores his avoidance of topics of women's daily life and work. For the most part he valorised men's life and men's work in Newfoundland -- it was men who most easily could be his heroes.

Legends in Barrelman texts

The largest and most apparent genre or category of item in the scripts of the Barrelman is the legend. I here use the term "legend" more or less as folklorists have used the term for about thirty years, to indicate that class of narrative "told as truth." The legend as a genre has been defined by folklorists with little agreement among writers and with few congruencies among the three main European terms, "legend", "legende" and "Sage."⁵⁸ Having grown out of the French term "legende", meaning a *reading* on a saint's life, English "legend" was early associated with religious

⁵⁸ See for example, Laurits Bødker's discussions in his International Dictionary of Regional European Ethnology and Folklore (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1965), pp. 173-178, 255-259.

stories; for this reason many writers used the cumbersome phrase "legends and traditions" in which "traditions" referred to secular legends.

Maria Leach's two unsigned articles in her Standard Dictionary of Folklore at "Legend" and "Local legend" both represent a view of the genre which was certainly in decline in the late 1940s. Especially in the second of these entries (the only two entries in the entire dictionary with the word "legend" in their titles, despite that word being part of the full title of the dictionary itself), the antiquarian view appears: local legends "give the unmistakable signs of antiquity, embodying long-dead customs and a primitive mythology."⁵⁹ In the following couple of decades a crystallisation of the term was made around William Bascom's breakdown of prose narratives; I remain close to Bascom's lines which distinguish generally between the truth genres ("legend") and the fiction genres ("tale").⁶⁰

In the development of legend definition during this century the factors of core belief and historicity were tied to several definitions as a result of separate sets of problems with definition. For belief scholars (for example

⁵⁹ Maria Leach, ed. Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend (New York: Harper and Row, 1984; orig. 1949), p. 640.

⁶⁰ I am leaving aside Bascom's "myth" category which does not apply in any careful way to Barrelman materials; William Bascom, "The Forms of Folklore," JAF 78 (1965), 3-20, passim.

Hand), there was no legend without a core supernatural belief. Wayland Hand was able to say as late as 1965: "Belief is the hallmark which sets the legend apart from the folk tale."⁶¹ It is only a short step, of course, to William Bascom's (and Herbert Halpert's) told-as-truth versus told-as-fiction distinction.⁶² The difference lies in whether legend is seen as a species of belief or of narrative: Hand saw it as the first. Though some folklorists -- notably Linda Dégh -- have continued to do so, most scholars since then have seen it as the second. Bill Nicolaisen is representative of the narrative group:

Legends are, first and foremost, narratives, are stories; indeed if they are not narrated, they are not legends but something else, beliefs maybe or rituals or sayings or rumours, but not legends.⁶³

There has been a long-standing connection made in folkloristics of legend to matters of belief, but just as much confusion surrounds belief as surrounds historicity.

⁶¹ See for example Hand's rather one-sided, belief-centred survey, "Status of European and American Legend Study," Current Anthropology 6:4 (1965), 439-446.

⁶² Halpert expressed this distinction in his contribution, "Definition and Variation in Folk Legend," to the Hand symposium American Folk Legend, pp. 47-54. Bascom laid out the territory for a generation of folklorists in his "Forms of Folklore."

⁶³ Wilhelm F. H. Nicolaisen, "Perspectives on Contemporary Legends," Fabula 26: 3/4 (1985), 214. Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi, "Legend and Belief," in Dan Ben-Amos, ed. Folklore Genres (Austin: U Texas P, 1976), pp. 93-123; originally Genre 4:3 (1971), 281-304. See also Dégh and Vázsonyi, "The Crack on the Red Goblet or Truth and Modern Legend," in R. M. Dorson, ed. Folklore in the Modern World (The Hague: Mouton, 1978), pp. 253-272.

Several writers have suggested that a legend is any utterance (narrative or otherwise) which includes embedded or "core" beliefs.⁶⁴ This has led to recent developments in which the term "urban legend" has been used for mere statements of belief (for example, "Procter and Gamble is run by Satanists" or in the context of the Barrelman, "Ford gives new motor cars to owners of twenty-five-year-old Ford cars."⁶⁵). There is no doubt that historical, local legends can be reduced to mere assertion, or even questions of the sort "Didn't the Devil make that mark?", and thus continue their transmission. This is exactly the sort of effect and process noted by Larry Small in his discussion of "genre change": legends become mere proverbial phrases, used for a variety of purposes in which a full, narrative legend might not be appropriate.⁶⁶ Legends, like any species of common knowledge, have the ability to be recognised in guises other than their full formal attire. But nonetheless it is not very useful to call mere beliefs "legends."

Unlike Bascom, I have found it convenient to make some distinctions between legend proper (what some have called "traditional legend" or what Dorson used to call "oral folk

⁶⁴ For example, Patrick B. Mullen, "The Relationship of Legend and Folk Belief," JAF 84 (1971), 406-413.

⁶⁵ "Masthead," 14 August 1937.

⁶⁶ Lawrence G. Small, "Traditional Expressions in a Newfoundland Community: Genre Change and Functional Variability," Lore and Language 2:3 (1975), 15-18.

legend") and other "truth" genres such as the anecdote (that told humorously about a well-known individual), and the contemporary legend (that told about a period more or less contemporaneous with the telling, often including a joke-like twist).

Despite striking differences between them, the contemporary legend, as discussed and analysed over the past fifteen years, is remarkably like the tall tale.⁶⁷ They both achieved in their times a cachet of interest in the media which made them well-known as genres to the public, the tall tale in the early part of this century (and earlier), and the contemporary legend in the 1980s and '90s. Both are told for entertainment, and both trade on their ambiguity, although it is clear that while it is belief more than fictive entertainment that drives the transmission of contemporary legend, the opposite seems to have been true of the tall tale. As noted above, their ambiguity leads in both cases to quasi-formulaic asseverations regarding their truth.

Dorson found it useful to distinguish among "oral folk legends", "literary legends" and "popular legends."⁶⁸ The first of these needs no explanation; the second includes

⁶⁷ I thank Neil Rosenberg for pointing out to me the social similarities between tall tale and contemporary legend.

⁶⁸ See for example his use of these terms in his essay, "Defining the American Folk Legend," in American Folklore and the Historian (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1971), pp. 157-172.

legends of the sort that circulate in history textbooks, and through them; the third is that class of legend which trades back and forth between these two territories. I have not made such distinctions, even though I am aware of differences in source and often in tone. There is a problem with Dorson's distinctions when they are applied to the Barrelman legends: a much larger proportion than Dorson would have liked of local legends today might be considered "popular" ones. It is doubtful that such pristine "folk" traditions have ever existed for very long -- authoritative or prestigious performers and media soon find outlets. If a pure, pristine folk tradition of North American legends were to exist in this century (and perhaps as new traditions come into being, there is such a period), it would quickly be "disturbed" by the background of near-universal literacy and near-universal access to the electronic media. In Walter Ong's term, in this century there are few centres of "primary orality" to allow the continuing status of Dorson's "folk legend."⁶⁹

Dorson's attitude to "literary" legends was not as strict in his first work with legends, Jonathan Draws the Long Bow, a book-length study of legends and tales found in newspapers and other popular literature in 17th to 19th

⁶⁹ Walter J. Ong, Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word (London: Methuen, 1982), p. 6.

century New England.⁷⁰ In Jonathan he makes no typological statements, except that of his table of contents, which shows a five-way breakdown of supernatural stories, Yankee yarns (which he further breaks into yarns of greenhorns, tricksters, and "originals" or local characters), tall tales (including strong man stories that certainly grade from the legendary to the fictional), local legends (of toponymy, tragic events, ghosts, and treasure), and a discussion of tales as developed by literary authors. He uses the rather elegant general term "stock fictions" several times to include all these sub-genres.⁷¹ In 1946 Dorson found a difficulty in separating the two traditions of oral and literary transmission:

...only half -- perhaps less than half -- the credit for spreading American popular tales and legends belongs to vocal avenues.... New England traditional narrative has also been perpetuated or even been initiated in literary form -- that is, in ways quite other than the unbroken oral descent whose interception is sought by scientific folklorists."⁷²

Thirty years later he had come to a more rigid division of the two traditions, with only a comparatively small area

⁷⁰ Richard M. Dorson, Jonathan Draws the Long Bow: New England Popular Tales and Legends (Cambridge: Harvard U P, 1946).

⁷¹ "In the United States the practice of narrating stock fictions becomes a firmly fixed social trait; but [unlike in, say, Europe] such tales run to the comic anecdote and local legend, the tall story and trickster yarn, rather than to the creation myths, prose sagas, animal fables, aetiological tales *Märchen*, and *novelle* familiar in medieval, classical, and primitive cultures" (p. 3).

⁷² Jonathan, pp. 12-13.

of "popular" overlap. A strict breakdown of the legends of the Barrelman following Dorson's later one denies the folkloric quality of such historical material both at source (where the Barrelman got them) and at target (what the audience did with them); thus it too denies the "mythic" power of such texts and motifs. There is certainly a folklore of the class of people who write history and that folklore is consumed by those people who are hungry for information about "their" past as much as oral folk traditions and whatever one might call accounts strictly based on documentary historical sources. The Barrelman's radio-telling of historical accounts, oral legends in source or whatever, crystallised them in the same way that a preacher's sermon might transform jokes into parables and crystallise parables into history. His broadcasts were a publication; like printed publication, broadcast materials were touched by the prestige of the medium.

Another difference between my usage of "legend" and Dorson's, is that he used the word to refer not to a single text, but rather to the entire constellation or cycle of texts referring to a single event or person. "Local legend, to my thinking," he wrote, "can never be accepted in one text, for the proof is on the legend collector to demonstrate that it pervades the social group."⁷³ In the

⁷³ "How Shall We Rewrite Charles M. Skinner Today?" in Wayland D. Hand, ed. American Folk Legend: A Symposium (Berkeley: U California P, 1971), p. 85.

same year, 1971, he wrote: "No one individual knows the whole legend, for by definition it is a communal possession."⁷⁴ In contrast to Dorson's use of the term for what I would call "legend types", on the model of Thompson's "tale type", I have tended to use "legend" to refer to individual texts. Only rarely do alternative versions of legends appear in the Barrelman materials. Smallwood, as the Barrelman, preferred to treat the texts not as versions of legends, as a folklorist would, but as individual glimpses of history and thus building-blocks of his mythos.

In terms of presentation on the Barrelman programme, all such categories of legends appear to be equivalent; if there is a difference it is that Dorson's "literary" legends are less likely to be given source attribution by the Barrelman. Often the Barrelman said from what published source he got legends, and in particular he frequently used Prowse's History of Newfoundland, but he did not attribute with consistency.

Prowse's History is rich in its use of personal, oral sources; despite its subtitle, From English, Colonial and Foreign Records, the text is a rich weave of threads from published, unpublished and oral sources. George Story in his retrospective review of Prowse's life and work points out his strong use of oral, anecdotal material.

There is nothing better in his History than

⁷⁴ "Defining the American Folk Legend," p. 161.

Prowse's vivid sense of the personalities of his leading figures. Prowse knew nearly all of them; and when he didn't know them he was able, more than any other Newfoundland historian, to draw upon an incomparably rich oral tradition and to use this tradition with deliberation as primary source material.⁷⁵

Examples of this weave abound -- especially in his footnotes -- throughout the part of his History that deals with first or second-hand living memory.⁷⁶ For instance, his anecdotes from the "second American War", that of 1812, are notable for their vivid picture of young men shooting at bottles of champagne to divide up seized American booty.⁷⁷ Prowse is more well-known for his intrusion of personal opinion into his History; especially when covering the period through which he lived and worked, the last decades of the nineteenth century, his opinions show through on almost every page. After telling a whimsical anecdote about the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry, he opines, "Badinage apart, there are very grave objections to the appointment of a judge on a political inquiry of this nature." His next note is a gleaming biographical sketch of the former Governor Sir J. H. Glover, at the end of which he

⁷⁵ Story, "Judge Prowse (1834-1914)," p. 23.

⁷⁶ George Story later wrote of Prowse, hinting at his colloquiality: "Everything he wrote was informed by his acute and lively sense of history.... Prowse's History retains its value both for its pioneering use of primary original sources and for its stamp of authorship: human insight, learning and style." "Prowse, Daniel Woodley (1834-1914)" in R. H. Cuff, et al., Dictionary of Newfoundland and Labrador Biography (St. John's: Cuff, 1990) (hereafter DNLB).

⁷⁷ Prowse, History, pp. 387-390.

says, "No more honourable, generous, kind-hearted, or active ruler ever presided over our Government."⁷⁸

Prowse was the object of much anecdotal badinage himself, if his appearances in the Barrelman's writings are something to go on. "What a great raconteur we lost when Judge Prowse died!" the Barrelman began his "Masthead" column of 20 April 1938. Prowse had died in January 1914, when Smallwood was barely thirteen years old, so it is not likely (though possible) that he knew Prowse's abilities from first-hand experience.⁷⁹

The Barrelman himself was a raconteur of legal and court stories and likely was in regular contact with someone who passed on to him some of Prowse's anecdotes. Nonetheless, he also repeated many stories from Prowse's writings, notably the History. The column of 20 April 1938 was mainly written from several anecdotes from Prowse. Most have to do with language and linguistic play, including a pun by a local man, Tom Mullock ("brother of Bishop Mullock"), who was told the Newfoundland interior was fit only for bears and replied the country was "barely known."

⁷⁸ Prowse, History, pp. 500-501.

⁷⁹ Story, "Prowse," DNLB. To this day Prowse is a character of some popular interest. His Münchhausen-like character, retailing anecdotes with himself at the centre of them, is used in Frank Holden's play Judge Prowse Presiding, originally a radio play broadcast on the CBC national programme Morningside in 1989, and later adapted to a stage play. Pamela Gill, "Holden Revives Judicial Role," Evening Telegram 18 June 1994, p. 61. An excerpt from a book which dealt in part with the eccentricities of Prowse was recently published: Philip Gosse, "A Visit to Newfoundland 99 Years Ago," Newfoundland Quarterly 88: 3 (April 1994), 11-14.

When he sold a piano, he delivered it on a hearse saying it was "a dead bargain."⁸⁰ The next anecdote has already been noted -- an occasion when the traditional toast "Bloody decks to 'en!" was used in the polite company of a religious minister who took offense without knowing the meaning of it. The remaining two anecdotes attributed to Prowse in that day's column are about Henry Beck, the St. Lawrence privateer, and about a Newfoundland ship that started its career as a trans-Atlantic slaving ship, something the Barrelman asks his readers to help with more information on. In other columns too he relies on Prowse explicitly: a pun made by a barrister asking that his client, a man from Italy, land of the finely painted walls, be "whitewashed" by the court⁸¹; and a comment from a local man that the seals in a certain place had been so plentiful that "even the dogs and the women made ten pounds a man."⁸²

Anecdotes about Prowse himself appear as frequently. A story the Barrelman says he heard from Sir William Coaker about Prowse is told in his column of 16 August 1937. Apparently Prowse had had some difficulty convincing London publishers to take the manuscript of his History. He concocted a scheme to get some blank Buckingham Palace stationery and wrote a letter of introduction for himself on

⁸⁰ Smallwood took these from footnote 1 on p. 464 of Prowse.

⁸¹ "Masthead," 29 July 1937.

⁸² "Masthead," 14 September 1937.

it. The next publisher welcomed him and published his book. Two months later the Barrelman told of Judge Prowse's willingness to let a well-to-do, minor felon go free on condition he buy a couple of copies of his book.⁸³ A month after that he included a story that he heard from former Newfoundland Prime Minister Edward (later Lord) Morris, whom Smallwood knew in London. Prowse used to write obituaries about notable people, local and locally-connected people. Morris had said that he wasn't looking forward to Prowse's obituary of him. Prowse took some offence, but Morris was quick-thinking enough to say that what he meant was he was sorry he'd never be able to read it.⁸⁴

Another anecdote about Prowse was included in a column a couple of months after the last mentioned one. Prowse was apparently a well-known sporting man, and travelled "up" the Southern Shore fairly frequently to go trouting. While on one of his trouting trips, near Cape Race, he had the light-keeper signal to a liner travelling between Halifax and St. John's to pick him up. A letter to the Barrelman from a descendent of the light-keeper, Frank Myrick, also the Cape Race light-keeper, explained that Prowse paid the full Halifax-St. John's fare for his trip.⁸⁵ Later in that year

⁸³ "Masthead," 25 October 1937.

⁸⁴ "Masthead," 15 November 1937.

⁸⁵ The letter from Frank Myrick appears in the "Masthead" column of 31 January 1938. Myrick is correcting an earlier item that must be lost; I have not found it in either the columns or the radio

Smallwood used two Prowse anecdotes in the Barrelman programme: one about his appearance at the "Battle of Fox Trap" to ease tensions there during the laying of railway track, and another about his being the judge in a lawsuit brought by a Mrs. Leamy, a "charmer" of ill, against a man who had not paid her the agreed dollar fee.⁸⁶

These anecdotes by and about historian and Judge D. W. Prowse illustrate the difficulty of making distinctions as Dorson did between "oral folk legends" and "literary legends." Of the Prowse anecdotes, presumably only those actually heard by Smallwood and transmitted without the use of print from Prowse's time to his own would qualify as the first. Those anecdotes published either by Prowse himself or by others, and thus transmitted by print to Smallwood, would qualify for the second; but since these stories likely also lived rich lives in the mouths of people interested in Newfoundland history along the way, they must be considered not literary legends, nor oral folk legends, but popular legends. Most historical legends of any wide currency would no doubt fall into the same category, weakening the power of the distinction entirely. In

programmes. One newspaper (19 January 1938) is missing from the microfilm that month, and it may have been that issue.

⁸⁶ The "Fox Trap" story appears in the script for 27 June 1938. On the famous skirmish between railway workers and local people opposing the extension of the line through their properties see Janet Pitt, "Foxtrap," in ENL II (St. John's: NBP, 1984). Pitt relies both on Prowse's and other contemporary accounts. The charm doctor case, the outcome of which was not known to the Barrelman, is included in the script for 9 September 1938. He says it happened "fifty years ago."

literate societies, especially those in which literacy protects and preserves a historical knowledge that is prized by enthusiasts of the culture, there may be no such thing (at least not in a diachronic view) as a pristine "oral, folk" tradition apart from the literate culture with which it interacts. Not only was Joe Smallwood such an enthusiast of Newfoundland culture, but so too were many, and to varying degrees perhaps all, of his audience.

Legend motifs in the *Barrelman*

David Buchan has suggested with regard to the contemporary legend that type indexes may be impracticable.⁸⁷ A common criticism of Reidar Christiansen's Migratory Legend type index when it appeared in the late 1950s was that type indexes would not work well for the legend.⁸⁸ Contemporary legends do not seem to recur *in toto*; rather they seem to mix and match motifs. Instead of there being a superorganic bank of legend types from

⁸⁷ David Buchan, "Modern Tradition and the Rolls-Royce," in Paul Smith, ed., Perspectives on Contemporary Legend (Sheffield: CECTAL, 1984), p. 100.

⁸⁸ Reidar Th. Christiansen, The Migratory Legends: A Proposed List of Types with a Systematic Catalogue of the Norwegian Variants (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatamia, 1958). Reviews which criticised his mixing of motifs and types were by Wayland D. Hand, "Status of European and American Legend Study" Current Anthropology 6:4 (1965), 439-446; Herbert Halpert, "Definition and Variation in Folk Legend," in W.D.Hand, ed., American Folk Legend: A Symposium (Berkeley: U California P, 1971), pp. 47-54; and Heda Jason, "Concerning the 'Historical' and the 'Local' Legends and their Relatives," JAF 84 (1971), 134-144.

which tellers choose, there seems to be a motif bank from which new combinations are brought together from time to time. This might be said, though perhaps with less force, about the historical legends which appear in the Barrelman.

Legend motifs that recur in the Barrelman are local treasures lost (or gained by privateers); strong men; household animals' amazing feats (cats, dogs and hens in particular); endurance by men lost for days in open boats during foggy weather, in larger vessels during stormy weather, and on foot on mobile sea ice⁸⁹; long walks made by men and women, especially to get to or find work; ships crewed by a single individual, sometimes with aged or very young help; "record" fast trips by vessels, cars, walkers and animals; wily tricks, bluffs and frauds; placename origins; shipwrecks and other marine tragedies or near-tragedies; heroic people by virtue of the risks they ordinarily took; and unsophisticates.

Christiansen's motif index of "Migratory Legends" is the only general index of its type and its intent was to extend the Aarne-Thompson Tale Type Index into legends. In fact it deals with only a small number of the sort of mainly non-supernatural legends that comprise most of the Barrelman

⁸⁹ The most famous such story of a man adrift on mobile ice is that of Wilfred Grenfell, told by himself in his book Adrift on an Ice-Pan (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1909). It is intriguing that Smallwood never mentions this story. Indeed he never mentions Grenfell himself, not even to note his death in February 1940. Rompkey (Grenfell of Labrador, p. 214 and others) notes a strong antipathy between Grenfell and Smallwood's mentor Richard Squires, and no doubt this party line was toed by Smallwood.

corpus. However, about a half-dozen legend types from Christiansen are secular and at least two of these fit in a very general way with the Barrelman stories: Type 8000 "The Wars of Former Times", and Type 8010 "Stories about Hidden Treasures." Examples of each of these, both from historical literature, and from personal presumably oral sources, have already been noted here.

Although most of the Barrelman's stories are fully localised, some of them represent motifs and types that have circulated internationally. Christiansen's Type 7050 "Ring Thrown Into the Water and Recovered in a Fish" is a typical example. The Norwegian variants noted by Christiansen generally have a deliberate tossing of the ring, usually a matter of the tosser's pride, explicitly or implicitly testing the power of God to bring the tosser to ruin; ruin follows when the ring is found in a fish's stomach. The Newfoundland versions in the Barrelman scripts show loss of wedding and engagement rings. In one case the ring -- thrown overboard to symbolise a broken wedding engagement -- was found later that same year in a fish's stomach; in another the ring was accidentally lost not at sea but in a potato garden where, fifty years later, it was found by the woman whose wedding ring it had been.⁹⁰ Unlike the

⁹⁰ The ring overboard is in the script for 5 September 1940. The potato garden story is 7 September 1938. Stories of rings in fish abound in the modern folklore of Newfoundland. For example, Mr. Nix Rossiter of Fermeuse, told Greg Pretty in November 1976 (MUNFLA tape C2681/76-496) of a ring having been found in a cod stomach; it bore the

Norwegian stories, they have no implied moral lesson -- they are merely prodigious and fortuitous events.

Other stories of objects lost overboard, some to be found and others not found, included guns, anchors, a crowbar, and even a dental plate (which was found, but no one knew to whom it belonged).⁹¹ Such stories led inevitably to the same motif being used in tall tales: watches being found still telling true time, having been regularly wound by tidal action; watches lost in the woods and worn a year later by a rabbit caught in a snare; and, more than once, pipes lost overboard being found still lit in the mouths of fish.⁹² A powderhorn lost overboard is dove after by the dorymate of its owner; having been gone too long he is followed by the owner who finds his friend

name of a woman who drowned on the S.S. Florizel nearby. Other mementos including a knife from the Florizel were found over a period of several decades.

⁹¹ The gun, lost in loose ice and jigged after the ice moved out: "Masthead," 20 December 1937. The anchor, lost during storm, but found by "dead reckoning" and setting a new anchor, "Masthead," 24 December 1937. The crowbar, which was not found and is in fact a jocular tale ("It's alright, sir, we know where it is."), undated script, September 1937 p. [8]. The dental plate found in the woods behind Battle Harbour, Labrador, and thought to have been dropped by a seagull that got it from a fish; script, 25 March 1942. In 1994 a story appeared in the St. John's Evening Telegram that showed the international nature of the motif. The Associated Press wire story was locally entitled "Cod still good for a laugh", making reference to the fact that for two years no fishermen have been allowed to catch cod in Newfoundland waters. It told of a Dutch fisherman whose false teeth were found in a cod stomach two months after they were lost overboard. The story turned out to be a prank played on the fisherman by acquaintances (Evening Telegram 17 December 1994, p. 1).

⁹² The watch around the rabbit's neck, script 17 January 1940. Two versions of the still-lit pipe are in scripts 19 and 22 February 1938.

emptying the powder into his own horn.⁹³

Stories of treasure and privateers came from a variety of sources, including published histories, listeners' letters, and -- apparently -- Smallwood's own personal memories of stories he had heard. An example of the first, those from published sources is that of the Newfoundland privateer, Henry Beck from St. Lawrence, who was said by St. Lawrence tradition to have captured a French vessel in 1814. While taking it ashore at Harbour Breton his crew were overpowered by the French crew, who took them to Boston for several months. Beck died en route.⁹⁴

The Barrelman seemed careful to pronounce English-speaking pirates "privateers", but other nationalities "pirates." On 9 March 1938 he told the story of how some Trinity Bay fishermen discovered and made profit from kegs of Spanish "pirate gold" that were lost when a Cartagena pirate "mis-reckoned his course" and was wrecked at Baccalieu Island about 1840. The following spring local fishermen discovered the remains of the ship in the water and "to their indescribable joy" jiggered up kegs "filled to the brim with gold coins of all the nationalities under the sun -- the fruit, of course, of the pirates' unholy trade."

⁹³ Script, 17 February 1938.

⁹⁴ This story comes directly from D. W. Prowse's 1895 History, p. 389; in turn Prowse heard it from an "old friend" living in St. Lawrence. The Barrelman used it in his "Masthead" column of 20 April 1938.

He distanced himself from the story's veracity with:

Of course, as we all know, nearly every settlement in Newfoundland is supposed to be the burial place of pirate gold -- and the same might be said of neighboring Nova Scotia, and even New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

At the same time he underscored the possibility of the story's being true by giving as its source the late Reverend Canon Lockyer. His overall tone is that of ambiguity -- listeners are left to their own devices of criticism. No doubt some took it as truth, others not.

The Barrelman's interest in strong man stories was an early one, as Peter Narváez has shown.⁹⁵ It remained a continuing interest both by him and his audience, though the preponderance of strong man stories declined somewhat after the first six or eight months. Stories were recycled after some months into the Barrelman newspaper (later the Newfoundlander), so interest was rekindled from time to time, starting new reports coming in, especially from areas of Newfoundland not regularly reached by the radio broadcasts. Examples of strong man stories are not hard to find in the scripts for 1937 and 1938 -- almost every second night's script shows some. By 1940 the interest had diminished, but in January of that year at least two were broadcast, 20 and 23 January 1940.

Stories of amazing household animals were included in

⁹⁵ "Joseph R. Smallwood, the Barrelman" in Media Sense.

the earliest Barrelman columns and radio shows. On 31 July 1937, in the first two weeks of the "Masthead" column's life, a story was included about a cat that outwitted its owners; they kept killing its kittens, but she fooled them by having a litter outside, bringing only one kitten home each day. They ended up keeping the whole litter, making the story a kind of cautionary tale against the wiles of a mother cat. The column touched off a series of cat and hen reports in the column and on the air, including one in which a cat and a hen each tried to raise the other's brood. Five months later such stories were still appearing on the programme.⁹⁶

Stories of men lost for days or even weeks at sea, usually in open boats in poor weather with other hardships such as lack of food and water, became standard fare for some time on the programme in early 1938. As the Barrelman would tell one story of the endurance of extreme hardship, listeners would tell stories of another more extreme adventure. These were often in first-hand accounts but more often were told -- legend-fashion -- by a fellow townsman of the survivor. A kind of bragging contest developed, but unlike some other bragging contests, this did not develop into one of tall tales. Perhaps all concerned felt that danger and death at sea were too close to everyday life and

⁹⁶ See for example the story of a cat and a hen sharing a nest, and the hen raising kittens; script, 24 November 1937.

work in Newfoundland to make joking references to it. Smallwood's intent was to valorise the heroes who underwent such real-life experiences; telling tall tales of that ilk would only undermine that plan. A tall tale is told of a man stuck in the woods for several days in a storm; both he and his dog survive by making a soup from the dog's tail -- the man has the soup and the dog the bones.⁹⁷ Being set in the woods, this story is safely removed from the more tragic sea.

One particularly tragic story told of two young brothers, eight and ten years old, who were caught in their small boat by a change of wind and driven offshore for ten days. Only one boy survived, having had to bury his younger brother at sea. Another told of two men and the seventeen-year-old son of one of them; having lost their mast, they drifted for a time before their boat broke up on a rock. They clung to the rock for several days while being washed over by the higher waves. The two older men died, but the son lived long enough to be saved by a passing boat.⁹⁸

The Barrelman, Joe Smallwood, was proud of his having done a lot of walking. He publically admired those who undertook long or arduous walks, and those who in old age continued to walk long distances. As noted above, when he

⁹⁷ Script, 26 February 1938.

⁹⁸ Script, 25 March 1938. Similar stories are peppered through the first three months of 1938: for example, 3 February 1938, 21 February 1938, 9 March 1938.

mentioned on air that some listeners doubted the ability of two boys from Bell Island to walk home from the west end of St. John's, across sea ice, in a total of three hours, the two boys challenged him to try it with them. He thought it was a good idea for them to stage a race, but his own involvement was not to be called for lightly:

I think they might just be a little more cautious in issuing challenges to all and sundry, especially the Barrelman. The Barrelman isn't as young, and possibly not quite as lively, as he was ten or fifteen years ago, but then he wouldn't need to be to put up a pretty good walk, and he isn't exactly a cripple yet. Here are a few of the Barrelman's walks in Newfoundland. In 1925 he walked across Newfoundland from Port aux Basques to St. John's, and at the same time covered some side walks besides during the same trip. He wore out three pairs of boots during that walk, and arrived in St. John's some twenty pounds lighter than when he started his walk at Port aux Basques, -- and if you knew him well you'd know that he can't afford to lose twenty pounds, like the undersized little man in the boarding house who complained of bugs in his bed: "It isn't that I mind the bugs so much, mam," he explained apologetically, "but I really can't afford to lose the blood." In 1934 the Barrelman walked some twelve or thirteen thousand miles, and in 1935 nearly two thousand miles. So if Messrs. Davis and Andrews will amend their challenge to include all but the Barrelman, theirs will be a much safer one to issue. (And now I hope they don't come back stronger than ever, ladies and gentlemen, because right now I don't feel a bit like walking -- I want to save all my breath for these broadcasts.....)⁹⁹

Fred Moores of Pouch Cove walked to and from Cape St Francis, and then St John's, a total of about fifty miles in one day, in between hitching a ride across Conception Bay to

⁹⁹ Script, 28 March 1938.

"ship" a girl to work with him for the summer, and buying his summer's salt in St. John's (8 February 1938). Aunt Hannah Legge, of Heart's Delight, 81 years old, still regularly walked in the fall six miles in to the berry-picking grounds (27 February 1938). Uncle John Butt, of Broad Cove, Bay de Verde, 92 years old, was still walking twenty miles into the country for his cattle the previous year (2 March 1938). A Miss Jennings walked through deep snow from Torbay to St. John's to get to her place of work (31 March 1938). A man sent his new stove home by boat but walked the ninety miles himself. Upon arriving home he realised the wrong oven had been included, so he walked back to St. John's with the oven on his shoulders, got the correct one, and walked back home again (1 April 1938).

The overall effect of such stories was to paint a picture of Newfoundlanders generally being active people who wanted to work. This was at a time when unemployment was very high and a current slur was that Newfoundlanders commonly did not "want to work." It would be an exceptional listener who tried to remember many of the individual texts about extraordinary walkers and workers. But it would be equally exceptional for a listener to discount the truth of all his attributed and detailed stories of named people. In these examples he is attacking the slur implicitly, but Smallwood took it on quite explicitly with some frequency: "And you'll hear people say that Newfoundlanders are lazy

and don't want to work!"¹⁰⁰ Or:

And still, ladies and gentlemen, you'll hear people talk about our people being lazy and not wanting to work. While there's a spirit about such as this Elliston man [who walks every year to Deer Lake for work, and back] possesses, we needn't fear for the ultimate future of Newfoundland -- and that's something you can bank on."¹⁰¹

The motif of long or arduous walks, in legend form, was common on the Barrelman. In one anonymously contributed item, it was, perhaps inevitably, turned into a tall tale. A certain man hated to spend his money. He was known for having filled up so much at an "all you can eat" meal that the restaurant owner refunded his money and asked him to stop eating. Rather than take the train and spend seventy cents to get home, he walked. He tried to talk his companion into walking, offering to carry the companion and take his seventy cents if he couldn't walk the whole way.¹⁰²

The Miss Jennings who had walked through snow-closed roads to get to work was a typical example of stories which seemed to appear whenever there was a big snow storm. Stories of people caught without the usual modern conveyances of trains or busses would reach the Barrelman and he would repeat them, often with some variation on "And by the way did I hear someone say the Newfoundland breed is

¹⁰⁰ Script, 7 March 1938.

¹⁰¹ Script, 5 February 1938.

¹⁰² Script, 30 March 1938. No source is given for this anecdote except to say "I was told today of a man..."

dying out?"¹⁰³ Likewise stories of men walking across Newfoundland for work were popular.¹⁰⁴

The "Irish Princess" and the Barrelman

I have shown that Smallwood took his material from many sources, some of which were the oral traditions of his listeners. The history and evolution of some Newfoundland folk legends can be traced through him. Notable among them is the now widespread legend of Sheila, "The Princess of Carbonear," a story with intriguing roots earlier than the Barrelman's intervention, but with a crystallised form afterwards.

Smallwood was clearly responsible for the greatest and most widespread promulgation of this local legend before the second half of this century. It fit very easily into his view of Newfoundland, as a melting pot for the the various schisms that had previously cut through Newfoundland life. The Sheila legend is a microcosm of his view of Newfoundland life: a Catholic, Irish woman, and a Protestant, English man, who together founded a family tree that still grew in the twentieth century. Not only did they represent two major factions of Newfoundland life, they were also founded on the one side by "one of the best families of the West of

¹⁰³ Script, 27 February 1938. A similar statement was made 8 February 1938.

¹⁰⁴ See for example several scripts in March 1938: on the 7th, 8th and 29th.

England," and on the other by one of the traditional royal families of Ireland. Since their establishment predated the first official colony in Newfoundland (Guy's of 1610), then one could logically say that blue blood founded the people that is now Newfoundland. It was a rich legend that served Smallwood's purposes well by taking on two of the basic problems he saw in Newfoundland politics and culture -- religion and sectarian ethnicity -- while leaving unquestioned more basic structures of class and aristocracy. As will be discussed later, Smallwood's political attitude to religion was complex, but he frequently attacked sectarian attitudes in hiring and trade. The Sheila story literally married the two main sects in Newfoundland culture, and made meaningless the sectarian walls that existed among Newfoundlanders.

The legend of Sheila has existed in Newfoundland for at least most of this century. Its gist is that one of the early settlers of Mosquito and Carbonear, on the North Shore of Conception Bay, was an Irish woman named Sheila who came from royal or aristocratic blood, and who married an Englishman named Gilbert Pike; together they began the large Pike family in Newfoundland.¹⁰⁵ The legend has been

¹⁰⁵ Mosquito changed its name to Bristol's Hope early in this century. Carbonear is one of two medium size towns within five miles of each other, the other being Harbour Grace, both of which are commercial centres for that part of the Bay. Mosquito lies between the two larger towns. A short history of Carbonear is given in Harold Paddock, A Dialect Survey of Carbonear, Newfoundland, PADS 68 (University, Alabama: U Alabama P, 1981). Another short history is J. Ralph Dale, "Carbonear" ENL, I (St John's: NBP, 1981). The Pike family name was the

very closely tied to both popular history and popular literature throughout the last half century, and it is not an easy task to draw the print and oral traditions apart; in fact the two are wound together inextricably. Most writers on the topic of this legend have addressed the problem of historicity, a difficult one in this case because no primary, or major secondary sources refer to the woman whom the legend is about. Almost without exception writers have been popular historians, rather than professional historians, and they have avoided the citation of authority in presenting the information they have newly found on the topic. The nearest one gets to the presentation of source in most of the printed works is a sentence like that opening the earliest known written account, which is worth quoting in its entirety:

From tradition handed down by the Pike family, from whom there can be nothing more reliable. [sic] The mother of the first white child was called Sheila Nagira, a young Irish lady belonging to the aristocracy -- who was being sent by her friends in Ireland to France to go into a Convent to finish her education under care of her Aunt, who was an Abbess. On her voyage this ship was captured by a Dutch warship. This Dutchman was in turn captured by three British warships, sailing under Letters of Marque with 1175 soldiers, besides their crews, commanded by no other than the redoubtable Peter Easton, who was then on a voyage to Newfoundland, and he landed his captives at Harbor Grace. Peter Easton was at that time sailing in the British service. His success with

22nd most common surname in Newfoundland in 1955, being about two-fifths as numerous as the most common: E.R.Seary, with Sheila Lynch, "Appendix 1: The Order of Common Surnames," Family Names of the Island of Newfoundland (St John's: M.U.N., 1977, 3rd printing 1980), p. 524.

profit and spoils led him with so many others at that time into piracy and disobedience to the British Admiralty. The Lieutenant or second in command of this squadron was Gilbert Pike, who belonged to one of the best West of England families. He fell in love with this young lady, which was reciprocated, and they were married by the Chaplain of the Fleet. They decided to remain in Newfoundland rather than continue the voyage. They took up their residence in Mosquito, where the best houses were built, and there was born the first white child in Newfoundland. This was prior to Guy's arrival and settlement. The traditions always say that Sheila Nagira was looked upon as an Irish Princess from Connaught, and every Irishman frequenting Newfoundland would make obeisance to her whenever they saw her. The Pikes claim descent from her.¹⁰⁶

This account, suffused with traditional motifs and phrases, is written by William A. Munn, a friend of Joe Smallwood and, like Smallwood, a member of the Executive Committee of the Newfoundland Historical Society. Smallwood eulogised him when Munn died in October 1940, mentioning his death on two programmes, and using most of one of them to speak of his affection and respect for Munn.¹⁰⁷

One motif that arises with some frequency in the retelling of the story is that of the "first white child" in Newfoundland. In retelling the story, Smallwood repeats the motif several times, but sometimes adds a cautionary note of information from Prowse that at the John Guy colony at Cupids in the winter of 1611 a boy was born, and that this child is normally thought of as having that distinction.

¹⁰⁶ W. A. Munn, "History of Harbor Grace -- Chapter Five -- Colonization," Newfoundland Quarterly 34:3 (December 1934), 5-8.

¹⁰⁷ Scripts, 22 and 23 October 1940.

The idea of a "first white child" was abroad in local folklores; Richard Dorson reports it being current in the mid-1940s in Luce County, Michigan.¹⁰⁸

Of course, the legend of Princess Sheila predated Munn's account, but his spelling of the surname ("Nagira") does not match the family traditions current at that time. The traditional pronunciation in Carbonear appears to have been "Sheila Mageela" [mƏ 'gi: lƏ]. This is attested by the report given to Christina Pike by one of her informants, Mrs. Flora Downton: "Now, we used to say Sheila McGeila."¹⁰⁹ This was repeated to me in November 1989 by Mrs. Downton:

Olive Mews, that's Carman Mews's wife, ... her name was Olive O'Geela. Well, we always called it Mageela. But now they call it MaGria. As far as I know, she was, I used to hear them say that Olive was called after her, her second name was Olive Mageela.¹¹⁰

Mrs Olive (Elliott) Mews was born in 1917. Olive's mother was following a widespread tradition in Newfoundland by giving her daughter a middle name which represented a surname from her own distaff side of the family (the Pikes). Olive's own account of how that name was chosen instead of what she now believes is the correct spelling and

¹⁰⁸ Bloodstoppers and Bearwalkers, p. 182. The motif appeared in somewhat more modern terms ("the first recorded Anglo-Saxon birth in Newfoundland") in a short news item by Mike Flynn, "Cupids Re-enacts Historic John Guy Landing of 1610," Evening Telegram 22 August 1994, p. 6.

¹⁰⁹ MUNFLA ms 72-259, p. 32.

¹¹⁰ Interview, Mrs Flora Downton, MUNFLA 90-106.

pronunciation of the Irish princess's name, NaGeira, was told to me in 1989:

When Mother decided that she wanted to christen me that, they got John--, there was a man here who started the Daily News, John Alexander Robinson. That was years and years and years ago. Well he went over [to Carbonear], they were friends of my mother's family, and they went over and apparently they cleaned off what they could of the old gravestone. And as near as they could make of it, he said, it was M-A-G-E-I-L-A. And that's the way I spell my name.¹¹¹

Olive Mews' middle name is in fact the earliest documentary trace we have of the Sheila legend. Though her mother rhymed it with "Sheila," Olive herself now pronounces her middle name to rhyme with "phyla": [mƏ 'gaI lƏ], to reflect better her understanding of how Irish should be pronounced.

In the same period, though remembered some seventy years later, is the memory of historian Cecil Reynolds, of being warned as a boy of five in Carbonear from stirring too close to the Pike clan. "They come from pirates," his grandmother warned him in about 1911.¹¹²

That there is no mention of the Irish Princess in Reynold's memory of the legend suggests an esoteric-exoteric factor in the life of the Carbonear legend at the beginning

¹¹¹ Telephone interview with Mrs. Olive (Elliott) Mews, 13 December 1989. John Alexander Robinson (1862-1929) was founder and longtime editor of the Daily News. His association with Carbonear began when he was a schoolteacher there in the 1880s; Robert H. Cuff, "Robinson, John Alexander," DNLB.

¹¹² Cecil Reynolds, "The Pike Legend," unpublished 1982 manuscript, MUNFLA ms 86-338, pp. 081-087.

of this century.¹¹³ The one legend, or legend cycle, appears to have had two quite different meanings, with equally different facets and motifs being foregrounded. Within the Pike family and its distaff descendants (Sopers in the case of Mrs Downton, Elliotts in the case of Mrs Mews), the important motif was that of the Irish princess. Outside the family, at least among the Reynoldses, the important motif seems to have been piracy. Most later versions of the legend incorporate the two facets without playing either one at the expense of the other. This nice dialogic convergence allows for varying readings while reproducing the cycle as a whole. Versions have Gilbert Pike to be a former pirate serving under Peter Easton, but this motif is played down by the interpretation that he served with Easton while Easton was still a respectable British naval officer; the latter is Munn's interpretation.

In the late 1800s the Pike family and the Sopers who inherited the old Pike home, were fairly well off. Several of the Pike sons were ocean-going captains, and the Soper family had a thriving business selling insurance of several sorts, including marine insurance.¹¹⁴ One of the Pike sons

¹¹³ William Hugh Jansen, "The Esoteric-Exoteric Factor in Folklore," *Fabula* 2 (1959), 205-211; rpt. in Alan Dundes, *The Study of Folklore* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1965), 43-51.

¹¹⁴ Information about the Pike and Soper families comes from my interviews with Mrs Flora (Soper) Downton and Mrs Iva (Soper) Harris, 22 November 1989; MUNFLA 90-106. Family photographs in their possession show an elegant, well-travelled family, including holiday pictures taken before the turn of the century in British Columbia and the United States.

(brother of Mrs. Soper) captained a ship for William Munn's merchant family in next-door Harbour Grace. Smallwood twice told of Munn's getting the Sheila story from an old man he met at the 1910 tri-centenary celebrations at near-by Cupids.¹¹⁵ But through his connection with the Sopers and the Pikes, Munn likely reheard the story before he wrote it in his Harbour Grace history series in the Quarterly.

Before the Barrelman promulgated the story the only evidence that it was publically spread is Munn's article. Smallwood no doubt read that article, and in any case knew Munn very well. Smallwood became intrigued with the legend and wrote about it several times and used it on his radio programme. According to Mrs. Downton, he also became intrigued with the gravestone in the Sopers' garden at Carbonear.

PH: Was the big stone, the one that says John Pike, was that standing up when you were young?

FD: No that was never standing up. They did try to stand [it up]; I remember Joey Smallwood when he was first, he came over with a crew. I don't know how many men; they tried to lift it, tried to get it up but they could never get it up.

PH: When was that that he came out?

FD: Well, it was when he was the Barrelman.¹¹⁶

Smallwood used the story of Sheila, following Munn's report closely, for the first time in his "Masthead" column on 12 August 1937, a month or more before he began his radio

¹¹⁵ Smallwood's account of this meeting, and its historic pedigree is quoted below.

¹¹⁶ Interview with Mrs Flora Downton, MUNFLA 90-106.

programmes. It was repeated with some expansion in the special expanded Year-End Edition of the Daily News on 31 December 1937, though not under his usual by-line.¹¹⁷ In an article on Carbonear history the legend was mentioned using some of the same phrases he had used in his August column: for example, "the most romantic" people to live in Newfoundland.¹¹⁸ Here he also makes note again of the pedigree of his story. With almost biblical attention to the chain of claimed transmission, he makes what is a very traditional asseveration of the legend's truth:

Mr. W. A. Munn has for years been interested in the story of "The Irish Princess," and he has told it in a recent issue of the "Newfoundland Quarterly."

I asked him where he had got his facts in the first place, and it was interesting to hear his answer. He first gathered some information at the time of the Guy Celebrations, 1910.

From the late Claudius Watts, of Harbor Grace, an old man of 97, he gathered quite a bit of information. Mr. Watts died about 20 years ago. He had gathered his information from his own father -- H. C. Watts, who was a nephew of George and James Kemp, very wealthy merchants of Carbonear. H. C. Watts was married to one of the Pikes. I imagine he would be nearly 150 years old if he were living today. Undoubtedly he got the story from the older generation of Pikes living in those days.

It seems clear, therefore, that the Carbonear

¹¹⁷ Despite the recent publications of the legend, some in the same paper, it is interesting that the popular historian P. K. Devine made no mention whatever of it in his history of Mosquito, the community in which Sheila and Gilbert were said to have first settled in, in the Daily News, 13 March 1938. His account is based on a manuscript history by Nicholas Peddle, born 1837 in Mosquito, and the fact that Sheila is not included suggests that either Peddle never heard the story or thought so little of it that he did not include it.

¹¹⁸ Daily News, 31 December 1937, p. 37, and in a special column, "Interesting Items from the Barrelman," pp. 41-42.

Pikes are amongst the very oldest families in Newfoundland.¹¹⁹

He told the story on the air five months later more or less as he had given it in his column.¹²⁰ And four years later, upon being asked by an American serviceman stationed in St. John's who were the national heroes of Newfoundland, he rattled off a great list of several dozen; Sheila was among the first half-dozen in his list.¹²¹ Smallwood also used the story in a "Source Book for Teachers" that he and Leo English compiled in about 1940.¹²² Copies of the book were distributed to all Newfoundland schools, and by this means the story was read by teachers throughout the country and presumably passed on to children in many of them. Placed in school libraries, among a very small number of Newfoundland books, the story was available to all students who had the active ("enthusiast's") interest to look.¹²³

Since the 1950s the legend has become far more popular. Well-known and prolific authors like Harold Horwood and P.

¹¹⁹ "Interesting Items from the Barrelman," Daily News, 31 December 1937, pp. 41-42.

¹²⁰ Script, 25 May 1938.

¹²¹ Script, 14 May 1942.

¹²² J. R. Smallwood and L. E. F. English, "The Carbonear 'Princess'," in Stories of Newfoundland: Source Book for Teachers Prepared for the Department of Education ([St. John's]: Newfoundland Gazette, [ca. 1940]), pp. 12-13.

¹²³ My own copy of this book, purchased from a dealer in St. John's in 1990, is inscribed by hand with the name of St. Thomas's School, St. John's, which closed in 1964.

J. Wakeham published repeatedly on the legend, and many other popular authors took it for granted and developed it.¹²⁴ In Carbonear itself, an occasional pageant began in the 1970s, evolving into a weekend-long dress-up "Pirate Days" celebration in June 1994.

As Halpert points out, little has been written on the legend of Princess Sheila, qua legend.¹²⁵ In 1972 Christina Pike tried to establish the oral roots of the legend, keeping in mind the widespread popularity of Wakeham's book, Princess Sheila.¹²⁶ She discovered that so many Carbonear people had read the novel, including all the people who had enough interest in the legend to talk about it, that it was no longer possible to separate the oral tradition from the literary motifs introduced by Wakeham to "romance" the story.¹²⁷ She did not know that the Barrelman had widely disseminated the story and if she had similarly tried to extricate the oral tradition from the Barrelman's texts, she

¹²⁴ P. J. Wakeham's Princess Sheila: A Newfoundland Story (St. John's: Dicks, 1958) was reissued in 1987 in a slightly shortened form as The Legend of Princess Sheila (St. John's: Creative). Harold Horwood has made perhaps a dozen published references to the Sheila legend since the early 1960s; most recently he included a version of the story in his and Edward S. Butts's, Pirates and Outlaws of Canada (Toronto: Best, 1984), pp. 12-13.

¹²⁵ Herbert Halpert, "Ireland, Sheila and Newfoundland." In A. Feder and B. Shrank, eds. Literature and Folk Culture: Ireland and Newfoundland, (St. John's: MUN, 1977), p. 147, fn. 1.

¹²⁶ MUNFLA ms 72-259.

¹²⁷ "Romancing the story" is a phrase that P.J.Wakeham used in reference to how he developed his stories, in an interview in 1990, MUNFLA 90-106.

would likely have had similar problems.

The oral tradition is a snapshot of whatever particular time in which the researcher is working. It is not something that slips through time immutable until a particularly strong media effect starts dismantling it. Rather it is the sum of all the factors that have preceded it. Christina Pike found Wakeham had a strong effect on the Carbonear residents' perceptions of their own community history, especially the Sheila legend. Likewise Smallwood, and Munn before him, strongly influenced local understandings of the legend, crystallising it for a time, until the next reshaping.

No doubt Smallwood's influence on the Sheila legend, its text and its affiliative distribution was greater than any of the other promulgators and interpreters of the legend. Through his extremely popular radio programme and his widespread school textbook, he was able to plant his view of Sheila in the awareness of a comparatively huge number of local history enthusiasts. Like perhaps no other folklore he discovered and used, the legend of Princess Sheila represented his views of Newfoundland as it should be. As a political and cultural metaphor, shaped by himself and other authoritative promulgators, it was understandably used by him repeatedly through his career as Barreelman.

Conclusion

Smallwood did not present to his listeners an entire universe of Newfoundland folklore. He chose certain genres, perhaps by design but certainly by the personal preference he showed by highlighting and foregrounding those genres. He had no particular interest, and thus space, for genres like song, belief, and custom, even though he did from time to time present examples of each of these. His preferred genre of folklore was the legend, in several forms. Anecdotes about known or nameable Newfoundlanders were very popular, along with local historical legends of all sorts.

His use of other genres, in particular the tall tale, showed the thinness of the lines between the genres. By carefully managing the verisimilitude of the tales and legends, and its ambiguity, the Barrelman was able to put forward to his audience a great deal of Newfoundland history. More particularly, he was able to popularise local legends, wrapping them in the joint flags of nationalism and scholarship, increasing their verisimilitude and thus widening their appropriation. Certain kinds of folklore, like the Princess Sheila legend, were more genial to his political-cultural plan of developing a strong and proud consciousness of Newfoundland as a nation of people united by their history and common culture. Abram Kean and Richard Bauman to the contrary, Smallwood's telling tall tales did

not seem to have a significant effect of lowering the verisimilitude of his historical legends. Rather, it seems on balance to have increased it.

Chapter Seven

Cultural Politics: Controversy and Consensus

As the Barrelman, Smallwood seems never to have used the word "culture" with reference to "the informing spirit of the whole way of life" of Newfoundlanders.¹ This is in no way surprising as that usage, derived though it is from E. B. Tylor's late-nineteenth century definition, is very much a post-World War II usage.² Before the War, if the word were popularly used it was more likely in the rather elitist sense of "good breeding and manners." To refer to the "culture" of Newfoundlanders may have been taken as a reference to the supposed simplicity and unsophistication of Newfoundland life, and its lack of urbane manners. It may not have meant to most hearers the until-then esoteric sense

¹ "This is one of Raymond Williams' phrases for modern usages of the word "culture." Raymond Williams, Culture (Glasgow: Fontana, 1981), pp.10-13.

² Raymond Williams points out his feelings of having learned before World War Two a different language from that being spoken in universities after the War; this difference seemed to him to be exemplified in the word "culture." Raymond Williams, Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society, rev. ed., (London: Fontana: 1983), pp. 11-12. See also his discussion at "Culture," ibid. Tylor's Primitive Culture (1871, and reprinted through the first half of this century, culminating in paperback publication in 1958 by Harper Torchbooks, New York) began with a classic and influential statement: "Culture or Civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." The popularity of Tylor's work in the 1950s reflected the new conceptions of "culture."

of "way of life."³ To someone with the leftist sensibilities of Joe Smallwood, it may even have had the redolence of Naziism which had attempted to appropriate the term in the 1930s.

Nonetheless Smallwood had a clear sense of Newfoundland "culture," and referred many times to it by other terms, like traditions and history. His sense of Newfoundland culture was complex, having many components, one of which was the desire to change it into something more appropriate, as he saw it, to a modern self-governing dominion. Anthony Wallace has called religious movements with the similar aim of improving their culture "revitalization movements" and Smallwood's impulse was of this sort, though secular.⁴ The Barrelman was his method to bring about a re-centring of the Newfoundland patriotic spirit, and a re-focussing of future party politics. That political sense of Newfoundland culture was behind the praxis encapsulated in the Barrelman.

Newfoundland culture -- both in the sense of literate and artistic products, and that of the way of life of Newfoundlanders -- was topical and being discussed in the period before the Barrelman began. Like other literate Newfoundlanders of his time, his interests in culture included both these senses. While he called for students to

³ Williams, Keywords, 87-93.

⁴ Anthony F. C. Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," American Anthropologist 58 (1956), 264-281.

collect information from their oldest neighbours about life in the community in past times, he also asked that a national art gallery be established and that his listeners contribute to the collection of Newfoundland poetry a friend of his was putting together.⁵

The two decades from the early 1920s through the early 1940s were a period of great cultural ferment in Newfoundland. A quick look at the chronologically ordered Bibliography of Newfoundland by Agnes O'Dea shows a flurry of publications in that period dealing with aspects of Newfoundland culture.⁶ A great deal of international attention had been aroused by the books by and about Sir Wilfred Grenfell, and similar internationally recognised cachets were held by Captain Bob Bartlett and to a lesser extent Captain Abram Kean, both of whom had written books attempting to make hay in the sunshine of their popularity. Books of local interest, sparking patriotic pride, had appeared on the Royal Newfoundland Regiment and its activities during the Great War. The poems of

⁵ On the need for a Newfoundland national art gallery, see for example his "Masthead" columns of 30 July 1937, 11 September 1937 and 4 June 1938. On his appreciation of Newfoundland poems, see for example his "Masthead" columns of 30 November 1937, 7 December 1937, and 23 December 1937. The Barrelmen -- both Smallwood and Harrington -- continued until the programme's demise to read and encourage poetry. His friend putting together a collection of poems may have been Robert Gear MacDonald. MacDonald had recently spoken about Newfoundland poets and poetry to the Newfoundland Historical Society (of which he, like Smallwood, was an executive member); "Masthead," 30 November 1937.

⁶ Agnes O'Dea and Anne Alexander, Bibliography of Newfoundland (Toronto: U Toronto P, 1986).

Newfoundlander E. J. Pratt were extremely successful both at home and in Canada. And the Newfoundland Government began to publish and distribute more widely than before literature to attract and keep the interest of tourists.⁷ Paul Mercer has shown that during this period the long-established local tradition of self-publication of broadside ballads and poems continued; a growing interest in other media like radio put it to an end in the late 1930s.⁸

There was a rising interest in what had not yet come to be called Newfoundlandia: items and facts of Newfoundland history, ephemeral publications and artifacts, folklore and geography.⁹ There was widespread dismay at the dismantling of the Newfoundland Museum to make room for government offices in 1934, and perhaps as a sop to the sector of the Newfoundland populace that had protested, a Public Library was established later the same year.¹⁰ Its mandate included the gathering of books, maps and other papers about

⁷ Dealing with a slightly earlier period, Gerald Pocius examines the role of tourist literature in defining the meaning of Newfoundland to tourists, and to Newfoundlanders, in his "Tourists, Health Seekers and Sportsmen: Luring Americans to Newfoundland in the Early Twentieth Century," in James Hiller and Peter Neary, eds., Twentieth-Century Newfoundland: Explorations (St. John's: Breakwater, 1993), pp. 47-77.

⁸ H. Paul Mercer, "A Bio-Bibliography of Newfoundland Songs in Printed Sources," (M.A. thesis, MUN, 1978).

⁹ More common was "Newfoundlandiana" for which the DNE gives 1957 as the earliest attested use; the Barreلمان used it in his "Masthead" column of 11 October 1937. Later he was also to use the term "Terranova", which is unnoted in the DNE; script, 29 July 1940.

¹⁰ The Amulree Commission (see below) had called for the establishment of public libraries (Paragraphs 628-29).

Newfoundland and its history. Public interest was high in the potential holdings of the Gosling Memorial Library (named for a former Mayor of St. John's, whose widow gave her husband's personal library as a core collection), and subscription funds were raised to buy manuscripts and out-of-print books from dealers and auctions in Britain and the United States.¹¹ A recognition of the value of musical traditions in Newfoundland had been raised by recent publications and successful radio programmes.¹² Foreign folksong collectors were publishing the fruits of their research in Newfoundland.¹³ Local collectors and distributors of the products of folk traditions, like Gerald S. Doyle and P. K. Devine, were well-known and successful. Businessman Doyle had published in 1927 what was to be the first of five editions of his Old-Time Songs of Newfoundland mixing advertising for his commercial products with a

¹¹ Jessie Mifflen has described some of the events surrounding the setting up of Newfoundland's first Public Library in her "History of Public Libraries in Newfoundland," lecture to the Newfoundland Historical Society, 12 December 1972, a copy of which is at the Centre for Newfoundland Studies, MUN. See also her The Development of Public Library Services in Newfoundland, 1934-1972 (Halifax: Dalhousie, 1978), p. 1.

¹² See for example Philip Hiscock, "Folk Process in a Popular Medium: The Irene B. Mellon Radio Programme, 1934-1940," in Gerald Thomas and J. D. A. Widdowson, eds., Studies in Newfoundland Folklore: Community and Process (St. John's: Breakwater, 1991), pp. 177-190.

¹³ Elisabeth Greenleaf and Grace Mansfield, Ballads and Sea Songs of Newfoundland (Cambridge: Harvard U P, 1933) and Maud Karpeles, Folk Songs from Newfoundland, two volumes (London: Oxford U P, 1934).

selection of local poems and songs.¹⁴ Devine was a popular historian who wrote an occasional column in the St. John's Daily News, dealing with hitherto obscure Newfoundland events and people.¹⁵ Many of his columns were compiled and published as a substantial small book in 1936, Ye Olde St. John's.¹⁶ In late 1937, just as the Barrelman programme was starting on the air, Devine's Folk Lore of Newfoundland in Old Words, Phrases and Expressions... was published and most of its copies snatched up by the canny Doyle for distribution around the country.¹⁷

The country had reached a crisis of political confidence in 1933, culminating first in a Royal Commission report recommending the cessation of electoral government and then the carrying out of that recommendation in February 1934.¹⁸ The report suggested there were cultural problems

¹⁴ His Old-Time Songs of Newfoundland (St. John's: Gerald S. Doyle, 1927) went through three editions in his life (recompiled with changes in 1940 and 1955) and two more after his death in 1956 (1966 and 1978). See Rosenberg, "The Gerald S. Doyle Songsters," and "The Canadianization of Newfoundland Folksong."

¹⁵ His columns were not regular but from time to time he printed one almost every week. See for example his column on the town of Mosquito, Conception Bay, Daily News 14 March 1938, p. 7. A week later (23 March 1938, p. 5) another in his style, though unsigned, appeared; it was on the nineteenth century "spa well" at Logy Bay, near St. John's.

¹⁶ P. K. Devine, Ye Olde St. John's by P.K.Devine ... 1750 - 1936 (St. John's: Newfoundland Directories, 1936).

¹⁷ "Free Distribution of Nfld. Books," Daily News 4 December 1937, p. 3. Smallwood had noted the importance of Devine's book some weeks earlier in his "Masthead" column of 12 November 1937.

¹⁸ The report is usually known as the Amulree Report for the chief commissioner, William W. Mackenzie, Lord Amulree. Its actual title is Newfoundland. Royal Commission 1933 Report (London: 1933). The period

in Newfoundland biasing politics towards the self-interest of the politicians, and away from the wider needs of Newfoundland as a whole. The following years saw the new Commission of Government (the replacement for parliamentary government) working towards a new political culture by the support of, among other things, near-communal agricultural settlements to reduce the unemployment problem in the city of St. John's, "folk schools" on those settlements, adult education, and co-operatives.¹⁹

The folk school, derived ultimately from Denmark, was a popular form of social and cultural engineering in the 1920s and 1930s in the Appalachian region of the United States.²⁰ In Newfoundland, the American missionary and medical doctor, Wilfred Grenfell had encouraged adult education through informal "settlement schools" (teaching home industrial crafts) as early as 1905-06, first as craft schools, and developing later into summer and evening schools, both for adults and for children.²¹ Adult education in Newfoundland

leading up to and after the institution of government by commission is covered by Peter Neary, Newfoundland in the North Atlantic World, 1929 - 1949 (Kingston: McGill-Queens U P, 1988).

¹⁹ Neary, Newfoundland in the North Atlantic World, pp. 64-65. Gordon Handcock, "The Commission of Government's Land Settlement Scheme in Newfoundland," in James Hiller and Peter Neary, Twentieth-Century Newfoundland: Explorations (St. John's: Breakwater, 1994), pp.123-152.

²⁰ David Whisnant, All That is Native and Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region (Chapel Hill: U North Carolina P, 1983), pp. 7-8.

²¹ Ronald Rompkey, Grenfell of Labrador: A Biography (Toronto: U Toronto P, 1991), pp. 116, 128, 134-6, and 244. See also Ellen M. Dinn, "Sir Wilfred Grenfell," ENL I (St. John's, NBP, 1984). The folksong

at that time was conducted partly through the efforts of the "Travelling Lecturer" Leo E. F. English, teacher, educational superintendent, author, poet, and museum curator.²²

Grenfell's schools never achieved the formality of recognition by the Newfoundland government's department of education. In contrast, the folk schools of the land settlements, begun in 1934, were organised and accredited by the government. The guiding force behind them was Frederick Emerson, "a young lawyer with a penchant for foreign languages and music," as the Commissioner responsible later described him.²³ Emerson was well-connected with northern European countries, speaking several Scandinavian languages, and being the consular agent or vice-consul for Iceland, Norway and the Netherlands.²⁴ He was also a folk music aficionado, and knew the folk song collector Maud

collector Elisabeth Greenleaf first came to Newfoundland in 1920 as a volunteer for Grenfell's "summer school" at Sally's Cove where she also collected a few songs and riddles. She returned to Newfoundland in 1929 to make a larger collection of songs and other folk traditions. See Isabelle Peere, "Elisabeth Greenleaf: An Appraisal," CFMJ 13 (1985), 20-31.

²² A short biography of English (1887-1971), by Paul Kenney, is in Robert Cuff, et al. Dictionary of Newfoundland Biography (St John's: Cuff, 1990). On English's itinerant adult education programme, see his informal report for 1937, in the form of a letter to Daily News, 22 June 1937. His "Sixth Annual Report" is reprinted the following year in the Daily News, 2 July 1938. See also Vincent P. Burke's summary article, "Adult Education in Newfoundland," in Smallwood's Book of Newfoundland, I, pp. 295-298.

²³ Thomas Lodge, Dictatorship in Newfoundland (London: Cassell, 1939), p. 44.

²⁴ Bertram G. Riggs, "Frederick Rennie Emerson," ENL I (St. John's: NBP, 1981).

Karpeles.²⁵ It was Emerson who designed the Newfoundland folk schools' curriculum and was responsible for hiring its staff.²⁶

Another aspect of cultural activity at the time was the encouragement of "home industry." Grenfell's organisation was active in the encouragement of improved rural crafts -- improved with regard to their saleability in the growing urban markets.²⁷ This was seen by Newfoundlanders to be a worthwhile end, and in the 1920s the Newfoundland Outport Nursing Association ("NONIA") was founded to direct and encourage women's crafts throughout Newfoundland.²⁸ The crafts were sold in St. John's and abroad to raise money to pay nurses serving in those communities. Traditional craft methods were joined with more saleable forms encouraged by the organisers. Patterns selected for the weavers and knitters to follow were not ones necessarily of local design

²⁵ Karpeles thanks by name only her "friends Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Emerson" for their hospitality when she visited Newfoundland in 1929; Karpeles, Folk Songs from Newfoundland (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), p. 20.

²⁶ Interview with the principal of the schools, Clare (Cochius) Gillingham, St. John's, 11 November 1992, MUNFLA 92-323.

²⁷ Rompkey, Grenfell of Labrador, pp. 180, 253.

²⁸ Joyce Nevitt, White Caps and Black Bands: Nursing in Newfoundland to 1934 (St. John's: Jespersen, 1978), pp. 143-145. See also Edgar House, The Way Out: The Story of NONIA, 1920 - 1990 (St. John's: Creative, 1990). Despite House's subtitle, taking into account its pre-history, NONIA was officially formed 1924 (p. 9).

and tradition; rather they were chosen for marketability.²⁹ Grenfell likewise had encouraged new directions socially and economically, encouraging the development of producer-consumer co-operatives in the areas of northern Newfoundland and Labrador under his sway.

When the Commission of Government came to power in 1934 as a result of the actions of an economically rightist government in Newfoundland, it fell ironically under the control of Ramsay MacDonald's Labour government in Britain.³⁰ Having this leftist lean, much of the Commission (though not all of it) felt that the economic and cultural directions represented by cooperatives would be beneficial to Newfoundlanders; it began a programme to encourage them. The Commission very early saw the need to change the structures of communication between governed and government; the attitudes and practices regarding quality in the production of Newfoundland's main export, saltfish; the entrenched denominational character of Newfoundland's

²⁹ [Colleen Lynch] The Fabric of Their Lives: Hooked and Poked Mats of Newfoundland and Labrador [St. John's: Memorial U of Newfoundland Art Gallery], 1980, pp. 20-21. See also Gerald L. Pocius's comment with regard both to headstones and textiles in Newfoundland, that superficial cosmetic and aesthetic factors seem to be highly variable over time, while underlying forms and techniques remain more constant; Textile Traditions of Eastern Newfoundland (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies, National Museums of Canada, 1979).

³⁰ Ramsay MacDonald took an interest in Newfoundland and in August 1934 he travelled to the country, visiting among other places the Markland land settlement. Interview Clare (Cochius) Gillingham, 12 November 1992, MUNFLA 92-323.

education system; and other cultural aspects.³¹ Within weeks of the Commission's establishment in 1934, and with Grenfell's help, Margaret Digby, a British organiser, was hired by the Commission to suggest ways in which Newfoundland co-ops might be established and succoured; her report was published as a small pamphlet which circulated among interested segments of the population, and a Division of Co-operatives was immediately established by the government.³²

Into this rich cultural climate came the Barrelman. Joe Smallwood had already spent a couple of years working in the field of co-operatives. After the election that toppled Sir Richard Squires in 1932, Smallwood had removed himself to Bonavista to organise a fishermen's union and a related producers-consumers co-operative. He was a supporter of the institution of the Commission of Government (though not always of its policies), arguing in 1932 and '33 in favour of such a move to make over Newfoundland's economy, culture and politics.³³ His Bonavista experiment was a venture into

³¹ Peter Neary, Newfoundland in the North Atlantic, 1929 - 1949, pp. 51-52, 55-58, 60.

³² Margaret Digby, Report on the Opportunity for Co-operative Organisation in Newfoundland and Labrador (London: P. S. King, 1934; rpt. St. John's: Oxfam, 1980). See also Wayne C. Stockwood, "Margaret Digby," ENL, I (St. John's: NBP, 1981). Digby also wrote a second report, a survey of the Newfoundland fisheries compared with those of Iceland: Newfoundland and Iceland: A Parallel (London: P. S. King, 1935).

³³ See his "Masthead" column, 28 March 1938. In I Chose Canada he gives his early position the spin of a successful prophecy; p. 188.

the economic realm of Newfoundland's social culture. The Bonavista Fishermen's Co-operative Union was not very successful, but some of its locals in other communities were fairly longstanding.³⁴

When, five years later, he became the Barreelman, he embarked on what can be considered a larger, more culturally oriented version of his previous attempts at economically remaking Newfoundland. From the early "Masthead" columns in mid-1937, through to his last programmes in late 1943 as the Barreelman, Smallwood deliberately set about raising Newfoundlanders' consciousness of their country, heightening their confidence and sparking their pride.

Whether he saw on the one hand efforts to raise awareness of Newfoundland's history and to build confidence in its culture, and on the other hand efforts to remake the economy and politics of the country as one and the same thing is moot. His approach appears to have been an integrated social, economic and cultural one. Despite his early left political connections, his was not a materialist view of Newfoundland. Rather he was a clear idealist: the economy was not the driver of life in the country, but was driven by Newfoundlanders' pride or lack of it.³⁵ He often pointed out that clean politics could not be instituted

³⁴ See Horwood's remarks about the Pouch Cove co-op which lasted two decades, Joey, pp. 60-61.

³⁵ "Masthead," 27 January 1938.

without education and subsequent popular attitude changes; those changes would also lead automatically to economic improvements in the country.³⁶

His activity with political and co-operative groups was congruent with the cultural climate of the decade. His 1930 book The New Newfoundland had been a effort to raise the confidence of Newfoundland's citizens in their country. His 1936 two-volume Book of Newfoundland carried this much further by engaging the work of many local authors and experts to describe in popular terms their aspect of the country.

Smallwood had been an active supporter, member, and employee of the Liberal Party of Newfoundland in the period before Commission of Government. In the late 1930s he was undoubtedly still seen by many as a Liberal or, inasmuch as there were no official political parties still in existence, a crypto-Liberal. Looking at the people to whom he gave credit as paragons of Newfoundland patriotism, one sees a wide section of the Newfoundland polity: he appears not to have favoured former Liberals over former Conservatives. Along with praise for the Governor who was theoretically above politics, and the Archbishop who was not,³⁷ we find

³⁶ See for example his "Masthead" columns of 25 April 1938 and 17 May 1938.

³⁷ For example, "Masthead," 27 February 1938.

praise for Kenneth Whiteway, a Conservative³⁸ and Edgar Bowring, another.³⁹ He included in his repertoire of admiring political anecdotes those about several Prime Ministers and party leaders: Sir William Whiteway (for a short time a Liberal, but in the main a Conservative) and Sir William Coaker (a Unionist and coalition Liberal); and he complained about the lack of "human interest stories" focussing on Liberal Sir Robert Bond.⁴⁰ As close as he was to Sir Richard Squires he rarely, if ever, even mentioned him: public memory was probably too bright of Squires's fall from political grace to speak well of him. His most affectionate stories were told about Sir Edward Morris who began as a Liberal, but spent the most active years of his political career as neither Liberal nor Conservative, but as leader of the People's Party. A narrow view of Smallwood's choice of backs to slap would suggest that he was gathering friends for the political battles that he knew were to follow the limited life of the Commission of Government. A broader view is that he was cloaking himself in as much of the fabric of Newfoundland political life as he could

³⁸ On Whiteway and his extreme conservative economics, see the "Masthead" column of 3 June 1938.

³⁹ Known for his philanthropy, Bowring was a scion of the established shipping, insurance, and merchant family.

⁴⁰ On the lack of anecdotes about Bond, see "Masthead" 26 August 1937. Smallwood's enduring affection for Bond was borne out in 1981 by his use of a full-page portrait of Bond in the first volume of ENL (p. 219); no other person, place or thing rated a full-page illustration.

gather.

In his efforts to forge a new national consciousness in Newfoundland in the 1930s, Joe Smallwood was operating in very similar ways to "cultural intervenors" (to use David Whisnant's term) in other times and places.⁴¹ Intervention, in Whisnant's terms, is a loaded concept, tied as it is to operations by cultural outsiders.⁴² His definition by no means excludes operations by cultural insiders, but his use of the term clarifies his position that it refers to outsiders. Here I use the term "intervention" in contrast to Whisnant in that I am calling Smallwood, an insider in Newfoundland culture, an intervenor. Exactly to what extent Smallwood was an insider is arguable. By birth he was a Newfoundlander (unlike Grenfell, for example), but such a definition of insider/outside neglects other powerful divisions in Newfoundland culture. He was, despite his fortuitous birth in Gambo, a "townie," a St. John's man; and he was, despite dropping out of school at age fourteen, an educated and bookish man.⁴³ He was a Protestant in a country where one's religious background coloured one's relationships and career path. A fond collector of Wesleyan

⁴¹ David Whisnant, All that is Native and Fine, pp. 13-14.

⁴² Whisnant, All That is Native and Fine, pp. 13-15.

⁴³ On townie-bayman sectarianism and its folklore in Newfoundland, see Martin Laba, "'The Bayman Food Market is in the Townie Dump': Identity and the Townie Newfoundlander," Culture & Tradition 3 (1978), pp. 7-16.

memorabilia, he was also a member of the Loyal Orange Order, a group that had for decades advocated public schools in Newfoundland, and Confederation with Canada as means to reduce the apparent power of the Roman Catholic hierarchy.⁴⁴ He had been associated with the notorious Squires government, and in a country where political party lines were scribed deeply, he was widely seen as a Liberal. Though he had cultivated connections with the "working class" of Newfoundland through his work with unions and co-operatives over a twenty-year period, he was closely tied by his Barreلمان days to at least two St. John's merchants: Ches Crosbie, who had funded his Book of Newfoundland project and some aspects of his Bonavista fishermen's co-op, and Frank O'Leary for whom he was in a very direct way a mouthpiece every night. No doubt whatever negative (or "outside") tones each of these factors potentially carried, for some people in Newfoundland they each carried positive tones as well. The very fact of being marked by internal schism can be a mark of being "inside." As much as any activist in Newfoundland political life, Smallwood was an insider.

Membership in a group, including national membership, is not a simple thing -- there is not usually a homogeneity

⁴⁴ On his affection for John Wesley, see Harold Horwood, Joey, p. 3. Horwood suggests that Smallwood "saw himself as a latter-day Wesley"; p. 314. On the political platforms of successive generations of Newfoundland Orangemen, see Elinor Senior, "The Origin and Political Activities of the Orange Order in Newfoundland, 1863-1890" (MA thesis, MUN, 1959).

of membership that makes all enclosed by it equivalent and equal. There are usually other insider factors that divide, and that carry with them more or less strong feeling about backgrounds and actions of members. "Outsiders" can be called upon by some insiders, when needed, for support against other "insiders." Thus intervenors like Grenfell, Greenleaf and Karpeles (all of whom fit Whisnant's terms) can be and have been widely seen by "insiders," as friends of Newfoundland culture. Grenfell, for example, took an active partisan role in Newfoundland, arguing at various times against the St. John's business community and the government of Sir Richard Squires.⁴⁵

Smallwood's intervention was what Whisnant calls "positive cultural intervention" in that he only rarely took proscriptive stands on cultural matters. For the most part, Smallwood's cultural view was an inclusive, rather than an exclusive one; he encouraged pre-existing cultural elements. From time to time he became excited about what he saw as dangerous cultural elements: xenophobia was one such element that he spoke against as discussed below.

As an insider in Newfoundland's cultural life, Smallwood shows biographical and political similarities with activists in other countries. For example, Smallwood's biography resembles in some respects that of Elias Lönnrot in Finland a hundred years before. Like Smallwood, Lönnrot

⁴⁵ Rompkey, Grenfell of Labrador, pp. 120 ff., and 211.

(1802-1884) grew up in a nation culturally overshadowed; in Lönnrot's case, by the economically and politically more powerful Swedish nation, language and culture; in Smallwood's case Britain and the United States.⁴⁶ Though he came from an economically poor background, by virtue of his interests and his scholarship Lönnrot was able to get a solid education. He trained and practised as a professional -- a medical doctor. Like Smallwood's work as a union and cooperative organiser, Lönnrot's service in rural areas brought him in contact with country people, enabling him to record and collect folk poetry. Eventually he brought together the series of poems that, published as The Kalevala, became known as the national epic of Finns, which helped lead to the complete independence of Finland in the early twentieth century.⁴⁷

Both Smallwood and Lönnrot collected and disseminated what they saw as a rapidly diminishing and severely undervalued national literature. Both left behind large archives of their recordings, in Lönnrot's case his original transcriptions of poems, and in Smallwood's case the letters sent him by his correspondents for the Barrelman programme. Although both had political motives for their cultural

⁴⁶ Michael Owen Jones, "Folk Poetry, Finnish identity, and Lönnrot's Kalevala" in The World of the Kalevala: Essays in Celebration of the 150 Year Jubilee of the Publication of the Finnish National Epic (Los Angeles: UCLA Folklore & Mythology Publications, 1987), 1-25.

⁴⁷ William A. Wilson, Folklore and Nationalism in Modern Finland (Bloomington, Indian U P, 1976), p. ix.

actions, Lönnrot had more explicit national dreams for his country than Smallwood. In his later career Smallwood became the more political; building on his previous history as a backroom politician and his fame as a cultural dealer, his later life was shaped by a quarter century in Newfoundland politics. In contrast, Lönnrot died before the establishment of a free Finland. But each was recognised in his lifetime as an expert in his country's cultural matters.

Lönnrot and Smallwood show similarities, but greater similarities existed between Smallwood and Bascom Lamar Lunsford (1882-1973), who was almost his contemporary. Lunsford has been seen as an important advocate of local culture in the southern Appalachian area around his home at Asheville, North Carolina, in the United States.⁴⁸ Between about 1920 and his death a half century later, and especially after the establishment of his regional folk festival at Asheville in 1928, Lunsford commanded a power and respect in his region that can be likened to that of the Barrelman in the late 1930s and early '40s in Newfoundland.

Smallwood never tried, as Lunsford did, to develop a folk festival form in Newfoundland. But he did dabble in the organisation and presentation of local music. For several months in 1939 he was the impresario for a series of radio and public concerts by a musical and singing group

⁴⁸ See for example, Loyal Jones' Minstrel of the Appalachians: The Story of Bascom Lamar Lunsford (Boone, N.C.: Appalachian Consortium P, 1984).

that was popular for its Newfoundland and other regional music.⁴⁹

Like Smallwood, Lunsford travelled widely with a variety of jobs as a young man, including intensive travelling in his own country, before becoming a cultural activist. In both cases this errantry led to strains in family life.⁵⁰ Neither Lönnrot, Smallwood, nor Lunsford settled on a single career, each of them swinging readily from one career direction to another. Lunsford trained as a lawyer but rarely practised, preferring the life of a festival organiser and developer. Lönnrot took time from his medical career frequently and increasingly to spend time at his Finnish literary and linguistic pursuits. Smallwood had three careers, never fully giving up any one of them: farmer, journalist, and politician. Lunsford too had a political career which sputtered through his life, managing campaigns, working in the State Legislature for a time, and even running unsuccessfully for the North Carolina Legislature.⁵¹

The fact that both Lunsford and Smallwood were overt politicians with some degree of success and contact with

⁴⁹ Script, 26 April 1939. This musical group was The Van Campers, named for "Van Camp's Beans and Pork," a sponsor's product.

⁵⁰ See Smallwood's tribute to his wife, Clara Oates Smallwood, in I Chose Canada, pp. 163-164. See Loyal Jones' biography of Lunsford, Minstrel of the Appalachians, p. ix, 100-107.

⁵¹ Jones, Minstrel, pp. 44-45.

even more successful politicians suggests they were representatives of their regional ruling classes. Lunsford, for all his rural contacts and folky sides, never wanted anyone to think he was anything other than the best class. "He dressed like a lawyer," said John Lair,⁵² an epithet that damned more than it praised. Smallwood, too, was known for his clothes, slightly old-fashioned, somewhat eccentric, but always respectable.

Although it can be said that each of these three intervenors exhibited differences from the very folk they were collecting from and giving prestige to, nonetheless they cannot be called outsiders to the culture they were working in. The differences between them and their "folk," to whom they preached and from whom they received the stock of their trades, merely reflect the access that they had to media, in Lunsford's case to the popular medium of festivals, in Lönnrot's and Smallwood's cases to print media, and in Smallwood's case to radio as well. Most "folk" whether they be peasants of nineteenth-century Finland, or Appalachians and Newfoundlanders of the twentieth century, have had little access to these powerful media except through such intervenors.

⁵² Jones, Minstrel, p. 75.

Informants and the politics of culture

Among both popular folklore promulgators and academic folklorists in the period before about 1940, it was not universal to report the names of informants. In some areas of folklore scholarship it was more common than others; song scholars, for example, have generally been very particular about their sources while collectors of local legends have been less so. In contrast, anonymity of informants has been an important tenet of sociological research in this century. While folklorists will go to lengths to "contextualise" their research reports by naming and describing their sources, sociologists will go to as great lengths to disguise their sources. The question of anonymous sources is not a clear one and a variety of reasons may justify anonymity. For the same reason that many artists obscure the faces of their nude models, anonymity may generalise or "universalise" the meaning for readers of scholarly information. Anonymity may be utilised by non-academic cultural purveyors in a similar rhetorical effort to increase the sense of national belonging by a concomitant decrease in or lack of personal connection. Neil Rosenberg has noted Gerald S. Doyle's frequent use of authors' names, especially when drawing on printed sources. Doyle's use of sources' names when drawing on his own "fieldwork" did not follow the same pattern; Rosenberg points out that this reflects the crucial role that

anonymity played in the definition of "folksong" at the time.⁵³ It may have been by this action of divorce from real singers' names that the texts in Doyle's collections, so widely distributed, became as Rosenberg says "key texts" in the Newfoundland canon of folksongs.

Smallwood almost always made a point of saying from whom he received or heard a story. Although some contributors asked in their letters for anonymity, his listeners generally liked to hear their names and those of others on the air. As already noted, this served his purpose of drawing his audience into his show.

He had personal control over what he broadcast on the Barrelman but less control in the other incarnations of his work. For example, it was not the policy to use sources' names for every item in the monthly newspaper the Newfoundlander. In reading the radio scripts edited for use in the paper, one sees that exactly those sentences which named the source of a story were expunged. An example of how the Newfoundlander removed source information is the legend of the Holy Thorn of Bishop's Cove, Conception Bay.⁵⁴ It was a plant which, carried over from Ireland many generations ago, mysteriously moved from garden to garden. The Barrelman read the complete, typed script on the air

⁵³ Neil V. Rosenberg, "The Gerald S. Doyle Songsters and the Politics of Newfoundland Folksong," CFC 13:1 (1991), 48.

⁵⁴ Smallwood used this in his radio programme of 14 June 1940.

including a full description of the trip he was taking when he heard the legend, and the names of the couple who told it to him. When it was readied for re-presentation, each of the references not only to the couple who had told him the story but also to the Barrelman's personal trip to the community, were removed. By removing the informants' names, the editor removed the attachment of the legend to the tellers, and to a specific neighbourhood of Bishop's Cove enclosing just three gardens. Thus it became a legend of the greater community of Bishop's Cove. The legend loses some of its local connectedness by the loss of its provenance, and seems to fall in its evidentiary status and its verisimilitude by the same process. Its "ownership" is appropriated by the process of anonymity, from named local people first to the Barrelman or his agent, and secondly to Newfoundland as a whole, becoming part of a canon of "Newfoundland folklore." It is not only the broadcast and repetition of texts which make them "key" or canonical texts, but also the universalising process of anonymity.

To the extent that they wrote contributions to the Barrelman enterprise, his informants were cultural intervenors just as Smallwood was. Insiders they no doubt were, but nonetheless they crystallised cultural forms by their actions, presenting them to outsiders and, by the same token, re-presenting them to insiders. That re-presentation of insider culture to insiders (through an outside medium)

is a newly meaningful act, an act of intervention and an act of invention. Investing the traditions of families and local communities with new meanings, it transforms them into traditions of Newfoundland as a whole, investing them with new meanings. By the same token, it is an act of self-expression and re-definition, changing one's status as a community member known mainly to insiders alone, to one known also to outsiders on account of having one's name read on the radio as a writer and contributor to the Barrelman.

Aspects of cultural politics

Smallwood's own politics of Newfoundland culture were made up of a variety of factors, many of which remained with him the rest of his life. I will discuss his opposition to xenophobia and the related issue of national confidence, his active pride in the achievements of Newfoundlanders, both at home and especially abroad, his use of local terms and pronunciations in the context of "good English", and his attitude to symbols of Newfoundland nationhood.

Xenophobia and National Confidence

Proud nationalism has often been associated with the less savoury xenophobia. Despite clear examples of xenophobia and racism in the Newfoundland of the thirties, Joe Smallwood was at no time xenophobic. Gerhard Bassler

has shown that beyond a widespread desire in Newfoundland at that time for financially secure immigrants, especially those who might be able to start commercial enterprises, a clearly well-accepted xenophobia existed among opinion makers in St. John's, including Government Commissioners and at least one newspaper editor.⁵⁵ Smallwood's view was that investment was welcome from whatever sources of capital existed. In contrast to the scattered acts of exclusion in Newfoundland his cultural view was inclusive and he was open to the ideas and developments of foreigners. Instead of referring to "foreigners," he would say, "those who have the misfortune of not being born in Newfoundland."

Many Newfoundlanders felt that the Government by Commission was an imposition; the imposition was underscored by the fact that more than half its members were not Newfoundlanders. Despite his general support for the Commission of Government, Smallwood criticised their specific policies, sometimes pointing out the temporary nature of their stewardship. In 1941, in opposition to a plan to give large tracts of the Gander River watershed to the Bowater paper mill of Corner Brook, he wrote a letter to the editor of the Daily News making that point: "It is our country," he wrote, "and Mr. Ewbank [Commissioner for

⁵⁵ Gerhard Bassler, Sanctuary Denied: Refugees from the Third Reich and Newfoundland Immigration Policy, 1906 - 1949 (St. John's: ISER, 1992), pp. 120-134, 139-146. James Overton notes in passing the targeting of St. John's Chinese businesses on two occasions in the riotous year of 1932 ("Riots, Raids and Relief," pp. 227 and 235).

Natural Resources] and his colleagues are only temporarily in charge of it."⁵⁶

One of the repeated themes in the newspaper column, "From the Masthead," was that of the value of non-Newfoundlanders to Newfoundland's self-image and development. In a December 1937 column on the need for more social histories based on the oral traditions of Newfoundland communities, he noted that many of the best histories have been written by non-Newfoundlanders. He remarked that what is to be valued in Newfoundland is often first noted by such outsiders.⁵⁷ Several weeks later he returned to the point: "The quickest to appreciate the interest and colour of Newfoundland culture, customs and history" are often those who were born outside Newfoundland.⁵⁸ When letters tinged with xenophobia came in to the Barrelman, he made a point of speaking against them.⁵⁹

Smallwood believed that investment in and development of Newfoundland's resources must be by foreigners because there was not enough money for those purposes in the country. Early in the 1930s he had written:

⁵⁶ Undated letter [1941], loose in the "Barrelman Notebook," CNS Archives "Smallwood Collection."

⁵⁷ "Masthead," 23 December 1937.

⁵⁸ "Masthead," 8 February 1938.

⁵⁹ For example, "Masthead," 26 January 1938.

Not possessing, ourselves, the industrial capital necessary to establish such large industries for the development of our country (thanks to the fact that in the past we did not accumulate capital of our own) we must perforce seek that capital in the money markets of the outside world.⁶⁰

Smallwood continued to make this simple argument for decades.⁶¹

The Barrelman's general attitude was one of cautioning Newfoundlanders against xenophobia. In early 1940 he read a letter from P. J. Toner of Ferryland.⁶² Toner's letter praised the Barrelman and in return the Barrelman said that, like Toner, some of the best Newfoundlanders are so not by birth but by adoption. He continued with the comment that the Newfoundland Native Society, which had been formed in St. John's more than a century before to distinguish between the native-born and others, was no longer needed.⁶³

Three years after this broadcast, in early 1943, a controversy arose from the visit some months before of Joan Blondell, the then successful American singer and actress.

⁶⁰ The New Newfoundland, p. 6.

⁶¹ For example, see To You with Affection (1969), pp. 87-91, 119 ff.

⁶² P. J. Toner was likely Pat Toner, a prominent musician in St. John's, playing in the house-band led by Tim Duggan on Uncle Tim's Barn Dance a weekly radio series on radio station VPCM. See the Marshall Studios photograph of the band in costume Evening Telegram, 19 December 1942. This same photograph is reproduced in John H. Cardoulis, A Friendly Invasion II: A Personal Touch (St. John's: Creative, 1993), p. 156, but Toner's name is transformed into "Pat Boone."

⁶³ Script, 26 January 1940. Phillip McCann discusses the Native Society in "Culture, States Formation and the Invention of Tradition."

She had been sponsored by the USO in October 1942, touring to many areas, and spent almost two weeks in the country.⁶⁴ She learned a mildly satiric song about the Newfoundland Express, the trans-Island rail service⁶⁵, and heard the jocular phrase "Stay where you're to, till I comes where you're at." When she returned to the United States Blondell used both song and phrase in her stage shows, including one broadcast in the radio series Command Performance, heard in Newfoundland. It was widely seen as an affront to the country. Not only did she receive insulting letters from Newfoundland, but also a controversy arose in the St. John's newspapers and radio.

Early into this controversy stepped the Barrelman. He was not the only cultural maven to do so; the popular sportsman and lawyer, George W. B. Ayre, preached grace and humour in a letter to the daily paper.⁶⁶ But Ayre's arguments closely followed the Barrelman's, and followed them in time by more than a month.

⁶⁴ Cardoulis gives much background on the events, including several reprinted texts in his A Friendly Invasion II, pp. 131-143. He does not mention the Barrelman's comments on the controversy.

⁶⁵ Neil V. Rosenberg has written about the song and its "Answers"; "Canadian Railway Songs: Newfoundland," CFMS Bulletin 16:2 (1982), 7-9 and "The Newfoundland Express Again," CFMS Bulletin 16:4 (1982), 22-25. Cardoulis reprints much of these two notes. A version of the offending song heard in Prince Edward Island about that island's train, was contributed to the same issue of the CFMS Bulletin by Don Miller who learnt it as a Canadian serviceman stationed there during World War II; this suggests a wider traditional distribution than just Newfoundland for the song.

⁶⁶ Evening Telegram, 25 March 1943; reprinted in Cardoulis, pp. 141-142.

The Barrelman made several extended references to the controversy involving Blondell and her references to Newfoundland between February and April 1943. In one of the first he gave a version of the song that was causing so much fuss:

Ladies and gentlemen, good evening:
 There's been a quick and wide response to my request for a copy of that notorious song "The Newfoundland Express." Copies of it have poured in upon me from all parts of the country, and not one but has been accompanied by a letter expressing the writer's indignation at the way in which our country has been belittled.... You'll remember that it started a few days ago when I said that I'd received a song written in reply to the Newfoundland Express. Before doing anything about the song written in reply I thought 'twould be better first to have a copy of the song itself. It seems that the song was written by a Canadian soldier, and many of you heard Joan Blondell sing it on Command Performance not long ago -- I didn't happen to hear her sing it. And here's how it goes.

Oh, how I yet remember
 That dark and stormy night
 The train pulled into Gander.
 I heard the people say:
 'See that girl from Corner Brook,
 She's just like all the rest --
 She came down here this morning
 On the Newfoundland Express.'

We left St. John's on Sunday;
 The day was bleaking cold.
 The engineer was roaring drunk,
 So some of us were told.
 He said if you're not anxious
 To answer her request,
 We'll get there next month sometime
 On the Newfoundland Express.⁶⁷

He read all eight eight-line stanzas. The song,

⁶⁷ Script, 5 February 1943.

modelled loosely on the popular country song of the time "The Wabash Cannonball", was a series of light jokes each hanging on the slowness of the train, and the bad habits of its operators who might be "roaring drunk" and inconsiderate of schedules. Soldiers, it suggested, were putting their lives in danger, and those on leave might waste their entire furlough travelling on it. A suicide who tried to die by lying on the track died of starvation.⁶⁸ The Barrelman continued:

That's the song, and I ought to say in passing that there are some variations in the copies that have been sent to me -- they're not all exactly the same, but this one is typical of the many versions I've received..... How does it sound to you, ladies and gentlemen? To tell you the honest truth, it doesn't sound half as bad as I had expected it would. From what I'd heard of it before I was expecting to find a most insulting song about our country, whereas it strikes me as being a comparatively harmless piece of doggerel altogether, certainly not one worth getting mad about. I think that by now we Newfoundlanders are sufficiently well aware of our country's true worth, of our own true worth, to be able to smile and shrug our shoulders. After all, it isn't exactly malicious, is it? I mean there's nothing cruel or ignorant about it -- it's just a poor attempt at humor by some soldier who isn't blessed with too much tolerance and understanding.

He suggests that the Canadian "yokel" from the "backwoods of Canada" who wrote the song probably had no better transportation in his own home area. The Newfoundland train

⁶⁸ Herbert Lench Pottle tells this story of a man, "low-minded" to the point of attempting suicide, who lies on the Newfoundland railway tracks but instead starves to death, as a joke in his Fun on the Rock: Toward a Theory of Newfoundland Humour (St. John's: Breakwater, 1983), p. 3.

is good by comparison with the lines off the main tracks, going "to some of those mining towns and other outports of the dominion" of Canada.

You know, it's not always because a fellow comes here from another country that he knows more than we do, or has had more experience, or has seen more. Far from it. Some of them are straight from the backwoods, and are completely lacking in background or knowledge or culture or understanding.

He then turned to the question of Blondell's apparent slur on Newfoundland speech.

Like a certain excellent army officer who traveled recently on the train with a friend of mine. He and my friend got chatting, and the conversation turned to Newfoundland. The officer remarked confidentially that he was surprised at the accent of the speech of Newfoundlanders -- he was surprised at their accent. My friend said: "Yes, our people have an accent -- and the people of the United States, and Canada, and England, and Scotland, and Ireland, and Wales, and Australia, and New Zealand. To us Newfoundlanders you Americans have an accent -- just as to you, Englishmen have an accent, and to Scotsmen Englishmen have an accent." The army officer actually had never thought of it, or looked at it that way -- he just wasn't sufficiently well-informed, hadn't traveled enough, wasn't thoughtful enough. Our speech only sounded like an accent to him because he wasn't used to it -- and he was actually surprised to learn that to us, Americans have an accent. I remember once my own surprise meeting a group of Barbadoes Negroes in New York and finding them with a very strong English accent, almost like Oxford English..... Yes, it's perfectly true that lots of us in Newfoundland say "Where were you to?" and "Where were you at?" It's perfectly true that we have this little mannerism of speech -- but is that any queerer than "toity toird and thoid avenoo" or any one of the thousands of peculiarities of speech and phrase heard in all parts of the United States?.... A cultured man, a man of education and background and experience, would never poke fun at such idioms and mannerisms of speech,

because he'd know to start with, that every part of the world has them, making it ridiculous for the pot to call the kettle black.....

Giving an anecdote from his own experience of the "painful silence" that followed the guffaw of a member of the House of Assembly at the dropping of an aitch by another member, he pointed out that many people are unaware of the accented nature of their own speech.

And nine times out of ten the fellows who get a laugh out of "Where were you to" or "Where were you at" can't open their mouths without committing murder most foul against the King's English..... So remember these facts, ladies and gentlemen, next time some non-Newfoundlander gets off with one of those puerile jokes -- the joke is not on us, it's on him, for he only reveals to the knowing his own ignorance and lack of background.⁶⁹

In this script we see his arguments of forbearance and grace: the song was probably written by "some inoffensive yokel from the backwoods of Canada.... It doesn't sound half as bad as I expected... [and is] a comparatively harmless piece of doggerel," he says. He allows that Newfoundlanders, like many others, have local ways of speaking, but it is not something to be ashamed of, nor something to be laughed at. Only the unsophisticated would make fun of the natural variations of the English language around the world. The overall attitude is that those who laugh at Newfoundlanders, even as lightly as Blondell seems

⁶⁹ Script, 5 February 1943. Punctuation, including the use of strings of periods apparently to indicate pauses, is as in original.

to have laughed, are more to be pitied than blamed. A proud head, he suggests, would be held above a hasty reaction.

A week later the vituperation against Blondell had continued and the Barrelman once again took up the topic in quoting a letter from a listener in Grand Falls in which a long poem is addressed to Blondell. Its ten eight-line stanzas bitterly told how the author had once admired Blondell but now had only pity for her lack of good will and maturity. The poem ended with:

This land none shall take from us,
It's ours by all that's right--
In her defence we'll always stand,
For her we'll always fight.
So this is why I write today,
To erase your silly slander,
And wish you better luck next time,
Cheerio -- from a Newfoundlander.⁷⁰

It was signed "A Fighting Newfoundlander," a direct reference to the statue by that name in Bowring Park, and an indirect reference to the pride Newfoundlanders took in the Royal Newfoundland Regiment's role in the Great War.⁷¹ No doubt the Barrelman used it in his programme because of its frankly patriotic stand, despite its faintly xenophobic tone.

At the beginning of the following week, he decided he'd

⁷⁰ Script, 10 February 1943. I have changed the format of the poem from a prose-like form with lines separated by slashes, to this form.

⁷¹ There was some bitterness in Newfoundland regarding the Americans' late arrival in the War. A common jest, often at Americans' expense, had it that "Nfld." stood for "Never Found Lying Down."

had enough of the confused reactions to Blondell's performance and, because what was being said wasn't being said "in quite the right way," he thought he'd try to re-set the discussion in the frame of cultural confidence:

Ladies and gentlemen, good evening:
 I think the time is ripe to get something off my chest -- something that's been simmering there for the past couple of years, but has been brought to a boil, so to speak, in the past week or two. It's something that needs saying openly. It's being said everywhere in the country today, though not perhaps in quite the right way -- and in any case it needs to be brought out in the open light of day. It all began a week or two ago, when I received one day a song entitled "An Answer to the Newfoundland Express." [...] After reading the song itself, and finding that there was nothing really malicious or vicious about it, I decided that I wouldn't read the answer, because I felt that reading it would do more harm than good. In short, I felt that the answer was just a wee bit too strong -- stronger than the original song itself -- The Newfoundland Express, called for.

Mentioning the extreme popularity of the anti-Blondell poem, he says he thinks there has been very little to excite the passions of Newfoundlanders in a long time.

In the first place, may I say this: that I am very pleasantly impressed by the evidence that our people are nowadays more alert than ever before to rush to the defence of their country's good name? I believe that ten or fifteen years ago a dozen songs like The Newfoundland Express, or much worse than The Newfoundland Express, could have been composed without causing as many as a dozen Newfoundlanders to utter a word of protest. But no sooner is this song composed than another song is composed to answer it, and the answer spread like wildfire right around the island, as proved by the fact that copies of it have reached me from all parts of the island. And no sooner does Joan Blondell sing this song than another is written at once to answer her, and the moment I broadcast

this answer I'm flooded with requests for a copy of it. All this shows, I think, that there's a new spirit in our people -- a spirit of Newfoundland patriotism, a spirit that compels our people to stand up for their country, whereas in earlier years they'd not have been offended at all, and they wouldn't have bothered to reply.

As the Barrelman, he says, he is particularly happy to see such a response, because for several years he has been arguing in favour of a stronger patriotic spirit in the country.

I think the time has gone when our people will put up quietly with any wise-cracks or gags or songs or jokes belittling their country or themselves. In future they're just not going to take it lying down. I'd be a hypocrite if I did anything but applaud that attractive new spirit in our people, for it's precisely the spirit I like to see.

After an advertising plug he returned to the topic preaching caution to mix with the "eagerness to repel insult or calumny."

It's grand to see people quick and eager to stand up for their country's good name -- but it can be overdone. There is such a thing as being super-sensitive, you know. There's such a thing as being altogether too touchy. And above all we mustn't lose our sense of humor and become a pack of old grouches.

With that he begins his theory of three stages of national pride. In the first there is no "pride of ancestry" because people are "unaware of their country's glorious history." In the second they have a new sense of their own history and a sense "that they themselves are of the finest stock." But in glorying in their self-image, they "lose their sense of

humor, and become just as touchy as formerly they were docile." Without saying so, he suggests that Newfoundlanders are at this "dangerous stage." In his third stage a people's pride has become a "sure and certain knowledge" giving them "a quiet and easy confidence" unmoved by minor insults.

You see, it's very much like individuals. If a man is down and out and without hope he's likely to be a pretty poor specimen of manhood -- no pride, no joy, just a dull mentality that thinks and sees and feels very little beyond the immediate need of food and shelter and clothing. But now he gets a job and things start slowly to look up for him. He acquires a new outlook on life -- he acquires some personal pride. But because his hold on success is still a little shaky and uncertain, he himself is still a bit too inclined to assert his new importance and a bit too inclined to resent any slur, fancied or real, against him. He's then what we call an under-strapper, aping his superiors, trying to keep up with the Joneses, lacking a sense of humor, taking umbrage easily, easy to hurt and annoy.... But finally his success becomes certain, and his outlook changes once again. Now the old uncertainty and shakiness are gone: now he's confident, filled with assurance: and being so, he's not so easily disturbed, not so easily insulted, because his own knowledge of his own success and importance is so sure and certain that he can afford to be tolerant and easy-going. Where, in the second stage, he'd have become frantic with rage at a fancied affront to his dignity, now he only smiles, a bit pityingly, perhaps.... Needless to say, it's this third stage I'd like to see our people as a people reach. I'd like our Newfoundland people to be so unalterably and unshakably sure of their own worth, of their forefathers' worth, of their country's worth, that they could afford merely to smile or shrug the shoulders at anything less than a very real insult to their pride or humor.⁷²

⁷² Script, 15 February 1943.

The Barrelman's trope of a man formerly without work but now independent, is clearly a reference to Newfoundland's new-found affluence during the war-time economic expansion. Peter Neary has pointed out that by late 1942 there was no significant unemployment in Newfoundland. Despite intervening inflation, relief expenditure in Newfoundland in 1942-43 was only one-fifth what it had been in 1939-40, and no able-bodied relief whatever (the near-equivalent of unemployment insurance) was paid in 1942.⁷³ In the "first stage" of the Barrelman's metaphorical life, he is making reference to what he saw as Newfoundland's situation in the period soon after the institution of Commission of Government: likened to a dog "cuffed about and reviled," it was a people downcast and lacking the basics of a national self-esteem. In his early Barrelman columns, dating from 1937, he had made similar statements about the lack of a national pride in Newfoundland. By 1943, he seems to have thought that that period is past. His reference to the man's former ignorance of his personal and familial past is probably a reference to his own role of Barrelman, inculcating a knowledge and sense of Newfoundland's "glorious history." There is little modesty in his radio face.

⁷³ Peter Neary, Newfoundland in The North Atlantic World, p. 164. His sources are the "Abbreviated Annual Report for the year 1942" (Dominions Office papers, PRO, Kew, 35/1143/N409/1), p. 47; and Parliamentary Papers, London, 6849, p. 42.

Pride in Achievements

Another aspect of the Barrelman's direct cultural politics was his pride in the achievements of Newfoundlanders, not only within Newfoundland where other countrymen might have heard of their deeds and attainments, but even more so outside Newfoundland where their fellow countrymen at home might have been unaware of them, and where their feats were among foreign people of higher prestige. He not only wanted to make these accomplished Newfoundlanders "better known to Newfoundlanders" but again he wanted to bring about a pride and faith in Newfoundland and her products.⁷⁴

From the very beginning of his Barrelman enterprise, the theme of accomplished Newfoundlanders was an important one. His radio programme of Christmas Eve 1937 was entirely a long list of such men, and to a much smaller extent women, who had left Newfoundland and gone on to be famous politicians, businessmen, sportsmen, artists, authors and so on. Some of his regular contributors were particularly interested in this topic. W. M. Dooley, a Newfoundland journalist retired in Boston, continued reporting stories of successful Newfoundlanders in the United States well after

⁷⁴ In the late 1940s, partly under the efforts of the Barrelman's sponsor, F. M. O'Leary, a "Buy Newfoundland Products" campaign was established in the media, with posters and newspaper ads carrying the message. O'Leary's newspaper The Newfoundlander was one of the organs of the campaign. In the early 1990s a similar media campaign of "I Believe In Newfoundland and Labrador" was launched by several radio stations and other local businesses and carried into almost all the media of the province.

the Barrelman's Daily News column, which he read, stopped. The Barrelman continued using Dooley's stories on the air until the end of Joe Smallwood's tenure.⁷⁵

Although the theme of accomplished Newfoundlanders declined somewhat in later years, the Barrelman continued using such examples to support his contention that Newfoundlanders were as good as the people of other countries. In one of his last columns he gave a kind of extended *blason populaire*, summing up what he thought were the differences among Newfoundlanders, Americans, Canadian, and Britons.

When I say the differences between Newfoundlanders and these other peoples, I do not mean to imply that they are entirely different, or that they are alike in nothing and have nothing in common. They are alike in many things, and have many things in common -- but it's the differences between them that I've been thinking about.⁷⁶

Canadians and Americans, he said, know everything there is to know about models of cars and their parts, about airplanes, submarines, warships,

And not only warships, but radios, and a thousand other machines and mechanical contrivances, tractors, cigarette-making machines, agricultural machinery, trains: oh, I don't know how many

⁷⁵ Dooley's items are included, for example, in the programmes of 27 June 1940, and 1 September 1943. Dooley's contributions of 27 June 1940 include what would now be called a "Newfie joke": two Newfoundlanders get work in Boston immediately upon arriving in the city; sleeping little their first few nights, they paint black their skylight, the only window in their room. They sleep so well they miss two days of work.

⁷⁶ Script, 20 November 1943. This programme was just two or three nights before he announced he would be leaving the Barrelman programme.

things along these lines. Their knowledge of them seems to be endless, and their interest in them endless.

Britons, like Newfoundlanders, know little about these things, but can speak intelligently about world affairs, the politics and politicians of their own and dozens of other countries. Speaking from his experience of living among them, he said:

They knew who was Prime Minister or president or otherwise head of the government in each nation. And their range of knowledge about the national affairs of their own country was simply endless. They discussed the budget like veterans, and were completely familiar with the taxes, and rate of each tax, and the amount each tax gathered. They knew these things, and they talked about them and argued about them, for they were quite evidently deeply interested in them.

Newfoundlanders, he thought, were not like this, either.

But of course they did have their expertise:

Consider the weather, for instance: practically every Newfoundlander knows his physical directions, knows how the wind is blowing, takes particular notice of it. He has a tremendous amount of weather lore, and can almost always forecast it. He has a tremendous amount of knowledge about the sea. He has a tremendous amount of knowledge about the lakes and ponds, about seals and fish and caribou and rabbits and sea birds and land birds. He has a tremendous amount of knowledge about schooners and boats and dories. He has a tremendous amount of knowledge about houses and gardens and horses and ponies and hens and pigs. He has a tremendous amount of knowledge about the woods and the marshes and the open-air life generally. Beside him the average Canadian, American or inhabitant of the United Kingdom would be a mere child..... Well, is there a moral to all this? Maybe there is, but if there is I'll just let you name it for yourself.

Although he makes here no explicit reference to xenophobia

or bigotry, he is making the cultural-relativistic point that each people is different, performing its tasks well, and establishing its own priorities. The implicit message is that Newfoundlanders must evaluate their own culture on their own terms, not by comparison to others. Both xenophobia and Uncle Tomism are amongst the responses to the cultural inferiority complex he referred to so frequently.

Dundes has discussed the importance of emergent literatures among peoples with "national inferiority complexes."⁷⁷ In an effort to establish a history in a community lacking the literate documents of classical societies, Dundes suggests such peoples develop canonical oral literatures. As noted above, there are biographical similarities between Joe Smallwood and Elias Lönnrot; in Dundes's estimation these similarities would extend to the normal (in this situation) production of such an anti-hegemonic oral-based literature. The Barrelman's production was not in the first instance a production of a canon; nonetheless by such processes as the mediation of the broadcast, the universalisation by anonymity, and the valorisation of certain texts by repetition or repeated reference, a canon developed.

The term "national" or "nationalistic inferiority

⁷⁷ Alan Dundes, "Nationalistic Inferiority Complexes and the Fabrication of Fakelore: A Reconsideration of Ossian, the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, the Kalevala and Paul Bunyan," J Folklore Research 22:1 (1985), 5-18.

complex" is an unusual one, used to my knowledge only by Dundes in the 1980s and Smallwood from the 1930s on. Smallwood used terms and concepts of psychology and psychoanalysis from time to time, and he seemed to be fairly current on the fields' theories. This knowledge may have been one of the fruits of his association with intellectuals in New York.⁷⁸ It reflects his currency of language but also reflects his politically charged view of culture.

Local Language

In Chapter Five I discussed the Barrelman's systematic use of non-standard language (localisms, archaisms, etc.) in the context of his high-prestige, standard English oratory. He used some words unselfconsciously, others he flagged with such phrases as "as we say here in Newfoundland," and some he glossed with clarifying definitions. All served to foreground local language, otherwise mainly backgrounded in the modern, prestigious medium of radio.⁷⁹ The Barrelman

⁷⁸ He was aware of the group which organised "America's Town Hall Meetings" and referred to them in his "Masthead" columns from time to time; Masthead" 6 April 1938, for example. From the 1890s until they began in 1935 a radio programme of the same sort, they sponsored public discussion on matters related to various populist and avant garde topics in New York City. See Harry A. and Bonaro W. Overstreet, Town Meeting Comes to Town (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1938).

⁷⁹ A similar thing was happening with the musical radio series, The Irene B. Mellon where local music and song were being foregrounded over, and in the context of, other musics: Philip Hiscock, "Folk Process and Popular Medium."

got involved in a matter of some local cultural importance when he brought up the question of how properly to pronounce the name of the country.

In the course of this controversy the Barrelman made clear his stand that whatever authority existed with regard to the "correctness" of a pronunciation, particularly that of a placename, rested entirely with local usage. More than once he noted that although some dictionaries agreed with his own favourite pronunciation of "Newfoundland," dictionaries could not be the arbiter of such a question; the only arbiter could be what local people say. Such a liberal view of correctness in language was at variance with most proponents of "good usage" in that time, proponents of a fairly conservative view of language.

How the name "Newfoundland" should be pronounced had already been a matter of insider talk for at least sixty-five years when Smallwood got involved. R. B. McCrea noted in 1869 that a local woman lightly chastised him for stressing the middle syllable; she said it must be left unstressed.⁸⁰ A generation later another visitor noted being cautioned against pronunciations with the stress anywhere but the last syllable.⁸¹

Smallwood's first mention of the pronunciation and its

⁸⁰ R. B. McCrea, Lost Amid the Fogs: Sketches of Life in Newfoundland (London: Sampson, Low, Son & Marston, 1869), p. 6.

⁸¹ Horace G. Hutchinson, A Saga of the Sunbeam (London: Longmans, Green, 1911), pp. 78-79; as quoted in DNE at "Newfoundland."

variants was in his 31 July 1937 "Masthead" column in the Daily News. This was about two months before he began his radio "column of the air."

By the way, it's not only non-Newfoundlanders who have difficulty in giving the word Newfoundland its correct pronunciation. Many a Newfoundlander who naturally and instinctively pronounces the name quite correctly is filled with hesitancy and doubt the minute someone asks him point-blank how the name should be pronounced.

Americans usually pronounce it NEW-f'n-land.⁸² All the emphasis is placed on the first syllable. The "found" is cut short to "f'n" like "fore" in "forecastle."⁸³ And quite correctly, too.

Englishmen usually pronounce it New-FOUND-land,⁸⁴ with all the emphasis on the "found." This is quite incorrect, though the pronunciation experts of the British Broadcasting Corporation give New-FOUND-land as the correct way to pronounce.⁸⁵ The B.B.C. is wrong, and everybody who pronounces it so is wrong.

⁸² This spelling is ambiguous. He probably means "NEW-f'n-l'nd" ['nufən,lənd] and not, as it could be read, the actually very common pronunciation (perhaps the most common one in casual speech in the 1980s and '90s) ['nufən,lənd].

⁸³ This was perhaps an unclear comparison; in the first syllable of the "standard" pronunciation of "forecastle" only the -R- is dropped while the rest of the word is elided to a mere [sl] - "foksl". At the same time, the often-heard Newfoundland folk pronunciation of "forecastle" is what might be called a spelling pronunciation, giving fully quality to all spelt parts except the 't'.

⁸⁴ Again, here he seems to mean "New-FOUND-l'nd" [nju'faund lənd].

⁸⁵ He is not explicit as to his source here, but it seems very likely he is referring to the B.B.C.'s pronunciation guide of 1937, a copy of which was acquired by the Gosling Memorial Library in St. John's when it was published. This is James A. Lloyd, Broadcast English, 6 vols. (London: B.B.C., 1935-37). The catalogue date on the Gosling's copy is 7 August 1937, a week after his column; he may have had access to it before it was catalogued. Smallwood appears to have mistaken the meaning of a stress mark (whether it refers to the vowel before it, which is wrong, or to that after it, which is right). Lloyd gives two identical pronunciations for the native and the recommended pronunciations: [nju:fənd'lənd]. To prevent misunderstanding, Lloyd also gives an "orthographic representation" of the recommendation ("newfündlánd") using popular dictionary diacritics for the unstressed middle syllable and the stressed final syllable.

The correct -- and only correct -- way of pronouncing the word is New-f'n-LAND. There is a slight emphasis on the "new" -- though only a slight one. The syllable "found" is cut short to "f'n." It is almost like "fun", though not so definite.⁸⁶

In other words, the correct pronunciation is precisely the one you will hear from any Newfoundlander when he pronounces the word naturally, unhesitatingly, without thinking about it at all. Once he begins to think about it, he is frequently liable to go wrong.⁸⁷

Although he never again returned to this topic in his Daily News columns, it became a matter of some controversy almost two years later when he was on the air as the Barrelman. A live broadcast had marked the official opening of a radio-telephone link among the United Kingdom, Newfoundland, and Canada. In his broadcast the following evening, the Barrelman pointed out that, unlike the Governor in conversation with the Canadian Governor-General, one of the Newfoundland Commissioners, J. C. Puddester, had pronounced the name as "New-Found-Land," with equal emphasis and full vowel quality to each of the three syllables.

No doubt you all noticed that His Excellency gave the name of our country its correct pronunciation -- he called it New-f'n-LAND. So did Mr. Penson, the Commissioner for Finance and Customs, when he was talking with the Deputy Post Master General of the United Kingdom -- Mr. Penson, too, called it New-f'n-LAND. It's true that Mr. Puddester, the Commissioner for Public Health and Welfare, called it NEW-FOUND-LAND, giving the the [sic: three]

⁸⁶ By this he clearly means the difference between [fən] and [fʌn], a difference which is sometimes described in American English phonemics as one of stress.

⁸⁷ "Masthead," 31 July 1937

syllables equal or almost equal emphasis, but I'm quite certain that he wasn't up to usual good form last night. Mr. Puddester happens to be one of the ablest speakers and debaters, though you'd never think so to judge by his short speech on the radio telephone to England last night. So you can't go by the fact that last night, in those few remarks of his, he didn't call it Newfoundland -- I've heard him a hundred times making a speech, and always he called it Newfoundland, and I'm quite sure that if you were to ask him how the name of our country should be pronounced he'd be the first to say, "Why, Newfoundland, of course -- there's only one right way to pronounce it, and that's it -- New-f'n-LAND." So, what do you say -- shall we all agree, all of us here in Newfoundland, that henceforth and forever more, in spite of all temptations, in spite of the BBC, in spite of everything, we'll just stick to our good old way, our own way, of pronouncing the name of our country, Newfoundland.⁸⁸

The following evening he devoted most of his programme to the same issue, opening with an anecdote about his own pronunciation of vowels before the letter R: he had not "properly" been distinguishing "bear" from "beer" until a friend pointed out his error. Then he continued the previous night's discussion:

Well, I was no sooner off the air than the argument started. One gentleman here in the station, a highly educated, in fact a university man, contended that in the absence of a definite and authoritative standard, one man's guess was as good as another's, and that so far as he was concerned he preferred to pronounce the three syllables fully and clearly -- NEW-FOUND-LAND.⁸⁹ Others agreed that the proper pronunciation was what I had given it, New-f'n-LAND. Later I was reminded that Mr. L. E. Emerson, K.C., the present

⁸⁸ Script, 11 January 1939.

⁸⁹ The "university man" may have been William F. Galgay, station manager, and an on-air user of the "full" pronunciation.

Commissioner for Justice, had once been interviewed by the Canadian papers on this very matter. It was when Mr. Emerson was up in Ottawa attending the Ottawa Conference. Mr. Emerson told the newspapermen that so far as he knew there were two pronunciations of the word in Newfoundland itself -- New-f'n-LAND, and NEW-FOUND-LAND. He said that most people call it New-f'n-LAND, though there were a good many who called it NEW-FOUND-LAND. Certainly Mr. Emerson is a highly educated man, and his diction is the envy of every would-be speaker in this country -- in fact, there are very few men in the world whose diction is so perfect. I called up Dr. V. P. Burke, the President of the Newfoundland Historical Society, and asked him the simple question, "Doctor, what is the proper pronunciation of the name of our country?" To tell you the truth, there was a crowd listening for the doctor's reply, and I was shivering for fear his answer would be different from my own. But no, back came his decisive and unhesitating reply: "The proper pronunciation is New-f'n-LAND." So there you are -- here in this country we certainly don't like the American NEW-f'n-land, and we don't like the English New-FOUND-land. It seems to lie between NEW-FOUND-LAND and New-f'n-LAND. Every Newfoundlander you meet says NEW-FOUND-LAND -- or -- New-f'n-LAND. Which of them is right? Which do you prefer? Do you call it NEW-FOUND-LAND, or do you call it New-f'n-LAND? I wish you'd write in and tell me. [...] Let's try to get this matter settled -- it's ridiculous for us not to be sure of the proper pronunciation of the name of our country.⁹⁰

He immediately began receiving letters on both sides of the argument.⁹¹ He quoted two letters, from Stanley Newell and William Dawe, on Friday 13 January 1939. Newell

⁹⁰ Script 12 January 1939.

⁹¹ Some of these letters are filed in CNS COLL-028 "Barrelman Papers," series Two, January 1939, but one (Stanley Newell's letter, quoted on air) was misfiled in the folder for January 1938; Mr Newell had misdated his own letter with the previous year, a common mistake in any January month, and the organiser of the collection placed it according to the wrong date.

disagreed with the Barrelman and felt the only true way of saying the name was to give full stress to all three syllables: this was what he was taught in school, he wrote, and you can "ask your grandparents and they will say the same."⁹² Dawe agreed with the Barrelman about the number of incorrect pronunciations and added one to the number of classes of people who mispronounced the name. By this he brought into the discussion one of Smallwood's political threads, that of the perception of some Newfoundlanders that their own culture was not prestigious. The Barrelman spoke of Dawe's letter:

Our soldiers, he says, when they were on the other side, picked up the Old Country way of calling it New-FOUND-land, and he says it was widely used in our regiment. "This," Mr. Dawe adds, "is another case of the Newfoundlander's inferiority complex which you are combatting in your broadcasts. In spite of the fact that at home Newfoundlanders always pronounced it properly -- namely New-f'n-LAND -- when they got in a strange country, and the strange people (who in many cases never heard of this country) twisted our country's name, our men just let it go and thought they must have been taught wrong, and changed the sound of the name to New-FOUND-land while traveling in this country. Let's stick to our own way of pronouncing the name of the country -- Let's continue calling it New-f'n-LAND." That's the end of Mr. Dawe's letter.⁹³

Again the following night's programme was mainly concerned with this issue, as the Barrelman read more letters and looked to more local authorities. He quotes

⁹² CNS COLL028, file 2.02.002 (January 1938).

⁹³ Script, 13 January 1939.

Michael C. James, a local author and geographer "whose opinion is not lightly to be dismissed":

"Our regular pronunciation of the name of Newfoundland may be regarded as the conversational way of pronouncing it; but in songs, in poetry, in reading and in addresses, speeches and orations, an equal emphasis of all three syllables is necessary in some cases and very desirable in others. In our Ode to Newfoundland, this is the only pronunciation that can be used -- NEW-FOUND-LAND, with all three syllables accentuated, to suit the rhythm of the music. Another instance I may mention," Mr. James goes on to say, "is that of the Honourable J. C. Puddester at the radio telephone inauguration. Mr. Puddester was not then engaging in a conversation in the ordinary acceptation of the term -- he was making a verbal and informative reply to greetings received from a member of the British Government then at Grimsby in England. Mr. Puddester's reply was in reality a short speech befitting the historic occasion, and it was therefore correct for him to avoid the conversational pronunciation in favor of a variant that gave more emphasis to his words and more dignity to his reply. I claim, Mr. Barrelman, that we have two correct pronunciations of our country's name -- one which may be classed as the conversational method, and the other as the emphatic method."⁹⁴

This was an understanding which the Barrelman agreed with fully, though not so unambiguously that he did not need to point out again the primacy of his own pronunciation.

In the following show, Monday 16 January 1939, he began the programme with a ten minute item which proudly went through his activities of the day calling several local people to poll them on their pronunciation. "Dictionary definitions and pronunciations" meant little to him in the

⁹⁴ Script, 14 January 1939.

face of local spoken authority. Warwick Smith, John S. Currie, Robert Gear MacDonald, Judge William Browne, Harold Newell, William A. Munn, Albert G. Hatcher, Leo E. F. English, and Albert Perlin were all polled and, except for Hatcher's occasional use of the "three full syllables" pronunciation, all invariably used the one propounded by the Barrelman. He finished up his item with a listing of these men plus the Governor, Commissioner Penson, and Michael James, all of whom indicate that the correct pronunciation is the locally used one exactly because it is the locally used one.

Five of the men in this list (Browne, Hatcher, MacDonald, Munn and Smith) were executive members of the Newfoundland Historical Society, of which Joe Smallwood was Recording Secretary.⁹⁵ The Historical Society issued a press statement two weeks later to the effect that it approved the pronunciation promulgated by the Barrelman, though without mentioning him.⁹⁶ The press report in turn touched off some discussion in St. John's two main papers, including a editorial in the Daily News in favour of the

⁹⁵ Smallwood lists the entire "Council" of the Society in his Newfoundland 1940 Hand Book, Gazetteer and Almanac (St. John's: Long Brothers, 1940), p. 235. Besides those noted, V. P. Burke, R. S. Furlong, N. C. Crewe, A. Munn, S. P. Whiteway, and O. L. Vardy were also on the Council. He lists the partly coincident Nomenclature Board on p. 143; that consisted of Major J. Haig-Smith (chair), Levi Curtis, W. J. Carroll, I. J. Sampson, Smith, Burke, and Whiteway.

⁹⁶ "Historical Society Annual Meeting," Evening Telegram 28 January 1939, p. 4.

"full pronunciation and equal emphasis" model.⁹⁷ Behind the scenes at the Broadcasting Corporation of Newfoundland, a memo was issued by its Board of Governors, ironically signed by R. S. Furlong who also happened to be on the Council of the Historical Society, agreeing with the Daily News editorial.⁹⁸

Although the Barrelman's radio controversy continued on succeeding nights with a few more letters on one side or the other, the climax had been reached with his list of authorities, and it was effectively the end of the discussion as far as he was concerned. He had established the importance of defining "culturally correct" as "that approved by the majority of local speakers." His point that local cultural matters, even linguistic ones involving the so-called King's English, should be settled by "majority view" at home may seem weakened by his population of influential men of St. John's in his "majority." But, given the pronunciations that have been apparent in recent years in Newfoundland, it is very likely that a wider poll would

⁹⁷ "Pronouncing Newfoundland," Daily News 31 January 1939, p. 4.

⁹⁸ Broadcasting Corporation of Newfoundland, internal memorandum, R. S. Furlong (Secretary to the Board) to W. F. Galgay (General Manager), 11 March 1939: "All three syllables are to be given equal value, but a slight stressing of the final syllable will be permissible." CNS Archives Galgay Papers, folder 105. One of the Barrelman's list of local authorities, John S. Currie, was also a member of the Board. Fifty years later R. S. Furlong did not remember the discussion at the Historical Society meeting, but clearly remembered the informal way in which the matter was discussed at the Broadcasting Corporation Board meeting. It arose, he said, out of "idle discussion at one of those meetings." (Telephone conversation, 28 May 1990.)

have produced the same results. Smallwood's strategy in all things was to appeal to apparent experts; this can be seen throughout his political as well as his journalistic careers. His experts were asked not only what their personal pronunciation was, but what they felt the "right" pronunciation was; that they all agreed that the popular pronunciation was also the right one supported his populist position.

This was not a small step to take against received concepts of "good usage" at the time. The argument between professional linguists, descriptive about language, and enthusiasts for "pure" language, who were prescriptive, only became commonplace in the 1960s with the publication of the first widely available descriptive dictionary.⁹⁹ In Smallwood's time it was much more common for stands to be made on the basis of the prescription of "good speakers."¹⁰⁰ His list of authorities certainly derived from such a stand, but his underlying disdain for "dictionary definitions and pronunciations" and his repeated appeal to the authority of "customary pronunciation" reveal the different attitude. He boiled the two "sides" down to a consensus, not of his

⁹⁹ This was the Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language (1962). A collection of essays on the role of this particular dictionary is James H. Sledd, ed. Dictionaries and That Dictionary: A Casebook on the Aims of Lexicographers and the Targets of Reviewers (Chicago: Scott, Foresman, 1962).

¹⁰⁰ The rise of descriptive lexicography and linguistics, and the decline of prescriptive usagism is succinctly outlined by W. H. Mittins, et al. Attitudes to English Usage (London: Oxford U P, 1970), pp. 1-3.

design, but with his approval. That the Barreelman took a descriptivist stand is remarkable in the context of attitudes to language generally, but predictable in the context of his cultural politics and populist stands on cultural aspects of Newfoundland.

Newfoundland Patriotic Association Fish Appeal

As soon as the Second World War began in September 1939, the Newfoundland Patriotic Association (NPA) began raising money to help both the families of men going overseas and the men themselves. Their annual "Forget-Me-Not" appeal in June was a custom well-established between the Wars. In June of 1940 the Barreelman supported the appeal by encouraging his listeners to buy and wear the Forget-Me-Not flowers being sold in the streets and shops. The Patriotic Association also began in that year a second appeal, calling on all working Newfoundlanders to give a cent of every dollar they earned to the appeal. As more Newfoundlanders were working than in previous years, the campaign was quite successful. The Barreelman and his sponsor, F. M. O'Leary, again supported and advertised the campaign.

The Barreelman realised however that many Newfoundland fishermen did not work for cash. It is a commonplace of popular Newfoundland history, one that Joe Smallwood put to use eight years later in the Refererendum debates, that

fishermen were tied to their supplying merchants in a cashless environment of "truck" or "credit" accounts.¹⁰¹ He came up with an alternative fundraiser that was congruent with this analysis of the fishery. Every fishermen would contribute one good saltfish ("Now, we don't want your West Indies," he said, referring to the lowest grade of the saltfish cull) and each community would send their combined donations as a package to F. M. O'Leary, along with the names of all the donors, which would be read on the Barrelman. O'Leary would sell the fish by auction to the highest bidder, and turn the cash over to the NPA. The idea was that cashless or not, every fisherman would be able to contribute meaningfully to a worthwhile, and by definition "Patriotic" cause in wartime. The products of his labour were transformed into a direct form of wealth put to national interest.

No doubt the best fish in each community did go into the O'Leary Fish Appeal pile, and the price attained remained high. It was an ingenious method of raising money while raising morale on the homefront. No doubt it also introduced O'Leary to another aspect of commerce, something he was always pleased to have accomplished as a result of

¹⁰¹ Lord Amulree pointed out the undesirability of this system, as well as the long-standing opposition to it, going back at least as far as a speech by Newfoundland's Director of Fisheries, Adolf Nielsen, in 1894 (Amulree report, paragraph 217).

his good works.¹⁰²

Symbols of nationhood

The Barrelman encouraged the development of national symbols of Newfoundland. Early in his career as the Barrelman, he got involved in a controversy over the Newfoundland coat of arms. Later he took part in discussions regarding the official recognition of plants and animals as Newfoundland's national emblems. However, as part of a humorous anecdote about the lack of knowledge about Newfoundland in other places, he made fun of those who thought the country had "a national costume." He reported that Prime Minister William V. Whiteway had been at an Imperial Conference in London where he was asked to attend a certain function in his national costume; his own derision reflected Whiteway's.¹⁰³ By his understanding, national symbols like animals, plants and coats of arms were appropriate for Newfoundland, but costume was not. Presumably he was afraid that the selection of a national costume, even perhaps the discussion of one, would place Newfoundlanders on a par with those parts of the British Empire where Western clothing was not worn.

¹⁰² See the interview by Carole Henderson Carpenter with Frank O'Leary, Jr., in 1970, in which he points out that if it had not been for the commercially successful side of the Barrelman, the cultural side would not have survived (MUNFLA tape C5881/70-57).

¹⁰³ "Masthead," 9 September 1937.

In early 1938 the discussion of a floral emblem for the country had been brought up on the Barrelman by George W. B. Ayre and another correspondent, L. Power. George W. B. Ayre was well-known in the city for his support of public recreational facilities for children, and his campaign for national holidays to be established in Newfoundland.¹⁰⁴ St. John's Day, established by the Squires government in the 1920s, had been delisted by the Commission of Government in 1934. Each June during the 1930s Ayre wrote pieces for the newspapers on the need for employers to support the re-establishment of the day as a national holiday. It was agreed by Ayre, Power and the Barrelman that the caribou had been for some time the national animal; but what was the national flower to be?¹⁰⁵ Ayre suggested the dandelion and, although it was widely eaten (the Barrelman himself not much later waxed eloquent on the subject of the taste of dandelion¹⁰⁶), the Barrelman thought the pitcher plant was more appropriate.

A few weeks later the Commission of Government had the Civil Service letterhead changed, dropping the Newfoundland Coat of Arms without any discussion or announcement. When the Barrelman heard of the change he reported it angrily.

¹⁰⁴ On Ayre's life, see Catherine F. R. Horan, "Ayre, George W. B.," ENL I (St. John's: NBP, 1981).

¹⁰⁵ Script, 2 February 1938.

¹⁰⁶ Script, 24 February 1938.

Change, he said, must not be made by the outsiders of the Commission, but by "ourselves":

This is pure vandalism.... It's our country. We and we alone have the moral right to adopt a motto for our country, or a coat of arms, or any emblem.... Hands off the national emblem!¹⁰⁷

An editorial followed two days later in the Daily News, repeating his concerns.

About two years later the Barreelman returned to the question of the motto and emblem on government stationery. A listener to his programme asked about the changeover, noting that a blessing ("Seek ye first the Kingdom of God") had been replaced with a curse ("Evil to him who thinks evil"), suggesting that perhaps such a change was appropriate to the Commission, the originator of the switch.¹⁰⁸

The Barreelman's tone in reply was very different from that of 1938 as he calmly explained the events of the previous ten or twelve years during which time the Government had dropped (in 1928) the old "cursing" emblem of a Lion and Unicorn in favour of one (the "blessing" one) which Edgar Bowring had found on some old documents in England. Although newly instituted it was felt to be "an older and more ancient" emblem, more rightly representing Newfoundland. But when the Commission took over they

¹⁰⁷ "Masthead," 12 March 1938.

¹⁰⁸ Script, 22 January 1940.

wrongly felt it was a new development and tried to disestablish it. They went so far as printing up some new letterhead but the public outcry stopped them from going further.¹⁰⁹

In the midst of the 1938 emblem controversy the song "The Flag of Newfoundland" was sung on local radio. It had been written by Catholic Archbishop M. F. Howley, and was about the popular "Pink, White and Green" tricolour flag which Howley's predecessor Bishop Fleming had designed and promulgated a century before. That event led some listeners to ask the Barreelman what precisely was the flag of Newfoundland.¹¹⁰ He answered by saying there was no flag of Newfoundland except the flag of Britain, the Union Jack. The tricolour flag, he said,

was never a national flag, and was never officially recognized, and isn't now. It had great significance and meaning in its day, and happily the need that existed for it in those times doesn't exist any longer.¹¹¹

So soon after his discussions about the need for national emblem, it is not clear why he should take such a stand.

As Ellen Dinn has pointed out, for almost a century

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ The previous year Smallwood had published "The Flag of Newfoundland" immediately following the "Ode to Newfoundland", the national anthem, and before the title of a section of Newfoundland poems and songs, in his Book of Newfoundland, II (St. John's NBP, 1937), p. 455. This juxtaposition with the Ode, and placement before the title suggests he thought the poem was of greater importance than other verse about the country.

¹¹¹ Script, 18 March 1938.

since its invention in the 1840s, the tricolour had indeed been a popular flag, with increasing acceptance throughout Newfoundland society.¹¹² Major opposition to the tricolour lay among those, in particular Orangemen, who continued to see it as a sectarian Catholic flag, invented and promulgated by Catholic bishops. Howley had tried to overcome sectarian bitterness by his compromise flag, but his connection to the flag was ironically what fueled the bitterness. Negative attitudes to the tricolour not only extended to Smallwood's time, but also through to the period of design of a new provincial flag in the late 1970s, when letters to the editors of newspapers still evidenced bitter feelings about it. Smallwood was a lifelong member of the Orange Lodge, and this fact goes a long way to explain his otherwise out-of-character anti-populism on the issue.

The Barrelman and Confederation with Canada

Less than three years after leaving the Barrelman programme, Smallwood became the leading and successful proponent of Newfoundland's Confederation with Canada. It would seem likely that while still the Barrelman he might have used his position to promote discussion on the topic. Nonetheless, as likely as this seems, he apparently never openly discussed the matter.

Smallwood showed an affection for Canada several times

¹¹² Ellen M. Dinn, "Flags," ENL II (St. John's: NBP, 1984).

as the Barrelman. It was the same kind of affection that he showed for parts of the United States and England, and his statements do not seem to suggest that he carried a confederate torch through that period. In particular he spoke well of "Prince Edward's Island" as he liked to call it, where his grandfather was born and where Smallwood still had relatives with whom he corresponded.¹¹³ His affection for Prince Edward Island no doubt was connected to his personal affection for his grandfather noted in Chapter Two. Smallwood told Peter Narváez that the first tall tales he told were ones from his grandfather, and they came from Prince Edward Island.¹¹⁴

From time to time he would point out the less glossy side of Canada to his audience, as he did with other countries like Britain and the United States. As I noted in the discussion of Joan Blondell's singing "The Newfoundland Express," the Barrelman told his audience that Canadian trains were no better, and perhaps a little worse in terms of creature comforts and speed, than Newfoundland trains. Canadian country people could be "yokels" and at least some

¹¹³ It was on "Prince Edward's Island" that in the summer of 1922 he heard one of his first radio broadcasts; script, 9 September 1938. In his autobiography Smallwood tells of working for a New York film production company raising capital in 1922 for a never-filmed movie project on P.E.I.; I Chose Canada, pp. 127-131. Letters from his relatives on P.E.I., and newspaper clippings of notable family events on P.E.I., like weddings, are to be found in the "Barrelman Notebook," in the CNS Archives "Smallwood Papers."

¹¹⁴ Narváez, "Joseph R. Smallwood, the Barrelman," p. 56.

were.¹¹⁵ Canadians were very much like Americans, and as such were certainly different from Newfoundlanders, but no better and no worse.¹¹⁶

He showed a strong patriotic stand with regard to the still very recent decision of the Privy Council on the delineation of the Labrador Boundary in 1927.¹¹⁷ Canada had fought hard to win territory that turned out to be most of Labrador, but Newfoundland won its full case, setting the border where it remains today. Probably more than anything else in the twentieth century the Labrador boundary issue instilled in Newfoundlanders a distrust of Canada, one that was only fully wiped away by Confederation in 1949. Smallwood often brought up the Privy Council case, usually to show the sinuosities of the Canadian argument. Rather than a pro-Canadian stand in the Barrelman materials, we find a light but well-defined anti-Canadianism.¹¹⁸

Early in his tenure as the Barrelman, he simply ignored the confederate comments of others, or passed them on

¹¹⁵ Script, 5 February 1943.

¹¹⁶ Script, 20 November 1943.

¹¹⁷ On the legal battle between Canada and Newfoundland, culminating in the 1927 Privy Council decision, see Leslie Harris, "The Labrador Boundary Dispute," Newfoundland Quarterly 87: 1 (1991-1992), 21-26.

¹¹⁸ See for example his references to the Privy Council arguments and decision in the scripts of 30 January 1940; 21, 25 and 26 October 1940. In that of 21 October 1940 he ridiculed the Canadian contention in 1927 that the Hamilton Inlet was not a bay but a lake, "a mere freshwater pond," in order to shorten the "Labrador Coast" that was being awarded to Newfoundland.

without comment. In February 1938 his own editor at the Daily News wrote an editorial lambasting the idea of Confederation, pointing out that Newfoundland would only stand to lose by the action, losing ten million dollars a year in customs revenue alone.¹¹⁹ Four months later, in the last days of his newspaper column, the Barreelman received and printed a letter from a St. John's man advocating Confederation, and suggesting that the Newfoundland national debt be liquidated by Canada in return for Labrador.¹²⁰ The Barreelman passed no overt comment, favourable or otherwise on the letter, although he did point out the size of Newfoundland's national debt. Two days later another letter appeared from "a young reader" arguing against Confederation and in favour of an expanded "Industrial Commission" of Government, one which would include local businessmen in the ruling body. The Barreelman quite explicitly agreed with this proposal and suggested that international capitalists might be brought in and paid fitting salaries to oversee the reorganisation of Newfoundland's economy.¹²¹

Two years later the Daily News editor took advantage of the new raising of the issue in Canada to ridicule the

¹¹⁹ Daily News, 18 February 1938, p. 4.

¹²⁰ The letter was by Jacob Carberry, "Masthead," 23 June 1938. The idea of selling Labrador to Canada had been touted for much of the past decade, mainly by Smallwood's own Liberal Party. See Neary, Newfoundland in the North Atlantic, pp. 14, 17.

¹²¹ "Masthead," 25 June 1938.

suggestion in a parodic editorial piece. That night the Barreelman read from it at length, suggesting additional ways to make fun of the idea. Newfoundland should annex Canada, he said, because Canada owed a great deal to Newfoundland as a result of pirate raids by d'Iberville and Canadian Indians in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as well as the gratuitous and unpaid efforts of Newfoundlanders to save Canada from American forces in 1775 and 1812. Likewise individual Newfoundlanders had contributed in many ways to the development and governance of Canada, contributions that had not been reciprocated.¹²²

Despite this flippant attitude in September, just two months later, in November 1940, he read in its near entirety an opinion piece by Canadian Goldwin Gregory, published that week in the Toronto magazine Liberty.¹²³ It was entitled "Newfoundland -- Our Tenth Province?" and suggested that Canada needed Newfoundland as much as or even more than Newfoundland needed Canada. For military reasons, Newfoundland was indispensable to Canada; for economic and security reasons, Newfoundland needed Canada. As with the letter from Carberry almost three years before, he passed no

¹²² Daily News 23 September 1940, p. 4; script, 23 September 1940.

¹²³ Script, 25 November 1940. Liberty is unfortunately unavailable at M.U.N., but it was a magazine with an early interest in Newfoundland and Newfoundlanders. Several local writers published in it in the 1930s; see for example my interview with P. J. Wakeham, MUNFLA 90-106.

explicit comment, but his mere reading the article must have been an act of giving credibility to the arguments.

Two weeks later he used a rumour he had heard that he was in fact dead as an excuse to bring the question of Confederation up again.¹²⁴ What, he asked, would be his dying wish if he were dying? He referred back to the Liberty article and noted Gregory's suggestion of an appeal to Newfoundlanders' "imperial patriotism," their loyalty to the Crown, as a way to win their approval of Confederation. Bringing this up was a device to discuss the need to question Newfoundlanders' undivided loyalty to Britain and to develop a separate loyalty to Newfoundland itself. That separate loyalty, he said, was his one great wish for himself and for Newfoundland. Seen in retrospect, through the lens of Smallwood's having used exactly Gregory's argument, this programme seems pivotal: it was here that Smallwood first made mention of a tactic, "British Union" with Canada, that was central to the second Referendum debate, in 1948.¹²⁵

Now, I'm not going to say whether Gregory is right or wrong in his opinion -- that's not my purpose, and certainly it isn't my purpose to discuss Confederation, for the topic simply doesn't belong in this program. My point is that Newfoundlanders

¹²⁴ Script, 9 December 1940.

¹²⁵ On the use of the phrase "British Union" to describe Confederation, see for example Neary Newfoundland in the North Atlantic, p. 323. As Harold Horwood, notes, the British Union campaign was almost turned upside down by the opposition suggesting "British Union with French Canada," Joey, p. 126.

are already intensely Imperialistic people, they're very British, they're very loyal to the Crown. But are they sufficiently loyal to Newfoundland?¹²⁶

Despite his saying that such a discussion does not belong on the Barrelman, there seems to be an implication that the topic is in need of discussion; perhaps this was his way of getting people to talk about it without his having to take an explicit stand on the matter. In any case his employer, F. M. O'Leary, remained opposed to the issue of Confederation and after Smallwood's departure from the programme his successor, Michael Harrington, campaigned hard against it. The O'Leary monthly newspaper, the Newfoundlander, associated so closely with the Barrelman programme, likewise took an active editorial stand against Confederation in 1948. Smallwood may have been canny enough to anticipate that his employer would not allow him to speak out for Confederation in his role as Barrelman, but it seems more likely that while he was Barrelman he had no strong opinion on the matter.

Conclusion

From the beginning to the end of the Barrelman, Smallwood practised cultural politics. Rarely if ever did he engage in flagrant, partisan-political discourse, nor did he champion extreme solutions to Newfoundland's problems as

¹²⁶ Script, 9 December 1940.

he did later in advocating Confederation with Canada. His was a more subtle politics. He continually practised the more subtle forms of building up Newfoundlanders' confidence in their country, its people and its products, and of trying to place in a less privileged perspective the common attitudes to foreign countries like Britain and Canada. Rather than the latter taking the form of xenophobia, however, he even-handedly weighed up similar and observable factors. He often called Newfoundland "the best small nation in the world," but his attitude was that every nation had its good points, and its bad points. In cultural regard of Newfoundland, the bad points were the things he took every opportunity as the Barreelman to improve.

Aware of the weaknesses of the Commission of Government and the effect on the government that both consensus and controversy among the Newfoundland populace could have (he once opined that the Commission was the government most susceptible to public opinion that Newfoundland had ever had), he used his power as a popular and wide-reaching broadcaster to manipulate both the consensus of Newfoundland public opinion, and the controversies within it. By so doing he was able to raise issues, and to re-centre the meanings of certain aspects of Newfoundland culture. These aspects included local folklore ("Little Traditions") like songs, current pronunciations and their meanings as well as "Big Traditions" like the national flag and floral symbols.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

As much as this thesis is a partial literary and performance biography of Joe Smallwood, it is also a study of folklore and rhetoric, and a snapshot of folklore in process at a crucial period in the life of the Newfoundland nation and state. Joe Smallwood was an intellectual power almost unrivalled in Newfoundland in his time as the Barrelman. In a time when all politicians were former politicians, he was the only one with any degree of credible access to the media. His lack of ties to the Commission of Government in a time of no overt politics allowed him to play up his appearance of disinterest. His power was one of ideas and he promulgated them through his free access first to the press (built up from nearly a quarter century of being a working journalist and author) and later to the more powerful medium of prime time radio.

Ian Rodger has written that successful rhetoric requires a knowledge of local "social and political folklore."¹ Smallwood was steeped in the political folklore of Newfoundland and had that requisite. To Rodger's dictum might be added that a further knowledge of regional folklore

¹ Ian Rodger, "Rhetoric and Ritual Politics: The Durham Miners' Gala," in Robert Paine, ed., Politically Speaking: Cross-Cultural Studies of Rhetoric (St. John's: ISER, MUN, 1981), p. 41.

in general can only aid a politician's populist rhetoric. The rhetoric of the Barrelman rested on both these things, resulting in his role of "Answer Man" -- someone who, to some of his audience, apparently knew everything worth knowing about Newfoundland and who came to represent some of the important aspects of Newfoundlanders' self-image.

Smallwood said that an important reason for starting his Barrelman enterprise was pecuniary -- he had a family to support, and by writing his newspaper column, and then his radio show, he was successively putting to better use the store of historical and economic knowledge he had picked up over the years. These are typical moves by any performer. Rosenberg has shown that among country musicians there is a clear tendency to gravitate to the largest market that can support a performer's music, style and ability; at one stage this can mean moving from live performance to recordings and electronic media distribution in a process of professionalisation.² What is true of musicians moving from "folk" style to "popular" style or, more to the point, from local to regional markets, is also true of narrative performers of national lore like Smallwood. By putting to greater pecuniary use his knowledge and performance abilities Smallwood was professionalising his skills.

² Neil V. Rosenberg, "Big Fish, Small Ponds: Country Musicians and Their Markets," in Peter Narváez and Martin Laba, eds., Media Sense: The Folklore-Popular Culture Continuum (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State U Popular P, [1986]), pp. 158 ff.

Using and extending his contacts in the Newfoundland establishment, particularly among the intellectual and newly rising middle classes, he developed a populist political career for himself on the foundation of his several sputtering attempts before the era of Commission of Government. His relationships with such people as William Munn, Leo English, F. M. O'Leary, and Ches Crosbie all reflect these contacts; culturally and economically rooted in Newfoundland, these people found his work genial to their own concerns. Smallwood likewise found a successful persona for that career development in the Barreلمان's balance of history and folklore, and of apparent historical omniscience and collaborative collection of folklore and oral history. His populism was built on an understanding of, and a reliance on, the degree and depth of enthusiasm current in Newfoundland for information about the country's past and present. At a time in Newfoundland's history when the electoral and governmental trappings of statehood had been removed, his Barreلمان programme was ideally suited to develop and reshape the native concept of the nationhood of Newfoundland. While it performed a function of cultural back-slapping for Newfoundland, it also served Smallwood's own personal, political aspirations, making his voice, like Newfoundland itself, "better known to Newfoundlanders."

Smallwood's Barreلمان forged mythic motifs, hammering them into shapes that suited his personal and national

vision. Motifs like the hard-working and resolute Newfoundlander were continually cycled and recycled through his stories, presented in a deliberate and explicit attempt to counter the current feelings of cultural and social dispiritedness. Some of his stories brought together groupings of these motifs into constellations which, like the legend of Princess Sheila, might be read by his audience as charters for a new Newfoundland social polity. By this exercise, by selecting and clustering folklore into more meaningful units, not only was he **using** folklore, he was also **creating** it. The new meaning he gave was not so much a textual as a supratextual meaning, based on the connotative meanings of his nationalism. Similarly he created folklore anew when he brought texts from very local areas to much larger ones. People throughout the entire country were influenced by the Barreelman through one or another of the media at his disposal -- radio, newspapers, and even a schoolbook. People in new areas heard his items now with newly nationalised connotations, different meanings from what they may have carried before, differences resulting from the Barreelman's intervention.

The Barreelman only very rarely got into discussions of authenticity, and never spoke of it as such. He would not have considered his own work of selection, foregrounding, amplification, repetition and broadcast of specific bits of culture to be "invention." The idea would have seemed

absurd to him; after all, he made few changes in the texts he was given. But neither would he have used terms I have used in this thesis: salvage, valorisation and revival. There is no doubt he saw his work as, in modern terms, a natural re-appropriation by the people of their national cultural property. Similar to revivalists in other times and in other periods, his intent was to bring the information about Newfoundland's past and present glory by broadcasting it over the airwaves for all to hear.

That he saw his work as salvage is clear from his continual calls to the youth of Newfoundland's communities to write down the memories of their parents and grandparents. Through the Barrelman programme, F. M. O'Leary offered a "Gold Medal" to the best of these student essays for at least a couple of years.³ "See the oldest people in the settlement," Smallwood inveigled his young audience, and commit the old people's stories to paper before they died and it was too late.⁴

His use of the term "hero" or "Newfoundland hero" likewise indicates his valorising instinct and his corollary recasting of the meaning of knowledge about Newfoundland. In conjunction with his own valorising impulse, he used

³ A gold medal was awarded for the 1942 and 1943 essay competitions; see scripts, 15 June 1942, 29 September 1942, 29 October 1942, 8 April 1943 and 16 June 1943.

⁴ Script, 22 November 1940. This broadcast was one in a series of calls to the youth of the country; eventually the O'Leary Newfoundland History Competition was established.

earlier traditions like the explicit entitling of Newfoundland sea captains; with the ever-present pronominal "Captain", he tried to build self-confidence within the country. The process of valorisation included the use of superlatives for describing various aspects of Newfoundland life otherwise taken for granted: the sealing captain who brought in the most seals, the oldest family or person in the country, the first settlement, the first white child, the man who walked the greatest distance, the woman who at the greatest age still picked berries, the first woman to fish on the Grand Banks, and so on. Each of these declarations took a more or less ordinary fact and applied to it some national superlative. He defined heroes and, as with Captain Bob Bartlett, called attention to the unaccountably unexceptional treatment they received. Heroes were made, too, of "ordinary" Newfoundlanders who travelled to other countries and became politically and financially successful, their ordinariness underlined by their family relationships to present and known Newfoundlanders.

This process of valorisation helped build a canon of national vaunts, commonplaces, and motifs. By repetition of motifs and by universalisation of textual types (either by anonymity or by metonymic association) he caused listeners to view differently their country, its history and its lore. Recasting the meaning of otherwise seemingly commonplace knowledge, he was inventing a new mythology of Newfoundland,

inventing new forms of its folklore.

Using traditional forms, his natural colloquiality, his modernist sensibilities, and his access to a great font of local and regional folklore and oral history, Smallwood established a credibility that served him well in the overtly political career that followed. When he left the Barrelman in 1943 he left behind hints that he believed his stated job was done, that the national consciousness he had striven to produce had come into being.⁵ Of course, Smallwood did not create the Newfoundland nation, nor its national consciousness. Their earlier existence has been indicated by the work of writers such as Phillip McCann, and exemplified by writers such as D.W. Prowse.⁶ But in the context of the actually "New Newfoundland" -- in an international depression with no self-government, and a strong feeling of shame at having lost that government -- Smallwood tried to spread the knowledge of an earlier geopolitical era, and Newfoundland's role in it, as well as a pride in all the unsung achievements he could uncover. His was a revitalisation impulse.

Like many twentieth century politicians, Smallwood was able to use his media exposure to consolidate and solidify his political support. Had he not had the Barrelman radio

⁵ For example, his discussion of the Blondell case.

⁶ Phillip McCann, "Culture, States Formation and the Invention of Tradition: Newfoundland, 1832-1855," J Canadian Studies 23:1-2 (1988), 86-103.

programme as a launching pad, his attempts at political flight would have been much more difficult. He was not alone in such a career path; examples abound of politicians whose early careers were in the electronic media -- in Canada, the United States, Great Britain, and in Newfoundland itself.

As Dundes has said about cultural intervenors in other nations with "nationalistic inferiority complexes," Smallwood was manufacturing what he assumed would be an authentic, valorising complex of national folk traditions about Newfoundland and its people.⁷ Had his broadcasts and newspaper columns simply taken the form of ephemeral entertainment, then there would be no point in calling any of it folklore; lost in the ether like so much other broadcasting, it would have had no lasting effect on the listeners. But some of Smallwood's Barrelman pronouncements appear to have had such a lasting effect.

To the extent that he rode on a folk-traditional wave of popularity of certain genres, like the tall tale, he probably had no measurable effect on the traditions of Newfoundland. Reflecting them and resonating with them, he was able to use such traditions as vehicles to greater popularity for his programme and himself. But to the extent that some of his examples became established both in the

⁷ Alan Dundes, "Nationalistic Inferiority Complexes and the Fabrication of Fakelore," p. 5.

popular traditions represented by authors like Ron Pumphrey, Jack Fitzgerald, and Art Rockwood, and in the folk traditions, as with the Princess Sheila legend, he was successful. It is moot perhaps whether his different roles as "primary" researcher (getting his information from oral and folk sources) and as "secondary researcher" (getting it from previously published sources) have any bearing on whether he invented or passed on others' ideas. As a mediator of folklore his role was substantial, whether or not he was the first to parade them systematically as bits of national importance.

One might ask if it were through the Barrelman that Newfoundland joined Canada in 1949? A hasty answer is "Yes": Smallwood learned how to use radio to advantage through it; he used the radio programme as a means to get back into politics, and became powerful enough to sway large numbers of votes. But a longer view would lead one to say "No": there is practically no evidence of his doing anything more than putting Confederation on the discussion table while he was Barrelman. Certainly he never actively supported the issue; through most of his Barrelman tenure he was an ardent Newfoundland nationalist and independentist.

Mody Boatright has noted the central truths that permeate anecdotes, which themselves can bear no trace of historicity or even the appearance of truth to the careful

researcher. Whether one accepts the historicity of the following anecdote or even regards its verisimilitude to be high enough to warrant discussion of its historicity, one can extract "social truth" from it.⁸ According to the story, Frank O'Leary and Joe Smallwood met at a party some years after Confederation.

The premier brought a man over to meet Mr. O'Leary saying "I'd like you to meet Frank O'Leary; I made him a millionaire!" Mr. O'Leary, blessed with Irish humour, retorted "Ah, that may be true, Mr. Premier, but I made you Premier!"⁹

Here lie the most obvious effects of The Barrelman: it was a commercial success for its backer, and it paved a political road for its presenter. But there is no doubt that it also had important effects on its audience, especially those among the audience who were, or became, enthusiasts of Newfoundland culture.

⁸ Boatright uses the term "social value" for this core truth; "The Family Saga as a Form of Folklore," in The Family Saga and Other Phases of American Folklore (Urbana, Illinois: U. Illinois P, 1958), pp. 1-19.

⁹ The story has been current for many years. Frank O'Leary, Jr., told it to Carole Henderson Carpenter in 1970; MUNFLA tape C3914/78-057. This version is taken from Carpenter's Many Voices: A Study of Folklore Activities in Canada and Their Role in Canadian Culture, CCFCS no. 26 (Ottawa: National Museums, 1979), pp. 31-32.

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Abbreviations used in notes and bibliography:

- C&T = Culture & Tradition
CfC = Canadian Folklore canadien
CFMJ = Canadian Folk Music Journal
CNS = Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland
DNE = G. M. Story, et alia, Dictionary of Newfoundland English.
DNLB = R.H. Cuff, et alia, Dictionary of Newfoundland and Labrador Biography.
ENL = J.R. Smallwood, et alia, Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador.
JAF = Journal of American Folklore
MUNFLA = Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive
NS = Newfoundland Studies
OED II = J. A. Simpson, and E. S. C. Weiner. The Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed.

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