THE FUNCTION OF FOLKLORE IN THE INTERRELATIONSHIP OF THE NEWFOUNDLAND SEAL FISHERY AND THE HOME COMMUNITIES OF THE SEALERS

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by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between an occupation - the Newfoundland seal fishery - and the communities from which the practitioners of the occupation come, and the examination employs the methods and materials of folklore to arrive at conclusions about this relationship. The basic concept is that individuals use the folklore of their home communities and of their occupations when they relate themselves to other individual members of the industry or the community or to these groups in a larger, more abstract sense.

The methods of research have included investigation of printed sources about sealing, location of relevant materials in the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive and direct personal interviews with men who have been sealing, as well as less directed interviews with many Newfoundlanders about the industry.

Five specific areas have been chosen for research, including the use of stereotypes in a man's relation to his occupation, an examination of the diversions which help to dictate interpersonal relationships on the sealing vessels, the relationship of the industry to the concept of manhood within the communities, esoteric and exoteric evaluations

of the dangers of the seal fishery and an examination of the reasons which men give for continued participation in the seal hunt.

Through these areas of investigation, one may see the extent to which occupations and communities interrelate, and the conclusions drawn detail the points of interaction. Briefly, the conclusions reveal that there is a significant relationship between the seal fishery and the home communities of the sealers and that folklore functions throughout this relationship.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to describe the Newfoundland seal fishery as an occupation through an examination of the folklore elements which arise from the interrelationship of the communities involved and the occupation. This interrelationship has folkloric impact in two ways: the traditional lore of the communities is evident during the prosecution of the seal fishery, and the fishery itself creates a new body of lore which becomes part of the tradition in each of the communities.

The means of livelihood on the north-east coast of Newfoundland, ranging from the Great Northern Peninsula on the west to the Avalon Peninsula on the eastern side of the island, has traditionally been fragmented into several occupations. The cod fishery is certainly the dominant industry as it has always been. Its failure in the past spelled economic disaster, and even today the depletion of the inshore stocks of fish is causing hardships for the residents of the area.

Given the cod fishery as the basis of the economy, other occupations, or productive pastimes, exist. The success of these helps to determine the level of existence above the basic necessities provided by average success of

the cod fishery. These supplementary occupations may be divided into two categories: 1) those which provide guaranteed income, such as work in the lumber woods or a job on a trading vessel; and, 2) those whose success is always hoped for but never expected or sure, such as moose hunting, trapping and sealing, to name only a few.

Within the basic framework of the interchange between occupation and community, it is the function of the folklore which is the primary concern of this study. The traditional lore of the men, whether born of the industry or of the community, functions within their lives both at the ice and at home, and this function may be either conscious or unconscious, overt or covert.[1] For example, in chapter four, one may see that the "time"[2] held when the ships are caught in the ice is a clearly overt use of a folklore event, for the express purpose of distracting the attention of the man from the dismal state of their hunt. In chapter three, on

[1]The use of the terms "overt function" and "covert function" in the place of "use" and "function" was suggested to me by Mr. D.J. Hufford of Memorial University of Newfoundland [hereafter M.U.N.] in April, 1974. For a discussion of the distinction between "use" and "function", see Alan P. Merriam, The Anthropology of Music (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1964), pp. 209-27.

[2]The word "time" is used in Newfoundland to mean a social function. Because of possible ambiguity, whenever the word is used in this sense it will appear in quotation marks. This and all other words glossed have been checked against the files of the Dictionary of Newfoundland English, a work in progress at M.U.N. which has drawn on both printed and oral sources in its compilation [hereafter DNE].

the other hand, the use of stereotypes by the sealers in dealing with ineffectual members of the crew functions to remove the personalities from the situation, but the functional aspect of this practice is covert.

The most difficult problem in dealing with the folklore of an occupation is to determine which material must be included to meet the goals of the study. My own experience, gained from seven small boat passages across the Atlantic, has helped me to isolate five specific areas for study: stereotypes, diversions, incorporation into and acceptance as a member of the occupation, hazards and the reasons for continued participation. The first three help to define and dictate the individual's role as a member of the crew, while the last two rationalize the participation of all of the members within the occupation.

Because of the vast amount of folklore material to be found in the study of any occupation, one must set some limits, and as they are set in this study, the concentration will be on the individual's relationship to the occupation. The use of stereotypes can help the individual find his place within the crew, but, perhaps more importantly, it dictates the form of his relationship with the other members. This same kind of relationship exists in each of the five areas studied. Going to the ice places each man in a situation which is crowded and often boring, so he must

make use of the means of diversion which he knows, so as to mollify the intense feelings which arise from living in cramped quarters and to ease his own and the group's boredom. He must also recognize the criteria for acceptance in the group and then meet them, just as he must recognize the hazards of the occupation and learn the traditional ways of combatting them. When a man gives his reasons for returning to the occupation, he is forced to rationalize all the aspects of his relationship with it, and it is through the statements of the reasons for return that one may see this relationship most clearly.

After chapter two describes the methods of research for this study,[3] chapter three discusses some of the traditional stereotypes of the seal hunt or seal fishery (the terms are used interchangeably), with particular emphasis on the captains, and this discussion serves a double purpose. First, it constitutes an introduction to some of the characters of the seal fishery, but also the chapter defines the average, anonymous sealer, from whose point of view this study describes the industry, by noting those characteristics which he sees as unusual enough to form the basis of a stereotype.

[3]For a more complete description of chapter two, see p. 7.

In isolation situations, those which isolate the people involved from normal social interaction, there is a definite need for diversion. This is particularly true when quarters are cramped, and for this reason, small boat captains often declare a "happy hour", during which the entire crew gathers for a short time and acts in a social manner, otherwise nonexistent in the course of the occupation. The larger crew of a sealing ship often acts in the same way. Chapter four describes some of their diversions and also demonstrates the way in which these diversions cover the entire spectrum from overt to covert function.

Membership in any group first requires that certain qualifications be met by each new member and then offers some rewards for meeting those requirements. Chapter five describes the conditions of and rewards for membership in the sealing occupation, and it further clarifies the distinction between overt and covert functions. The initiation takes place at the ice; the methods of the occupation are learned; and, a ritual takes place which functions overtly to incorporate the new member into the group. When the new sealer returns home, he begins to be rewarded for participation, as his experience functions in a covert way to enhance his status within the community.

Whenever I am asked about long-distance sailing,

the first questions invariably center on the risks involved, and the same is true of sealing. The reason for this is two-fold: most people are only interested in hearing of the exciting moments of such occupations, and also, those who participate are pleased to recount these instances which are particularly effective in enhancing the status change mentioned above. There is, however, another side to this matter. It is extremely difficult to relate the normal circumstances of such a voyage to someone who has never participated in a similar occupation. Therefore, when asked a general question about his work, the sealer will describe either a dangerous or a humorous situation. Chapter six includes sealers' descriptions of the hazards and nuisances of their occupation, along with the traditional preventions against and remedies for such circumstances. It is particularly interesting that these dangers are described in a subdued manner and appear to hold no terror for the raconteurs and that this appears to be a matter of confidence on the part of the men, rather than of bravado. The nuisances, such as lice, are more difficult to remedy and are therefore treated humorously. This humorous treatment becomes a remedy in itself.

Since the outsider asking about an occupation most often hears about dangers, he might well ask why anybody would want to become a part of the group that practices the

occupation and, after becoming a member of that group, why he would continue to work at such a hazardous job. While some of the elements of the answers have been suggested in previous chapters, chapter seven discusses the question directly, giving sealers' own reasons why they have continued to go to the ice. This chapter forms a conclusion because it is the direct statement of the men's concept of their relationship with their occupation.

Chapter two describes the research methods used in gathering material for the chapters described above. The reason this chapter is mentioned last is that a discussion of the research and its methods necessitates some comment on the many interesting topics for which information was encountered but which do not fit within the framework described above. There are several specific topics with which I hope to deal at a later time, including the lore which is esoteric to the wives and other close relatives of the sealers. For example, I was told recently by a fellow student that the people of Elliston, Bonivista Bay, were somehow aware of the Newfoundland disaster[4] before they received news, because a strange gloom seemed to settle on the town one day when the men were on the ice. Some men from

[4]The "Newfoundland disaster" refers to the specific incident in which seventy-eight men from the vessel Newfoundland died from exposure when caught on the ice in 1914. Throughout this study, the names of ships are underlined.

Elliston were involved, and for no apparent reason, the school children in Elliston were subdued on that day.[5]

In the course of my research, I have come upon many songs which relate to the sealing industry. I have concluded that these require a separate study. As an example of the intricacy of this topic, a student in the folksong class last year told the instructor[6] that the tone of the song, "The Newfoundland Disaster", varies with the number of people singing it at any one performance. To make a valid statement about the functions of such songs and the reasons why the tone varies according to the number of singers, one would have to do intensive fieldwork, and the method of this study has been extensive throughout. I have, however, made note of songs I have encountered, and I hope to complete an annotated collection of them soon. Furthermore, the sealers did not consider the songs about sealing to be their private property, and in fact they rarely performed these songs when they were at the ice.

As well as the songs about sealing, the repertoire of the men among the sealers who actually sang at the ice

[5]This was reported by Mrs. Hilda Murray, a native Newfoundlander who is currently working toward her doctorate in folklore at M.U.N.

[6]Dr. Neil Rosenberg, Chairman pro. tem. of the Department of Folklore at M.U.N., to whom I am grateful for this information.

would make an interesting investigation. In chapter four, the song sessions and other "times" are examined, but the repertoires of the performers at these sessions form too large a topic for this study, primarily because there does not seem to be any group of songs reserved specifically for the seal hunt. An interesting aspect of such research would be the role of the seal fishery in the diffusion of songs among Newfoundland performers.

Also interesting would be a study of the changes in the lore of the sealers over a period of time. Sanger's M.A. thesis[7] is an interesting study of the technological changes in the industry and of their impact on the men, and these changes must certainly be accompanied by at least some changes in the lore. Because the temporal span of this study is approximately eighty-five years, being the memory span of informants, I was initially concerned about the effects of time on the information gathered. It has become clear, however, that two constant factors in the seal fishery make the time factor less crucial than was at first expected. First, the actual method by which an individual sealer kills a seal has not changed appreciably in these eighty-five years which are examined in this

[7]Chesley W. Sanger, "Technological and Spatial Adaptation in the Newfoundland Seal Fishery during the Nineteenth Century," M.A. Thesis, M.U.N., 1973.

study.[8] Secondly, the necessity for large crews (partially a result of the method of killing) has always led to over-crowding of the sealing ships. It is these constants, rather than the changes, which affect the subject matter of this study.

An additional subject which would be of interest is a comparison of the material from land-based sealers with that from men who went in ships. Although this could prove interesting, it would be a difficult study, primarily because most men who went to the ice as common hands on a ship had also killed seals from the shore, and they do not always distinguish between the two kinds of hunt. Clearly, the majority of the isolation material applies only to the ships, but it would be interesting to examine the effects of the isolation of the outports, during the winter, in relation to the isolation experienced aboard the sealing ships. As well as the methods, the two forms of sealing shared most of the same hazards, and, for this reason, I do not distinguish between evidence given by those who hunted from the land and that from the men who hunted from the ships.

[8]The only exception to this is the outlawing of the sealers' gaff. For a discussion of the ramifications of this law, see Cater W. Andrews and Robert Parker, "Brief to the Special Advisory Committee to the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry on Seals," ([St. John's]: typescript, 1971), pp. 23-29.

Valuable work could also be done on the extent of current popular interest in sealing,[9] on the life histories of sealing captains or any of the individuals involved with the hunt, on the difference between the lore held by the captains and that which is traditional among the common men, and also on the history of the industry. Fortunately, Dr. C.W. Andrews of Memorial University is currently engaged in research for a three volume study on the "History and Biology of the Newfoundland Sealfishery".[10]

Sealing in Newfoundland is at least as old as the permanent settlement of the island.[11] It has been prosecuted on foot from shore and from ships of either wood or steel, powered by either sail or steam, and it has employed nets, gaffs, clubs and guns over the course of its history.

The sealers themselves keep the history of the occupation in a personal and individual fashion. Each man remembers the historical events of the industry in terms of the ship he served on that particular year, by the name of his skipper at the time of the particular event or both. Statements of historical fact are usually accompanied by

[9]For example, a new sub-development in St. John's is naming its streets after famous sealing captains.

[10]Dr. Andrews' proposed publication will include "Background and history" (vol. one), "Biology, Research and Conservation" (vol. two) and "Of Ships and Men (vol. three).

[11]Dr. Andrews told me that Basque fishermen were probably hunting seals here in the sixteenth century.

such comments as, "I was with Arthur Jackman in the Terra Nova that year." The momentous years are remembered by their particular conditions or incidents. For example, one often hears that an event took place "the year after the Newfoundland", which would mean 1915, one year after the Newfoundland disaster of 1914. The year 1863 was known as the "spring of the Green Bay" because the ice floe came hard against the island and brought the seal herd in with it, so that thousands of seals were taken from shore. Since then, any year in which the ice comes in and many seals are taken from shore is known as a "Green Bay spring".

The towns around the north-east coast of the island also keep special years in history through reference to the seal fishery. Twillingate remembers 1862 and 1973 as years in which good times came to the town because the seals came within reach of the shore-based sealers. When the ice is close to shore, men can either walk out to the seals or approach them in the small, open boats used in the trap fishery. This happened in 1862, and the shore fishery was so successful that the sealers bought the bell which still hangs in St. Peter's Anglican Church,[12] and

[12]Story in Pictures and Poetry of the 1973 Seal Haul at Twillingate Newfoundland also Marking the 85th Year in Business of the Firm of E.J. Linfield, [issued by E.J. Linfield's of Twillingate as an "85th Anniversary souvenir"], n.d., n.p., [inside front cover].

this was at a time when such bells were rare items in Newfoundland.

The material in this study was collected almost exclusively in the form of memorates,[13] or personal experience narratives which do not necessarily have any supernatural overtones. In fact, the lore of the seal fishery contains a surprising lack of supernatural material.[14] Because of the extensive methods of collecting used for this study, it seems unlikely that the lack of supernatural data is due to the beliefs of the informants interviewed. If, as it appears, the lore of the seal fishery contains a small proportion of supernatural belief, the conclusions of chapter six appear to be well founded: authors such as Malinowski and Mullen have correlated the existence of risk and uncertainty in an occupation with the abundance of supernatural beliefs held by the

[13]See Laurits Bødker, ed., Folk Literature (Germanic), International Dictionary of Regional European Ethnology and Folklore, Vol. II (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1965), "Memorate".

[14]This is surprising because of the predominance of supernatural material in the seal lore from the British Isles. See David Thomson, The People of the Sea (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1965). With so many Newfoundlanders coming from English and Irish stock, one might expect more of these traditions to have persisted among them.

members of the occupation.[15] A logical corollary to this concept is that a lack of such beliefs indicates that those involved feel confident of their ability to cope with conditions on a pragmatic or scientific level.

This confidence is an eloquent statement of the way the men see their relationship with their occupation, and one will be able to see, throughout this study, that it is the function of the folklore to give the men this ability to cope with the conditions and dangers of the seal fishery. Also folklore functions to increase the rewards for participation in the hunt by allowing those people outside the occupation to hold an overly dramatic picture of the hazards of sealing.

The research methods employed for this study will precede the discussion of the five areas selected and will be the topic of chapter two.

[15]See Bronislaw Malinowski, Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1954), pp. 25-36. See also Patrick Mullen, "The Function of Magic Folk Belief among Texas Coastal Fishermen," Journal of American Folklore, 82 (1969), pp. 214-25.

CHAPTER TWO - RESEARCH METHODS

The decision to investigate some aspect of the Newfoundland seal fishery came essentially from personal interest in maritime occupations. Horace Beck[1] shares this interest and suggested that I work with the seal hunt, particularly with the hope of finding parallels between the traditions about sealing in the British Isles and those in Newfoundland. Although this course of investigation proved to be barren,[2] the research has provided an opportunity to develop my interests in maritime industries. Each of the five areas described in chapter one has a direct parallel in deep-sea sailing and is of special interest to me because of my experience in the latter occupation.

Given the decision to work with the seal fishery and an idea of the basic structure for the study, my most difficult problem stemmed from the fact that I am not a Newfoundlander. When I arrived here, I knew little more about the island than its location and something of its

[1]Horace Beck is a Professor of folklore and American literature at Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vt. I have sailed extensively with him, including an Atlantic crossing, and asked his opinions on thesis topics. He has written extensively on maritime subjects [see bibliography].

[2]See pp. 13-14.

climate. When I first arrived, I decided to live in one of the smaller towns around the capital; and I found a room in "Hill Harbour"[3] which is a few miles from St. John's. When I was asked to join a dart league which was in the process of being formed at one of the local pubs, I saw participation as a way of learning something about the community. Because of the difficulties of orientation into a new program at the university, I did not play regularly that fall, but I found that I was welcome at the games any time I could attend.

As it turned out, this participation in the dart league came to form the first of five specific steps in my research. In a general way, it was valuable as an introduction to Newfoundland culture, and as the research progressed, it became increasingly valuable as a source of contacts with sealers. The other steps of the research are an examination of the printed sources concerning the seal fishery, a search of the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive for sealing references, directed interviews on specific areas of the study with particular informants and a final field trip, the purpose of which was to synthesize the data from the

[3]Names and home towns of principal informants are changed but remain consistent throughout. The introduction of pseudonyms is signalled by quotation marks.

previous steps through general discussions with sealers to whom I had not previously spoken. Following will be a discussion of each of these steps and comments on the value of conducting the research in this progression.

AN INTRODUCTION THROUGH DARTS

The actual research began in the winter of 1973, when, because I had shown that I was reasonably capable as a dart player, I was asked to join the winter dart league as a regular member, instead of as an alternate. The fact that the league met two nights each week in a fairly alcoholic atmosphere made heavy demands on my time, but participation proved to be valuable and the time well spent for three reasons, and these exclude the straightforward enjoyment aspect, which certainly existed.

The first reward for participation was the beginning of an understanding of the ideals of Newfoundland men, or at least of the men involved in the dart leagues in Hill Harbour. Reverence of "machismo" is probably the dominant factor, and this manifests itself in a general respect for the tougher men in the community. "Cyril Brown", a participant in the league, was one recipient of this kind of respect. Cyril is approximately twenty-six years of age,

married and lives with his wife in a trailer, near the center of Hill Harbour. It appears as if he works only the amount of time required for him to receive unemployment insurance and spends the remainder of the year engaged in minor occupations which are in season at any given time, such as rabbit hunting, trouting or sealing.

One evening when a fight was narrowly averted by diplomacy during the course of a dart game, the bar-maid told me that the fight would not even have threatened if Cyril had been there, and it certainly would not have started. She said that his presence alone was protection against trouble starting in the bar, because of the general respect people in town had for his ability to fight. She said that the young men from Hill Harbour had always fought with their counterparts from "Calm Harbour" (about three miles north of Hill Harbour) and that Cyril had earned his reputation by being the first of the Hill Harbour boys to suggest a visit to the pool room in Calm Harbour. Cyril went to the ice for the first time that spring, taking time off from the dart league in which he was a team captain. Because of the status he had already, his trip to the ice did not really change his position, but rather solidified it.[4]

[4]See chapter five for a discussion of change of status resulting from the first trip to the ice.

The other characteristic of Newfoundland men which became apparent through participant-observation of the dart league is the extreme level of competitiveness which exists among them. There was always a great amount of taunting of other players during the games, and the tone of this varied according to the relationship of the men involved. Any taunt, when passed between friends, seemed light-hearted enough, but the same taunt, when aimed at a known adversary of the man doing the taunting, could tighten the atmosphere of the entire game.

The competitiveness became extremely apparent during the final matches of the dart season. The winner of the league was not determined until the final game of the final night, and much of the good humour which had existed during the beginning of the season was missing in the last few weeks and was gone altogether on the final night. When the night was over, however, and my team had won, there seemed to be a general relaxation of the tension, and all the members of the league exchanged drinks with the same joviality which had existed months before.

It is difficult for me to be sure of my own role in the league, but I think I was considered to a great extent to be an outsider, although given many outward signs of acceptance. For example, I was voted the "most improved

player" (by a unanimous vote - Cyril told me later), but at the same time, I was still somehow outside the group. This became clear to me one night, when a member of my team nearly became involved in a fight with a man from another team. I knew this to be only one expression of their mutual dislike, because they had each spoken to me about their feelings toward the other. I was perhaps breaking some taboo when I interceded, because I noticed that no one else made any move toward doing so, but the fact remains that they did separate. I cannot be sure whether this was because of the way I dealt with the situation or because I was the one who chose to intercede, and they did not wish to involve me in an actual fight.

Whatever the answer to the above, I was definitely regarded by the league members as a dart player first and a researcher into the seal fishery second. This meant that my enquiries about sealing were generally treated seriously. As my interest intensified, so did their willingness to help me, and this was the second benefit of participation in the league. Each of the players seemed more than willing to tell me what he knew about the industry, and this brought out an interesting point. Of the members of the league, approximately one third seemed to be conscious of the "machismo" factor and to be interested in enhancing their own status in light of this ideal. Another third might be

considered urbanized enough to be aware of it but to ignore it consciously. Generally this group consisted of the men who were regularly employed. The remainder did not seem concerned with the ideal in either way. Of the men in the league, a total of about thirty-five, Cyril was the only one who had been to the ice, and his first trip came during the course of the season. When talking about the hunt to me, all of the members of the first group felt that they had to explain to me why they had not gone sealing themselves, and the explanation was generally that it was nearly impossible to obtain a berth, now that there were so few ships engaged in the hunt. The other members of the league did not make any mention of their own reasons for not participating.

These rather ragged statistics make two interesting points: first, to a certain percentage of young men today, the seal fishery is definitely considered a means of establishing manhood status; and, to another group, the definition of manhood has changed enough, so that sealing is no longer a necessary, if even a sufficient, criterion for manhood. It should be sufficient evidence of the latter that only one of thirty-five had gone sealing and that only, approximately ten felt it necessary to explain why they had not gone.

The frantic efforts by Cyril's brother "Gordon" to obtain

a berth demonstrate the other point, that a trip to the ice is still a means of achieving manhood status within certain groups of young men in Hill Harbour. He was undoubtedly prompted by the fact that he was the only one of three brothers who was not going to the ice that spring and that he was the one adopted son in the family. The interesting point, however, is that his unsuccessful attempt to secure a berth in itself gained him a degree of status within his family and his peer group. From the time he first decided to try until well after Cyril and the other brother returned, Gordon's conversation centered on his attempt; his immediate friends mentioned it often, and on the day Cyril returned, he mentioned Gordon's effort to me.

Furthermore, the day that Cyril and "Gerald" returned was the only time that I saw the three brothers sitting together at the pub. It was also the only occasion on which I saw their father, a blind broom-maker, in the bar. This indicates that the occasion of Cyril's first trip to the ice held a definite significance for the family.

As well as an awareness of some of the ideals of young men in Hill Harbour and an appreciation of the role that sealing plays, or can play, in relation to that ideal, my participation in the dart league led to a further situation, which was significant in my research. After one of the games, I was talking to another man about sealing.

He was not a dart player, but he had been to the ice three times, and I had met him on several occasions because his mother had been my land-lady when I first moved to Hill Harbour. He seemed pleased by my interest in sealing, but he said that, if I were really to understand sealing, I would have to go to the ice myself. He said that Gerald Brown had helped him get his berth, so together we asked Cyril to contact Gerald to see if he would help me also.

Cyril brought Gerald to the next meeting of the dart league, and with the exception of the time I spent playing, I talked with Gerald the entire evening. Gerald had been six springs in the Arctic Endeavour with Captain Jim Gillette, and he had been able to obtain berths for some others. Our conversation was interesting from several points of view. First, I became aware of the paranoia of the sealers which results from current attacks on the sealing industry. Fully the first half of our conversation consisted of Gerald's sounding out my feelings about the hunt. He seemed reluctant to believe that an outsider could look favorably on the seal fishery. Once he was satisfied about my intentions, however, he said that he would try to help.

Gerald made an interesting point during the conversation: he said that I would have much better rapport (although he did not use the word) if I signed on as an ordinary hand, rather than going as an observer. He stated

clearly that the men would have respect for my academic interest only if I showed that I was willing and able to do the work.[5]

Unfortunately, when I called the Department of Manpower and Immigration, I was told that because I was in Canada on a Student Visa there was no way in which I could sign on as a sealer. I reported this development to some of the dart players at the next game, and one of them said that if he were not working regularly he would gladly let me go to the ice in his name. At this suggestion, I asked "Howard Pynn", the captain of my team who is chronically unemployed, what he thought of letting me go in his name, and he was immediately enthusiastic. We agreed on splitting in half whatever I might make on the voyage, so that Howard could afford to stop receiving his welfare checks for the duration of the fishery that year.

Dr. Halpert[6] had given initial approval to my going to the ice, but when he heard these developments, he was skeptical. He pointed out that if anybody in Hill Harbour should come to have any reason to make trouble for Howard or

[5]I was told by a former student of Melvin Firestone's - see Melvin Firestone, Brothers and Rivals: Patrilocality in Savage Cove, Newfoundland Social and Economic Studies, No. 5 (St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1967), p. 102 - that Firestone was offered the opportunity to go sealing from shore with some men from Savage Cove. When he refused, the men began giving him false information, such as the fact that one man could pull twenty seals in from the ice in one day. The average haul is actually three, and five is considered a feat.

[6]The Henrietta Harvey Professor of Folklore, M.U.N.

myself, knowledge of our arrangement would give him the ability to do so.

I decided to follow Dr. Halpert's advice and explained my decision to Howard, who saw the wisdom of it. We remained good friends, and the rest of the dart players realized the reasons why I had not been able to go. In fact, the situation worked out well, as I gained some status from my attempt to go, without actually having to make the trip. It is difficult to determine what effect the trip would have had on my research, but Dr. Halpert's advice turned out to be almost prophetic. Later in the winter, Howard was involved in a fight with a younger and smaller man. While he won the fight, he lost the respect and earned the animosity of many people in town. Although the animosity did not last very long, this was a time that some one might have chosen to use the knowledge of our arrangement against us.

When the possibility of going as a sealer had disappeared, I called the Shaw Steamship Company, owners of the Arctic Endeavour, in Halifax to see if there was any possibility of going to the ice as an observer. This met with no success, and I was later told by Gerald that the company was probably afraid that I might write a damaging report of the hunt, as several other observers had done in the recent past.

I called the Department of Manpower and Immigration

again to see if they would allow me to go, if I contributed my earnings to the Permanent Marine Disasters Fund or a similar worthy cause. They still said it was not possible, and I had to give up my efforts.

INVESTIGATION OF A SELECTION OF PRINTED SOURCES

When I had first asked Dr. Halpert's opinion about my going to the ice, he had suggested that I do as much research in the printed sources as possible before going, so as to be aware of possible routes of enquiry. Although I was very disappointed at not being able to attend the hunt, I had at least had the opportunity to familiarize myself with some of the published works on sealing. With the help of Dr. Halpert and Dr. George Story,[7] who both made several suggestions of references, and through use of the card files in the Centre for Newfoundland Studies in the M.U.N. Library, I was able to find several works which have proven useful in my research. The following is a short description of the works I found most useful and which should form the core of reading for anybody interested in the seal fishery. These sources proved to be useful in much the same way as were the informal interviews conducted with the dart players.

[7]Dr. G.M. Story is a professor of English at M.U.N. and is particularly interested in Newfoundland language and folklore.

Major W.H. Greene's The Wooden Walls among the Ice Floes[8] is an excellent history of the occupation, up to the publication date of the book in 1933. It also includes discussions of the types of seals, of the oceanographic conditions in which the hunt is prosecuted - in the Atlantic Ocean, north-east of Newfoundland - and an account of one year's voyage. Furthermore, he includes many items of direct interest to folklorists, including cures, stereotypes and tales of wrecks, among others. Its style, at the same time scientific and human, makes this book invaluable in assessing the atmosphere of the seal fishery.

Cater W. Andrews' and Robert Parker's "Brief to the Special Advisory Committee to the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry on Seals"[9] is a neat summary of the history of the occupation and of some of the socio-economic aspects of the industry. Written in 1971, the brief fills the gap in the history between Greene's work and the present, as well as summarizing the period covered by Greene. It further expresses the feelings of many Newfoundlanders about the federal legislation concerning the seal fishery and includes an introductory statement from J.R. "Joey" Smallwood, ex-Premier and engineer of Newfoundland's confederation with Canada.

[8]Major W.H. Greene, The Wooden Walls among the Ice Floes (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., 1933).

[9]See note 8, p. 10 and note 10, p. 11.

Chafe's Sealing Book[10] is a useful companion to the works on the history of the industry, being essentially a statistical report on the seal fishery. It is particularly useful for uncovering such pertinent information as the frequency of trips for which the men received no pay, as a result of finding no seals.

The autobiography of Abram Kean (pronounced "Kane"), entitled Old and Young Ahead,[11] is essential reading for anybody interested in sealing. Particularly since I have not interviewed any captains for this study, Kean's observations on the industry make an interesting counterpoint to the traditions of the ordinary sealers.

Three other sources stand out: George Allan England's The Greatest Hunt in the World [formerly Vikings of the Ice],[12] Wake of the Great Sealers by Farley Mowat and David Blackwood and Death on the Ice by Cassie Brown with

[10] Levi G. Chafe, Chafe's Sealing Book, 3rd ed. (St. John's, Nfld.: Trade Printers and Publishers, Ltd., 1923).

[11] Abram Kean, Old and Young Ahead (London: Heath Cranton, Ltd., 1935).

[12] George Allan England, The Greatest Hunt in the World (Montreal: Tundra Books, 1969).

[13] Farley Mowat and David Blackwood, Wake of the Great Sealers (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1973).

[14] Cassie Brown with Harold Horwood, Death on the Ice (Toronto: Doubleday Canada Limited, 1972).

Harold Horwood. The first of these tells of England's experiences on the 1922 hunt, aboard the Terra Nova with Captain Abram Kean. His observations are astute, and he includes much of the oral material he encountered during the voyage. Like Major Greene's book, this work is invaluable in its description of the atmosphere of the seal hunt.

Mowat's text to Wake of the Great Sealers has a definite air of authenticity when compared to oral material, but, annoyingly, he makes no attempt to identify his sources. In his author's note, he states,

> For literary purposes, I have presented much of . . . [the material in this book] . . . in the first person and have given fictional attributions to the narrator. However, the material itself is in no way invented, but it is the remembered and the recorded truth about the great seal hunt of Newfoundland.[15]

As this shows, it is impossible to ascertain whether the quotations in the book are actual statements of his informants or are Mowat's compilation of information from various sources. I do not doubt, however, that Mowat is well versed in the traditions of the seal fishery, and I find many of his observations to be extremely valuable.

Death on the Ice by Cassie Brown, with Harold Horwood,[16]

[15]Mowat and Blackwood, p. 5.

[16]On Joan Morrissey's "Newfoundland This A.M." program on CTV, January 16, 1974, Mrs. Brown stated that Horwood did nothing but lend his name to the book, at the insistence of the publisher who felt that a known author's name would be a necessity for the book to sell on the mainland.

also claims a basis in first hand interviews. Her primary informant, Cecil Mouland, is a survivor of the Newfoundland disaster who appears to be not only a willing informant but even an eager one. The major drawback to this book is the author's apparent desire to lay the blame for the disaster on Captain Abram Kean, but much of the evidence does not support this stand.[17]

Another group of books must be mentioned here: those which attack the seal fishery on the basis of its cruelty and its lack of conservationist conscience. Two examples should give the reader an idea of this genre - The Last Seal Pup[18] by Peter Lust and Savage Luxury: the Slaughter of the Baby Seals[19] by Brian Davies. The purpose of these books is, quite simply, to put an end to the seal hunt. They are often inflammatory and generally manage to shift the onus of the responsibility from the industries which demand seal by-products to the individual Newfoundlanders who participate in the hunt. They represent pure and simple propaganda, specifically designed to create a stereotype of the Newfoundlander as a brutal killer. Regardless of one's own feelings about the seal fishery, he must recognize the

[17] See pp. 213-14.

[18] Peter Lust, The Last Seal Pup (Montreal: Harvest House, [1967]).

[19] Brian Davies, Savage Luxury: the Slaughter of the Baby Seals (London: Souvenir Press, [1970]).

methods of such propagandists. For example, no sealer would dare "sculp"[20] a live seal, baby or full grown, under normal circumstances,[21] but one sealer from Twillingate accepted pay to do this from a propagandist who wished to film the kill.[22]

AN ARCHIVE SEARCH

With this background of informal interviewing and bibliographic investigation, my next step was to gather primary, oral material on the seal fishery, and the logical place to start was the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive. There is not room here to give a detailed description of the Archive or of the various systems it employs for the location of materials; however, since three of these techniques were particularly helpful to me, I shall describe them briefly.

The basic theory of this Archive is accessioning by collection, rather than by genre, and each contributor's materials remain together as a unit, under a single accession number. The accession number consists simply of the last two

[20] To "sculp" is to remove the skin of the seal with the thick layer of fat still adhering to it.

[21] See p. 181.

[22] I was told of the truth of this incident during a field trip to Twillingate, New World Island, Newfoundland, between February 1st and 4th, 1974.

digits of the year in which the collection is accessioned, a dash and the number of that particular collection. For example, the fifteenth collection to be accessioned in 1974 would bear the accession number, 74-15. This number is then stamped on every page of the manuscript, on each tape, on each photograph and on any artifacts which might accompany the manuscript. A master accession card is made for each collection and filed in straight numerical sequence. These cards actually constitute a fourth system by which material can be located, because each one gives not only the name of the collector and the types of material submitted, but each also gives the title or titles of any major essays in the collection.

When the university courses spanned a year's term from September to April, each collector was required to submit a large and varied amount of material, and in those years (1967-1970) the students were also required to hand in tables of contents for their collections. These tables were based on a generic breakdown of the discipline, and they indicated which genres were represented and in what form the material was presented, be it collecting cards, short reports or long reports. These tables of contents have proven very useful in locating pertinent information among the student collections.

The collecting cards were instituted by Dr. Halpert

as a means of eliciting miscellaneous items of folklore from a student's own tradition or from that of his informants. They are designed so that the student can receive credit for work which does not fit the framework of his larger reports. Each five by eight card is printed with spaces for necessary contextual information including: the name of the collector, his/her age, place of principal residence and religion, and the same information is required about the informant along with an indication of from whom he/she learned the particular item.

The card collection has been indexed using several keys, such as "cures", "supernatural beliefs" and "traditional songs". For the purposes of my research, I looked at each card which was listed on the master index card, headed "Fishing and the Sea". However, there are only a few references to sealing among the card collection.

The most rewarding Archive source for my research has been the tape collection. Approximately fifteen-hundred of the more than two thousand tapes in the Archive have had table of contents cards made for them, and these have been an invaluable source. The tapes referred to here are the "C" tapes,[23] or work tapes, which are stored for use

[23] Each tape submitted to the Archive receives a shelf number with an "F" designation, indicating a field copy. The two copies of each are designated "A" and "C", indicating Archive and work copies. A full run of tapes is stored separately for safety.

in the Archive.

During the summer of 1973, another graduate student[24] and I were employed in the Archive, compiling an index of the traditional song materials collected there. In the beginning stages of the work on this index, we searched all of the tape tables of contents for songs, and, as we did this, we also made note of any references to sealing on the tapes.

Once this list of tape references was complete, I found which of the tapes had been transcribed[25] and which I would have to transcribe myself, by comparing my list with the files of tape transcriptions. Approximately sixty of the one hundred-fifty tapes with references to sealing had been transcribed, but in many cases I listened to those which had been transcribed to be sure of the accuracy of the transcript. In general the work of the transcribers is good, but each person who has worked there has had an individual philosophy of transcription and the method is not necessarily consistent.

[24] I am grateful to Al Webster for the help he gave me while working on this Archive project.

[25] With financial assistance from the Canada Council, the tape collection in the Archive is currently being transcribed for use by the Dictionary of Newfoundland English project and for general use by the Department of Folklore.

The method used for tapes for which there were no transcripts involves a personal system of indexing which is somewhere between a table of contents and a transcript. Since the general outline of the study was decided, I was able to recognize that some of the material would not be needed in full transcript, while other sections required transcription. The result, then, is detailed tables of contents for the relevant sections of the tapes, with some passages within each section given in full transcript. This method was developed for my personal field tapes, and it has proven to be effective.

At this point in my research, there came a major change in the basic theory of research. Having listened to all of the material accessible in the Archive, I realized that for the purposes of my study the Archive materials would, in general, supply the necessary data, and that my best course of action would be to use these materials as the basis for the study and to conduct specific, directed interviews with a few informants to expand on the major points of the study and to fill in any gaps in the Archive materials. That I was able to make this decision is first attributable to the general and extensive nature of my topic, but it is also a result of the scope of the materials to be found in the Archive and the accessibility of these materials.

DIRECTED INTERVIEWING

Because of the extent and quality of the information contained in the Archive, the directed interviews were conducted to confirm that information and to ask direct questions about the conclusions which had been drawn from that source. For example, the tape collection contains many stories about disasters at the seal fishery, but these accounts do not discuss the effects of these disasters on the sealers' thinking about their occupation. Therefore, one of the questions I asked "Paul Halliday" of Calm Harbour, a survivor of the Viking disaster, was whether the men talked about the incident in the years following and what effect, if any, this talk had on their relationship with the occupation.

This section will introduce the three informants, who were interviewed in this direct fashion, and will mention briefly the ways in which they specifically helped the research.

"Alf Walsh"[26] runs a small grocery store and gas station approximately six miles from St. John's. I had met him on several occasions when doing business in the shop and had always found him in a good mood which indicated that he enjoyed running the shop. He is sixty-three years

[26] In future references, Mr. Walsh will be referred to as "Informant 1".

of age, and his present business appears to be more of a retirement pastime than a serious means of livelihood. His major occupations have been as operator of a saw mill and animal slaughterer. He went to the ice one year only, and felt, when I asked him for an opportunity to discuss sealing with him, that he could not be much help because of his limited experience. On the contrary, it was the fact that he had gone just one time that made him a particularly valuable informant.

When I talked to him formally the next evening, we sat in the front room of his house which adjoins the store. Mrs. Walsh stayed in the kitchen, and we did not speak to each other except to exchange pleasantries. The interview was very conversational, and Mr. Walsh did not seem at all bothered by the tape recorder. His jovial appearance in the store certainly carried over into our private concersation, and the interview went very smoothly.

The references to this interview later in this study show the extent to which it was useful in supplying material, but some general points of interest also came from this discussion, and they are primarily a result of the fact that he went to the seal fishery just one time. Before the actual interview began, Mr. Walsh commented on his own surprise at how much he could remember about his one trip. Granted, I had prodded his memory by asking

about his experience, but he was the one who remarked on the indelibility of sealing experiences on the memory.

Another important result of his limited participation in the occupation was that he was particularly candid about the relationship between sealing and the achievement of manhood status. The year following his sealing voyage, he began working regularly on the Imogene which was then engaged in the trade between St. John's and Montreal. He said that he felt this regular job to be a far more secure way of providing for his family than the seal fishery, but he commented further that he had been under considerable pressure from relatives to go to the ice at least once.

A final point which arose from the singular qualifications of Mr. Walsh is that, as a man who had killed domestic animals for a living, he was in a good position to comment on the alleged cruelty of the seal hunt. He said that a seal, particularly a "whitecoat",[27] could be killed "Like this!", at which point he struck his left forearm with the index and middle fingers of his right hand. On the other hand, he said, a grown pig would often require as many as four sledge-hammer blows on the head before a piece of its skull would be driven

[27] A "whitecoat" is a young harp seal, whose coat has not begun to change color from pure white to the mottled color of adolescence.

into its brain and kill it. I had heard this argument before but never from some one who was in such a good position to know nor in quite such vivid terms.

I met "Bill Lundrigan"[28] through his sister-in-law,[29] a friend of my wife's and mine. She knew that I was working with sealing and that Bill had been to the ice, so she invited us to dinner when Bill was in St. John's, taking an exam at the Trades College. Bill is twenty-six years old, and he is currently working in the construction crew at the new hospital in "Spinning Bay" but hopes that passing the electrician's exam at the Trades College will help him find better work.

More will be said about Bill in the next section, but our one formal talk belongs here. After dinner, we began discussing sealing, and I again noticed the reserve with which sealers answer questions at the beginning of such interviews. We sat in the living room of his sister-in-law's apartment and the atmosphere was fairly formal. In terms of data, Bill's major contribution was in the form of stories about pranks. It is a reflection of his own healthy sense of humour that we talked almost

[28] In future references, Mr. Lundrigan will be referred to as "Informant 2".

[29] I am very grateful to Barb Roberts for this introduction.

exclusively about pranks and practical jokes. The major reward of this interview was that we developed rapport and agreed to meet again, later in the winter, for more discussions about sealing. Bill said that, if I came to visit him in Spinning Bay, he would introduce me to other sealers there and perhaps take me sealing with him if the seals were near shore.

At the time when I was particularly interested in the hazards of the occupation, I read the manuscript of one student contributor, submitted in the introductory folklore class in the winter of 1972. She had interviewed her father, Mr. Paul Halliday of Calm Harbour,[30] concerning his participation in the seal fishery and his considerable repertoire of traditional songs. I called this student and asked her if she would object to my interviewing her father. She said that, quite on the contrary, she thought it would take his mind away from his impending cataract operation, and she added that she would introduce me to him at his home in Calm Harbour.

Because Mr. Halliday is a singer, I felt that he was the man to ask about the repertoire of the men who sang at the ice. The interview took place in the kitchen, with

[30]In future references, Mr. Halliday will be referred to as "Informant 3".

Mr. Halliday and myself seated at the table and his daughter coming and going between the kitchen and the living room, and Mr. Halliday began a general description of the fishery. When I asked if the sealers sang any songs about the industry, he answered, "No, no, we never had those then. No, they was all your old-time songs, ya know, Irish songs."[31] It was during this interview that I realized that the songs about sealing were not the property of the sealers and that a study of the repertoire of the sealers would be beyond the scope of my work.[32]

The fact that Westbury Kean, Captain of the Newfoundland at the time of the disaster, had died in New York that week led to a discussion of the hazards of the industry. I was particularly interested to hear Mr. Halliday discuss the Newfoundland disaster, concentrating mostly on the dilemma of George Tuff, the "master watch",[33] who did not want to lead his men back on to the ice but who was unwilling to contradict Captain Abram Kean. This story was brief, especially when compared to his recounting of the incident in which Abram Kean lost three men in the

[31]Informant 3, tape 1, side 1/032.* [The asterisk indicates that this is my own transcription, and it will be used in this way throughout the study.].

[32]See pp. 8-9.

[33]Each ship at the seal hunt has several "master watches", and it is their job to lead the men while on the ice.

Narrows of St. John's Harbour.[34] The definite implication of both the length of the stories and their tone is that Mr. Halliday felt that the latter incident was more significant in discrediting Captain Abram Kean than was the major disaster in 1914. I have come to believe that this is true because the circumstances of the Newfoundland disaster are more easily accepted by the sealers than the loss of three men in the Narrows.[35]

Also from Mr. Halliday, I began to get the impression of the confidence with which the sealers faced the dangers and conditions of the occupation, and that they could talk of these among themselves without causing undue anxiety.

SYNTHESIS OF THE RESEARCH

Although I was beginning to feel that much of the new material I was finding, through new submissions to the Archive and access to some old collections which had not previously been indexed, was repetitive and that I might be at the stage of beginning an ordering of the data I had, I still wanted to accept Bill Lundrigan's invitation to visit him in Spinning Bay.

[34]See pp. 76-77.

[35]See p. 213.

As it turned out, this trip to Spinning Bay was not a collecting trip but, rather, an opportunity to test the accuracy of the data already collected and the validity of some of the conclusions which had already been drawn from that data. Bill apologized for the fact that the extreme winter weather would make it more difficult for us to find some of the men to whom it would have been interesting to talk, but we did find several men who had been to the ice. Talking to these men, whom we encountered in the two bars we visited in Spinning Bay, gave me the opportunity to speak from a position of authority and to see if my statements were challenged.

I began to feel comfortable with the material, particularly because the generalizations which I had been able to make from observing the dart league members in Hill Harbour seemed equally valid in Spinning Bay, one hundred-eighty miles north-west of Hill Harbour. The same stereotypes appeared in conversation, for example, as well as the same attitude which Mr. Halliday had expressed toward the hazards.

EVALUATION OF THE RESEARCH METHODS

Because this thesis is primarily based on material from the Archive, the other four steps in the research are not only useful, but I think they are also necessary. The

material in the Archive is certainly representative, in respect to the ages of informants, their home towns and the other criteria for valid generalization, but alone it cannot answer many questions about itself.

With the next chapter, "Heroes and Goats: the Stereotypes of the Seal Fishery", the discussion of the five chosen areas of the occupation begins.

CHAPTER THREE - HEROES AND GOATS: THE STEREOTYPES OF THE SEAL FISHERY

The use of stereotypes represents a form of shorthand thinking, which Lippmann brands as "economy of effort".[1] By isolating certain familiar aspects of the unfamiliar, we are able to feel that we know more about a person or a situation than our actual information would allow. This trait of stereotypification, which Lippmann regards as not only common but also necessary in dealing with a complex world, may be used as a means of communication in two directions. The individual with esoteric knowledge uses stereotypes in his descriptions to avoid confusing his listener; while the observer, from an exoteric point of view, will grasp familiar stereotypes to feel more comfortable with his knowledge of a situation, of strange people or of an occupation in which he has not before been engaged.

I have often been in situations which constitute good examples of this form of communication. For instance, when I am asked by people with little or no experience with sailing, what is it that makes me want to sail long distances on small boats, I have always found it difficult to express

[1]Walter Lippmann, Public Opinion (New York: Macmillan, 1961), p. 59. I owe this reference to Dr. Neil Rosenberg.

those aspects of such a trip which make it pleasant. A real part of the enjoyment comes from being aware of and acting in accordance with the necessity to be extra sensitive to the feelings of the other members of the crew. In a small boat, it is this awareness, more than any other single factor, which determines whether the trip will be remembered as successful or as tedious. The person who might ask me about my experiences is probably not interested in my amateur opinions about the sociology of small groups, and my answer is invariably in the form of the stereotype picture, such as one finds in John Masefield's "Sea Fever",[2] of the sea, romanticized beyond recognition.

The listener will be able to grasp these elements of the stereotype, such as breath-taking sunsets, and realize that he has seen beautiful sunsets himself, and, thus, knows something definite about life at sea. Eventually, he will recognize enough of these stereotyped elements to feel that he has an understanding of an entire voyage.

The shortcomings of this sort of picture should be clear: the stereotype descriptions of such voyages do not include many of the elements which constitute the entire

[2]John Masefield served before the mast on clipper ships, but his picture of the sea does not reflect the extent of his esoteric knowledge, rather it lapses into the kind of stereotype picture that could have been created by somebody with no experience at sea.

experience, for example the difficulty of staying perched on the head (toilet) in a heavy sea way. In the same way, sealers are reluctant to tell collectors about some details of their experience, such as men who, so frightened at being caught away from the ship in a storm, lose control of their bowels and are forced to discard some of their clothing lest it freeze.[3] Stereotypes are, therefore, a device used by raconteurs. They allow the story teller to abbreviate his descriptions by using elements familiar to the listener and to bowdlerize the elements which are not part of the stereotype picture.

This system of shorthand and bowdlerization is important to remember with respect to folklore research relating to an occupation. When telling a fieldworker about sealing, the informants are necessarily limited to such comments as will be understandable to the collector. In other words, they hit the high points of the occupation, and, when asked about the characters or personalities involved in the seal fishery, they describe first the heroes and anti-heroes, or "goats",[4] of the occupation.

[3]An example of such an incident was reported to me by Paul Mercer, a fellow graduate student in folklore at M.U.N. He heard about it from his grandfather, who was at the ice on the day of the Greenland disaster in 1898.

[4]"Goat", probably a contraction of "scapegoat", is a part of the jargon of American baseball and refers to the individual who bears the blame for the team's losing a game.

The informant can, thus, satisfy the curiosity of the collector through the use of types which the latter will recognize.

As well as discussing the function of stereotypes in the relationship between the men and the occupation, this chapter also serves an ulterior purpose. By placing it near the beginning of the thesis, I hope to provide the reader with material to which he can relate through knowledge of other occupations, although he may know nothing as yet about the seal fishery itself. I believe this to be an important matter, because of the preconception which I had about the seal hunt before I came to Newfoundland. My knowledge consisted entirely of what I had learned from a documentary film on the hunt and was completely colored by the film editor's conservationist attitude. The film showed, for example, the scene of the hunter sculping a live whitecoat and then licking his knife, which I later learned was staged in Twillingate.

The stereotypes presented in this chapter are those which exist within the oral tradition of sealers and were compiled through an examination of the material in the Archive and expanded through questioning at the directed interviews. As such, they present a double picture: first, they present descriptions of some of the atypical individuals within the total group of sealers; but, more

importantly, by showing those characteristics which the tradition chooses to consider atypical, they also create a picture of the anonymous, average sealer, from whose viewpoint this study describes the occupation.

Stereotypes may be said to constitute an important element of literary style. The purpose of allusion and metaphor is to provide the same economy of effort found in the use of stereotypes. The first person singular used by Mowat in Wake of the Great Sealers allows him to add depth to his work while, at the same time, economizing on effort, because the fictional narrator is himself a stereotype.

The preconception which I had about the sealing industry before I came to Newfoundland appears to have become the stereotype of the industry for many mainlanders. The following excerpt from Edmund Fuller's review of Wake of the Great Sealers in the Wall Street Journal is particularly telling:

> The brutality and greedy rapacity of the slaughter are painted starkly. Surprisingly, Mr. Mowat, with a good record of support for conservation, nowhere offers us any comment on this - a neglect which distracts from our response to the celebration of these hardy folk, who paid terrible costs in human life for their ruthless harvest of seals.[5]

[5]Edmund Fuller, "The Harsh Trade of Catching Seals," The Wall Street Journal, 3 April 1974, p. 20, cols. 4-6.

Only the phrase, "painted starkly", is free from Fuller's stereotypification of the sealing industry. "Brutality", "greedy rapacity" and "slaughter" are not to be found in the intimated sense in Wake of the Great Sealers and are a product of the stereotype of the occupation which Fuller undoubtedly shares with many mainland Canadians and Americans. The stark nature of Blackwood's prints (he is a well known artist and print maker in Newfoundland) is a result of his feelings about an occupation which has on occasion brought tragedy to the lives of Newfoundlanders and not a comment on the cruelty of the hunt's methods.

STEREOTYPES IN FOLKLORE STUDIES OF OCCUPATIONS

In his foreword to George Korson's Coal Dust on the Fiddle, John Greenway mentions that Korson skillfully handles the problem of ". . . compressing the life and lore of hundreds of thousands of bituminous miners in twenty-two states into a truthful composite."[6] This means essentially that Korson has been successful in isolating fair and representative stereotypes from among the bituminous miners.

Mody Boatright also recognized the existence of stereotypical characters within an occupation and entitled the second section of Folklore of the Oil Industry

[6]George Korson, Coal Dust on the Fiddle (Hatboro, Pa.: Folklore Associates, Inc., 1965), pp. I-II.

"Popular Stereotypes". In his introduction to this section, he warns that these stereotypes are not necessarily accurate or representative, but he does recognize the fact that the stereotypes in one occupation will likely have antecedents in others. His comments are interesting, because they treat one level on which stereotypes operate:

> The folk way of reducing the complexities of human character to manageable concepts is simplification. There is first the unconscious assumption that all or most members of a group, an occupational group for example, exhibit a few common traits. These traits are extracted and thus a stereotype or public image is created. The accuracy of this image is not to be accepted without question, not only because it is an oversimplification, but also because it is based on the most conspicuous behavior of the most conspicuous, though not necessarily the most representative individuals. The cowboy who got drunk and shot up Dodge City became the norm, not the one who behaved with a modicum of decorum.[7]

Boatright's subject is the "public image" of the members of an occupation, and this is comparable to the opinions which Fuller, as an outsider, has about the seal fishery. In other words, he is dealing with the sum of the familiar characteristics which an observer may total up and come to believe is the truth about the

[7]Mody Boatright, Folklore of the Oil Industry (Dallas, Texas: Southern Methodist Univ. Press, 1963), p. 75.

occupation. On this level, the stereotypes function for the outsider, but my concern is the function of the stereotypes for the sealers themselves.

Although the characters discussed below are the conspicuous members of the industry, they are the subject matter of this chapter because they are, for whatever reasons, considered atypical by the sealers, not because they stand out to the general public. The captains receive the most treatment, because they are the furthest removed from the men in the hierarchy which exists aboard the ships. Because of the hierarchy, the men know little about the captains on a personal level, so they create the stereotype to rationalize their relationship with them. Some men became master watches or became famous within the occupation. The stereotype of these men allows the sealers to explain why some men in their ranks rose to a position of leadership, and stories of these men form the second section of the discussion. The final group includes some of the other individuals who became the subject of stereotyping within the traditions of the sealers.

One must agree with Boatright that these stereotypes cannot be accepted without question, if the actual character of an individual captain is the purpose of the study for example, but the testimonies can be accepted

without question as representative of the oral folk tradition, which has a reality of its own. It makes no difference to the reality of the tradition that a particular captain was a God-fearing man who loved his family and provided well for them, if that tradition has found reason to stereotype him as an evil man.

THE CAPTAINS

There is a duality of feeling which exists among crew members, and probably among followers or employees in general, which explains a great deal about the traditional stereotypes of captains. The men certainly have an interest in the outcome of the enterprise in which they are involved, but they also demand a certain degree of personal comfort and safety.

In the seal fishery, the captains and men share the overwhelming desire to fill the ship with seals, but the men fall short of the captains' mania when safety is at issue. As will be discussed in chapter six, the Newfoundland sealers may have what would appear to be a peculiar idea of what is dangerous, if analyzed by an outsider, but they did have limits. The stereotype reflects the duality, because the men's comments about captains reveal a love/hate dichotomy. If the captain is cautious and refuses to send the men on the ice in bad

weather, it costs them money by reducing the total catch of seals. If, on the other hand, he sends them out in any conditions, then he does not have enough concern for their well-being.

I have experienced the same feeling in ocean racing on sailboats. The captain's decision to set extra sail for more speed may help the group effort to do well in the race, but it often causes grumbling among the crew. The same is true of a decision to shorten sail for the sake of safety, except that the grumbling will blame the captain for losing the race.

The same dichotomy exists in maritime traditions. Some captains were known to be hard drivers of their crews, but they found crew as long as they made fast passages. European tradition mentions Bernard Fokke who was such a hard driver and made such consistently fast passages that he was suspected of having made a compact with the Devil. When he and his ship failed to return from a voyage, it was not due to his driving too hard, but rather, it was said that the Devil had claimed his due.[8]

Before beginning the discussion of sealing captains in particular, there is one example of the way in which

[8]R.L. Hadfield, The Phantom Ship (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1937), pp. 13-15.

the sealers saw their occupation as a fraternity which transcended the hierarchies, existent on the ships, when it came in contact with people outside of the occupation. In many ways, this represents the sealers' stereotype of non-sealers and was told by a ninety year old, but spry, man from Eastport, Bonavista Bay:

> I was goin' down to town, an' he was comin' up with two more, big fellows we'll call 'em, two office fellas, come up the town. And now that Captain George Barbour didn't . . . had no learnin' see, he'd sooner be talkin' to anybody besides dem kind of people, because he didn't fit in, not proper, with those . . . fellows. . . . I seen 'un comin', he wid dose two men, and when he got right over by, he told the other two men to excuse. He wanted to have a talk to me.[9]

What links the captains and men into a fraternity is the basic desire to kill as many seals as possible. The financial reward of the men is directly proportional to the number of seals taken, but the intensity of the captains' desire went beyond this relatively simple state. Central to the stereotype of the great sealing captain, or "jowler",[10]

[9]MUNFLA, 64-10/C35/922*. All references to material in the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive will be made in this form: accession number/ tape number/counter number or transcript page numbers. The counter numbers are included only to give relative position of material on a tape, because the rev counters vary appreciably, from machine to machine.

[10]A "jowler" is in general a lucky person. When used in a sealing context, it refers to a successful sealing captain.

is his monomaniacal frenzy to fill the ship with seals. His ideal is not only to kill as many seals as the ship would hold safely, but it is also to pile the decks with sculps and even to tow more behind the ship on long lines.[11] As if this were not enough, to be "high-liner"[12] of the fleet meant not only taking the greatest number of seals but also bringing them into port first.

A general antecedent for the monomania of captains may be found easily in tradition. Captain Vanderdecken's monomania took the form of refusing to admit that he could not sail his ship, the Flying Dutchman, around the Cape of Good Hope, in spite of the howling gale. He cursed the storm, cursed God and even took a shot at the Holy Spirit, Who came on board to offer him a chance to repent.[13] The Dutchman's impiety is the archetype of monomania, and tradition has awarded him the archetype of sailors' damnation: he must sail forever in a gale, and because he is a sign of impending disaster to any who see him, he finds no welcome or refuge anywhere.

[11]Greene, p. 50. The S.S. Commodore returned one year, log-loaded and towing six hundred sculps behind the ship.

[12]The "high-liner" of a particular fleet is the skipper who brings in the largest catch. It may refer to a particular year's most successful skipper or may be applied generally to the man who is most consistently successful.

[13]Fletcher S. Bassett, Legends and Superstitions of the Sea and Sailors (Chicago and New York: Belford, Clarke & Co., 1885), p. 343.

Although from literary tradition, Melville's Captain Ahab is certainly another antecedent for the stereotype of the sealing captain. Much has been written on the mystical nature of Ahab's quest and the many magico-religious overtones of the Pequod's voyage, but Beck suggests that Ahab is not as much a creature of Melville's imagination as has been thought. For example, the gold coin which Ahab nailed to the mast for the first man to sight the whale has received much attention. Beck states, however, that it was common practice for whaling ships leaving New Bedford (during the period of his study) to carry a coin in this way, for the same reason.[14]

The Newfoundland ideal of a "skipper man"[15] leaves absolutely no margin for deviation. The ideal is to force the most possible performance from the ship, no more and no less. As Wareham states, the requirement to take risks through pushing the vessel to her limit and the respect for good seamanship can and do exist side by side in the Newfoundland tradition.[16] He also points out that it is a sin to err either on the side of caution or on the side

[14]This was mentioned by Professor Beck in a lecture at Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vt., October, 1971.

[15]"Skipper man" is a term of respect indicating ability. It is usually preceded by "proper", to show that the individual in question has met the standards of his profession, be it sealing, trading or fishing.

[16]Wilfred W. Wareham, "Social Change and Musical Tradition: The Role of Singing in the Life of a Newfoundland Traditional Singer," M.A. Thesis, M.U.N., 1972, chapter five.

of recklessness, and these are sins of equal consequence.[17]

Narratives about the captains, whether from oral or from printed sources, reflect the idea of extending oneself exactly to the limit of safety. Where this limit lies seems to be completely a matter of the judgement of the men involved, because the acceptable behavior is so finely delineated that it seems almost impossible to reach the limit without going over it. This is probably why the three categories of stories and descriptions of captains are not equally represented in tradition. The captains may be described as either falling short of the ideal, attaining it or stepping beyond it, and my research has revealed that most of the material is in the latter two categories.

Representative of the first category is Captain Henry Dawe:

> The one I remembers best was Skipper Henry Dawe. Now there was a swiler! Went to the ice as a common hand in 1863 and by 1875 was a skipper man and the finest kind. I went with him in 1914 in the Ranger, the year of the big disasters, and that was his fifty-first spring to the ice, but he never lost a man in all his time. Lost plenty of seals because he wouldn't put his men to the risk, and always watched the barometer and kept an eye on the weather.[18]

[17]This was stated by Wareham during a conversation on March 4, 1974.

[18]Mowat and Blackwood, p. 50.

On the surface, this appears to contradict the ideal stated above, but there are several points to be made about it. First, I have been told that a skipper who was not willing to drive to the limit could maintain the respect of his crew by being extra fair to the men.[19] His crew might come to consist of men in whom the dichotomy of feeling, that between desire for safety and desire for success, was not as marked as in other men.

What I question about the quotation is that it does not appear to be the kind of thing that a man would say to other sealers. It must be remembered that the stereotypes do not spring into being but that they are the result of generations of sealers comparing notes about their captains. I find it hard to imagine that one sealer would say to another, "Henry Dawe is a great sealer. You're safe when you go with him!" and this is the gist of the quotation. This is a prime example of the difficulties which arise from the fact that Mowat does not cite his sources in Wake of the Great Sealers. Because of the manhood element, discussed in chapter five, this does not seem like a traditional statement of an aspect of the stereotype. I do not question the statement itself or Mowat's honesty, but I

[19]This was also mentioned by Wareham, but he was not speaking specifically about sealing captains but about fishing captains and the captains of boats which transported the fish to markets from ports in Placentia Bay.

do question its place among traditional comments about sealing captains, because I have not found any other statement of this kind of attitude.

The lack of such statements in tradition makes a point about the stereotype, albeit a negative point: cautious captains are not stereotyped, or are not included in the overall stereotype, by the sealers. The reason for this might well be that no stereotype was needed for the men to be able to understand their relationship with captains who did not push them to extremes. This example of a case where the function of the stereotype was not necessary so one was not created will be more clear after the discussions of the functions of the stereotypes of the other two categories of captains.

The second category of stereotyped sealing captains includes those men who were able to walk the line between caution and recklessness. The delicate balance which the captains had to maintain is reflected in the stereotype, because the captain of tradition is apparently schizophrenic. His ability or tendency to change moods quickly is so much a part of the tradition that it is stated repeatedly in an oral formula: ". . . one minute, . . . the next." England was told the following about Captain Hickson:

> As fine a man as ever wet a line! He'd swear at ye one minute, an' give ye a piece of his heart, de nex'.[20]

[20]England, p. 144.

In Mowat's book, the same formula is used to describe Captain Sam Blandford:

> ". . . a proper wildman he was - would pound a man one minute and give him his shirt the next, but no better man ever went to the ice."[21]

These extremes of mood are not only what the crew expected from the captains but also, to some extent, what they respected in the captains. If returning to the ice with the same captain for several springs may be considered a sign of respect, the following tells a great deal about what the men expected of the captains:

> Jacob Kean, Captain Jacob Kean, he was hard. . . . he had no mercy on men. But when he had men, stay on the ice, an' they wudn't all aboard by dark, he'd be one o' de huneasiest men in the world, about his men, an' wanted to know where they 'ere to, an' . . . I spent five years with Captain Jacob Kean.[22]

Although the figurative language is missing, this statement from a seventy-five year old, former resident of Greenspond, Bonavista Bay,[23] is a further example of the formula.

The significance of sealers returning to the same captain on several occasions is difficult to determine.

[21] Mowat and Blackwood, p. 50.

[22] MUNFLA, 66-25/C317/243*.

[23] Greenspond was for many years the capital of the sealing industry, and many of the sealers lived in that area of Bonavista Bay.

Many reports tell of the difficulties in obtaining a berth to the ice, but most of these reports refer to a man's first attempt. A sealer who carried out his duties effectively would go to the captain at the end of each trip and ask for a berth for the following year, and I have heard no reports of such a request being denied. Most of the men to whom I have spoken who went to the ice several years sailed on at least two or three different ships. In many cases, the changes were the result of wanting to go on a bigger and better ship, perhaps a steel ship instead of a wooden-hulled one. Whatever the reason, there does seem to have been a certain degree of mobility among the ships for the able sealer.

It appears then that the man quoted above chose to remain with Captain Kean. This fact, coupled with the other fact that Kean's arbitrariness does not seem to exact any particular comment, leads one to believe that the changeability is a true element of the stereotype, as it exists in tradition.

In terms of the ideal qualities of a captain, it is not surprising that this would be an element of the stereotype. If the ideal is to push to the limit, then the captains will have no mercy on the men and will take great chances with their safety for the sake of killing seals. As soon as the men are lost out on the ice, however, the captain is

in danger of having over-stepped the limit and caused a disastrous situation. It is understandable that the captain would be "huneasy", just as any person would be who realizes that he may have been caught committing a sin.

A disaster which is averted, no matter how narrowly, is in no way a cause of discredit to the captain. On the contrary, it shows that he is playing his hand to the utmost, and this is exactly what tradition demands that he do. Furthermore, this is realized by the crew. For example, England relates an incident in which Captain Abram Kean forgot to pick up a party of men he had left on the ice. It was after dark when he remembered them, and he raised steam to go and look for them. After they were found, the meeting of the captain and the master watch is described as follows:

> "We'm ahl rate, sir," Roberts assured him [Kean]. He seemed almost apologetic for having nearly lost his life through the Old Man's forgetting to go after him by daylight.[24]

It is possible that the reason for this element of the stereotype is the fact that the mood of the captains did in fact change quickly, and that, as the captains played the edge of a thin line between fulfillment of the ideal and disaster, the men were often subjected to

[24]England, p. 160.

drastic changes in their temperaments. Another element which must certainly be considered, however, is that the temperaments of the men also changed with the conditions of the voyage. At the beginning of the trip, when the men were fresh and full of enthusiasm for their work, there would be more problem involved in keeping them from going on the ice after seals than there would be in sending them out, if the weather were bad.[25] If, however, they were in the midst of a trip, on which they had not found a concentration of seals and which was not likely to yield a decent share for each man, their reaction to the captain's order to go on the ice might be entirely different.

It is undoubtedly a combination of these two factors which makes the captains appear to the men to be fractious and unpredictable and which has established this characteristic as part of the stereotype of the captain. In order to be able to cope with the captains' characters and with their own changing attitude toward the occupation during the course of sealing voyages, the men can use the stereotype schizophrenia.

It appears that the captains were aware of the monomaniacal element of their stereotype. Mr. Walsh told me that, as they were returning from the ice with a full

[25]See pp. 204-05.

load of seals, Captain Westbury Kean spotted a lone white-coat on the ice. He stopped the ship and ordered a man over the side to kill it and bring it aboard. The trip had been almost perfect. The night before they were allowed, by law, to kill seals, they had "burned down"[26] for the night in the middle of a "patch"[27] of young seals, and after only three weeks, they had filled the ship.[28] This may seem like wretched excess, with thirty thousand sculps already in the hold, but this theatrical piece had to be staged so that Kean's image would approach the ideal.

The two accounts which follow describe the same incident from different points of view. They tell of the actions of two captains on the day of the Greenland disaster and are the reminiscences of an eighty-eight and a ninety year old man, respectively. They demonstrate particularly well how thin the line is between proper action and disaster:

> . . . I was in the Terra Nova with Jackman. . . . Beautiful morning, and he said to the master watches when dey was leaving, he said ah, he got on the bridge, and he had 'is lecture. I don't know whether you ever

[26] To "burn down" is to lower steam pressure in the boilers.

[27] A "patch" is a concentration of seals on the ice.

[28] Informant 1, field notes, October 15, 1973.

> hear tell of 'im or no, of Captain Jackman, Arthur Jackman. He was a rough man. He had his captains on the bridge. "Now," he says to the master watches, he says, "now, we're gonna have a God-damn big gale of wind," he says, "before dark, an'," he says, "the glass is going right down [the barometer is dropping]." And he says, "The first sign of snow," he says, "you see coming," he says, "come on for the ship."[29]

As this particular account continues, the narrator and his companion had a difficult time getting back to their ship and only reached it, just after dark, by cutting a large piece of ice from the solid pack ice with their gaffs. On this they were able to make their way across a "lake o' water" which separated them from the ship. The fact remains, though, that they did make it to the ship, and Arthur Jackman had again taken as much risk as possible with the lives of his men, but he had not lost a man.

On the same day, the men from the Greenland had a different experience:

> Captain Barbour's son . . . he was out. When we are all on the ice, he said, "Hands, you never had such a starm in your life as you're gonna have today." He don't know, he said, "what Uncle George was looking at this marning. The glass was bottom up," he said, "it's broke," he said, "pretty near broke." . . . It was carelessness that killed un. . . . Captain George Barbour got to punish for dis, . . . because he hadn't

[29]MUNFLA, 64-8/C23/373*.

> stopped to tell 'em about the starm, . . . but he wanted the seals, he wanted the seals. Ne'er mind the men, the seals he want. A hard time, my son.[30]

George Barbour is in the third category of sealing captains, because, on the day just described, forty-seven men from his crew died on the ice.[31] The only real difference between these two accounts is the extent of the warning which the men received from their respective captains, but tradition now refers to the events of that day as "George Barbour's disaster".[32]

Thus far the risk described has been that of men possibly being caught away from the ship, but there is another danger which is the result of the goal of the captains, the goal to be high-liner. It will be remembered that to be high-liner one must not only come into port with a full ship but must also be the first ship to reach home.

> By Sunday, March 29th, Captain Clarke had proved his right to be called a jowler, for the Cross was log-loaded with about twenty-five thousand seals. Her holds were jammed full and several thousand pelts had been precariously penned on deck. That afternoon Clarke sent a radio

[30] MUNFLA, 64-10/C32/364*.

[31] MUNFLA, 64-8/C23/600*. Greene, p. 63, says that forty-eight died and sixty-five were frost-bitten.

[32] MUNFLA, 69-3/C563/673*.

> message to Captain Bartlett, skipper of the Terra Nova, announcing that he was bound up for St. John's that same night and expecting to be the first ship home. Bartlett, whose vessel was also loaded, had "no mind to make a race of it." An experienced master mariner, he had taken thoughtful note of a drop in the barometer and he preferred to hold to the shelter of the ice until he saw what kind of weather was brewing.[33]

The Southern Cross was not the first ship into St. John's that year. In fact, she was never seen again!

We have, then, the stereotype of the jowler or, rather, two stereotypes. One is the functioning stereotype, held by the sealers themselves, of the changeable and temperamental men with whom they had to deal when they were at the ice. At the same time, we have all the information necessary for the creation of a popular stereotype, the one which outsiders use so as to feel that they know about sealing captains.

The next section deals extensively with one of the captains, Abram Kean, who is currently becoming the stereotype captain in popular tradition.

ABRAM KEAN

I met a man in Edinburgh, Scotland, this summer who, when he heard that I came from Newfoundland, said

[33]Mowat and Blackwood, p. 136.

he thought it was a terrible thing that Abram Kean should have been responsible for the deaths of so many men and not been prosecuted for it. His information was based on the review of Death on the Ice which he had read in a local newspaper. This is striking evidence of the fact that Abram Kean is becoming the embodiment of everything bad about the stereotype of the sealing captain.

While the above is an example of popular tradition, Kean does not fare very much better in folk tradition. In many respects, he conforms to the stereotype. His ideal was the same as that of the other captains - to return home first with a log-load - only he achieved this more often than any other man in the history of the seal fishery. He was hard on his men, but he could also, at times, show concern for their welfare. The difference between Kean and the other captains, individually or as collectively represented by the stereotype, is that Kean overstepped the limit twice. It is not only this fact, but it is also the seeming callousness with which he treated the second incident that is remembered in folk tradition. The first of these incidents was the Newfoundland disaster, and the second concerns the loss of three men in the Narrows of St. John's Harbour.

In the stories quoted below, Kean reinforces the stereotype and adds some new dimensions to it. The first of

these has already been told,[34] involving the time when Kean forgot to pick up some men from the ice. When he did remember to look for the men, which in fact justifies the averred faith of Master Watch Roberts, Kean's first question was, "How many seals ye got, me sons?"[35] He later admitted, however, that at "one time . . . seemed as if it like to ha' been a most miserable affair."[36] Both of these comments of Kean's appear to be protective of his position and reputation, and they are probably as close as he would come to admitting that he had made a mistake.

Kean was not only human to the extent that he could make mistakes and try to cover them up in an almost childish way, but he was also not always the most successful of the skippers. Paul Halliday told me a story of one time that Kean was outwitted by Arthur Jackman. Both men were working for Bowring Brothers of St. John's, a large merchant house. When Jackman went into their offices one day in the spring, Kean was there, and Bowrings' representative showed Jackman a map, drawn by Kean, showing what he thought would be the location of the seals that spring. Jackman said that if the seals were actually where Kean indicated, then he would not get any himself because he was not going to follow Kean. Jackman went off-shore, unlike Kean, and as Mr. Halliday puts it: "That's where he got 'em, out on the banks. All the ice

[34] See p. 63.

[35] England, p. 159.

[36] England, p. 160.

drifted south, seals and all, and that's where he got 'em. He was first of the year with a load, twenty-five thousand, all young harps."[37] By drawing the map and making Jackman see it in the presence of their financial backer, Kean essentially issued a challenge to Jackman, which if he had accepted and lost, would have forced Jackman to acknowledge Kean as the permanent high-liner of the sealing fleet. Jackman accepted the challenge and won, so Kean could not lay claim to the title.

The two situations in which the interaction between captain and crew is most direct are matters of discipline and directions as to the way in which the crew should conduct themselves. One of the problems of discipline, which is universal to occupations which require large numbers of men and in which a certain degree of anonymity may be maintained, is that of loafing. In the sealing industry, this is called "slingeing",[38] and it is a particularly difficult problem because the men, for the most part, are paid a standard share of the whole ship's profits. Kean faced one such man on the Terra Nova, and England reports the incident as follows:

> "You ain't got the sense of a she capelin!" the Old Man vociferated. "If you slindge any more, I'll make a

[37] Informant 3, tape 1/138*.

[38] "Slindging" or "slingeing" (the latter spelling is more common) is the avoidance of work or loafing while working.

> sample of you! A sample as you'll never forget. Ye may 'pend on it, I'll cut ye! You'll only get paid 'cardin' as you work. Sick! Uh! You'll come into collar, from now on, an' when you're tailed off to do a job, you'll do it?[39]

This is only a short sample of the tirade which Kean aimed at the man, but it apparently worked because,

> From then on, he was no longer classed as a slindger and a merry-me-got,[40] but as a prime, A-One man. With new dignity he stood erect and took his place among the other men, a man.[41]

This problem is by no means unique to the seal fishery, for such individuals are also reported among the Nantucket whalers. One man on a whaling ship was cured of "playing sick" when he found that the captain's prescription was a head of tobacco in a pint of black fish oil.[42] This treatment has some appeal through its subtlety, particularly when compared with Kean's direct methods, but each is reported as successful.

A man from Bishop's Cove, Conception Bay, tells of another kind of problem which Kean had to handle as captain.

[39] England, p. 182.

[40] A "merry-me-got" is a bastard. The DNE files suggest that the term is "merry-begot".

[41] England, p. 184.

[42] William F. Macy, ed., The Nantucket Scrap Basket (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1930), p. 13.

The following incident took place aboard the Nascopi when Kean came down from the bridge to talk to the men. The man telling the story had helped another man the day before and had towed four sculps while the other man towed two, because the other man had looked "like he was T.B.'d".

> Y'know, he [Kean] says, the weak got t' live as well as the strong and tis no odds how good a man you is, he says, if there is a weak man working long side a ya, he says, you're doin nothing for 'n. You're only doing yer own work. [i.e. one should only do his own work]. The weak, he says, is not like the strong. No odds, he says, some strong men, he says, thinks theirselves a wonderful men. They're doin two or three men's work fer some one else that's a weak man, he says. Ye are not doin that [i.e. one should not do that]. The weak man is doin he's best, he says. He's doin jest as much acardin' to as you're doin if he's not gettin half the work that you're gettin. Half the seals, he says, he's doin he's best. You're not goin to strike among 250 men, he says, all, he says, lions 'n' able fellers. But, he says, I seen the weak helping the strong, the strong helping the weak. And all hands began t' stand an' look y' know, nobody never knowed what was up.[43]

Kean went on to tell how he had seen the narrator helping the other man, and the reaction of the narrator was to work his way to the back of the crowd - "I didn't want 'n to look me in the face y' know."[44]

[43]MUNFLA, 72-92/pp. 41-42. The quotation is from the contributor's own transcription of his field tapes, included with his manuscript collection. The lack of a tape number in a note indicates that the material is from a manuscript.

[44]MUNFLA, 72-92/p. 42.

This anecdote about Kean shows not only that he was aware of and willing to understand the fact that men are capable of different levels of work, but, more importantly, he also shows that he is able to use anecdote himself, in such a way that it functions to make a general statement to the entire crew and to chastise an individual who has acted in opposition to that general philosophy.

The problems involved in assisting another man because the other man cannot do his share of the work are discussed in the following chapter,[45] but the secrecy with which such assistance must be given is evident in the beginning section of the above story. The narrator takes great care that nobody should see him when he takes the extra seal from the weak man or when he returns it later.[46]

There are many other stories about Abram Kean which support the stereotype of the captains. The Greatest Hunt in the World presents many of these, because England lived with Kean for the most part of a sealing voyage. The picture he paints as a journalist is certainly the one which has become the popular stereotype outside Newfoundland. The Hickson stories[47] have probably melted into the descriptions

[45] See pp. 110-11.

[46] MUNFLA, 72-92/pp. 35-39.

[47] See England, pp. 143-54.

of Kean, and together they build what the outside world sees as the sealing captain. Popular tradition now has another element of the sealing captains on which to build its stereotype. While popular tradition depends on Death on the Ice to create its picture of this side of the sealing captains, the folk tradition contains many examples of the way in which Kean exemplifies this stereotype.

> Abram Kean had the blame, my son, Abram Kean was the man. Nothing more nor nothing less, the men that's in the grave, it is all his fault.[48]

Kean ordered the Newfoundland's men back on the ice in spite of impending bad weather, and

> Well, that was the Captain's orders, and we had to get over the side quick, 'cause he was a crazy man y' know;[49]

> They blamed Captain Kean, Abram Kean for this;[50]

and,

> He was a bad man, he was![51]

Kean was not alone in taking the blame for such a disaster - as mentioned, George Barbour was blamed for the

[48] MUNFLA, 65-17/C195/pp. 52-53.

[49] MUNFLA, 73-78/C1487/295*.

[50] MUNFLA, 73-78/C1489/355*.

[51] Informant 3, tape 1/108*.

Greenland disaster[52] - but Kean was alone in being held responsible for two breaches of the norm. Several years after his part in the Newfoundland affair, Kean lost three men right in the Narrows of St. John's Harbour. I have heard two accounts of this incident, and they are identical in details and very similar in the attitudes expressed about Kean. This similarity of the stories is particularly interesting because one of the men was at the ice that spring with one of Kean's sons in the Ranger, while the second story comes from a man who, although a sealer, was not on a ship that year. The following is the account by the man who was not personally involved:

> That was the spring of the White Bay, we call the White Bay. We had so much easterly wind, an' the Narrows were blocked with slob ice, an', you know, big pans between an' slob ice all from dat. And ah, Captain Abram Kean he got stuck there, off o' Chain Rocks, an' now he had got the men out, for to get on the line [i.e., to tow the ship]. An' ah, finally, buttin', you get way on the ship, an' that would prob'bly break 'er through the barrier, which she wouldn't if the line wasn't there. But dis time she went back, you know, and the ice fawned,[53] I suppose there was thirty, forty men went inta the water. But they were up like that [i.e., quickly], you know, many in the water, some wid dere hands on the pans, an' I never saw it myself, some just

[52] See p. 67.

[53] To "fawn" is to break apart into loose pieces.

> did see it. Anyhow, he lost three men dere. And he didn't seem to trouble any more about 'em. After he had the roles called, he saw there was three men missing, an' that was it. He went on then. Didn't trouble any more about it. He was a hard old dog.[54]

The other man who was with Kean's son adds;

> And we knew nothing about it. He never even put the flag at half-mast, an' he never came back, he went on. We didn't know until some time that night. He was a bad man, although there was nothing ever done about it.[55]

The issue here does not seem to be the fact that the men were lost, as that might be seen as an unavoidable and normal hazard of the occupation. What does draw the attention of both men, and their animosity as well, is the cold-bloodedness of Kean's reaction. Kean did not seem to trouble any more about it; he didn't come back; he went on; he did not put the flag at half-mast; and, he did not tell anybody about it until later that night.

There is a version of a local song about this incident in the Archive, and the man who sang it says that he learned it form the newspapers. This incident clearly became part of popular tradition as quickly as it entered folk tradition.

When speaking of Jacob Kean's uneasiness when men were out on the ice too late, the man speaking certainly seemed to respect this characteristic. The captains were

[54]MUNFLA, 66-25/C317/318*.

[55]Informant 3, tape 1/130*.

shown to be respected for their ability to drive men hard but, at the same time, to be concerned about the men's safety. This is the essential character of the stereotype sealing captain. This characteristic is seen to be consistent whether in the course of a minute's conversation or of a man's entire career. Abram Kean could certainly drive men, as he was responsible for more seals being brought into St. John's than any other man. However, he was more than deficient in the other requirement of a proper skipper man. The three men lost in the Narrows were lost in the course of normal sealing activities, and Kean is not to be blamed for that, but for his lack of remorse (even if the lack is only public and he mourned privately) for the deaths of those men.

The problem of Mowat's sources again becomes important when evaluating the following:

> "I seen him on the bridge when the Bell [the Bellaventure which took the corpses of the victims to St. John's] pulled away," one of his crew remembered. "Never had no eyes for her. He was spyin' to nor'ard on the lookout for swiles. More like a devil than a man, he looked up there. No doubt 'tis a lie, but they was some aboard was sayin' the Old Man'd think nothin' of runnin' the winches on one side takin' up sculps while he was runnin' 'em on t'other side takin' dead men off the ice."[56]

[56]Mowat and Blackwood, p. 131.

It would certainly be valuable to know where Mowat found this idea and if it actually comes from folk tradition. The fact remains, however, that the very inclusion of this idea shows that it is at least a part of the popular tradition in Newfoundland. Furthermore, this picture is consistent with the description of the other time Kean lost men, although it is certainly a magnification of his character as shown in the incident.

The stereotype of the sealing captain is useful in a discussion of the other stereotypes of the industry. Besides being the personification of the intensity with which all of the men involved treated their occupation, the captains, by their interchange with the other men, have already introduced us to the master watches, the "slingers" and some generalities about the qualities desired in ordinary sealers.

MASTER WATCHES AND OTHER EXTRAORDINARY SEALERS

Some men certainly were able to rise from the ranks of the common sealers to become captains. We have seen already that Captain Henry Dawe was a "common hand" in 1863,[57] and Abram Kean, in his autobiography, tells that he went as a "common" sealer at the age of seventeen.[58]

[57] See p. 58.

[58] Kean, p. 22.

With the introduction of steam power first and of steel hulls later, the number of ships involved in the hunt decreased because more men could go on each of the ships. Also, many of the sealing ships were lost in an assortment of ways, and they were never replaced as fast as they disappeared.[59] For this reason, the number of captains naturally decreased as well, and since the turn of the century, the prominent captains, such as Abram Kean, seemed able to keep the captaincies within their families.[60]

With the possibility of advancing to a captain's job all but gone, the extraordinary men among the ranks could rise only to the job of master watch, and there have certainly been some exceptional men in that position. Like the first officers in the Royal Navy,[61] the master watches were both shamans and priests: the captains talked to the captains through them, and the men could talk to the captains through them as well. Mowat puts it this way:

> It is little wonder that, while great captains were worshipped from afar, it was the master watches who

[59] Kean, pp. 137-43.

[60] In 1914, Abram Kean commanded the Stephano, and his sons, Joseph and Westbury, commanded the Florizel and the Newfoundland, respectively.

[61] The hierarchy of command in the Royal Navy is described clearly and readably in C.S. Forester's Hornblower series.

became the living legends of outport Newfoundland.[62]

One such man was Master Watch Johnson of the Viking. When that ship blew up in 1931, Johnson stayed on the ice, instead of walking ashore to the Horse Islands. He was not injured by the blast and could easily have made the walk to safety, but he refused to leave a group of crippled men alone on the ice. The entire group was later rescued, and a man from the Horse Islands, who was a witness to the disaster and participated in the subsequent rescue operations, said of Johnson, "He never had no fear!"[63]

As well as their courage, master watches were respected for their ability to find their way on the ice, even in bad weather, and for their ability to predict the coming of such weather. The belief in the latter ability is related in this way, by a survivor of the Newfoundland disaster:

> . . . the master watches, they would be much older than we were, and they used to get up and look at the stars, 'cause they could tell when we were going to have a starm. On the day of the Newfoundland disaster, there was an old man who, half way to the Stephano, looked up at the sky and said, "Men, we're gonna have a starm." We laughed at him, we young boys, we wanted to get on board that big Stephano for the night. We questioned

[62] Mowat and Blackwood, p. 62.

[63] MUNFLA, 67-35/C387/pp. 2-3.

> him about it, and he said there were "sun arms", spots all over the sky and streaky like, ya know. He said, "If I had one more man with me, I'd go back to my own ship." Well, thirty men followed him, went back to the ship.[64]

This master watch's predictions were certainly borne out by the events of the next two days.

Another quality which separated the master watches from the ordinary run of sealers was their ability to find their way back to a ship in even severe conditions. One master watch led his men back to the Adventure in what the woman who told the story thinks might have been the same storm that caught the men from the Newfoundland. The fact that the wind shifted direction in the middle of the afternoon is given as one of the major reasons for the Newfoundland's crew becoming lost, so this master watch could not have used the wind direction as a guide. This woman from Pool's Island, Bonavista Bay, reports the following conversation between the captain and the master watch, on the latter's return to the ship that day:

> . . . it's like this see, them men, you know, they don't absorb nothing, they don't absorb nothing, but, see, I absorbs. I knew this morning when I left that I walked in a nor'east direction. Now you see, we worked the fat all day, an' I kept lookin' at the sky an' lookin at the sky, an' finally, he said, I saw a

[64] MUNFLA, 73-78/C1487/244*.

> starm comin', an', he said, I observed it. I was still nor'west, so I turned nor'west an' looked around a little bit, an' I smelled smoke.
>
> Smelled smoke, Joe Sarge?
>
> Yes, Skipper Sir. I don't chew, an' I don't smoke, an' you see I got 'cute nostrils. I can smell t'ings that ye fellers don't know nothin' about.[65]

The reasons why a master watch was able to find his ship in storm conditions are probably as numerous as the stories of such incidents. I am not aware of any stories which are built on the fact that the master watch carefully followed the rules, given in a manual such as the Sealing Industry Duties of Officers,[66] for keeping track of the location of the ship. The stories usually involve some special ability of the man, whether this be knowledge of the weather, sense of smell or luck.

The shore based seal fishery also had its heroes, and they are close to the master watches, in terms of the stereotype picture painted of them by tradition. The most conspicuous example of an able sealer that I have found is

[65] MUNFLA, 69-15/C604/500*.

[66] Sealing Industry Duties of Officers (St. John's, Nfld.: Robinson & Co., Ltd., Printers, [ca. 1914-1920]). I am very grateful to Mr. Paul Sparks of Robinson Blackmore Printing and Publishing Ltd., of St. John's. When I spoke to him to ask if his company had been Robinson & Co., he called back and said that this pamphlet was printed before 1920 and was probably a result of the Newfoundland disaster, as was the Permanent Marine Disasters Fund which was formed just after that event.

Bill Anthony, who is credited with a number of extraordinary deeds. There were limits to the number of sculps that a man could tow, and this was normally three, although it might be more over a short distance. Bill Anthony, however, was coming to shore one day, as the account has it, and he was hauling five seals. He met a girl who was having trouble with the two she had killed, so he laced her two to his five and hauled all seven the remaining two miles to shore.[67]

Another story tells of how Bill was coming ashore when he met a man who had given out and could not walk any farther. Bill put this man up on his back and walked ashore. The other man, whose name was Nipper, died however. Bill said that he felt all right except that his legs were sore, not from the walking but ". . . when he was dying, he kicked me legs."[68]

The report of Bill's death seems to be fitting in the light of his activities. He took his gun to the blacksmith's forge, where he intended to use the fire to heat the barrel so that he might bend it straight. He forgot that the gun was loaded, and when he put it in the fire to heat it, it exploded and killed him.[69]

[67] MUNFLA, 65-13/C76/pp. 4-6.

[68] MUNFLA, 65-13/C76/pp. 6-7.

[69] MUNFLA, 65-13/C76/p. 7.

There were other remarkable acts as well. For example, "Old French Bob" Barker walked out fifteen miles on the ice, as the story goes, to get tobacco from the sealing ships which were jammed in the ice. After reaching the ships and getting the tobacco he needed, he refused the offer of a bunk on the ship and walked back to shore, falling in several times as he had on the way out.[70] Another story tells of a Captain Stuckless who killed three seals with a single rifle bullet.[71]

These narratives are not, with the possible exception of the last, fantastic enough to be classed as either hero tales or tall tales. The motifs in the "F" and "X" sections of the Motif-Index of Folk-Literature[72] are all rather more outlandish than any of those found above. I think that the reason for this lies in the functions of the stories which describe the stereotypes of the sealing industry.

The male pride, especially in an area such as Newfoundland where "machismo" and manliness are revered,

[70] MUNFLA, 64-13/C99/pp. 43-46.

[71] MUNFLA, 67-35/C390/p. 42.

[72] Stith Thompson, Motif-Index of Folk-Literature, 6 vols., Indiana University Studies Nos. 96-97, 100, 101, 105-106, 108-110, 111-112 (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1932-1936).

demands stereotypes for its maintenance. To explain why he is not conspicuous in his work, particularly work so specifically qualified to test hardiness, each sealer has two methods at his disposal: first, he may attribute the status of the conspicuous men to particular, unusual qualities such as a sense of smell which is not clouded by tobacco; and, secondly, he may elevate the status of all sealers, so that he will at least be respected in his community. In fact, the sealers do both. The stereotypes of the captains and master watches preclude the realization that some men, of no extraordinary talents, do become master watches. For example, the master watch from the Newfoundland who turned back was weather wise, but it is also pointed out that he was much older than the others.[73]

Stereotypes also function in the second method. They isolate certain characteristics and make them the source of humour within the occupation. This mocking isolation implies that these characteristics are not to be found among real sealers and, thereby, the occupation is purged of any connection with these characteristics.

There are many other stereotypes which function within the framework of the occupation, including "slingers",[74]

[73]See pp. 81-82.

[74]See pp. 71-72.

"suckoles",[75] Norwegians[76] and even the ships themselves.[77] Since the stereotypes in this category all serve the same function, two examples should speak for them all.

It is probably universal that urban and rural people create stereotypes of a derisive nature about each other, and this is true in Newfoundland as well as in other places.[78] Furthermore, these types can be found in the lore of the seal fishery:

> Frank Jackman, he was sailing in a vessel called the Portland, sailin' vessel belong to somebody in St. John's, I think, and he was up in the gulf, an' he had thirty St. John's men aboard, an' he had thirty seals. [Laughs] An' they had them all stoned, brought ashore to the public house and sold 'em for liquor. [Laughs].[79]

The man who told this story is from Pilley's Island, Notre Dame Bay, approximately two hundred miles north-east of St. John's.

[75]"Suckole" is not in the DNE files, but "suck" is given as referring to a man who tells the skipper about the actions of the other men. "Suckole" is used in exactly this sense in the account of the shipwreck of the Greenland (as distinct from the Greenland disaster), MUNFLA, 67-35/C402?p. 17.

[76]England, p. 116, says that the Norwegians used to lull the suspicions of the seals by playing concertinas before slaughtering them.

[77]See p. 125.

[78]One may still see graffiti based on the conflict between "Baymen" and "Townies" in the washrooms at M.U.N.

[79]MUNFLA, 66-25/C322/803*.

The training of a green hand, a man who was making his first trip to the ice, was actually a serious matter for the entire crew,[80] but these young men were also treated with scornful humour, particularly if they were at all slow in learning how to sculp. A man I met in Twillingate told me that the young man he was supposed to indoctrinate one spring was hopeless. He said that, if the guy did not make a mess of the seal, he sculped him from the back. The proper method, as may be inferred from this, is to sculp from the front. In fact, this man told me that the green hand made such a mess of the seals that he threw them down a "blow hole"[81] so they would not mess up his "pan"[82] and ruin his own reputation as a sealer.[83]

Mr. Halliday showed a mixed emotion about new men, mixing homorous exaggeration with serious commentary:

> Some young fellas used to cut the flippers so wide you could crawl right through. This meant money to all the men, because they would get less for a seal that was damaged.[84]

The stereotype green hand is common in sea lore,

[80] See pp. 167-69.

[81] A "blow hole" is a hole in the ice through which seals breathe.

[82] One of the many meanings of "pan" is a stack of seals on the ice, ready to be put aboard the ship.

[83] From field notes, February, 1974.

[84] Informant 3, tape 1/285*.

particularly the new man who is told to steer by a star. When the captain asks him about his erratic course, he answers, "I lost that one, but I found two or three others."[85]

Other elements of the seal fishery were certainly stereotyped. The seal finding ability of his captain is averred by each crew member, and the "old dog hood"[86] has become the embodiment of the seals' will to resist the hunters. The average sealer, however, would not fit into any of these characterizations. As mentioned, there were more captains than ships when the new, larger ships reduced the number of vessels in the industry, so men rarely served as common hands and then as captains. Only one man in twenty or thirty ever became a master watch, and although they were the best of the men, even this small percentage probably never gained the extraordinary proportions of the men mentioned above. Most men, though respectful, did not polish the captains' apples, nor did they try to avoid work, and most of them learned quickly how to sculp without ruining the pelts.

Therefore, the men discussed in this chapter do not represent the greater proportion of sealers, but these

[85]For variants of this story from Maryland and from Maine, see George Carey, A Faraway Time and Place (Washington, N.Y.: Robert B. Luce, Inc., 1971), pp. 134-35 and Horace P. Beck, The Folklore of Maine (Philadelphia and New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1957), p. 193, respectively.

[86]See pp. 194-97.

stereotypes are part of the tradition belonging to those typical ice hunters. They are the subject matter for jest, and in some cases they are models for emulation and in other cases examples of behavior to be avoided. In all instances, however, they function to help the men fit themselves within the occupation and to allow each individual to gain and maintain self-respect from his participation in the fishery.

The purpose of this chapter has been to discuss that function and the way in which the men relate to the occupation. The next chapter focuses on the ways in which the folklore of the men functions in the relations of the men with the other men, the other individuals, in their occupation.

CHAPTER FOUR - "BUT YOU NEVER GOT A ROW, NEVER": DIVERSIONS AT THE SEAL FISHERY AND THEIR FUNCTIONS

Interpersonal relationships require a depth of understanding which cannot be supplied by stereotypes. The stereotypes are useful when unequal agents must relate to each other, as when an individual needs to relate himself to an occupation, a nationality or a race. This shorthand does not assist the relations of two individuals, and it is often used, in fact, by one individual who wishes to enrage another. Racial stereotypes used on a personal basis are examples of this.

An occupation which isolates the men involved from their normal social milieux complicates this situation. The men have to find some basis of mutual understanding, deeper than stereotypification, through which they can live in some degree of harmony while in constant company and in cramped living quarters.

These facts are further complicated, when speaking of the Newfoundland seal fishery, by the characteristics of Newfoundland manhood and by the basic, social divisions within Newfoundland culture. The hardiness and "machismo" characteristics often manifest themselves through fights, and Newfoundland is partitioned into religious blocs - Catholic, Anglican and others - national groups, including English and Irish, and neighboring communities often

engage in the kind of feuding which is described in chapter two.[1]

For the seal fishery to operate, the men were forced to find some level on which they could communicate and, thereby, live and work together. The drive to kill seals, described in the previous chapter, was certainly a link among all of the men, and others exist as well. It is the purpose of this chapter to describe the diversions which exist in the traditions of the seal fishery and to discuss the functions which the diversions had in unifying the men.

There were many other traditions which the sealers had in common, but the reason for choosing diversions comes from the fact that there was little time for entertainment except when the ships were caught in the ice and there were no seals in the area. This meant that there was not only the problem of boredom, but there was also the realization that no seals meant no money for the trip. In these extreme circumstances, the functions of play, song and story sessions and pranks and practical jokes may be seen most clearly.

An eighty-one year old man from Shoe Cove, Bonavista Bay, who had been to the ice five springs before he decided

[1]See p. 18.

that he would not go any more, told John Widdowson and Fred Earle:[2]

> We never had a row. We had all kinds o' arguments you know, but you never got a row, never. I often wondered would a crowd o' women ever get together like men and knock about, I don't think they would. Be always every one wantin' to be skipper. Ah, my son, yes.[3]

This is only one of many such statements, encountered in my research. They all aver that differences between men were never carried beyond the argument stage while at the ice. This particular statement adds that women could not, in all probability, behave in this way. This implies, first, that there was an awareness of a sense of fraternity among the men and, secondly, that part of the reason for the men being able to keep peace lay in their acceptance of their places in the ship-board society.

What makes the absence of fighting even more interesting is that the ban applied only to the actual trip. There would be fights up to the moment that the ships left port, and they would be resumed as soon as the seals were unloaded in St. John's. This is perhaps universal to all occupations, such as off-shore fishing and mining for

[2]John Widdowson and Fred Earle did extensive field work in Newfoundland in the summers from 1964 through 1967.

[3]MUNFLA, 67-35/C402/p. 27.

example, which bind men together in work and in shared danger.

When asked if the men were always in good humour at the ice, and if he ever saw any fights, a seventy-five year old man from Greenspond, Bonavista Bay, replied, "No, no. After you got clear of St. John's."[4] He said also that there were some fights when the men came aboard the departing ships drunk, but these displays ceased until the ships returned to port, where there would be some fights, or "rackets", when the seals were unloaded and the flippers shared out.[5]

Because of the way this man stated the situation, it comes to mind that the absence of liquor may have been a major factor in the maintenance of peace, but this is a rather simplistic view. In the first place, there was the odd bottle of spirits aboard the ships, either moonshine or rum - the latter coming into style in the 1920's.[6] Secondly, the basic rifts in Newfoundland society, mentioned above, are not the result of liquor, although they may be oiled by it.

There is more to be learned from this absence of fighting than that a Newfoundlander deprived of his rum

[4]MUNFLA, 66-25/C317/429*.

[5]MUNFLA, 66-25/C317/457*.

[6]Informant 3, tape 1/363*.

becomes a basically gentle creature. There is, first, an atmosphere of fraternity among the sealers, as has been seen by the fact that one man felt that George Barbour would rather talk to him, a common sealer, than to office fellas,[7] and another man's belief that women could not get together and "knock about" the way men can.[8] Secondly, the work itself provided entertainment during the course of a sealing voyage. As one man put it, "Well, if you went out to the seal fishery and you struck the seals, you had plenty of entertainment!"[9]

These are only generalizations about the men's basic attitudes, and this chapter's task will be to show the traditional forms of entertainment, used at the seal fishery to solidify the feeling of fraternity.

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

Before entering into a detailed discussion of the various forms of entertainment, I should discuss the role played by religious services in the occupation. In many places, religion is one of the major means of solidifying a culture, but the situation in Newfoundland

[7]See p. 55.

[8]See p. 93.

[9]MUNFLA, 71-57/C1009/322*.

is different than, for example, that in the Catholic countries of Europe, because the inter-denominational feud is extremely vigorous. Religious services at the seal fishery defy classification, and the different religions give men differing attitudes toward working on Sundays. The latter would make an interesting study in Newfoundland in general[10] and in the seal fishery in particular. For example, Captain Hickson

> . . . didn't have no Sunday on his calendar at ahl, . . . Had it printed widout narr Sunday on to it. But evvery [sic] night, had prayers.[11]

Mowat describes the general attitude of the captains in the following way:

> Some used to burn down in the ice - drop the steam pressure to save coal - at midnight on a Saturday and every man on board would have to go to prayer meeting next day even supposing they was in the middle of the whelping ice and it fair crawled with whitecoats waiting to be sculped. Then they was others would spend Sunday cruising the floes, stealing panned pelts other ships had left behind to pick up at a later time.[12]

Mowat's second type is probably an exaggeration. The fact is that the decision whether seals would be killed on Sunday

[10]My ex-landlord, in St. Phillips, used to say, "If Sunday is the Lord's day, it must be the best day for work."

[11]England, p. 145.

[12]Mowat and Blackwood, p. 51.

did not rest with the captains but, rather, with the individual men:

> [Did they ever catch seals on Sunday?] Some people would, and some wculdn't. If we were into the seals, most people would get out and kill seals. . . . The men didn't go out, they'd get their share accordin' to law.[13]

There was no room on the sealing ships for clergymen, and the conducting of any religious services was the responsibility of men who were zealous. One such man, from Spinning Bay, who had had what he called a "change in life", led a multi-denominational service on the Beothic, at the request of some of the men. The service took place on the first Sunday out from St. John's, and the following week he received this feedback from another member of the crew, a Roman Catholic:

> Now I said, I quite understand I said friends that we're different denominations, we have a lot of R.C. people. I said, and probably you'd like to have the mess room to hold your service. And we're only too happy to be 'long with you. And I'd like for some representative to stand and tell me. Up gets a man up in the corner. Captain . . . . thanks, thanks, thanks a million times. We'll never forget the words you spoke the first sabbath we left St. John's he said when you stood on the bench in number one hatch and said look, we're all travelers to the bar of God. He said, we're all travelers tonight. He said, continue your service, and we're with you.[14]

[13] MUNFLA, 73-78/C1490/020 and 127*.

[14] MUNFLA, 65-17/C197/pp. 39-40.

This is a good example that an atmosphere of cooperation existed on board the sealing ships. If a large group of Newfoundlanders can cooperate on religious matters, then they certainly have the ability to create the necessary attitude for diversions to be successful. Caillois says that "All play presupposes the temporary acceptance, if not of an illusion, then at least of a closed, conventional, and, in certain respects, imaginary universe."[15] Such an imaginary universe can only be functional if all of the people involved are willing to join in and to suspend their personal realities for the sake of the play.

The entertainments at the seal fishery took three distinct forms, including 1) play, 2) song and story sessions ("times") and 3) jokes and pranks. The play includes examples of three of Caillois' four categories (described below); the "times" included everything from mouth music to hymn singing; and, the jokes ranged from good-natured humour at the expense of the ships and the conditions aboard them to serious practical jokes with clear motives in social control.

PLAY

Of the three forms of diversion which I will describe from the traditions of the seal fishery, the first is play.

[15]Roger Caillois, Man, Play, and Games (London: Thames and Hudson, 1962), p. 19.

In chapter two of Man, Play, and Games, Caillois isolates four main categories of play: Agôn, Alea, Mimicry and Ilinx. Somewhat simplified, these are games of skill, games of chance, games which involve the assumption of imaginary roles and games designed to induce a feeling of vertigo.

The following three examples of Agôn are separated by one characteristic: exclusiveness of participation. The first two are clearly intended to be strictly diversionary; competitiveness does not seem to be their primary concern, and these games are open to anybody who feels inclined to join. The third example elevates the element of competition to the extent of awarding a prize, and in this case participation is limited to those whose skill is already recognized.

In the first example, the only rules appear to be in the delineation of bounds and goals and a reference to the fact that they used to play the game at home and were aware that there were more rules. The ball was a "duff",[16] and the game seemed to be of interest to all, not only those who were actually playing. It might be more appropriate for this and other stories about duff to be moved into the chapter on stereotypes, because if anything concerned with

[16]"Duff" is a form of dumpling, the making of which is described immediately below.

the seal fishery has been stereotyped, it is duff. The following is a typical description of the making of duff and of some of the characteristics of it:

> They used to open a barrel of flour, and they'd dump half a barrel into a big vat or tub, two men with paddles would stir it while another feller would be throwin' the water in. No baking powder or soda but a little drop of molasses. Not too much, because the two fellers stirring were chewing tobacco and you never knew when you'd come across some tobacco juice or something. They put the dough into bags and tied them and throwed them into the big pot and made duff. They had a big boiler in the galley, and in another they'd throw ham butt, pork fat and dumpling. You had to eat the dumpling when it was hot or it would set up like cement.
>
> [How did your stomach feel after that?]
>
> Oh, she'd think she was having a fine feed.[17]

It was generally known that if the duff was not eaten in the first hour that it would not be eaten at all, and uneaten duff has found many uses in the diversions of sealers. If it was thrown at a man after an hour and hit him, it was said to be fatal! When it was first cooked, it was as "soggy as a buoy, in the water all summer," but after an hour, "you could eat none of it. You'd have good footballs . . ."[18] The first example of Agôn shows that this

[17] MUNFLA, 73-78/C1488/195*.

[18] MUNFLA, 65-17/C183/p. 42.

is not purely a jest:

> . . . they'd play a game with the duff. They used to kick that thing around. . . . if we was jammed in the ice, we'd have a game of football, kickin' that old duff back and forth, until we kicked the daylights out of it, then we used to give up.
>
> [Did you have any rules?]
>
> Oh, yes, there was rules, we used to play football years ago, not like they play it today. We used to have goals and have it marked off.
>
> [Did you have captains and choose teams?]
>
> No, there was just so many men, an' they was over there an' we . . . they was against us and we was against them. And then they'd be on the deck of the ship, up on the bridge somewhere, watchin' the game. It was interestin' 'cause there was nothin' else to do.[19]

It is interesting to note that the game provided diversion not only for the men who were directly involved but also for other men on the ship, who could amuse themselves by watching. It is more important, however, to notice what appears to be a conscious avoidance of making this a contest between two teams. It has been my experience that it is a dangerous thing to create too much competition within a group of men who are isolated for a period of time, because in any group there are likely to be people who are ungracious in winning and others who will take offense at the winner's lack of grace.

[19]MUNFLA, 73-78/CL489/000*.

On a yacht race from Bermuda to Travemunde, Germany, I was aboard the seventy-three foot ketch, Ondine, with nineteen other crew members. During the twenty-three days of the race, the competition between watches grew steadily, with regard to how many miles had been covered during each shift. When we arrived in Germany, one of my watch mates (normally an affable character) looked all over the town of Travemunde until he found and thrashed the member of the other watch who had been the most vocal individual in promoting the inter-watch rivalry. If this can happen in just three weeks to a crew which is engaged, for the most part, in recreation and which consisted of twenty people, it is not difficult to imagine the result of such a serious, competitive attitude among one hundred-fifty men during the course of three weeks stuck in the ice. Furthermore, the sealers were involved in one aspect of their livelihood, not a form of recreation.

The lack of competitiveness is striking, however, when one considers the general competitive nature of Newfoundlanders,[20] but, in the dart league as well as in the seal fishery, there seems to be an understanding of the danger of letting competition in games become too important. Because of the seriousness with which the dart games were taken, each new dart season saw a complete shuffling of the

[20] See p. 19.

personnel on the teams. Although the best players, who acted as captains of the teams, always played against each other, the remainder of each team changed for each series of matches. It is reasonable to assume that this was done for the sake of relations within the community. Being fairly small, the town could not afford to have animosities develop in dart competition which would carry over into everyday life. This is the same reason why the teams which participated in the various games of skill on the sealing ships would not be chosen specifically to play under particular captains; it was simply "they was against us and we was against them."

Another game which is reported to have been played by the sealers is "cat" or "cat stick":

> A small stick [was] sharpened to a point on both ends. A hole was dug in the ground and this stick was placed in the hole with one end sticking up. This stick was about eight inches long. A longer stick about eight feet long was then used to hit the end that was sticking out of the hole. When it flicked up into the air you then hit it again. The one who hit it the furthest won the game. The shorter stick was called the "cat" and the longer stick was called the "stick".[21]

Most people have the ability to create games of skill out of whatever materials are at hand when they find themselves bored, and sealers are no different:

[21] MUNFLA, 74-3/8. NB: References such as this one to collecting cards are identified simply by the accession number and a number following the slash, which represents the number of the particular card in the contributor's collection.

> Days on the ice, jammed on the ice, there'd be no seals around. They'd be out on the ice playing cat.
>
> [Sure, they wouldn't have any wooden pegs or anything out there?]
>
> They'd have gaffs, gaff sticks.
>
> [That's what they used?]
>
> Yes, certainly.[22]

Given the gaffs which each of the sealers carried, it is reasonably predictable that cat would be popular among the men at the ice and also a game that they would create quickly from their own imagination.

When a game of skill on a sealing ship becomes an actual competition among specific competitors, it involves a limited number of men who possess a particular talent. This again is a preventative against the creation of hostility or animosity:

> . . . we'd have a, eh, had a shooting contest eh, from the three ships. Get out on the bridge of the Florizel and out on the ice they'd put up two poles and put a string o' line across so far away, so many yards from the ship and they'd hang bottles on these poles and they'd have a contest between the three ships, the three best gunners in the ships, to shoot to dat, you know, pick your shot, go up and try twelve shots and see you could break twelve bottles. And there was one man from Pouch Cove broke eleven out of twelve with twelve shots and that was Bobby Noseworthy . . . he was master watch on the Florizel and he's the only, he

[22]MUNFLA, 72-235/C1367/501*.

> nearly made the possible, he got eleven out of twelve wit twelve shots. . . . Hon. R.B. Job was out that spring in the Nascopi and they gave him [Noseworthy], they gave a prize whatever it was I don't know, where 'twas money or what . . .[23]

This incident took place one spring when the Nascopi, Beothic and Florizel were jammed near each other, and it makes several interesting points. First, the contest was among men who were acknowledged as the best in their field. Thus, the winner that day would be the man who had the best day, and there was not so much pride to be lost as there was recognition to be gained. The account does not mention that the losers shot badly but, rather, that the winner shot extremely well. The second point, then, is that in a contest which is structured in this way it is easy for the losers to lose gracefully, because they would not be forced to eat crow when they acknowledge the quality of Noseworthy's shooting.

A third point here is that the nature of the deed to be accomplished by the competitors is particularly easy to observe. There is no room for interpretation or resultant dissention, because the bottles were either broken or whole. The fourth, and perhaps most important, point also seems to be designed to avoid dissention. This contest is not to be considered a form of gambling, because

[23]MUNFLA, 71-57/C1009/pp. 14-15.

the prize came from R.B. Job, an outside source. The fact of the prize being awarded to one man or one ship did not deprive the other men of anything, and therefore, it could not cause tension between winner and loser.

One of the prime characteristics of the Agôn games described above is that the results were only positive, the losers actually lost nothing. The entertainment value in these games appears to derive either from participating or spectating, and no more was required of them. If these games of skill may be seen as one end of a spectrum, the other end would be represented by Alea, games of chance. Since there is little to be gained from simply demonstrating that one is capable of being luckier than someone else, the games of chance are usually gambling games, in which the loser actually gives something to the winner.

In games of chance, skill is of secondary importance so that, although animosity could develop toward a perennial winner, it would not be based on loss of face as would the animosity which develops from repeated losses in a game of skill. To lose in an Agôn game means that one has not the skill to win, and this is disturbing. To lose in a game of chance means that the other person has more luck, and this can be accepted easily. At the seal fishery, the emphasis on competition is removed from the Agôn to prevent

the losers from being too disturbed, and the rewards for winning are either lessened by this de-emphasis or come from external sources. As Caillois mentions, gambling games create neither goods nor wealth[24] and constitute rather a redistribution of the existing wealth. In the case of the seal fishery, the wealth is mostly in the form of tobacco:

> Us'd took de boots off St. Peter an' sold 'em fer baccy, or went down to our naze [knees] to any man wid a smoke. 'E could of sold baccy fer a shillin' a puff. . . . Dey was ahl gamblin' fer baccy, fer gumbeans. Gumbeans? Dem's small little pellets o' baccy. Well, me son, I cut off swiles tails, an' burned 'em to look like baccy, an' rolled 'em up in little pills. An' I gambled wid dem, an' won twenty-two gumbeans, just by playin' dem swiles' tails! 'Twas dark in de 'tweendecks, an' nobody never knew a t'ing 'bout dat.[25]

The thrust of this narrative does not seem to be to praise his ability at the particular game but, rather, to emphasize his ingenuity in finding a way to get into the game.

Tobacco turns up constantly in accounts of the seal fishery, and usually it is a shortage of leaf which is the theme of the stories. It should be realized, however, that a shortage of tobacco is in no way peculiar to the seal fishery. In fact, it was a recognized condition of

[24] Caillois, p. 10.

[25] England, pp. 118-19.

life in the outports. In spite of the perpetual shortages, the vast majority of Newfoundlanders used tobacco, either for chewing or for smoking,[26] and they would go to great lengths to get it. An example of this is the story of "Old French Bob" who walked thirty miles over the ice in one day, just in hopes that he would get some tobacco from the sealing ships, jammed off shore.[27] Furthermore, the man whom England was quoting above goes on to describe how he smoked the pockets out of his clothing after the gumbeans had run out.[28] One man remembers telling a variant of this story, when he was at the ice himself, about his Uncle George who loved tobacco:

> [he said,] "I smoked my pockets last night." Went on and saw a goat. He looked at it and said, "You, you always got it!" as the goat was chewing its cud. So I told them that one anyway.[29]

Tobacco is certainly a persistent element of the sealers' tradition, and the following shows another way in which it appears in the context of a game of chance:

> We used to make a . . . we made a board of our own out there, when we, fellers got out of tobacco, see.

[26] See pp. 82-83. In this case, a man is shown to be exceptional for not using tobacco.

[27] See p. 85.

[28] England, p. 119.

[29] MUNFLA, 73-78/C1489/192*.

> We got a square piece of board and we cut a big hole in the center, and then we got our knife and [cut a trench] up to every corner. . . . we'd play for tobacco now. We used to get a big louse then and put him in that hole, see, and if he went up there where 'as my cousin in the little trench we had cut, he had to put out some tobacco. And, sometimes he wouldn't have it to put out. But then, the feller that had plenty of tobacco, it was all right if the louse crawled up towards him. He'd get to throw some tobacco out and some feller would win.
>
> [How would you win?]
>
> The other men each got some from the man the louse crawled to.[30]

As mentioned before, Caillois says that games in the Alea category do not create any goods or wealth. Since he is not dealing with closed societies, however, Caillois does not mention that Alea may serve as a means of sharing what wealth there is among the group. Considering the value of tobacco and the lengths to which men would go to obtain it, the game described above reveals a fascinating situation: some men have tobacco, and others do not, but the game is played for tobacco anyway. It might be said that they play for the sake of the game itself, but this is not the case. The truth here is that this game provided a socially acceptable way for the men who had tobacco to

[30]MUNFLA, 73-78/C1488/854*.

share it with the men who had none.

A man who had tobacco could not simply give some of it to another man. When England gave some cigarettes to Master Watch Joe Stirge, for example, the following ensued:

> Joe Stirge warned me not to be over free with my donations.
>
> "You better save y'r baccy, me son, an' not jink[31] y'rself. Ye'll need un wonnerful bad, later on."[32]

This shows that it was not normal behavior to give tobacco away, and that it was, in fact, taboo. Stirge accepted it from England probably because the latter was an outsider and did not know any better than to offer.

This system of unarticulated sharing has parallels in Newfoundland's traditional way of life. In a recent conversation, the son of a Newfoundland outport merchant told me that, before social assistance came with confederation between Newfoundland and Canada, the merchants' relationship with the fishermen had served a purpose of assisting the less efficient fishermen. A good crew might receive more credit from the merchant than a bad crew, on the basis of their respective catches, but all of the fishermen received some credit from the merchant. If the

[31]To "jink" a trip is to endanger its luck. A "jink" is an ill-fated trip and has the same derivation as "jinker"- a Jonah.

[32]England, p. 118.

good fishermen did not receive the credit they deserved, this is to some extent attributable to the fact the there were others who were getting more than they had earned.[33]

I asked further if one man might actually help another by tending his nets for him, and my informant answered that, if this did happen, it was done in complete secrecy.[34] As regards the game in question, the need for secrecy no longer exists, because it is luck which forces the man with tobacco to give some of it to the men who have none. The fact that the former can win nothing from participating in the game is ignored. The loser-pays-all rule adds evidence to this discussion, because the dispersal of goods is faster and more universal than it would be if there was only one winner and if he collected from the men toward whom the louse did not crawl. In other words, the game centers on the loser, rather than on a particular winner, so one is led to suspect that the focus is on losing rather than on winning. A game like this one could only exist in a society in which charity is neither offered nor accepted but in which the spirit of charity is dominant.

[33]This conversation took place on March 4, 1974.

[34]Another example of the attitude of Newfoundlanders toward one man helping another who cannot do an average share of the work may be seen in chapter three, p. 73.

A third kind of play found at the seal fishery is what Caillois calls "Mimicry". This involves "a special awareness of a second reality or of a free unreality, as against real life."[35] It is these games that represent pure diversion and that require the largest degree of cooperation among the participants. The following is a clear case of Mimicry:

> They used to have court cases, they'd get a, keep a, manufacture an idea about a case, a fella, once, we had one where a fella had a piece of land, we had one fella wit us, there's a couple of fellas, they were real liars you know, one fella had a piece of land and dere was a school house built on the land. And dis odder fella come from the States and when he come home he said he owned the land and de school house had to be moved offa de land so he'd get his land. So we had that case in court aboard the Florizel and we had the land there out and had the box there and we had the school house and dey all decide the school house had to be moved and we all got together one night and moved dis school house off dis land, down in the hold of the Florizel and he got his land back and built a house on it. [Laughter followed.][36]

One might imagine that there would be interesting sociological material contained in the decisions reached by such

[35] Caillois, p. 10.

[36] MUNFLA, 71-57/C1009/p. 13.

mock courts, but the more important aspect for this study is the degree to which the men became involved in the play.

Another example of Mimicry comes from another man who experienced it aboard another ship:

> . . . I had to go out and call a man out of his bunk twelve o'clock in the night one time. I was policeman and all, had the big belt and big coat and big poker lashed to me side. He got out the bunk too, come aft, had a concert. . . . We had law work you know for something he'd done see, for badness you know. We had a big puncheon tub down in the after part of the boat you know and two knobs o' coal under, the judge was in the tub, sat down. Come before him and the last sentence he passed on fella, 'twas tie him to the post, to iron post was there, for an hour and the last half hour he was there take icy cold water and heave down his back. And no sooner we had him tied on, he was, the ropes was cut and he was gone. 'Twas all fun see, all fun yeah.[37]

On sealing ships, the category of diversions which may be called play not only provides pure and simple diversion, but it also reveals the avoidance of confrontation, the etiquette of sharing and the social solidarity within the crews of each ship and among the crews of all ships. The next form of diversion to be discussed - song and story sessions - appears to have a more purely

[37]MUNFLA, 67-35/C402/pp. 25-26.

entertainment-oriented function.

SONG AND STORY SESSIONS

I am not able to discuss the functions of performances during "times" aboard the sealing ships as they relate to individual performers, but I suggest that the performer status situation would be analogous to that described by Wareham, applying to fishermen and traders.[38] Thus, proper classification of the materials performed during "times" at the ice would mean classification of the song and story repertoires of all of the communities from which the sealers who were active bearers of the traditions came.[39] Hence, for the purposes of this study, I will concentrate on the functions of the sessions for the entire crew, rather than the functions of performing for individual sealers.

> Oh, we'd always be singing, Newfoundlanders are good for that, you know, ah when we all get together. An' there'd be a crowd up one end of the hold somewhere singin' hymns, an' another crowd down there singin' songs, "jigs" we used to call them.[40]

This description comes from a man who was on the Newfoundland

[38]This is the main theme of Wareham's study.

[39]For comments on song material at the seal fishery, see pp. 8-9 and 40-41.

[40]MUNFLA, 73-78/C1489/029*.

in 1914 and refers specifically to the time when the ship was heading out from St. John's and when they had not yet arrived among the seals. Sessions which took place at such times seem, from his description, to be rather casual:

> . . . everybody sit down and sing. 'T'd be some queer singin' dere. Some fellers 'd get out of tune. . . . They'd be singin' with a chew of tobacco, ya know, you couldn't do much singin' with a chew of tobacco.[41]

When the ships were jammed in the ice, the "times" took on added importance and, as a result of this, they became more organized and almost formal as well.

> We [the Florizel, Beothic and Nascopi] were jammed in the one place for about twenty-eight days. . . . You had to do something or else you'd go wild you know what I mean. . . . you got to make all the entertainment you can, there's always some very clever fellas amongst the bunch, you always find the clever guys you know.[42]

In these situations, the men were aware of the need for diversion, and this account shows that the men who could think of entertainments were considered clever and gained some prestige from their ability.

The social exchanges among ships, jammed in this way, ranged from simply visiting for tea, coffee and a chat[43] to concerts. Because these were situations which required that the men not only combat boredom but also that they

[41] MUNFLA, 73-78/C1489/040*.

[42] MUNFLA, 71-57/C1009/pp. 15-16.

[43] MUNFLA, 71-57/C1009/p. 15.

sublimate the increasing realization that they would earn no pay for this trip to the ice, the organization of the "times" seems to have been very carefully attended to:

> . . . We'd have a concert aboard the Florizel this night and then they'd put a big poster out on the ice, we all jammed in a big sheet, big poster on the concert held tonight, doors open at eight p.m. and go over aboard the Nascopi you know. . . . down in the hold o' de steamer, we'd go over aboard, we'd all dress up and you know, we wasn't dirty because we wasn't gettin' no seals, all wash up and shave up and go over, that's it and they'd have everything arranged right around, boxes and the seats all hands are finished by eleven or twelve o'clock in the night and the two, the three ships there'd be lighted up just like a city you know.[44]

The fact that they were all clean and went to the extra effort of washing and shaving helps to remove this occasion from the normal circumstances of a sealing voyage, and I think that this is exactly what they intended. The seal fishery for that year would be, at best, a failure and, at worst, a disaster if the ships were crushed by the ice. The men were well aware of these facts; therefore, this concert was not only a means of killing time, but it was also organized in such a way as to remove the men as much as possible from the context of sealing.

The lengths to which the sealers went in preparing these concerts almost brings this form of diversion into

[44]MUNFLA, 71-57/C1009/p. 15.

the realm of Mimicry, discussed above, because the formality was observed not only in the preparations but also in the concerts themselves:

> . . . we'd pick out the choice people could sing songs and recitations and what not and tell stories and they'd have a program wrote up and each one's man's name and what he was going to sing and his song and the next one. You'd have that, and we'd open, open with some kind of ode and we'd close it with the national anthem.[45]

Allegiance to England was not a very strong trait among Newfoundlanders,[46] and this closing with the national anthem demonstrates clearly that the men were doing everything they could think of to make the occasion formal. I have not found any other accounts of concerts held at the seal fishery which were so carefully organized and so formal, and the reason for this is that being trapped for twenty-eight days is a very extreme example. In many years, the ships would be log-loaded and back in St. John's in less time than these men spent trapped. Being jammed for shorter periods was a frequent happening, however, and most descriptions of concerts reveal a lesser degree of formality and preparation in keeping with the reduced pressure on the men.

[45] MUNFLA, 71-57/C1009/p. 14.

[46] When talking about federal laws which hurt the seal fishery and Newfoundlanders in general, Mr. Walsh said we were ". . . under British rule then; pretty well the same now, but 'twas England then." Informant 1, tape 1, side 1/314*.

In the following narrative, the ship was also jammed, but the fact that they later got into the seals shows that the duration of the jamming was not as great as that described above. The differences are clear: the "time" was informal; there was no practice; and, the performances lasted only two hours, as compared with three to four in the previous example. Furthermore, the captain's permission was necessary for this occasion, while the other account does not mention whether the captain gave his blessing or not.

In the first case, the captains seem not only to have allowed the proceedings but also to have actually taken a hand in the festivities. Two facts indicate this: first, the ships were all lighted up, which required an order from the captains; and secondly, it is uncharacteristic of sealing captains to allow bullets to be wasted on sport, but they must certainly have allowed it in the contest described above.

The less drastic circumstances are described by Mr. Halliday, as reported by his daughter:[47]

> We had a concert on board the Terra Nova and I was singing. Fellas were step dancing. We had it on the waist of the ship, in the hole or the body of the ship where the men slept. . . . We had a great time and 'twas after that we got into the seals, we got the ten

[47]See pp. 40-42.

thousand.

> About fifteen on the concert; all kinds of songs, fellas now down from the North, White Bay, Pool's Island. They know all kinds of old songs. We had a fella play the spoons, the pan. I sung a song. Well anyway they all came down. We went up and asked the captain. He said, ". . . you can have whatever time you like, 'cause we have no seals you know. If you wants to have a concert go ahead and have it." No practice, nothing at all. All hands got together whoever could sing or step dance. We had mouth organs, accordions. Fellas had accordions out there. One fella could play the accordion. "The Old Man and the Old Woman" was the tune he played. Another fella sang all kinds of songs, I can't remember all the names of the songs. We had spoons, used to play two pans together. It lasted about two hours.[48]

From these descriptions of concerts, it appears that the formality and intensity of diversions vary in direct proportion to the extremity of the situation. Undoubtedly, there were many other situations in which songs and stories were exchanged among the crews of sealing ships, and the functions would vary with the specific circumstances. Regardless of the functions for individuals, which must be left for further study, the basic function of "times" can be seen as an easing of anxieties which the sealers may have had about the status of the occupation, at a given moment.

[48]MUNFLA, 72-133/p. 19.

In the descriptions of "times", there has been only one mention of stories. Even in that case - the discussion of the program for the concert aboard the Nascopi - the mention of stories seems to be an afterthought, because they listed the performers who could "sing songs, and recitations and what not and tell stories."[49] The material performed at the entertainment sessions appears to be weighted heavily toward folk poetry, music and dance. The reason for this probably lies in the acknowledged function of the "times": to conquer boredom and to sublimate the situation. For this reason, participation is a key element of the activity, and there would not be any enthusiasm for long, traditional narratives.

The purpose of this section is to discuss the function of the "times", and longer narratives were not a part of them, but this does not mean to suggest that such tales were not told at the seal fishery. In the context of the entertainments, the stories referred to are most likely jokes. A ninety-two year old man remembered that when the ships were jammed, "you'd be in the bunk all day long, and out all night long, dancin' and singin' songs, tellin' stories." When he was asked further about the stories, what he remembered were off-color jokes.[50]

[49] MUNFLA, 71-57/C1009/p. 14.

[50] MUNFLA, 72-77/pp. 3-4.

It seems reasonable that the narrative material at the concerts would be short and humorous, but on other occasions, other forms of narrative can be found. For example, Mr. Halliday speaks of the fact that the men talked freely about disasters, particularly when there were survivors of disasters among the crew, and this indicates that the survivors told personal experience narratives about their roles in the events.[51]

Several anecdotes have been mentioned already in the stereotype chapter. These were aimed at describing, or characterizing, other sealers, and other anecdotes will be given in the following section, the main target of whose humour is the living conditions aboard the ships.[52]

What has stood out in the discussions of play and of "times" is the level of cooperation which the crew of a vessel could achieve for the sake of maintaining the society aboard the ship. These were decidedly communal efforts for the benefit of the entire crew. The subject matter of the following section is rather more personal, but the functions, in most cases, are still oriented toward the good of the group and its consciousness of itself.

[51]Informant 3, tape 1/449*.

[52]See pp. 216-24.

JESTS, PRANKS AND PETTY THEFTS

A third kind of diversion found among the sealers is jokes, and these may be divided into three categories. The first of these is jests and consists of the jokes made by the men at the expense of various aspects of the living conditions aboard the ships. As an example of this form, some of the stories about duff will be related. The second category includes pranks and practical jokes, which range from reasonably innocent comments on the state of the ship to pranks whose specific purpose is social control. The third category is petty thefts, mostly from the galley.

Stories of duff have already appeared in this chapter, telling how it is made[53] and the way it was used in football games,[54] but there is more to be said about this renowned dumpling. For example, the following is England's retelling of a story he heard from the wireless man on the Terra Nova:

> Aboard one ship he served on, the main injection pipe in the engine room broke, flooding the engine room and threatening to sink the ship. There was no way to make repairs, so the carpenter built a stout box around the broken pipe - a hurry-up job if ever there was one -

[53] See p. 100.

[54] See p. 101.

> and braced this box with a beam to timbers overhead. Then the box was packed with hard-bread and nailed tight. He finished: "That there hard-bread swelled up, by crimus, into a mass as hard as concrete, and stopped the leak. We'd already sent an S O S, and expected to leave the ship in four hours, but we didn't have to go, after all. That bread did the business, and we got to St. John's that way. How's that for a story?"[55]

This story would be equally effective if duff were the packing, and it shows the psychology of the duff stories:[56] if duff is not fit to eat, then it must be good for other purposes, such as packing leaks in the engine room, acting as a weapon or substituting for a football.

A man from Trinity, Trinity Bay, told the following, which from the tone appears to be a true story:

> One feller, one feller brought home one one spring an' put un on his garden fence for a knob, you know, on the post. [Laughs][57]

This degradation of the duff not only shows the man's opinion of it as food, but also it was probably a symbol of the fact that he had had to endure privation when he had gone to the ice.

The truth about duff and the other foods which the sealers ate belongs in chapter seven, but these stories about them represent a form of diversion. As will be seen later,

[55]England, p. 120.

[56]See p. 125, where Mr. Halliday fails to differentiate between duff and hard bread.

[57]MUNFLA, 70-4/C809/177*.

the living conditions at the ice were poor. If the men had dwelled on any of the specific conditions, they would only have felt worse about them; therefore, their best defense was to treat such things as a joke, albeit with a wry kind of humour. This wry humour is common to all occupations which demand that the men live in isolated conditions. For example, I have often heard the story about men on whaling ships fighting for the hard-tack with the weevils in it, so as to get some meat.

Lice and other elements of life aboard sealing ships receive this same treatment, but here the purpose is to show the function of the jokes which were told at the expense of such things. More stories of this kind may be seen in chapter seven, in which the purpose is to discuss the actual conditions endured at the ice.

With practical jokes and pranks, it is always difficult to determine the motives of the joker. A man may play the exact same joke on his best friend or on his most bitter enemy, and one may never really be sure which is the case or for which reasons the joke was played. Some such pranks may be completely innocent and intended for the amusement of all; while others are openly spiteful or cruel. The practical jokes played aboard sealing ships span this entire spectrum.

An example of the innocent kind of joke occurred on the Newfoundland shortly before the disaster. The men went on deck at night, while the ship was heading out to the ice, and put a broom up the mast of the ship. This is a traditional sign in Newfoundland that a ship is for sale.[58] The only person who might take offense at such a joke would be the captain, but Wes Kean probably shared the men's opinion of the ship, because he was a junior skipper in the fleet and undoubtedly knew that he had been given command of one of the least able ships. It may be assumed that this prank was played simply for the sake of amusing the entire crew, all of whom were aware that there were better ships on which to hunt seals.

Those jokes played on individuals are more likely to cause difficulty than those played at the expense of inanimate objects. One function is certainly to amuse all of the other men, but whether they also act as a means of releasing hostility is difficult to ascertain and most likely depends on the individual instance. For example:

> We had some tricks of our own . . . skylarking in the night time, see. That's if she was jammed. The hard bread, the old duffs, we used to cut them up . . . and some guy'd be sleeping an' some fella stroke him on the side of the jaw with a piece. An' he'd jump up then, like he was gonna cut throats. We used to have

[58] MUNFLA, 74-60/[no shelf number assigned as yet]/000.

some fun with that.[59]

It is probably universal in occupations which use a watch system and have some men sleeping while others are working that the sleeping men will be the objects of the pranks of the other watch. This is undoubtedly because people who are startled out of sleep usually react violently and are, therefore, splendid victims. While sailing from the Canary Islands to Barbados, I witnessed two such pranks, played by one Australian crew man on the other each time. The first of these simply involved calling the latter for watch two hours early. He needed fifteen minutes and the howls of laughter from the watches below to realize that he had been the butt of a prank. In the second instance, he was told that the flying fish which had landed in his bunk had found its own way there from the deck, but, of course, this was not the case.

Another prank from the seal fishery which is of the same kind involved hanging a can of molasses over a man's bunk in such a way that he would spill the contents over himself and the bunk when he tried to lie down.[60] This joke and the other from the sealing ships were both recounted by Mr. Halliday, and they seem innocent enough. A major reason why they sound harmless is the fact that they do not refer

[59]Informant 3, tape 1/195*.

[60]MUNFLA, 72-133/p. 20.

to specific individuals: ". . . some guy'd be sleeping an' some fella strike him . . ." If these pranks had been used as a means of releasing hostility, Mr. Halliday would probably have taken the opportunity, afforded by the telling of the anecdotes, to state his specific grievance against the man who had offended him. Furthermore, both accounts are related in a way which implies that these pranks were played often.

Mr. Halliday states specifically that they had fun with the prank, and there is no mention of getting back at the victim or of teaching him a lesson of any kind. These are probably just what they appear to be on the surface, and, as further evidence of this, the first example took place when the ship was jammed, a time which other evidence suggests was free from confrontation and characterized by crew solidarity.

The most perplexing example I found came from Bill Lundrigan of Spinning Bay, and it involves an exchange of pranks. This is the story as it is recorded in my field notes:

> The other men in his watch were on the ice getting arctic ice for drinking water, and they called for some additional help. They had found a seal hole in the ice and spread snow over it, making tracks across it with boots. When Bill went out to help them, just after putting on his last set of clean clothes, he

> fell in - ". . . and I went down right up to my neck." - much to the delight of the rest of the men. The next day, when one of the tricksters also fell in (by mistake), he asked Bill for help. As he passed, Bill put his foot on the man's shoulder and pushed him down to his neck in the water.[61]

This exchange seems to reveal something more than just good natured fun, and this is supported by the fact that Bill did not seem willing to discuss the incident any further. It could simply be that he was not amused by the original prank and was only responding in kind, but this is not the impression that I received from Bill when he told the story. He did not say that it was a dirty trick but, rather, seemed amused as he told of it. Since I cannot find out any more about the incident from Bill, I can only suggest that there was more to the exchange than entertainment. The element of revenge did not appear in the other stories, and it certainly adds an air of seriousness to this report.

Another prank, also reported by Bill Lundrigan, shows clearly the way in which pranks could be used as a form of social control. The year he went to the ice, the sleeping quarters were partitioned into cubicles, with eight men in each. The partitions did not reach to the overhead, and a

[61]Informant 2, from field notes, December 12, 1973.

man in the adjacent cubicle continually threw lighted cigarette butts over the partition. Bill said that this was not done on purpose but that the man simply forgot where he was. To cure him of the habit, another man in Bill's compartment prepared a bucket of cold water from melted, arctic ice for the next time it happened. When the butt came over, the water went over in return, and, when he jumped, the man in the next cubicle burned himself on the steam pipe that ran over his bunk. Bill said that this man threw no more cigarettes over the partition.[62]

A final example of practical jokes among sealers affords no interpretation other than malicious cruelty:

> This fella used to sleep and he used to have the "hag",[63] you know. And this fella got a can of molasses and hung it up over his bunk, an' this fella jumped up and tipped it an' got it all down his front. . . . He threatened every man.[64]

Nightmare can be a bad enough experience without any added anguish, so this can only be seen as malicious. It is interesting that this report has the prank being played by a specific, though still anonymous individual, as if to imply that it was only one man's idea of humour.

Although my research has not uncovered enough stories about the cooks on sealing ships to establish a

[62]Informant 2, from field notes, February 1-4, 1974.

[63]The "hag" refers to nightmare in the form of witch-riding, incubus and succubus.

[64]Informant 3, tape 1/202*.

stereotype, the work they did is certainly a part of the sealers' traditions. The duff may be seen as representative of the reactions which the common hands had to the food prepared for them by the cook. There was a definite disparity between the food he prepared for the men and that which he served to the captain and the officers, and the men found a scapegoat for this caste system in the cook, although he was in no way personally responsible.

The food was not only bad, according to the men, but there also was not enough of it. Mr. Halliday said that the standard trick played on the cook was to tell him that you were getting food for four men and then to share that portion among three, "That would be enough for three."[65] This prank solved the quantity problem, and a man from Greenspond, Bonavista Bay, tells one way in which the sealers tried to improve the quality:

> No soft bread. The only bit o' soft bread we'd get, when we used to be young fellas, we, we go an' steal it when we'd watch after the cook, when he was bakin' it for d', ah for de captain and the staff. . . . lots of time we used to steal a pan of bread off them. Lots o' times, time an' again. When you see a chance den, t'row the pan overboard, an' forget all about dat.[66]

There is certainly no hint of conscience in this

[65] Informant 3, tape 1/385*.

[66] MUNFLA, 66-25/C317/231*.

narrative, which indicates that stealing from the galley was considered proper by the men and that it was almost a game. Since I have found no reports of men being caught or of reprisals by the captains or the cooks, it is possible that everybody was party to the game.

CONCLUSIONS

An aspect of isolation occupations which makes them particularly rewarding for research is the fact that the "lubricants" of society are necessarily more self-conscious. Particularly on a sealing ship which is jammed in the ice, the men have no place to escape from each other and are forced to call on whatever means they can devise to live successfully with one another. Diversions are certainly among these means. Play can bring the group together through games and solidify the group feeling through the collective statements of their willingness to share an unreality in Mimicry. The normal nature of some diversions is even altered to remove competitiveness and possible aggressiveness. "Times" in these situations are designed to allow maximum participation and, thereby, collective diversion. In general, pranks are designed to amuse or to affect social control without confrontation.

In societies which are not as isolated - in terms of sex, closeness of quarters, monotony of diet and actual

physical mobility - as the seal fishery, the functions of diversions are not as overt. For example, the pranks played by children on Chalk Sunday in Ireland are designed to show that the society in general does not approve of bachelors and spinsters.[67] On the other hand, the prank played on the man who threw cigarette butts over the partition was designed to have the immediate result of making him stop. The pranks in the former case are an end in themselves - an expression of an attitude. In the latter, the prank was decidedly a means to a desired end.

It is possible to see here a progression from an individually oriented prank, which is played for a specific purpose, to a traditional system of pranks played by children on given days of the year. The key to this progression is the extent and continuity of the problem which the prank is designed to combat. One man's habit of disposing carelessly of cigarette butts will probably never give rise to a traditional children's prank, but the social problem created by bachelorhood is far more wide-spread and enduring, and thus it has created a traditional expression of disapproval.

Diversions at the seal fishery are all designed to answer immediate problems, and they are, in general, immediate and specific answers. The continuing social

[67]See Kevin Danaher, The Year in Ireland (Cork: the Mercier Press, 1972), pp. 47-52.

problems of the seal fishery, such as "slingeing" and the inability of some new sealers to learn the art, are codified in narratives about stereotypes, rather than in direct action through pranks. The functions of the materials discussed in the third and fourth chapters may be seen as another statement of the general avoidance of confrontation in isolation occupations, because the serious, recurring problems are dealt with in an impersonal, traditional form of narrative, while daily problems are faced with immediacy.

In each of the three categories of diversions, one may see the spread of tradition operating through contact at the seal fishery.[68] Though practiced in a unique context, all of the diversions mentioned have counterparts in the lore of Newfoundland communities. It may be stated, therefore, that these diversions are not the property of the seal fishery but, rather, that the seal hunt acts as a clearing-house, through which folklore items from many parts of the island are exchanged.

The following three chapters, on the other hand, will deal with the lore which is specifically the property of the sealing industry. This includes the lore which has

[68]This concept is suggested by Halpert in his "A Typology of Mumming," in Herbert Halpert and G.M. Story, eds., Christmas Mumming in Newfoundland (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), p. 38.

developed about sealing and which operates within the communities ashore and in the lives of the men who went to the ice.

CHAPTER FIVE - "YOU'LL SOON BE ABLE TO GO TO THE ICE.": THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CONCEPT OF MANHOOD AND PARTICIPATION IN THE SEAL HUNT

Although going to the ice can give manhood status, through meeting two of the major criteria for coming of age in Newfoundland, this is neither universal to the entire island, nor is ice hunting the only way in which a boy can become a man. Participation in the ship-based seal fishery has primarily been limited to men from the north-east coast of Newfoundland - those communities which lie between the tip of the Great Northern Peninsula and Cape Race[1] - and, therefore, the generalizations about achieving manhood status at the seal fishery can only apply to the men from communities in this area.[2]

Furthermore, while a sufficient criterion in itself, the seal fishery is not a necessary criterion for manhood even in this region of the island. It is questionable now, in fact, whether becoming a sealer is equivalent to becoming a man.[3] The men who went sealing and those who still go to the ice, however, do not question the connection between

[1]Every man who has contributed information about the ship-based seal fishery to the Archive was born in this area of the island.

[2]Wareham's study concentrates on one man's achieving manhood status in an outport in Placentia Bay on the South Coast, and sealing is not mentioned in his work.

[3]See pp. 20-22.

seal hunting and manhood. It is here that one begins to see the way in which the attitude, apparent in the cooperation among the men while at the ice, manifests itself in the home communities of the sealers and in their lives. What is a close-knit group at the ice becomes a limited-membership, esoteric group ashore. Folklore material about the occupation functions to ennoble the seal fishery and make participation a source of pride for those who have gone, of envy for those who cannot go and of shame for those who will not go.

Before continuing the specific discussion of manhood and the seal fishery, it would be well to clarify what is meant by "group". Ben-Amos places the social limitation of the "small group" on folklore as a communicative process,[4] but I think that this is overly restrictive and ignores the power of a common denominator to supersede the constrictions of the small group. While sealers on one ship, in one year, meet all of the requirements for his small group, the folklore of the seal fishery is homogeneous far beyond the limits of this group. Men of different half centuries, from different towns, of different religions, national origins and economic conditions all share an attitude about sealing, which demands that young men go to the ice or explain why they did

[4]Dan Ben-Amos, "Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context," Journal of American Folklore, 84 (1971), 3-15.

not go. The two groups which are the subject of this chapter are "small groups" in Ben-Amos' sense, as face-to-face contact exists among the members of a sealing crew and between the sealers and non-sealers of a particular community. There is another group, however, which I suggest is as unified and as identifiable as those above, and that includes the people who are aware of the traditions about sealing and who discuss the occupation in the light of this awareness. My own status in Hill Harbour changed because of my interest in and knowledge of sealing and because of my attempt to participate in the hunt, and this is as much a part of the functional operation of the folklore about sealing as any personal experience narrative, told by a veteran of twenty springs to the ice. The folklore functioned for me, and I am in no way a member of either of the small groups mentioned above. As a functioning, communicative process, therefore, the folklore connected with the seal fishery cannot be limited by the concept of a small group.

The purpose of this chapter is threefold: 1) to reveal two factors which help to define the concept of manhood in Newfoundland - these being hardiness and the ability to provide for one's family - and to discuss the ways in which these criteria may be fulfilled by going to the ice; 2) to discuss the interest which sealing held for boys and young men and to comment on the ways in which this

interest was fostered by the members of the occupation; and, 3) to examine some of the elements of a composite first trip to the ice, with regard to the ways in which a man becomes incorporated into the crew and the effects of this first trip on his status in his community.

The basic framework in which manhood will be discussed is van Gennep's concept of the rites of passage.[5] The concept envisages status change as taking place in three, identifiable stages which form ". . . a complete scheme of rites of passage [which] theoretically includes preliminal rites (rites of separation), liminal rites (rites of transition), and postliminal rites (rites of incorporation)."[6]

The young Newfoundlander's first trip to the ice may be seen as signalling two changes in status for him: in one respect, hereafter called "membership", he becomes a sealer and a member of the sealing group; and, in a second respect, "manhood", his status changes within his community. Of the social contexts in which his status changes, the first is esoteric to the sealing industry, while the other - the community - is exoteric.[7]

[5]Arnold van Gennep, The Rites of Passage, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1960).

[6]van Gennep, p. 11.

[7]See Wm. Hugh Jansen, "The Esoteric-Exoteric Factor in Folklore," in The Study of Folklore, ed. Alan Dundes (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965), pp. 43-52.

The preliminal period in the passage toward membership spans the time during which the young man[8] is on a steamer but has not yet been tried at the actual work of killing and sculping seals. During this time, he is separated from the veteran sealers in the crew and is considered a green hand. Because of the nature of the occupation, the transitional period is brief, lasting only for the first few minutes on the ice when the neophyte kills and sculps his first seal. The postliminal period of the passage to membership in the group of sealers lasts until a man freely chooses to give up the occupation. The membership is never revoked, once gained, but incorporation, in terms of the solidification of the right to membership, only continues as long as the man adds more sealing experience to his record.

Manhood requires a much longer period of passage, in which the achievement of membership is only the liminal period. Separation begins when either the family or the community begins to suggest that the boy may no longer be satisfied with the achievements of boyhood and that he must start acting like a man. Children are exposed to sealing through the conversations of their fathers with friends, but

[8] An eighty-one year old man from Greenspond, Bonavista Bay, remembers that he took a man's share at the ice at the age of fifteen, MUNFLA, 67-35/C402/p. 16, but I have not found reports of younger men going to the ice. It is interesting that each informant, at some point in an interview, gives his age at the time of his first trip on a steamer.

there comes a time when the comments about sealing include direct reference to the young man and his imminent participation in the hunt. The liminal period encompasses the passage to membership and ends with the performance of any one of several "rites" which dramatize the man's ability to become a good provider. Given the two criteria for manhood discussed below, the liminal period lasts while the man continues to be a good provider and restates his hardiness through continued participation in the hunt or some other test of hardiness, accepted by the community.

The postliminal periods of both passages are left open-ended, because there is a question in my mind about the necessity for reaffirmation of both membership and manhood. Mr. Walsh apparently felt the need to tell me the reasons why he had gone to the ice only one time,[9] and this leads me to believe that reaffirmation of membership was necessary, if sealing were to be the only, or a major, criterion for manhood which an individual met. Furthermore, the number of times a man went sealing is an omnipresent qualifier in any statement which describes a particular man as a sealer.

[9]Informant 1, tape 1, side 2/135-184. Mr. Walsh's reason for not returning to the ice was based on his becoming married and feeling that there was a need for steady and more "sure" livelihood.

TWO CRITERIA FOR MANHOOD

Literally hundreds of criteria exist without which manhood status can never be reached. Normal human development involves a parallel growth of mind and body, and each line of growth has its own separate criteria for maturity. In a society which offers livelihood only through physical labour, however, the emphasis of the group will naturally be on the physical development. To become eligible to take the tests for manhood offered by the seal fishery, one must have met many previous criteria, but the concentration here will be on just two: hardiness and the ability to provide for one's family.

In the labour oriented society, hardiness almost becomes the basic requirement in one's being able to provide a living for himself. The physical ability needs only the minimal mental ability to turn the labour into tangible rewards. These two criteria are chosen here because they best show the way in which sealing has been a means by which one could achieve manhood status and also the reasons why this condition has changed due to Newfoundland's growth toward urbanization and industrialization.[10] Now that one may earn a good living in Newfoundland without hardiness in terms of physical endurance, this particular element of

[10]See pp. 20-22.

manliness has been de-emphasized to the extent that it is an end in itself, rather than a means to the achievement of manhood status.

> "Ye know, sir, that when we gets to be young men in this country they don't think much of a chap unless he's bin to de ice. It's a sort o' test ó' hardiness, and the girls think a heap of the young fellers that's bin once or twice to the swoile fishin' and come back free with their money. It's jest dog's work while it lasts, but somehow there's an excitement in it that sets young fellers kind o' restless in the spring."[11]

Story quotes this as evidence of the position of the seal fishery as the "great Newfoundland adventure" but adds that it was the best source of cash income until the mining and logging industries developed.[12] One may see, therefore, that there was a time when the seal fishery, in itself, was able to meet both these criteria for manhood.

The characteristic of hardiness manifests itself in the ideal of having a good reputation as a worker - a fellow who could "take it"[13] - and this is equally true for all of the traditional occupations in Newfoundland. An adjunct to the concept of hardiness, or perhaps the epitome of it, is the willingness to take risks and to take them to the brink of disaster. This element was discussed in the

[11]George M. Story, "Newfoundland: Fishermen, Hunters, Planters, and Merchants," in Halpert and Story, p. 23.

[12]Story, p. 23.

[13]Wareham, p. 115.

stereotype chapter, as it applied to the sealing captains, and the latter certainly epitomize manliness to Newfoundlanders. What may appear to be foolhardiness to outsiders is the ideal for Newfoundlanders, as long as the bounds of safety are not over-stepped.[14]

The first element of manhood mentioned by Wareham is that of being a good provider.[15] Unless a man had a berth on a foreign-going vessel, the only chance for cash income in the spring of the year was to go to the ice. Furthermore, Story mentions that, with the relationship between the merchants and the fishermen being essentially a goods for services one, the seal hunt was the source of the "only cash income a fisherman might earn."[16] To the man who wished to be a good provider, then, the seal fishery was doubly important: it was the only source of any income in the spring of the year and also the only source of cash income at any time of the year.

The introduction of cash to the discussion is important, because young men generally began contributing to the family well before the age when they might be expected to go to the ice. If the family were engaged in the trap fishery in local waters, all the children were expected to

[14]From a conversation with Wareham, March 1974.

[15]Wareham, p. 100.

[16]Story, p. 23.

help with the shoreside treatment of the fish, and, depending on the availability of older family members, boys of only six or seven years of age might be expected to go out in the trap skiff to tend the nets with their elders. Because of the general lack of cash, it was a conspicuous contribution to the family when compared to the years of less glamorous contribution which a boy may have served. Participation in the Labrador fishery might also be expected of boys when on vacation from school, but even this was not as conspicuous as participation in the seal hunt.

The relationship between the physical and the mental development toward maturity is also well treated by Wareham, who says, ". . . a boy usually became a man only when he left school and began working."[17] This relationship is further developed in Joe Janes[18] when he refused the opportunity of a college education, when it was offered by his father. As the reason for this refusal, Wareham says,

> . . . . there was nothing else to do [with a college education] except be a school teacher, clergyman or post master. While these were prestigious positions, they did not meet Joe's idea of a "man".[19]

Leaving school to begin work was necessary but not sufficient in the quest for manhood. This is clear in the fact that Joe

[17] Wareham, p. 107. See also Wareham, p. 117, in particular, and chapter five, in general.

[18] "Joe Janes" is a pseudonym given by Wareham to his informant. His residence, "Great Harbour", is also fictitious.

[19] Wareham, p. 116.

"arrived" only when he secured a berth on a foreign-going vessel.[20]

In the discussion of manhood in direct relationship to the seal fishery, the comments included are those of sealers. In other words, they represent the esoteric concept of manhood which cannot help elevating the importance of the seal fishery in the achieving of manhood status. For men who earned the right to call themselves men by going to the ice, it is imperative that sealing remain a way of becoming a man, or they face the prospect of their own manhood being questioned by the younger generation. Because of this, they not only emphasize the hardiness aspect and the ways in which the seal fishery can provide a testing ground for it, but they also significantly neglect any mention of the other ways in which a young man might begin to contribute to the support of the family, even though other means of earning cash have become increasingly available in Newfoundland.

The sealers, therefore, create a folklore of the seal fishery through their constant reference to the occupation. The young boys who hear these references are, in some ways, the ones who determine what the criteria for manhood will be, because they give their respect to those men

[20]Wareham, p. 128.

who exemplify the characteristics which young boys see as defining manhood. As long as boys and young men believe that they can achieve manhood status through the seal hunt, they will respect the men who have gone to the ice.

SEALING AND YOUNG BOYS' INTERESTS AND ACTIVITIES

Although the direct pressure to go to the ice did not begin to be exerted until adolescence, this does not mean that a milder form of pressure could be evaded by younger boys. They saw sealing going on; they discussed it among themselves; they heard about it from older men; they were shown some of the techniques of the work; some of the techniques formed a part of their play; and, they played hookey to be among sealers. All of these elements of the life of young boys in Newfoundland occur before the start of the preliminal period of the passage to manhood, before the boys are told that they must begin to act like men.

In many of the communities involved, Green Bay springs gave them the opportunity to see men killing seals. When the seals were close to shore, the boys would even participate in the land-based hunt. For example in 1894 - known as the "Great Seal Haul" in Lewisporte, Bay of Exploits - the schools were closed, so that students and teachers alike could lend a hand at bringing the seals to shore.[21]

[21] MUNFLA, 64-13/C92/p. 6.

His father is often the epitome of a boy's concept of manhood, and the shore-based seal hunt gave young boys a chance to see their fathers engaged in the sealing. This naturally made them want to emulate the sealing activities. When I asked Mr. Walsh if the boys talked about sealing, he said, "Indeed they did! They were brought up with it. Go to your grandfather's, first thing they'd bring up."[22] The emulation aspect came not only from what boys saw their fathers doing but also from what they heard their fathers say they had done.

Before the advent of the mass entertainment media, when people still had to create their own entertainment, the seal hunt and its wealth of personal experience narrative formed a major portion of the evening conversation:

> That was their life, see, in the seal fishery. Well they'd start at Christmas time, they'd have lots of hard ones, when they'd be drinking, Christmas. Talking about going to the ice, going to - are you going out this spring? Find out whether you'd be going out.[23]

One might even suspect that a father's favorite story about the seal fishery would become a part of his son's repertoire of stories. Furthermore, in the context of a lying contest between young boys, one might expect these favorite stories

[22]Informant 1, tape 1, side 2/185*.

[23]Informant 1, tape 1, side 2/080*.

to be enlarged upon, until the boys would begin to see the average sealer as a superhuman figure.

On other occasions, the older men were more direct in their influencing of young boys toward interest in the seal fishery. Although the teaching of trades or skills in Newfoundland has traditionally forbidden direct instruction,[24] pre-teenagers appear to be exceptions to this rule as far as sealing is concerned:

> Well, me father he was at it - he was at it like I said, fifteen springs. He loved it so much. He used to get down on the floor and he used to have those hooked mats, them times, instead of canvas on the floor. The women used to hook mats, on the floor see, and I can remember when I was a young boy, he'd get down in the night time and get the mats and fold the corners of the mats together and show us how he used to lace up and tow seals. He'd be interested in telling us about it. He'd enjoy telling about, telling us young fellas about it.[25]

Mr. Halliday also told me about an instruction, similar to that told above by Mr. Walsh, but his father used a coat instead of a hooked mat and also took a knife and showed him how to sculp a seal, as well as demonstrating the proper way of lacing seals for towing. It was interesting that, as Mr. Halliday described the situation, he was showing

[24]See pp. 166-70.

[25]Informant 1, tape 1, side 2/106*.

me how to lace pelts together, using the plastic placemats on his kitchen table. He positioned the mats so that the front of one overlapped the back two thirds of the one ahead, and he then showed me where the holes should be cut for lacing them together. He said that this was the method used by all sealers because it made for the easiest possible hauling of three sculps.

The extent to which boys were interested in sealing is reflected in several of the games and entertainments. The games they played on the ice may or may not have had a direct relationship with sealing, but the boys exhibited a definite fascination with the sealers and the sealing vessels.

I have not found any traditional games of children which suggest that sealing was in their minds when they played on the ice, but two literary sources suggest the connection. Mowat reports that it was sport but also that it would "come in handy when you was old enough to try for a berth on a sealing ship bound for the northern ice."[26] One of Duncan's characters says that he cannot go copying - "a game of follow-my-leader over the broken ice"[27]- because

[26]Mowat and Blackwood, p. 9.

[27]Norman Duncan, The Way of the Sea (Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1905), p. 138. I owe this reference to Dr. J.D.A. Widdowson.

his mother does not want him to go, and he elicits this response:

> "When you grows up you'll be sorry you didn't l'arn t' copy when you was a b'y," said little Skipper Joe. "Sure, b'y, when you goas huntin' swiles, an' you gets out on the ice, an' the ice goas abroad,[28] what you goain' t' do? Sure b'y," he added, sagely, "you're brung up too tender."[29]

Although I have not found oral evidence of a direct nature for this connection between sealing and children's games on the ice, three games collected by an undergraduate student last year give evidence of an indirect nature. The three games - "cribbing", "clamper-hopping" and "gallering"[30] - are all played by boys, ranging in age from ten to thirteen, and they are games of Agôn or games of skill.[31] One might expect to find games on the ice of the Mimicry form of play, but it is interesting that they are all games of skill. Not only are they examples of Agôn, but also, in each case, there is no ending to the game. This suggests that the purpose of the games was not competition but experience or practice in travel on the ice.

[28] When the ice "goas abroad" it breaks up and moves away from shore or from the ship.

[29] Duncan, The Way of the Sea, p. 138.

[30] MUNFLA, 74-4/1, 74-4/2, and 74-4/3, respectively.

[31] For a discussion of the kinds of play isolated by Caillois, see pp. 98-114.

"Cribbing", "clamper-hopping" and "gallering" are probably local names for the same game, because they are identical in most aspects. The only variation is that the first and third - reported from Bonavista, Bonavista Bay, and from Winterton, Trinity Bay, respectively - include the boys' carrying of sticks. This is an essential element of cribbing and an option in gallering, but clamper-hopping, reported from Placentia, Placentia Bay, on the South Coast of Newfoundland, requires no stick.

It is important to realize that the ability to move on the ice is required in more Newfoundland occupations than sealing alone. Men would often go on the ice in quest of sea birds, and the presence of ice was often exploited in the moving of buildings from one part of a town to another. The games are certainly a form of training for the boys in the art of maneuvering on the ice, and sealing is one of the occupations for which the young boys trained. The presence of sticks in the games from sealing areas may be indicative of the connection between games on the ice and future plans to participate in the seal fishery.

When Greenspond, Bonavista Bay, was the centre of the sealing industry - through being the home of many sealing captains and the major commercial port nearest to the traditional sealing areas - the ships used to spend the

winter in Pond Tickle, between Greenspond and the mainland. When the sealers arrived in the spring and signed on the ships,

> Pond Tickle usually freeze up then, and ah, boys 'd run away from school, and run down aboard the boats, and that's where we stayed, down aboard the sealing boats, sealing ships. Probably get a feed of pork and duff, we used to call it, we had a, we used to get a great kick out o' dat, you know.
>
> [Would the teacher punish you for being aboard the boats?]
>
> Well, sometimes he would, undoubtedly he would a good many times. We'd get hardened to dat.[32]

The enjoyment here seems to stem from two sources: association with the sealers as well as participation in the esoteric foodways of the sealers.

The probability of punishment by the teacher seems to have had no deterrent effect on the boys' fascination, but, more significantly, the boys were welcomed by the sealers. This is a further example of the ways in which older men could foster the interest of the boys in the seal fishery. In his discussion of individuals and groups, van Gennep places great emphasis on the rite of eating and drinking together as a rite of incorporation,[33] and the

[32]MUNFLA, 66-25/C317/152*.

[33]van Gennep, pp. 28-29. The significance of this rite is mentioned in several places throughout the book.

boys' visits aboard the sealing ships, with the sharing of a meal, clearly functioned in this way.

This fascination with sealing was not restricted to the boys, as the speaker in the following account, for instance, is a sixty year old woman from Pool's Island, Bonavista Bay:

> On Sunday, of course, it would be a big day in the churches. We'd have sealers' services, as they were called, and of course the people in the settlement didn't go very much, because they left the space for the men that was going to the ice fields to have their little service. But ah, we were kids, an' ah, we would go to the church, ah, open the bellfry where the bell would be, rang you know, and ah, we would listen very quietly and very carefully there to what was going on. Of course it was curiosity.[34]

This again represents the children's attempts to see the esoteric elements of the occupation and to satisfy their fascination with sealing.

Although the teacher would punish the boys who played hookey to go aboard the ships, he had to bow to pressure on the day that the ships left to go to the ice. As the same woman continues:

> Thousands of people would be standing around on the ice the next morning. Of course there's no school that morning. It's just as well that the teachers didn't

[34]MUNFLA, 69-15/C604/167*.

> open the school, because there was just [no] person there. They were all out on the ice, seeing all that was going on.[35]

The leaving of the ships was an occasion for celebration in the entire town, in fact in the entire region, just as it later became a day of festivity in St. John's when the ships began departing from there.

The interest in sealing and in sealers was not, of course, restricted to residents of Greenspond and the other towns around Pond Tickle. The boys in Gambo - the western terminus for the special sealers' train that went to St. John's when the centre of the industry shifted to there - used to wait for the sealers to arrive from out around Bonavista Bay. When they came, the boys would "run out on the ice and take the slides [on which the men brought their gear from home] and haul them to the railroad station. They kept the slides for their pay."[36]

ADOLESCENCE - THE BEGINNING OF THE RITE OF SEPARATION

It has been seen in the section above that the interest in sealing was common to young boys and girls and that it was also held by the communities at large, in certain regions of the island. The young boys, however, received a

[35] MUNFLA, 69-15/C604/247*.

[36] Mowat and Blackwood, p. 57.

special kind of attention from the sealers, whether family members who had been to the ice or men engaged in the occupation. As the boys grew older, this special attention increased to the point of forming the adolescent males into an esoteric group. There is a subtle change in the esoteric information given to older boys, and this rests in the fact that each mention of sealing includes a reference to the boy's imminent participation in the hunt:

> When I was quite young, he [the father] used to tell me about the seal fishery, what you had to do when you got out there, and my grandfather, he'd say, "You're goin' to the ice. If you ever get caught out overnight, you keep chawin', ya." He said, "Then you'll never frost burn your face, because," he said, "your face is goin' up and down, up and down . . ."[37]

What this man means by "quite young" is difficult to determine, but this example has several elements of direct pressure on the boy to begin thinking seriously about his own future participation. As well as the direct statement, "You're goin' to the ice," this quotation includes references to the hazards of the occupation and the traditional means of combatting one of the hazards. This kind of reference would not have any place in a child's romanticized picture of the seal hunt.

The above is only marginally different from the kind

[37]MUNFLA, 73-78/C1489/818*.

of information which would be given to young boys about sealing, but the teenagers would begin to receive more direct instruction in the practical aspects of going to the ice. Hints would be given by fathers to sons who were going to the ice for the first time, and they would include everything from the necessities such as the proper kind of clothing to take, to special hints, such as carrying raisins in one's lunch-bag, or "grub bag", because they give moisture and quick energy.[38]

It is interesting that, while these practical hints increase for the teenagers, the direct instruction in sculping, lacing and towing disappears. The young men on the verge of going sealing are expected to know how to do these things, either through experience in the shore-based fishery or through the instruction received as boys. This attitude toward instruction and its relation to the traditional education system of Newfoundland will be discussed later in this chapter.[39]

The real separation from boyhood and entrance into the preliminal period of the passage toward manhood begins when a young man is treated as described in the following:

> . . . and lots of times when you'd be growing up, you know, you get up around fifteen or sixteen years old,

[38]Informant 1, tape 1, side 1/970*.

[39]See pp. 166-70.

> ya see, perhaps you'd go to your grandfather's house or your uncle's house or something like that, and they'd say, "Hold it! What about you some day go to the ice." No talk of goin' anywhere else, you know. No talk about goin' to the Bell Island mines or . . . "You'll soon be able to go to the ice." Like ah, they didn't consider you a man until you went out there and had a few trips to the ice . . .[40]

This could not be more direct, and what is interesting to note is that, when the pressure becomes this direct, it is applied by grandfathers or uncles and not by the father. Although my evidence on this point is not comprehensive, it is possible that, just as direct instruction was not given to young men in learning an occupation, direct instruction in one's responsibilities to one's immediate family could not be given by a member of that immediate family.

In the following, it is again an uncle who applies the pressure, but this example explains to the young man the reason why he should go sealing: he is old enough to be expected to help provide for the family. Since the ability to be a good provider is a criterion for manhood, this indicates that, once a certain age is reached, the qualities of manhood are not simply something to be desired in young men; they are demanded:

> There was one of my uncles that said to me one time - I never forgot - me brother was after being out

[40]Informant 1, tape 1, side 2/095*.

> to the ice, and he made seventy-five dollars, but I was too young to go. See, he was four years older than me, me brother, he was about eighteen then, and I was about fourteen, see. I was talking to me uncle, and ah, he says, "How much did Dick, did Dick make just after gettin' in from the ice?" And I told him what it was, about seventy-five dollars. "You know, boy," he says, "when you gets able to go out to the ice along with him, that'll be a hundred and fifty dollars." See, as sure as that, you know. That as long as he made seventy-five, he was gonna make seventy-five again the next year, and if I went out, I'd make seventy-five. But 'twas different than that.[41]

As suggested by Mr. Walsh, his uncle's logic was a bit faulty, but the point was made perfectly well. The brother had taken his place as a man in the family by contributing at least some of his earnings from the hunt, and there was no reason why Mr. Walsh should not do the same. This shows, furthermore, the double nature of the requirements for manhood in hardiness and in providing money for the family. Mr. Walsh had already worked in the mines on Bell Island and given his pay checks, uncashed, to his parents, but he knew that he was still not considered a man.

Once these pressures, applied over the years of childhood and adolescence, had achieved their desired effect

[41]Informant 1, tape 1, side 2/188*.

and the young man had decided to go to the ice, then the father could again give him help. Many examples may be found in which the father, who has retired from the seal fishery, would go to a captain with whom he had served and would request a berth for his son.

The procuring of a berth may well signal the start of the liminal period of the passage to manhood. The period or state of separation had begun with the first mention by a relative that the time was near for the boy to go to the ice. As soon as this was mentioned, the boy could no longer relax in the state of childhood. The postliminal stage must come after the return, and the rite of passage into this state of manhood was most probably the moment when the man was able to hand his parents the money he had made at the seal fishery.

If a berth could not be acquired for a boy, he either had to remain in the separation stage or find some other way of entering the transitional stage. The traditional substitute for the legitimate securing of a berth was stowing away. Mowat says of stowaways that they were "youngsters who were so drunkenly enthralled by the cold fire of the ice they'd risk their unlived lives."[42] This is a very dramatic statement of a rather less dramatic situation. In

[42]Mowat and Blackwood, p. 58.

a society where a trip to the ice was a necessary transitional stage in the passage to manhood, a young man, denied normal access to that stage and yet sure that he is ready to end his period of separation, was forced to take such measures. The reaction of the captains and the rest of the crews to stowaways who appeared from hiding after it was too late to put them ashore shows more an attitude of acceptance and mild respect than one would expect them to show to some one they considered drunkenly enthralled:

> . . . the captains were usually very generous, an' they would sign articles with them, an' they would share with the boys. . . . the men would throw together, you know, one a pair of socks, another a pair of mitts, an' somebody else an extra pair of boots. They fit them out, an' they came through all right.[43]

A TRIP TO THE ICE - THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD

The transitional stage in the passage to manhood, an actual trip to the ice, may be seen in terms of van Gennep's concept as well. The new sealer is first in a state of separation from both his past life ashore and from the established members of the crew. The transitional stage is signalled by a traditional rite of initiation - the visit of Father Neptune - and he enters the postliminal period when he is accepted as a member of the crew. This

[43]MUNFLA, 69-15/C604/608*.

final step may not actually take place for several years and is only actualized when the man asks for and is given a berth by the captain for the following season's hunt. Here the issue is confused somewhat by the existence of castes among the sealers themselves, but, for all intents and purposes, the incorporation may be considered to start when the man is accepted as a member of his first crew.

A stereotype of the young sealer has been presented in chapter three,[44] but not even a majority of young sealers in the preliminal stage of the passage toward membership fit the stereotype. The beginner, in actuality, is probably better characterized by his desire to learn than by his mistakes. It is during the preliminal period that an overt rite of incorporation takes place, in the form of the visit of Father Neptune:

> Every year 'long with a bunch of the old hands at the job, there'd be fifteen, maybe twenty young fellows about eighteen years old who wouldn't a been prouder if they'd been goin' to New York. Once on the boat though their tune'd change. Half of 'em'd be homesick the first night. Or seasick.[45] And the rest of the crowd'd tease 'em something awful. Anyway the big

[44] See pp. 88-89.

[45] In transcripts, where punctuation is a matter of interpretation, I have on occasion corrected the transcribers, but excerpts from student manuscripts, such as this example, are exact quotations, with no change in spelling or punctuation.

night'd always roll round, some dreaded it, and that was when we'd cross the Strait of Belle Isle. Old Father Neptune'd come aboard an' to look at him, you'd swear he came right from the sea. He'd be dressed in long rubbers, oil skins and a capelian[46] on his head. Usually he'd have a long beard and water'd be dripping from his face and off his clothes. Half the young fellows were frightened to death but there'd be no getting away. Whoever was crossing the Strait for the first time would be gathered in the cabin and every single one of them'd be shaved. Sometimes he used a real razor but most times it was a wooden one and he'd use a mixture of soap, cocoa or something like that for lather. All the rest of the crew would look on and enjoy the fun. If anyone tried to sneak off, he was always caught and brought back to face the music.

Most of the young fellows thought there was such a person as Father Neptune the first time because they'd heard so many stories about him. They'd be scared but it'd be an awful let down if he didn't come aboard. It livened up the trip and made the newcomers feel a part of the crew.[47]

Rather than making the new men feel part of the crew, this ritual seems to be designed to emphasize the fact that the new men are, in fact, separate from the rest of the crew, from the men who have been to the ice before. In some ways, it does act as an incorporation because, for example, the young men know that this is a rite which they will have to

[46]This probably refers to the "cape ann", a popular hat among fishermen because of its long back rim which keeps water from the back of the neck.

[47]MUNFLA, 72-267/pp. 43-46.

endure only one time and that, on completion of the ritual, they are at least members of the group of seamen who have crossed the Straits.

There can be no question about the traditional significance of the visit of Father Neptune as it applies to the occupation of ocean voyaging. Where the purpose of the occupation is simply the passage of the ship and its cargo from one port to another, the visit could certainly be considered the rite of incorporation, but the actual business of the seal fishery is killing seals, and one could not consider recognition of a man's ability to be a member of a steamship crew to be recognition of his membership in the group of sealers.

Because of Newfoundland's dependence on maritime traffic, Newfoundlanders would certainly be aware of this ritual and its place in maritime traditions.[48] In fact, the visit of Father Neptune played a part in the summer cod fishery in Labrador. In the trade with Labrador, the crossing of the Straits was probably as significant as the crossing of the equator or of the international dateline is in the world's merchant fleets and navies. If the trip to the ice may be seen as first the liminal period of the passage to manhood and, secondly, the entire rite of passage to membership, then it is not surprising that this ritual plays two

[48]Horace P. Beck, Folklore and the Sea, American Maritime Library, No. 6 (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 116-19.

separate roles. Its overt role is to signal the beginning of the liminal stage of manhood. When a young man has crossed the Straits of Belle Isle, he enters a transitional stage: he is still separated from boyhood, but he has begun doing something which is positive and will bring him a new status. The transition completes his separation from boyhood and shows the direction in which he will go to achieve the status of manhood.

The covert role of this rite has already been suggested. In the passage to membership, the young man on his first sealing voyage is only just starting when the ship crosses the Straits. In this system of rites, then, Father Neptune functions to emphasize his separation from the rest of the crew. In the light of this, Neptune's visit appears to be more a statement of solidarity among the established members of the crew than an incorporation of the new hands.

The superficiality of the ritual may be seen from two other facts: first, when it occurs now, the custom is an entertainment on the Canadian National coastal boats; and, it appears to have disappeared from the sealing industry. I asked Mr. Halliday if there had been any pranks played on him because he was going to the ice for the first time, and he answered:

> No, that was years before that, Neptune used to come aboard. I remember my grandfather and father talking

> about that. On your first trip, you were supposed to be a green hand, see, and you were supposed to be shaved; Neptune would come aboard and shave you.[49]

It appears from further discussion with Mr. Halliday that, when he uses the term "green hand", he means only those men who did not know how to kill and sculp seals. As he says, "On your first trip, you were supposed to be a green hand . . ." which implies that many of the men treated this way were not, in fact, green hands. Many of the men who went to the ice on a steamer for the first time already had experience in the shore-based fishery.

The visit of Father Neptune, therefore, takes on a new significance: it becomes an overt statement of the fact that, even though a man might have all of the necessary qualifications for membership as a sealer, the veterans of trips to the ice were not willing to grant membership until the young man had made such a trip. This emphasizes the esoteric nature of participation in the ship-based hunt, which participation does not - except to green hands in the sense that Mr. Halliday uses the term - teach the young man anything about killing seals. What it does teach him is that he must be aware of the fact that living and working on a ship make the seal fishery different than it is when conducted from the shore.

[49]Informant 3, tape 1/188*. The frequent references to shaving are interesting because of shaving's importance as a ritual act of incorporation into manhood.

The liminal period in the passage to membership was very short and consisted of the time in which the experienced men, who were new only to the extent that they had not worked from a ship, proved that they knew how to kill seals and also the time in which the true green hands were taught the methods of the hunt. It was vital to the success of the entire voyage that every member of the crew be able to sculp effectively. The instance mentioned in chapter three, in which seals were actually discarded,[50] is extreme, but the men did lose money when pelts were damaged.[51] Because of this factor, the traditional reluctance to share knowledge was suspended on the first day that the crew was among the seals; but, even then, it was only suspended under strict conditions.

The following is a description of the traditional learning process as it operated in Great Harbour:

> Although there was great emphasis on formal education, it is significant that all traditional learning was done by observation rather than by asking questions and being told. One was expected to "pick it up" oneself. . . . Even in school, though students were instructed by the teacher, they were not encouraged to ask questions.
>
> My father, as merchant, says that he always had difficulty in getting the experienced worker to instruct the inexperienced... .
>
> This reluctance to share knowledge resulted in a situation in which one was protecting one's position

[50] See pp. 88-89.

[51] MUNFLA, 66-25/C317/137*.

> by keeping the supply of qualified men to a minimum. Competition was equally keen in all facets of the community.[52]

Two points have already been made which relate to this traditional learning system. The first showed the way in which direct instruction in the techniques of sealing was reserved for the very young and ceased when young men came to an age when a trip to the ice was an actual possibility. Secondly, the responsibility of a young man to go to the seal fishery as a means of beginning to take his share of the family's financial burden was articulated only by uncles or grandfathers and was not mentioned at all by the immediate family. These examples of direct instruction are in keeping with the system of learning described above.

Wareham also mentions the keen nature of the competition in all facets of community life, but we have seen already that, at the ice, the traditional competition was toned down to a minimum. It is perhaps the unique level of cooperation at the seal fishery, as manifested in the suspension of competition, which also caused a lapse in the traditional methods of learning. The cooperation, in part, results from the fact that each man's earnings are dependent on the efficiency of all of the other crew members, and the following narrative of one man's first day on the ice makes

[52]Wareham, pp. 17-18.

the point quite clearly:

> The man that was supposed to go on the ice with me, my buddy we'll say, he happened to be an old man. 'Twas his last spring to the ice, although he was out lots of springs before that one. He had a feeling about that being his last spring, and so it was. But the day that we was supposed to go out and start, this Thursday morning that I was telling you about, on the thirteenth, he was sick. Now if he was to go on the ice with me, he'd have showed me what to do, how to sculp the first seal, see. Every young feller would have somebody to go out with him, see. So anyway, me buddy was sick, and he couldn't go. I had to go alone although there was hundreds of men, not hundreds but all the crew you see. So anyway we got out, there was seals all around, and all the people that was used to killin' seals, they started right in. Now probably there were fifteen or twenty of us that didn't, ah, have any experience, so what we had to do, all we could do - any fellow that had a buddy with him, well he'd talk to him, show him, see. But I didn't, so over I goes, an' those two fellers were there, workin' on the seal, an' I stood up lookin' at 'em. So buddy turns around and he says to me, "What are you lookin' at me for," he says, "why don't you get to work? 'Tis no time now to hang around." 'Twas my first spring out, I said, an' I never sculped a seal in my life. An' he says, "Haven't'you got nobody to show you?" I says, "No." An' he said, "You can't stay here lookin' at me. I'm not goin' to show you how to sculp seals." I says, "I don't want you to show me. I don't want you to talk to me. You go ahead and do your work," I said, "all I wants to do is look at you," I said, "when

> you sculps the first seal. I'll sculp one then." So that's what I did, an' myself an' him never could agree throughout the whole trip. He didn't like me, and I didn't like him. When we'd meet, we'd be into it.[53]

The other man in this story was apparently willing to show one green hand how to sculp, but he was vehement in his refusal to instruct a second. Given the traditional system, it is actually more surprising that he would agree to teach one man than that he would not teach a second.

The suspension of the tradition, however grudging, is probably the result of a combination of factors. First, as mentioned, the old hands had a vested interest in the ability of the new hands. Secondly, the new men did not pose a threat to the old hands. With the possible exception of the high-liners in the peak years of the industry, every ship that went to the ice had a small proportion of green hands in its crew. Since experienced men would certainly be given berths before inexperienced men, this indicates that the occupation was not overcrowded and that, by training a new man, the old hand was not jeopardizing his chances for a berth the following year.

It is also of interest to note in this account that the man was willing, though still grudgingly, to allow Mr. Walsh to learn in the traditional way, once it had

[53]Informant 1, tape 1, side 2/030*.

been stated that this was to be the full extent of the instruction. It seems, further, that this was still not completely willing instruction, judging from the relationship which existed between the two men for the remainder of the trip.

The intensity of the feelings described in this incident, compared with the lightheartedness of the account of Father Neptune's visit, leads one to believe that the first day on the ice and the killing of the first seal form the true initiation rite. Neptune's visit emphasizes the separation which can only be ended when the green hand establishes his ability to do the work required of him.

The period of incorporation, the postliminal period of the passage to membership, involves both recognition by the rest of the crew and introduction to the esoteric features of the ship-based hunt. An example of a man who enters the postliminal period is the reformed "slinger" who becomes recognized as "a prime, A-One man."[54] An example of the right to use the esoteric material of membership might be seen when a man begins to exert pressure on younger relatives, thus using his membership in an overt fashion.

[54]England, p. 184. See also pp. 71-72 of this study.

RETURN FROM THE ICE - THE PERIOD OF INCORPORATION

It would be very difficult to isolate the specific action which accompanies the start of the period of incorporation, and it is possible that no single moment has this exact function. Examined in the light of three specific frameworks, however, arguments may be presented for three possible rites of incorporation. Within a community, each sealer is a member of other groups, and his participation in the seal fishery functions on his status in each of these. He is at the same time a member of a family, a member of the adolescent group involved in courtship and a member of a peer group which consists of the young, aspiring men.

The arrival of the sealing ships in St. John's, with the attendant celebrations, is rejected in this context, because few of the sealers actually lived in St. John's, and the welcome given by that city is more a recognition of the status of all sealers, rather than a realization of the change in the status of any individuals within the occupation. It is in a man's home community that the change is apparent and important.

The change in the young man's status within the family should be clear through the discussions above. Although he had worked summers in the past and had given his pay checks to his parents, Mr. Walsh was still under pressure

to do more in the way of attaining manhood status. When he arrived home from the ice, he bought himself a new suit and was still able to present his family with sixty-two dollars.[55] This was not only more money than he had made in his time in the Bell Island mines, but this moment also represents the first time when he can face his relatives and show them that he also has met the requirement of hardiness, which they had demanded before calling him a man.

He mentioned the new suit because it was an overt symbol of his change of status in a second group. He said that all of the sealers, particularly those who were to the ice for the first time, were anxious to return home in time to attend the Easter Monday dance. Because of the pride they had in having been to the ice, they were eager to show off their new clothes, and, as Story suggests, the girls were fond of them because they were free with their money.[56] Furthermore, he said that the young men, just back from the ice, would take the opportunity provided by the dance to taunt the other young men who had not been sealing. The way he said this suggests that the fight which resulted from the taunts may well have been the primary reason why the young men were anxious to be home for the dance.[57]

[55]Informant 1, tape 1, side 2/214*.

[56]Story, p. 23.

[57]Informant 1, from field notes, October 15, 1973.

The Easter Monday dance, or whatever occasion the new members of the sealing group found to confront the young men who had not achieved membership, would represent the rite of passage or change of status within the group concerned with courtship. The pride of the new sealers, coupled with the defensiveness of those who had not gone, would give the former group a great advantage in the current courtship ritual.

The above shows the change of status of the young sealer in the eyes of both the girls in his community and the other young men. Another example of change within the latter group occurred the night that Cyril Brown returned to the dart league, after having been to the ice. He was immediately given two nick-names: "Thumper" and "Flipper". When he was throwing for a particular number, somebody would shout something such as, "Just think of it as a whitecoat, Flipper!" It was clear that he received considerable recognition for having gone to the ice. In Cyril's case, the status change was not as much within his peer group, because of the reputation which he already had,[58] but there was a change, or at least a new aspect to, his relationship with his father. Until the day that Cyril returned from the ice, I had never seen his father, who is blind but runs his own manufacturing business, at the bar.

[58]See pp. 17-18.

On this day, however, Mr. Brown was at the Veteran's Inn with Cyril, Gordon and Gerald. The atmosphere was jovial, and the topic of conversation was sealing. They spoke of Cyril's reaction to the trip and Gerald's evaluation of Cyril's work. What was most interesting, in what appeared to be a ritual expression of family unity, was that Cyril made a point of reminding me of Gordon's efforts to find a berth, although unsuccessful. Clearly, the function served by sealing for the entire family was that they found a source for feelings of solidarity as a family unit.

CONCLUSIONS

The discussion in this chapter has been primarily on an individual basis, centring on the functions of sealing in the lives of individuals. The functions with respect to the communities at large are more difficult to ascertain, because statistics on participation in the seal fishery are non-existent, as far as percentages of men involved from a particular town are concerned. One sealer suggests that twenty men from his town of about six hundred went to the ice regularly.[59] When I asked Mr. Halliday how many young men from Calm Harbour went, he answered only that berths were

[59]MUNFLA, 73-78/C1489/700*.

hard to find and that young men would go if they could.

It is vital to remember that all of the information in this chapter comes from men who did participate in the seal fishery, and the importance to sealers of maintaining the status of the occupation has been discussed above. Therefore, the feeling of exclusiveness which is built around sealing as a criterion for manhood, is probably overstated. On the other hand, while perhaps not the criterion for manhood, participation in the ship-based hunt is unquestionably a criterion for manhood.

The three specific purposes of this chapter - discussion of manhood in general, of the interest in the seal fishery and of the functions of participation - have been aimed at a particular aspect of the total picture of sealing: the esoteric nature of sealing as an occupation. To sealers, manhood can only be achieved through sealing; they foster interest in sealing among young boys to ensure that sealing will remain a criterion for manhood; and, they function overtly as a group in their relationships with the rest of the culture. Their argument for the importance of their occupation is so effective that all sealers are given respect along the north-east coast of Newfoundland. Sealing holds a major place in the popular culture of the island, and men who have not gone to the ice feel that they have to explain why they have not gone

The next chapter discusses the hazards of the occupation, and, through this discussion, it reveals more information about the esoteric nature of the fishery. The hazards are a major factor in the popular culture picture of the seal hunt, and the confidence with which the men themselves face these hazards points out the esoteric/exoteric duality very clearly.

CHAPTER SIX - "YE GOT TO BE VERY CAREFUL AT THE SEAL FISHERY": HAZARDS OF THE OCCUPATION

In Newfoundland, one of the criteria for manhood is the ability to "take it", and what makes the seal fishery a good occupation in which to achieve manhood status is the wide spectrum of hazards to which the sealers are subjected. It is in this area, the hazards of the occupation, that the differentiation between ship-based and land-based sealing is the least discernible.

If we include the small boats in which the land-based sealers went out to the ice - seeing the loss of one of these as equivalent to the loss of a steamer - then all of the hazards described in this chapter apply equally to the two varieties of sealers. In effect, when the ships are in the ice floes, there is almost no difference in the methods of the hunt, and the ship becomes more like an island than a vessel. As England says, "This wasn't seafaring so much as hunting; a land hunt merely transferred to the ice."[1] It is equally dangerous, for example, to landsmen and steamer hands when the ice goes abroad or breaks up, leaving them with only small pans of ice on which to seek the safety of their respective bases.

England's comment perhaps reveals the reason for

[1]England, p. 136.

the de-emphasis of Father Neptune's visit, as discussed above.[2] As a seafaring tradition, the visit would only have meaning while the ship behaved like a ship, rather than as an island. Furthermore, as seafaring poeple, Newfoundlanders would naturally apply maritime traditions to the shipboard periods of the hunt, but these traditions would become illegitimate when the occupation revealed itself to be a hunt.

Although the intention here is not to present a taperecorded history of the major sealing disasters, verbal accounts of these incidents cannot be ignored, because disasters and narrow escapes form a large percentage of the personal experience narratives which are the source materials for this study. The subject of disasters almost invariably creeps into any interview about the occupation. As England says during the course of one of his first general discussions with the sealers aboard the Terra Nova, "Talk presently turned on perils and disasters."[3]

There can be no question that the men were aware of the disasters, and, in fact, they recorded the history of their occupation by reference to the years which brought either success, failure or disaster in the hunt. They also distinguish the years of their own participation in the

[2]See pp. 161-65.

[3]England, p. 54.

fishery in terms of the ships they were aboard, for a particular year. For example, when Mr. Halliday was preparing to tell me about the loss of three men in the Narrows of St. John's Harbour by Abram Kean,[4] he began:

> He lost three men in the Narrows, you know. He never turned back or anything, he just went on.
>
> [What year was that?]
>
> It was after the Newfoundland . . . I was in the Ranger.[5]

An eighty-eight year old man from Winterton, Trinity Bay, begins his reminiscences of the day of the Greenland disaster in the following way:

> I wasn't on the Greenland, I was in the Terra Nova with Jackman.[6]

The description of hazards is naturally accompanied by two elements: preventatives and remedies. With any danger, one normally hears of examples in which the danger was avoided as well as explanations of ways in which such dangers should have been prevented in cases where they were not. Should the preventatives fail, one may still hear of the measures to be taken to prevent hazard from becoming disaster.

In the discussion of the stereotypes of the captains

[4]See pp. 76-77.

[5]Informant 3, tape 1/116*.

[6]MUNFLA, 64-8/C23/373*.

and of the master watches,[7] one could see that the degree of prevention depended on the individual captain and, to a lesser degree, on the master watches. In this chapter, however, this element of the skipper stereotype is brought into question through a discussion of the attitudes of the men toward taking risks on the ice. The men were not forced on to the ice against their will and into dangers against which they had no protection. The stereotype of the captain remains intact, but instead of being seen as a maniac, hurling his men into the path of danger for the sake of killing seals, he becomes the embodiment of the energy which pervaded the entire crew. The skippers and crews alike were aware of the dangers, but they also knew how to prevent hazardous situations from occurring and how to manage these situations if they were not properly prevented.

The hazards discussed in this chapter may be divided into two general categories: individual and collective dangers. There are, of course, any number of hazards which are common to the occupations which employ heavy equipment, such as winches on the sealing vessels, and there are many more as well. The six hazards which are isolated and discussed in this chapter are, for the most part, esoteric to the seal hunt; furthermore, they are those dangers which appear most often in the sealers' narratives

[7]See chapter three.

about the occupation.

The perils which are dangerous primarily to individuals include ice blindness, seal finger and encounters with the "old dog hood". Ice blindness is common to all occupations which are pursued in arctic conditions, but some men are more susceptible than others. Two men may work side by side all day, and only one of them might be troubled with inflammation of the eyes. It may also affect some individuals over a long period of time. Gerald Brown, for example, squints and blinks continually now, and he attributes this to his seven springs at the ice.

Seal finger, sealer's finger and seal's hand are separate names for the same infection. It is certainly unique to the seal fishery, because it results from contact between an open cut and seal fat. This ailment is often mentioned as a reason why no sealer would dare sculp a seal, even a baby, while it is still alive. Sculping involves cutting the flipper tendons, and a live seal's flippers would strike inwards, towards the sealer, if the tendons were touched while it was still alive. The seal's claws are sharp and would inflict a cut, which would necessarily be spread with seal fat, causing a serious infection - seal finger.

Encounters with the "old dog hood" are also individually dangerous. The ship-based sealers are primarily interested in the whitecoats, but if the patch of the young

seals cannot be found by the ship, the sealers are forced to hunt the less valuable, older seals. The stories of encounters with these older seals fill the spectrum from humour to fear. In some instances, the old hood is seen as a friendly adversary, while in others he is a terrible foe.

A few aspects of two of the most important collective dangers have been isolated, and these dangers are, first, the destruction of the ship and, second, the stranding of men on the ice and away from either the ship or the land. Sealing ships were subject to all of the possible dangers which beset ordinary ships at sea, and the problem is compounded by the fact that their work takes them into the ice floes. The problem of the ice is not as great now because of the steel-hulled icebreakers which participate in the hunt, but formerly, when Labrador schooners and wooden-hulled steamers were used, the ice itself took a high toll in ships. To name only a few, ships were lost to storms when overloaded, ice which crushed them or forced them ashore, holes punched by broken shafts, boiler explosions and explosions from other causes.[8]

Potentially the most dangerous situation which involved sealers was when a man or a group of men were caught on the ice away from either their ship or from the shore. This has been a fairly frequent occurrence in the

[8]See Greene, pp. 61-64; also Kean, pp. 137-44.

history of the seal fishery. On most occasions, the men survived their stay on the ice and returned safely; on some occasions, the men died of exposure.

The only one of all the dangers for which the lore of the sealers did not provide both a preventative and a remedy was the sinking of the ship in open water. In all other cases, the men felt confident in their ability to deal with the situation and to survive. This is an important point in the discussion of the industry's manhood element, because the existence of the hazards is common knowledge, while the remedies are esoteric. These dangers, of which the sealers are well aware and for which they know solutions, appear to the uninitiated observer to be necessarily fatal, and this enhances the hardiness aspect of the hunt.

The other danger which will be discussed in this chapter is that of falling through the ice. This is a good example of the way in which hazards are misinterpreted by observers of the fishery, because it does not have the dire consequences which one might automatically attribute to it. Even in the most extreme circumstances, such as the terrible storm on the day of the Greenland disaster, men fell through the ice and survived.[9]

In the stories of hazards, it is extremely difficult

[9]See pp. 211-13.

to distinguish among bravado, understatement, true confidence and self convincing. The fact that sealers tell of the dangers with no fear in their voices may be attributable to any, or a combination, of these. Given differing levels of ability and experience in the sealers, narratives which speak with selfconfidence about the dangers probably exhibit all of these characteristics. Without knowing something about the narrator, it is impossible to classify a particular statement as any one of the above. A statement such as, "It was nothing we could not handle," for example, may be perfectly true from the master watch who had, in fact, led his men through the danger. To inexperienced hands, the situation was probably terrifying, so this comment from one of them would represent either bravado or an attempt to convince himself that there was no peril. An experienced hand might be concerned, though not terrified, and would perhaps understate the danger involved.

Each of these hypothetical bases for making the one comment represents an established narrative form which may be found in any lying contest, and it is the variety of underlying emotion which sets the attitude of the exoteric audience. Members of the audience will be no more prepared to accept the truth from the master watch than they will be to swallow the bravado of the neophyte. They are really only able to visualize their own reactions to the situations and

to realize the extent of their own terror if caught in such circumstances. This fact about narrative in an esoteric/exoteric situation works for the sealers. There is no way in which the audience will allow them to express their true feelings about the dangers, nor will the audience believe true accounts if the sealers give them.

Two factors point to the true reactions of the sealers toward the hazards of their occupation: first, they could not have been terrified by the conditions because men went to the ice year after year, after having experienced all possible conditions. Secondly, as mentioned above, there is what I consider to be a surprising lack of supernatural material involved in the seal fishery's folklore, and this suggests that the men did not feel out of control.[10]

Each of the hazards mentioned above will now be described in detail, with its accompanying preventions, cures, remedies or controls.

HAZARDS TO INDIVIDUALS - ICE BLINDNESS

Anybody who has seen ice or snow realizes the degree of brilliance with which the sun reflects from their surfaces. This brilliance naturally presented a danger to sealers, who spent entire days on the ice with no shade from the direct rays of the sun or from the reflected rays. As a

[10]See pp. 13-14.

ninety-two year old former sealer told a student collector, some men were more susceptible to ice blindness than others:

> A man wit poppy eyes[11] 'd get blind quicker 'n I would, wit' eyes like I got, mine are in me head [sunken], see.[12]

To these men, the danger of ice blindness would be particularly pressing, for two reasons, because the blindness is a result of not only the glare but also of the wind blowing small particles of ice into the eyes. Many of the worst cases, such as the one described below, were the result of storm conditions, when the sun would not be a contributing factor.

The symptoms of ice blindness, reported by the same former sealer, are as follows:

> Your two eyes - you can't see! There's an inflammation, the ice gets in the eyes. I never was blind meself. I seen men lotsa times, had to help em get aboard - they wouldn't see no livin thing![13]

The sealers used two preventatives against ice blindness. The first of these is goggles, which one man describes as "a machine over der eyes, wit glass in it, elastic comin over de head."[14] The other form of prevention

[11]The term, "poppy eyes", does not appear in the DNE files, but it apparently refers to eyes which protrude from the head.

[12]MUNFLA, 72-77/p. 2.

[13]MUNFLA, 72-77/p. 2.

[14]MUNFLA, 72-77/p. 2.

was shown to me in some photographs, taken at the ice five years ago, and is designed strictly to combat the glare. It consists of smearing seal's blood on one's cheeks, just under the eyes, and it helps to absorb some of the glare.[15]

What is interesting about these two means of avoiding ice blindness is that the former was reported by a ninety-two year old man who made his first trip to the ice in 1901, and the second was reported by Bill Lundrigan who was at the ice in 1969. This is contrary to what one might expect, reasonably, because it would seem logical for the technologically advanced protection to be reported from the later date, and this minor anomaly leads to an interesting conclusion.

One of the reasons that the seal fishery was accepted as an occupation in which one might earn manhood status is the criterion of being a good provider. Before industrialization, in any form, came to Newfoundland, the seal hunt was the only source of cash income for fishermen and the only source of any income in the spring of the year. This aspect of the work year in Newfoundland has lessened, although it has not completely disappeared.

The time limits of the onshore cod fishery are still the same as they have always been, and many men still consider cod fishing to be their major occupation. Working

[15]From field notes, February, 1974.

regularly at this fishery qualifies a man to receive unemployment insurance benefits for the rest of the year, so he may continue to be a provider for his family on the basis of the single occupation.

Furthermore, there are now many occupations in Newfoundland which have no seasonal basis at all. As an example, Bill Lundrigan was employed full time in Spinning Bay in the construction of the new hospital at the time he showed me the photographs in which seal's blood was shown as a prevention against ice blindness. Essentially, then, the seal fishery can no longer claim to be important in the achieving of manhood status on the basis of economics.

What this means to young men who hope to earn manhood status through the seal fishery is that the other criterion, hardiness or the ability to "take it", must be emphasized. When one considers the number of materials, such as oil, molasses or soot, which could be used instead of seal's blood, the use of the latter becomes purposeful. When Bill showed me the snapshots, he made a point of calling me attention to the blood and the way it was used, and this indicates that he considered this the important feature of the pictures. It is both hardy and esoteric to use the blood of a recently killed animal for such a purpose, and it thus emphasizes both the manliness of the occupation and the singular ability of the seal hunt to

provide a setting in which manhood can be demonstrated.[16]

Should these preventative measures not prove successful, there are cures mentioned in the lore. The three cures mentioned prescribe different media, but they require the same method, and this method is on the level of folk medicine which Violetta Halpert calls "folk-pharmacopoeia", in which the cure lies in the substance and its proper application rather than in any power of the person who administers the treatment.[17]

The suggested cures involved the application of a poultice of available natural substances, either tea leaves or potato peels[18] or orange halves, as described in the following:

> Bright, beautiful spots of color floated before his eyes, and he had to be led to the saloon, where someone ordered

[16]This is perhaps analogous to the situation which developed on my highschool football team. When the trainer provided a specially manufactured grease, which was designed to prevent glare, all of the pass receivers continued to use polish from their shoes, because it was esoteric to the game.

[17]Violetta Halpert, "Folk Cures from Indiana," Hoosier Folklore 9 (1950), p. 12. It is interesting to note that her reference to eye trouble (p. 6) gives a cure which is physio-magical and not in the realm of folk-pharmacopoeia. Further examples of folk cures may be found in Vance Randolph, Ozark Magic and Folklore (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1964), chapters six and seven. Again, eye disorders appear in chapter seven, "The Power Doctors", rather than in chapter six, "Mountain Medicine".

[18]MUNFLA, 72-127/p. 26.

> him to lie on his back and placed two orange halves, turned inside out, over his eyes. It stung fiercely and tears streamed down his face, but the homely remedy worked, and his vision returned quickly.[19]

The "someone" who administered the orange halves is only significant here because he knew the procedure. There is no hint that any of the curative power came from him rather than from the oranges themselves. In the cures for seal finger which follow, the opposite is true.

HAZARDS TO INDIVIDUALS - SEAL FINGER

This infection - alternately called seal finger, sealer's finger and seal's hand - is described in the following memorat, along with one instance in which it was cured. It is important to notice the contrasts in the roles of the administrators of this cure and the one described above.

> Actually, I never heard anything about stopping bleeding or putting away warts or anything, but I did know, I did hear of a 'skimo [Eskimo] woman. When the men would go out to the seal fishery in the spring of the year, if they cut their finger, or anything, and the oil of the seal got into it, calls what they call a seal finger. And if it got infected and got real bad, they would go ashore to some place down on the Labrador, wherever they were closest to. I heard one tale about this 'skimo woman, This guy went ashore with a seal finger and went to this 'skimo woman, and she went down

[19]Brown and Horwood, p. 229.

to the beach and picked up a handful of sea lice [marine parasites], put it in a cloth and wrapped it around his finger. The idea was the sea lice was supposed to eat the poison out of the wound, you know. That's supposed to be true.

[Was it effective?]

Far as I know, it was. I was told it was anyway.[20]

The Eskimo woman is the important element in this narrative. Although there is no mention of any charm which she may have used to accompany the application of the sea lice, there is a power implied, not specifically in the woman herself, but in the procedure she uses. She was sought out because she knew the cure, and, although her power is not mentioned, it is interesting that this story came to the narrator's mind at the mention of blood-stoppers and wart charmers. This indicates that he saw her as having a similar kind of power.

Another cure for seal finger is much the same, except that the curative substance is red clay. Again, a specific person is located to administer the cure:

Ye got to be very careful at the seal fishery. You're liable to get a seal's hand. I had it when I come home. I fell on the ice - and the mark is gone. But it wasn't the doctor who fixed that when I arrived here in St. John's. That's the first place they took me, Mrs. "Avery" over on the Southside, she bandaged me. She used

[20]MUNFLA, 67-34/C377/519*.

> to get her own herbs from the Southside Hills. There was no doctor in St. John's who would equal her. We only had a few of them. So she cured my hand. Whatever she had she wouldn't sell the secret, but her daughter got it after she died. She's dead too now. Ye know, there's people like that. The druggist was only put there in case you were bleedin' or anything.[21]

Both of these cures approach Mrs. Halpert's second level of folk healing - the physio-magical - because the cure lies as much in the procedure as in the natural healing agent, be it sea lice or red clay.[22] There is an element of sympathetic magic in all of the cures mentioned above, in that the cool poultices are intended to produce relief from the burning of both the swollen eyes and the infections. This kind of magic is also inherent in the idea that marine parasites would remove the marine substance, seal fat, from a wound.

Clearly, there is only one way of avoiding seal finger: be sure that no open wounds come in contact with seal fat. In an occupation like the seal fishery, some cuts are inevitable, so there is no guaranteed prevention against seal finger. This is perhaps the reason why the cures for ice blindness - a danger for which there are preventatives -

[21] MUNFLA, 72-127/pp. 26-27.

[22] V. Halpert, p. 12.

are examples of folk-pharmacopoeia; while the cures for seal finger - against which there is little or no protection - rely more on the power of other people, people who were not present at the ice. A third example of a cure for seal finger mentions red clay once, gives no description of the way it was used but says that when his uncle had seal finger, "He used to go to an old lady."[23] In this case, the cure seems to lie almost exclusively in the power of the old woman. Where control by the sealers is not complete, they begin to resort to what might loosely be termed magic, assuming the faith in the healer's power is as great as this last example indicates.

Before going on to the non-medical hazards of the seal fishery, there is one more general point to be made about the treatments. They are all "cures" rather than "medicines", using Mrs. Halpert's distinction, because they are all applied externally; none are taken internally.[24] The only reference to medicines in my research is to Radways Ready Relief, a patent medicine.[25] Belying the last word of its name, this tonic appears to have been used as a supplement to the foods carried in the lunch bags. Although based on very scanty evidence, this preference of Newfoundlanders

[23] MUNFLA, 67-35/C424/693*.

[24] V. Halpert, p. 2.

[25] MUNFLA, 73-78/C1488/271*.

for external medicines for treatments and their reserving of internal medicines for prevention may prove to be an interesting course of study.

HAZARDS TO INDIVIDUALS - THE OLD DOG HOOD

In the same way that duff might be considered a stereotype of the occupation,[26] the "old dog hood" is a vibrant element of the sealers' traditions. The whitecoats are the bread and butter of the occupation and are completely helpless; adult harp seals make some feeble attempts at resistance; but, the adult, male hood was actually feared by the sealers, because its fierce defense was the only resistence shown by any seals.

It is the old dog hood, for example, which appears in two humorous recitations about sealers. Samuel Manuel, a veteran of thirty springs on the ice as the story reports, looked so much like an old hood that he was shot by mistake by the man who was ordered to shoot two seals. Samuel had disobeyed orders and gone on the ice to fight the seals by hand.[27] Maurice Crotty, on the other hand, was a greenhorn, and it was his inexperience which led to the following scene:

> Coming home, 'bout a mile from the vessel,
> We found Maurice stripped off for a bout,

[26]See pp. 99-101.

[27]Omar Blondahl, "The Great Seal Hunt of Newfoundland (Songs of the Sealers), Banff, RBS 1173, 12" phonodisc, 1959.

> And a big old dog hood, with his flippers,
> Was stretching him out with each clout.
> "I challenged him fair," said poor Maurice,
> "For a fight he before me did stand.
> But he took a mean, dirty advantage,
> For he hit me...with rocks in his hand!"[28]

As well as laughing at Samuel Manuel and Maurice Crotty, these recitations show the place of the dog hood in the tradition as the epitome of toughness in seals, and this reputation is well earned. The hood, for which the seals are named, stretches over the tender part of the snout and,

> If you happen to hit him on the hood see, that's it. Just as soon as you taps 'un, that hood swells all over his head see. . . . And it's just like hittin' a rubber ball, you don't hurt she, only worries 'n just all. They stands a lot of punishment.[29]

Furthermore, the hoods are not only equipped to defend themselves, but they also have the courage to attack:

> . . . if you struck a family of hoods, you wants to always capture the old dog first. Because he's game fer anything. Yeah. He's game for anything, brother, he'll, he'll face ee . . .[30]

As if this were not enough to make the old dogs dangerous foes, it appears that they are mobile as well:

> A dog hood on the ice you know, when he - when he chases ya, you wants to go on the rounds see, 'cause it takes

[28]Mowat and Blackwood, p. 71.

[29]MUNFLA, 65-18/C211/p. 36.

[30]MUNFLA, 65-17/C168/p. 9.

'n a long time to turn around. But comin' straight you will never get clear of 'n.[31]

To complete the picture of the old dog hood as a formidable enemy for the sealers, he apparently has a mind as well:

> We hauled 'n out, a old bitch hood. We went back to the gaze again, and when we looked in, sir, here was the old dog hood just goin' leavin' the ice with the old bitch, dragged her out and carried her away. Took her off o' the ice. Come up and took her off the ice, see, and dragged her down.[32]

The old dog hood can defend himself, has the ability and the will to attack, has speed and a mind with which to co-ordinate his defense. In the light of all this, it is no wonder that the sealers feared encounters with these seals and like to tell of the occasions when they did defeat an old hood. The following is typical of dozens of examples encountered in my research:

> And we went down to where the old hood was to, we took the twenty-two and we fired four more, five more, there was three of us out there, four or five more bullets at him, thought he was dead anyhow. So I went down and took me knife was good and sharp for to cut him open for to skin him, you know. And he hove his hinder [flippers] he struck me in the back, there I go, knife in me hand too. I dropped me knife ... right in

[31] MUNFLA, 64-13/C89/p. 39.

[32] MUNFLA, 64-13/C90/p. 1.

the cold water too.

[Twelve, fifteen feet you were thrown?]

Yes sir, oh God, you'd never believe it. So anyway I never went to him no more then, no I went and got the thirty, we had a thirty-thirty rifle too, went up and put two more bullets into him. So we fixed him that time. ...Oh, old dog hood is a hard ticket, sir. Don't play around.[33]

SUMMATION OF INDIVIDUAL DANGERS

The hazards to individuals have never been the cause of a disaster at the ice. Multiple cases of ice blindness have been a factor in the disasters, but the blindness is one of many results, not a cause. However, the stories and photographs of these dangers and their preventions serve as a means by which the sealers can draw the attention of their audience to the perils of the hunt.

When Bill Lundrigan showed me the photographs in which seal's blood was used as a preventative against ice blindness, for example, it functioned to remind me that the seal fishery <u>is</u> a dangerous occupation, in spite of the understatement of danger which I had noticed when Bill spoke to his sealing friends in the bar in Spinning Bay.

The effects of the dangers, such as the squint which Gerald Brown attributes to his sealing, might almost be seen as badges of membership in the seal fishery. They are at least

[33]MUNFLA, 67-35/C391/pp. 29-30.

as eloquent a statement of membership as the personal experience narratives about the hunt. The exoteric view of sealing does not distinguish among the dangers, and any token of one of the hazards will certainly excite thoughts of the underlying risk involved in participation in the occupation. The basis of the underlying risk is the collective dangers, which are the subject of the next section.

COLLECTIVE DANGERS

The most popular of the exoteric traditions about the seal fishery are based on the disasters, because it is these incidents which receive coverage in the press and which pass into popular tradition in books and other media. If one sealer's squint may be considered a badge of participation, a man who has survived one of the major disasters will certainly gain even more recognition from non-sealers, and this is the case. At this year's fall convocation at the Memorial University of Newfoundland, Cecil Mouland received an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree. Mr. Mouland is one of four living survivors of the Newfoundland disaster of 1914 and a primary source of material for Death on the Ice. He is fast becoming a culture hero because of the book and numerous television appearances, but he went to the ice no more than three years. This is not to say that Mr. Mouland does not deserve his recent acclaim, but it emphasizes the

fascination which the disasters hold for non-sealers.

The very nature of the seal hunt placed the men in constant proximity to danger, but in most cases good judgement or luck prevented disaster. The purpose of this section is to discuss situations in which the decisions made by officers or men caused extreme and immediate peril, over and above the inherent danger of the hunt. These situations show the intensity of the men's desire to kill seals and their adherence to the manhood criterion of pushing to the limit of safety.

DANGERS TO THE SHIPS

Abram Kean states that of the eighty-steamers which by 1935 had been involved in the seal fishery, forty-four had been lost by natural causes sealing.[34] Although as a sealing captain, Kean may have a rather broad definition of natural causes, the fact remains that many ships were lost due to circumstances which were not related to conscious decisions by any of the men involved. For example, a ship could be "nipped" - actually sliced in half at the waterline by ice which was forced over itself in layers - as was the Tamarak from Twillingate.[35]

It was also possible that the ship could be "rifted" -

[34]Kean, p. 137.

[35]MUNFLA, 64-13/C81/p. 20.

caught in the ice and broken against the shore[36] - as was the schooner, Daisy Mae, also from Twillingate. If the placing of the blame in such a circumstance on luck may be seen as an admission that there was nothing the men could do to prevent the wreck, then this seventy-four year old sealer from Twillingate would agree with Kean that the loss of the Daisy Mae was due to natural causes:

> Yes, they said when we went out that we was an unlucky number, you know, thirteen, was an unlucky crew, and there's no mistake, the man that said 'twas an unlucky crew he wasn't much out.[37]

Nor was it the lot of only the small schooners to be at the mercy of the ice. The Greenland was wrecked in 1907 - nine years after being involved in the disaster of 1898 - by normal conditions of the hunt. When backing down to try to force her way through heavy ice, she broke her propeller, and the blades put a hole through the hull. The only recourse for the crew was to abandon ship and find room on other vessels, because as soon as the ice broke up, the Greenland went to the bottom.[38]

These three examples serve to show that ships were lost even when there was no conscious decision to tempt the fates. Mowat suggests that the wooden walls tempted fate by

[36]The DNE definition for "rifted" is the same as that given above for "nipped". Either the words are used interchangeably or this is an example of local usage.

[37]MUNFLA, 65-17/C186/p. 8.

[38]MUNFLA, 65-35/C402/p. 17.

their very use in the hunt,[39] but, be that as it may, the primary concern here is with instances in which a conscious decision was made to take a risk beyond the unavoidable chance taken in simply going to the ice.

The first example of this involves small boats and occurred twelve years ago:

> The forecast was given out, a storm fifty miles an hour, snow and then, that never took any effect on anyone. Never mind that no more than if the forecast was given out, well it was going to be a good day tomorrow and so much heat and this and that. But they wasn't, they was givin' out this tremendous storm that was supposed to strike. And they even told what time in the day it was going, it was going to increase, even told what time the snow was supposed to strike. But yet, everybody went on and never no more concerned than that.[40]

The storm struck as predicted, and one boat was lost with three men; and not a single seal was taken by any of the boats which went out that day.

Because the land-based sealers were not forced to go out on days like the one described above and yet did, they were personally willing to face dangers, for the sake of catching seals. The occasions on which they used boats to hunt the seals may actually be seen as more hazardous than the regularly scheduled ship-based hunt, because they were

[39] Mowat and Blackwood, p. 100.

[40] MUNFLA, 67-35/C390/pp. 1-2.

less prepared. They had no way of knowing in advance when seals might come within reach of their operations, and any preparations may have proven to be wasted. A man recorded in Fogo said that often, when seals appeared,

> . . . a scatter man 'ould go out into his schooner, take fifteen or twenty men aboard in a hurry and go out, probably spend a night or a couple of nights out among the ice, shootin' seals. This time ... they struck a storm of wind ... and turned her over on her beam ends, when the . . . squall struck her, it turned her over on her beam ends, and the ballast shifted see, she couldn't come back [upright], you know, they have ballast throwed in like, you see, there was no such thing as had it pounded so as it couldn't move, so she couldn't come back. And there was fifteen men come ashore in Exploits, in a small boat. That's all was saved.
>
> [Oh, the rest of them?]
>
> All drowned![41]

Overloading of the ship is another hazard which the captains often faced knowingly. Two instances of this have already been mentioned: the Commodore piled her decks with seals and towed even more behind her;[42] and the Southern Cross penned extra pelts on her deck.[43] The only difference between these two ships is that the Commodore arrived safely in port, while the Southern Cross was never seen again.

[41] MUNFLA, 64-13/C91/p. 25.

[42] See p. 56.

[43] See pp. 67-68.

Ideally speaking, the rules of seamanship would not permit a captain to sail out into the teeth of a violent gale, sail at all in a ship which was not properly equipped or allow his ship to be loaded to the extent that the men could ". . . with ease wash their hands in the sea."[44] Practically speaking, however, any number of circumstances force captains to ignore these rules. In Newfoundland, where capital for upkeep and provisioning was not always available and profit was so hard to realize, these rules were continually broken. The schooners which collected the fish from the outports and delivered them to either St. John's or another town for processing were often in deplorable condition, and the captains of them gained considerable status from successful completion of a voyage.[45]

In the seal fishery, these rules were even harder to keep. Discretian, out of deference to any of these prohibitions, would have meant the loss, or at least the possible loss, of seals. Discretion might be admirable in certain instances, but in respect of the seaworthiness of the ships, it would have required complete abandoning of the hunt in many of the ships.

That the men would knowingly allow themselves to go to sea in such ships, even though the actual seafaring

[44]Greene, p. 50.

[45]From a conversation with Wareham, March 4, 1974.

only lasted for the passages to and from the ice floe, begins to reveal the attitude of the individual sealer toward the collective dangers of the seal fishery, and this attitude is the subject of the following section.

STRANDING ON THE ICE

The impression is created by the stereotype of the captain that it is his will alone which forces the men into dangerous situations on the ice, but this is a faulty conclusion. Neither is it true that stranding on the ice is unavoidably fatal to the sealers. The characteristic of pushing to the limit is by no means restricted to the captains, although the results are more conspicuous when the captains miscalculate. The evidence of the land-based sealers should be enough to show that the common hands shared this willingness to take risks, but there is more:

> I don't think there's anything in the world that the common man will take a bigger chance [for] than he'll take for a seal.[46]

As this statement by a man from Little Bay Islands, Notre Dame Bay, shows, the men were not tools in the hands of seal-crazed captains; they took the chances willingly and sometimes against the captain's wishes. The following shows clearly how the men acted:

[46] MUNFLA, 67-35/C384/p. 27.

> He said he sighted seals he said, just about dark. So one of the watch, master watches and 'twas eleven or twelve of us besides - he made up his crowd anyway the master watch - go and see - if dere - I suppose about three or four mile I guess we had to travel. Anyway, we left anyway, took, took torch lights with us and flags - if the seals was there we marked it see. So we got out as far as we could go - we went out pretty near to the edge of the water - now when we started to come back we had some job to get back, every man had to separate, there wasn't a piece of ice, pan of ice big enough for two men to step on. We got aboard just the same. I tell you das the night the old man, captain - I tell ya he done some old swearing on the crowd.[47]

There were two basic elements of risk which the sealers faced at the ice: the possibility of physical injury and the chance of making no money for their efforts. The latter will be discussed in the next chapter, but physical danger is the central issue here. In what percentage of the hunt's duration did the men feel that they were not in complete control of the situation? The only hazard for which the sealers' tradition does not provide a solution is the loss of the ship in open water, and this seafaring segment of the fishery has been shown to be peripheral, if not exoteric, to the sealing occupation.

The famous disasters of Newfoundland's seal fishery all fit one of two general categories: they are either the

[47]MUNFLA, 64-13/C49/pp. 10-11.

result of the loss of the ship with all hands;[48] or, they occurred because men were caught out on the ice, away from either the ships or the land.[49]

A first and very important point to be made about the hazard of being caught on the ice is that, in itself, it was not necessarily fatal. The following gives evidence of the ability of Newfoundlanders to live on the ice:

> There was one old man 'long wi' 'em be the name of Joey Munden. [He said, "Aat*!" he said, "away wi' thy foolishness," he said. "Thee bisten* out there yet, bist?" he said. "All thees got to do is look out to thy baccy - not be too hard on thy baccy on the first of it." Now that's all he worried about.] ... Eight of 'em gone fourteen days. And when they landed, when the people see them landin' down here comin' in, they runned down, knowed 'twas they, see walkin' in - told 'em to hurry up and come up to the house to get - something, tea, didn't know, some tea, they knowed they was starvin', and this old Joey Munden said, no, he said, we bain't a bit hungered. We had our breakfast before we left our pan out there this mornin'.[50]

The men had built a shelter using ice, burned seal fat and eaten seal meat for fourteen days.

While on ships at the ice, sealers talked of past

[48] The Southern Cross and the Seal, for example.

[49] The Trinity Bay disaster (1892), the Greenland disaster (1898), the Newfoundland disaster (1914) and the Viking disaster (1931) all saw men die on the ice from exposure.

[50] MUNFLA, 65-17/C189/pp. 25-26. The section in brackets was re-transcribed by Dr. Widdowson in July, 1973. The asterisks indicate his spellings.

disasters, particularly if there were a member of the crew who had been involved in such an incident and who enjoyed telling of his experience.[51] However, when asked if he considered sealing to be a dangerous occupation, a man, whose life-time spanned all the disasters from the Trinity Bay disaster through the Viking, answered, "No, no, no, not unless a storm, you had your men out and a storm come on."[52]

The men did have a chance of survival, even if a storm did come on, because they could act at three distinct stages of the storm. There are traditional signs of a storm's approach; some men were capable of reaching safety in spite of a storm; and, even if caught, the men had means of survival.

Mowat mentions two supernatural omens, seen the day of the Newfoundland disaster: the first tells of a sign which looked like a "big kind of beast with long, sharp horns" and which was recognized as an "ice spirit", a sign of death.[53] He attributes the latter to crewmen of the Beothic who returned to their ship safely from the storm that day. The other example tells that some men returned to the Newfoundland because they saw "a giant of a man it looked to be, covered all over, face and all, in a black, hairy coat. It stood there,

[51]Informant 3, tape 1/441 and 445*.

[52]MUNFLA, 70-4/C809/418*.

[53]Mowat and Blackwood, p. 112.

big as ary bear."[54] This, according to Mowat, was the reason why a group of men returned to the Newfoundland, but we have already seen the reason a survivor of the disaster gives for these men returning: he said they went back because one of the master watches had seen "sun arms" and interpreted them to mean that a storm was coming.[55]

Whichever reason one accepts for the men turning back, the basic story is the same, and it is interesting in terms of Honko's definition of memorate because supernatural tradition was actualized and began directly to influence behavior.[56] A further example of this is the fact that Captain Joe Kean went in search of his men because "it had been reported to him that the whitecoats were taking to the water - a sure sign of stormy weather."[57]

In spite of these and other warnings of storms - such as the barometer dropping - the men sometimes chose to ignore the weather.[58] The beginning of this story has been quoted, in which Jackman warns the men of the barometer dropping, but the following describes the conditions which

[54]Mowat and Blackwood, p. 115.

[55]See pp. 81-82 for this text.

[56]Lauri Honko, "Memorates and the Study of Folk Beliefs," Journal of the Folklore Institute, 1 (1964), p. 11.

[57]Brown and Horwood, p. 109.

[58]See pp. 65-66.

the men had to face, when returning to the ship after ignoring the warning:

> . . . by 'n' by we runned up again' a lake o' water. Now we walked up in so far, an' we couldn't see no place to get across. So we come back to our tracks the while up in the lake. We took that and cut off a pan. I suppose it was - it was as big as this kitchen, I suppose - we chisled off with our gaffs, clear of the other ones. An' we had to go right across the lake. The lake was about as far as this, I suppose, down to the store down there, a couple of gunshots. An' we was goin' across the lake. We was up to the top of our fur rubber, our skin boots, in water. We got across on the other side, an' we went on. An' we found the ship, just at dark.[59]

This story not only shows the difficulties which the men could overcome to return safely to the ship, but it also tells something interesting about the men's attitude to risk and to being out on the ice in storm conditions. In spite of Jackman's warning, these two men willingly put themselves in the position of having to fight their way back to the ship. They had been the first to bring seals to the pan which their watch was building, away from the ship. Although the snow had started, they were easily convinced to try for some more seals, while waiting for the other men in the watch to return to the pan with their first seals for the day. It was this willingness which separated them from the rest of the watch and which made it so difficult for them to return

[59] MUNFLA, 64-8/C23/525*.

to their ship.

Although he is speaking with the wisdom of hindsight, this master watch from Twillingate demonstrates that the men had confidence in their ability to survive on the ice in storm conditions, if they could not return to their ships:

> I'll tell ya now, . . . me son, a lot a dat could be the men they'd have in charge, the master watchers, see, and you know they make mistakes, like those poor fellers was drownded, twas all be mistakes. But master watch now, I been master watch on the ice them men that was perished, if that had been a bunch of Twillingate fellers, or if I'd been master watch with anybody, dat would never happened, dem men wouldn perish see, dats one thing a master watch now deres a, deres a lot different, dat master watch should a kept he's men together never mind about trying to walk to de steamer eleven miles, he ought to forget dat in a starm, and the wind choppin off east [see below], well certainly he had compasses, he should a stayed where he's seals was to see and got a fire in, kept he's men together see.[60]

Even allowing for hindsight and local pride, not to mention personal pride, what this man says makes sense. The men of the Newfoundland had built walls on the ice to shield them from the wind, but, as Brown says, "Since they had built the walls on the edges of their pans, they could not seek shelter on the lee side."[61] When a storm wind in the New-

[60] MUNFLA, 72-89/C1187/pp. 39-40.

[61] Brown and Horwood, p. 152.

foundland region begins by blowing from the south-east and changes direction, counter-clockwise to east, this is a sure sign of two things: first, the storm will increase in intensity until the wind moves around to north-west. Secondly, the wind is sure to blow from the north before the storm is over. This counter-clockwise motion is what the master watch from Twillingate means by "chopping off east". Therefore, to build shelters on the south side of a pan, so that it cannot offer shelter against a north wind, is a mistake that a Newfoundlander should not make.

After the Newfoundland disaster, master watches were required to pass an examination, given by three foreign-going captains, before they could serve in that capacity. The booklet, Sealing Industry: Duties of Officers, appears to be a result of this disaster, as the instructions seem to be aimed at just such circumstances as existed in 1914, on the day of the disaster.[62]

FALLING IN

The problem of men falling either through holes in the ice or from the edges of pans of ice appears throughout the entire narrative tradition connected with the seal fishery. The art of traveling on the ice without falling in

[62]See p. 83, particularly note 64.

was practiced by young boys,[63] and falling in has been anything from a petty annoyance[64] to a serious problem. The seriousness of falling through the ice depends primarily on how close the man is to the ship or to shore. If a man was near his base, he was rarely in danger, but, away from the ship in storm conditions, he could be in great peril:

> We never walked very far before I went down again, second time. This time I went down in water. ...I got up, but I was wet. An' ah, then I had to take off all my clothes an' wring it. We built up a shelter ... we wrung it, an' he took off some of his, an' gave me, he was dry, what he had on between. He had to scrape the snow off me back before he put it on, before I put on his shirt. He had to take off his shirt. Well we went on after we got straightened out, it was very good.[65]

This account of the day of the Greenland disaster, which has appeared in parts throughout this work,[66] is particularly good because it shows the attitude to danger, as it is held by all levels of the crew. Jackman sent the men on the ice, knowing of the coming storm, but he gave them a distinct warning of its approach. The master watches agreed to go on the ice in these circumstances, as did the men. The two men in this narrative accepted the master watch's suggestion that they get more seals, in spite of

[63] See pp. 149-51.

[64] See pp. 127-28.

[65] MUNFLA, 64-8/C23/500*.

[66] See pp. 65-66; 208-09.

the snow's having started. Finally, there is no mention by the narrator that the other members of the watch should have waited for him, before heading back to the ship.

CONCLUSIONS

It appears from this esoteric discussion of the hazards of the seal fishery that any disaster, involving the death of men on the ice, cannot be blamed on any one individual. If the men had used all of the traditional knowledge at their disposal, Abram Kean's name would never come up in discussions of the night that the Newfoundland's crew spent on the ice during a bad storm. This, of course, is not the case. The disaster did occur, but "'twas all be mistakes."[67] Abram Kean bears the blame because he was the most prominent of the men who could have prevented the tragedy. Furthermore, the vehemence with which Kean is blamed may well be a result of the other incident in which he was involved in the deaths of sealers,[68] the description of which is certainly in the sealers' tradition.

This chapter should not, by any means, imply that the seal fishery was anything but a dangerous and difficult occupation, but the exoteric picture of the hazards is certainly darker than that which is held by the sealers

[67] MUNFLA, 72-89/C1187/p. 39.

[68] See pp. 76-77.

themselves. If the people at home wanted to see the hunt as fraught with perils, the sealers were in no hurry to correct them. In fact, any statements from sealers which indicated that the fishery is not dangerous would be treated as bravado. This was my reaction when Cyril Brown returned to the dart league after his first trip to the ice and said, in response to questions about what the trip had been like, "It was a piece of cake!"[69]

In spite of the fact that the seal fishery was and is never a piece of cake, young men wanted to go, and the reasons for this have been discussed at length. What was not discussed is the reasons why men would continue to go to the ice. Mr. Walsh does not seem unmanned by the fact that he went to the ice just once, although he does feel that this should be explained.

Because of the way that the sealers use their membership, they are certainly aware of the status which is gained by participation, but this could not justify a man's signing on year after year. There must be more reason than a simple reaffirmation of manhood status to make men decide to go out again, and this is the subject of the next chapter.

[69]From field notes, April 25, 1974.

CHAPTER SEVEN - "YOU'D GET A BIT OF CREDIT FOR GOING TO THE SEAL FISHERY": THE LURE OF THE OCCUPATION

The preceding chapters have given clues for the solution to the problem of why men would continue to go to the ice year after year. As with the captains, they all shared a fascination in the possibility of filling the ship with seals. The diversions and entertainments perhaps outweighed the unpleasant aspects of the work. Once a level of manhood had been reached, it had to be maintained through the seal fishery, unless there were good reasons why an individual should stop going to the ice. Finally, the hazards reflect on all these other aspects, by magnifying the manliness and the stereotypes of this manliness and by intensifying the need for diversion and entertainment.

What is missing so far is the reasons which the men themselves give for their continued participation in the seal fishery. The purpose of this chapter is to determine, through the comments of the men, why they have kept alive the interest in the occupation through continued participation - participation which, regardless of the conditions and hazards, might reward them with no wages at all after as many as one hundred days' work.[1]

The first section of the chapter will describe some

[1]MUNFLA, 65-17/C181/pp. 9-10. The Diana was seen by the lighthouse keeper on Baccalieu Island on June twenty-second one year. When seen, she was over one hundred days out and was still unable to free herself from the ice.

of the living conditions and the men's attitudes toward these conditions. One man put the situation quite succinctly, ". . . 'twas dogs den, not Christians,"[2] but there is more to be said than just that.

The second section will discuss the possibility of cash reward being the main reason for men going to the ice. Story mentions the seal fishery as the source of "the only cash income a fisherman might earn,"[3] but the seal fishery was at best a gamble for the men. They can and do often come home with no money at all. Although cash was an incentive in a cashless economy, the very nature of that economy made the trip to the ice more important than just cash could make it.

The conclusion of the second section will lead to the third and final section, the primary reason why men would continue to go to the ice. These reasons are, in some part, a result of the complex nature of the cashless society, and for this reason, some of them have lessened over the years. Others, however, are still as important as they were at any period of the hunt's history.

CONDITIONS AT THE ICE

In discussing the living conditions at the ice, one cannot avoid the problem of the vast changes which have

[2]MUNFLA, 64-10/C49/p. 10.

[3]Story, p. 23.

occurred during the period through which the hunt has been prosecuted. The changes brought about by law and by advances in technology have continually improved the style of life aboard the sealing ships. It would be an error, however, to isolate sealing ships from the rest of Newfoundland's socio-economic history. At the same time that the various improvements were being made in the technology of the sealing ships, similar improvements were also being made in all the technological aspects of the island's economy. The same technology that made the seal fishery more certain through the use of ships with ice-breaking capabilities also brought supplies to many of the outports during more of the year.

Since the memory of the men who are the sources for this study stretches back more than eighty years, the technological advances would seem to be of vital importance in discussing the living conditions at the ice, but the description of these conditions is not so complicated a matter. The important thing to realize is that advances in conditions aboard the ships parallel advances in conditions throughout the island, and those on the sealing ships always seem to be slightly behind. In other words, statements about conditions are always relative, and the disparity between the conditions on the average sealing ship as they actually existed and the conditions which the men thought the current state of the culture should have provided for

them is a constant factor, regardless of the year in question.

It is interesting to note that the living conditions aboard sealing ships were never at issue during the sealers' strikes.[4] Furthermore, there does not seem to be a tone of bitterness in most men's descriptions of the conditions, but rather a tone of resignation, which sometimes becomes humorous. Some of the descriptions below, removed from context, make good jokes and anecdotes, and the element of humour may be the result of distance from the pain of the circumstances.

The two major components of living conditions are food and sleeping quarters, and food will be the first topic of discussion.

FOOD AT THE SEAL FISHERY

The sealers' food has already drawn some attention, through stories of the duff and the petty thefts from the captain's mess, and, although all mention has been unfavorable, comments on the quality of the food are so diverse that only three generalizations can be made about it: the captain and other officers had better food than the ordinary sealers; the food was not appreciably better or worse than many men were used to,[5] although there never seemed to be

[4]This was reported by Paul Mercer, a Newfoundlander and fellow graduate student, who is working on material about a local satirical song writer.

[5]See p. 220.

enough meat in the diet; and, the food appears to have been sufficient to keep the men alive and well enough to do their work.

From the descriptions of the fishery, there appear to have been three staples in the sealers' diet. As well as the duff, "switchel tea" and "lop scouse" appear in stories. The former was made in five gallon kettles, which were kept simmering continuously, and was simply a very weak, molasses tea. The latter, a stew, had everything in it "but the kitchen sink", but cabbage was a necessary ingredient.[6]

What made the menu of the officers different from that of the men was primarily fresh meat and soft bread. The men, as has been seen, had hard bread and dumplings, and, if they had meat, it was always salted - generally salt pork. Just as with the soft bread, the officers' fresh meat seems to have been considered fair game, for those willing to take it:

> We had pretty bad grub, but they had two fresh quarters of beef hanging in the rigging for the captain and officers. Some of the men used to climb up there at night to cut off a piece. We used to get the bones from the cook, just the bones, what somebody else had chewed the meat off of, and we'd make a pot of soup out of it. We'd pick up this bone with a little bit of meat on it, and we'd say, I wonder who was chewing on this?[7]

[6]MUNFLA, 73-78/C1489/116*.

[7]MUNFLA, 73-78/C1489/085*.

This is another example of the wry kind of humour with which the men treated the subject of their food,[8] as one may envision an almost Shakespearean delivery of this rhetorical question.

Mr. Walsh, who went to the ice fifteen years after the man quoted above, said that, in 1929, they had some fresh meat but that it would run out in about a month. Then he added, "But that didn't worry, because you didn't always get fresh meat at home,"[9] and this comment is made by a man whose family was involved in the slaughtering of meat. This shows, therefore, that the discrepancy between conditions on the ships and those at home was not overwhelming.

The following story is a good expression of the way the men felt about the food, and it is the kind of story which is traditional in all isolation occupations:

> ... she was frozen in - out - so far from the wharf, and they were gettin' ready for the seal fishery, and they were livin' aboard of her, the crew. So many men gettin' her ready an' and - uh - and uh - they - they usen't to be fed too well. And they - they never saw a bit of meat for a long time. He went aboard one day, Mr. Scott did, the old man, and he - and he said to one of the crew, a fello' from here, he said - uh - the glass, they used to call the barometer, you know, the glass. The glass is low, he said, I don't know what we're goin'

[8]See pp. 122-24 for a discussion of food as a subject of jest.

[9]Informant 1, tape 1, side 1/230*.

to have, and the fello' he said, I hope it'll be pork, sir! [Laughter].[10]

A parallel anecdote to this may be found in the local traditions of Cape Cod, Massachusetts. As the story goes, a Dutchman, on stripping down before a meal of thin bean soup, was asked what he was doing and answered that he was going to "tive for the bean, by Cot."[11]

This discussion of food is designed to reveal the ways in which the sealers regarded their diet, but also, because of the diversity of the opinions expressed, this discussion should make clear that food alone would not be able to influence a man's decision on whether or not to return to the seal hunt in subsequent years.

LIVING ACCOMMODATIONS AT THE ICE

Essentially the same conclusion can be reached with regard to the accommodations given the men at the ice, except that there seems to be more of a concensus about the poor quality of them. Before the 1898 law limiting crew size was passed,[12] a major source of discomfort resulted from the number of men who were crowded into each ship:

[10]MUNFLA, 64-13/C77/pp. 11-12.

[11]Mary Rogers Bangs, Old Cape Cod: The Land, the Men, and the Sea (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1931), p. 166. This story is found about fishermen in Newfoundland and has been given the new motif number, [J 1341.14], and is in Questionnaire Q68-413-1, in MUNFLA.

[12]Kean, p. 134.

> Used to carry big crews dem times. I don't know the reason why. I suppose there were so many men wanted to go to da seal fishery, and then t' give every man a chance for a berth, I suppose that's why it was, not for what money you'd make out o' it anyway.[13]

Not only were the large crews a cause of discomfort, but they were also designed strictly for the purposes of the owners. A large crew assured the owners that as many seals as possible would be taken even in years when the main patch was not found. It meant further that when a concentration of seals was found the ships would be loaded quickly enough for them to make another trip to the ice that year. When second trips were outlawed in 1895,[14] the way was paved for the passage of a law restricting crew size.

Nonetheless, the size of the crews was not the only cause of discomfort. The bunks provided for the men were temporary structures along the sides of the hold, and the men had to provide their own bedding, often using hay collected from the Southside Hills in St. John's just before departure, and they usually had to share a bunk with at least one other man. Furthermore, when they started killing seals, the men would lose even these meagre accommodations, because the seals would be stowed in the hold. Being displaced by the seals was known as being "burned out".[15]

[13] MUNFLA, 66-25/C317/195*.

[14] Greene, p. 12.

[15] MUNFLA, 72-127/p. 16.

Lice are a part of the sealers' lore, beyond the part they play in gambling games:[16]

> One night I was watchin', we'd have a dim light down there [in the hold], a lantern, hangin' up or somethin', there was no electric lights down there, always use a lantern. And I watched the old man out on the hatchway there, takin' off his underwear an' took it all off an' turned it inside out, an' I didn't - never said a word to him. Turned it all inside out, put it on again. And I said, what'd you do that for, old man? He said, boy, he said, ah - I couldn't sleep, he said, I couldn't sleep, he said, he said, they tore it out of me so much. Now, he said, by the time they get back, I'll be asleep.[17]

Many other aspects of the accommodations could be described in detail, such as the occasions when seals' sculps were actually thrown on top of men who were sleeping in the hold[18] or the "sham of a toilet" which was provided for the crew,[19] but the above is enough on which to base a general comment on the living conditions: the fact that these conditions were not at issue during the sealers' strikes shows that the men expected and accepted them. The conditions were bad, but they were not drastically different

[16] See pp. 108-10.

[17] MUNFLA, 73-78/C1488/177*.

[18] Informant 3, tape 1/180*.

[19] MUNFLA, 65-17/C181/p. 37.

from those to which the men were accustomed, at least until the seals began coming aboard. The smell and general filth which existed when the ship was filling with seals were atrocious, "But you didn't mind because, if there were seals coming aboard, you expect to be making a couple of dollars."[20]

In spite of Mr. Halliday's comment about the men not minding, sharing the ship with thousands of sculps must relate clearly to the ability to "take it", discussed as a criterion for manhood. If this status could be earned through the first trip to the ice, however, there must be more than this demonstration of hardiness which made men go to the ice for as many as forty springs.

CASH INCENTIVE

If a reaffirmation of hardiness is not sufficient reason why men would participate annually in the hunt, perhaps the possibility of earning cash is the reason. This was, however, only a possibility, as a St. John's clergyman of the 1860's wrote:

> The seal fishery is a lottery where all is risk and uncertainty, but the risk, we must confess, is not equally distributed.[21]

The unequal distribution of risk, both physical and economic,

[20]Informant 3, tape 1/185*.

[21]Mowat and Blackwood, p. 31.

among the men and the merchants certainly existed. The owners of the ships were not subjected to any of the physical dangers described in the preceding chapter, although they did have large financial investments in the hunt. Furthermore, the men also faced a financial risk, and a hypothetical example should demonstrate their position. If a ship had a crew of one hundred-fifty men and each of these men took his "crop",[22] the ship would have to pan eighteen hundred dollars worth of seals before the men even started to earn any money. If the trip were a jink, the crop would be forgiven, that is to say the men would not have to pay back the crop money from their own pockets. But, if the share per man was between nine and twelve dollars before the crop money was taken out, the merchant would take the extra:

> ...you made a poor voyage, and didn't get that nine dollars - the - the difference - between what you did get and the price of your crop, that - you could be let off free, that would be wiped off. ...but if you went over nine dollars, they try to collect that. You'm likely to have a writ now anytime at all, for that other dollar. ...go to the trouble to get a collection agency on 'n. ...to get that other dollar if your crop went over.[23]

[22]The "crop" was an advance, paid to the sealers before they left for the ice. Each man would be given nine dollars worth of goods on credit, and he would have to pay twelve dollars when he returned from the ice.

[23]MUNFLA, 65-17/C168/p. 12.

Not only, then, did the share have to exceed twelve dollars for the men to make any money, but also, if the equipment a man needed to go to the ice cost more than the nine dollars allowed and the share did not equal twelve dollars, he would have to pay the extra.

When speaking of financial risk in the seal fishery, however, it was the merchants who took the biggest chance, but it was also the merchants who stood to make the biggest profit as well. They actually invested money in each man who took his crop and stood to lose thirteen hundred-fifty dollars just in crop money if the trip failed, and this would be risked on each hundred-fifty man crew a merchant sent to the ice.

The men, on the other hand, did not fear a jink any more than they feared the hazards of the occupation. The seal fishery was never a major life support industry for the men involved. This is true not because of the hazards or the possibility of a jink but because it was too irregular to be trusted. It was not considered to be a disaster when the seals did not come close to land, within range of the shore-based sealers, or when the ships came back from the floes empty; rather, it was considered a boon when the hunt was a success.

In the words of a man who hunted from the shore: "Oh, that's been a wonderful gain to us you know, sealing, leave

everything else, almost leave your meals to go sealing."[24] The emphasis here is on the gain. They were not sitting and waiting for the seals; other things were going on, but when the seals did come, it would mean a gain - an opportunity which could not be ignored.

The men who went to the ice in ships were also philosophical about their chances:

> You wouldn't make no money, you may come home with ah probably twenty or thirty dollars, fifteen twenty dollars, an' sometimes with nothing. It gave a chance, that's all.[25]

The chance which the seal hunt gave was not only for profit at a time of year when money could be made in no other way, but it was also a chance for cash, in a basically cashless economy.

There was even the chance of a bonanza, a real windfall. For example, in Twillingate, the sealers did so well in 1862 that they bought a bell for the Anglican Church,[26] and in Green Bay, when the ice jammed against the shore in 1864 and brought the seals with it, "even the women and dogs made ten pounds-a-man."[27]

[24]MUNFLA, 67-35/C388/p. 27.

[25]MUNFLA, 66-25/C317/300*.

[26]Story in Pictures and Poetry of the 1973 Seal Haul at Twillingate Newfoundland also Marking the 85th Year in Business of the Firm of E.J. Linfield, [inside front cover].

[27]Greene, p. 11.

The men who went to the ice had good years as well. Mr. Walsh told me that, the night before they were allowed by law to kill seals, they burned down in the middle of a patch of whitecoats, and three weeks later they were back in St. John's with a log load, worth a share of seventy-nine dollars per man.[28]

The way in which the sealers spent the money that they made in the good years tells something about the way they regarded the hunt and the possibility of profits from it. A church bell, such as the one donated by the sealers of Twillingate, was a rare luxury for a Newfoundland town in the middle of the nineteenth century.[29] Mr. Walsh gave the money he earned to his family, but not before he had treated himself to a new suit.[30] While a new suit may not be considered a complete luxury, the bell certainly was.

The three versions of the traditional rhyme, which follow, give further insight into the attitudes about the proceeds of the seal fishery:

"'Way down on Pigeon Pond Island,
When daddy comes home from swilin',

[28]Informant 1, tape 1, side 2/214*.

[29]Mrs. Halpert has suggested to me that the scarcity of bells in Newfoundland outports is the reason why so many traditional rites of passage here include the discharge of guns. The guns have now been replaced by automobile horns, but church bells are still not to be found in wedding celebrations.

[30]Informant 1, tape 1, side 2/220*.

(Maggoty fish hung up in the air,
Fried in maggoty butter)!
Cakes and tea for breakfast,
Pork and duff for dinner,
Cakes and tea for supper,
When daddy comes home from swilin'."[31]

Rocks and salt to cover your tilt,
Down in Pinchard's Island.
You shall have a sparklin' dress,
When Dad comes home from swilin'.[32]

and,

Greenspond is a pretty place,
So is Pinchard's Island.
Mama will have a silk dress,
When papa comes home from swilin'.[33]

The first of these shows that a trip to the seal fishery would at least mean that the family would be able to stop eating the winter stores and would be able to afford better food when the father returned. In the second, which appears to be a song sung by children, the sealing trip will not only provide salt for the summer's cod fishery but also a new dress for a little girl. The third, and most optimistic, rhymer believes that the seal fishery will pay well enough

[31]Norman Duncan, Dr. Grenfell's Parish (Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1905), pp. 125-26. I owe this reference to Dr. Herbert Halpert.

[32]MUNFLA, 68-31/C501/755*.

[33]MUNFLA, 69-15/C602/200*.

to provide money for a silk dress.

The financial return from participation in the seal fishery was not a necessary element of the economy in the outports, but such returns could raise the standards of living for the sealers' families, not perhaps to the point where a man could buy a silk dress for his wife but, at least, enough so that they would not have to buy the summer's salt on credit.

FRATERNITY AND ADVENTURE

The chance to increase his family's yearly income as well as his personal status as a man could be enough to entice a man back to the ice, but there are other reasons in addition. There is, for example, an element of adventure in any hunt which makes it enjoyable and exciting. It is interesting that most wild animals which were once hunted commercially, but are now protected from market hunters, are still pursued by sportsmen. For example, wildfowl used to be the basis of a huge industry in the Mississippi River Delta area, and, although wild ducks and geese may no longer be sold commercially in the United States, the hunting of these birds still continues, within prescribed limits.

Particularly during a season when the men in the outports had little or no work and had become restless since the repairs to the cod fishing equipment had been completed,

going to the ice would provide them with diversion, plus the possibility of the rewards discussed above:

> ...we used to love it then, love for it to come, the seal fishery, young fellers, you know. They'd love for the time to come around, cause that's all there was then. There was nowhere else you could go. You'd do the cod fishery, den you'd be home during the winter months, two, three months in the winter, you'd do nothing, only just play ball or something else. You'd long for the first of March to come, to get away.[34]

The advent of industrialization, with its provision of year-round employment, may have decreased the need to get away, but it could not decrease the aspect of fraternity among the sealers:

> It was quite a social affair, because the men from Torbay and Flatrock and Brigus, all around Conception Bay, were already on board [when the ships arrived in Greenspond to pick up the sealers there], and the men from Bonavista Bay already knew many of them from being shipmates on previous voyages.[35]

In later days, when the ships left from St. John's, men from Bonavista Bay would walk to Gambo and ride the special sealers' train to the capital. As the men from near Cape Freels walked toward Gambo, they would be joined by men from the towns nearer to Gambo and would find hospitality in each town along the way. When they arrived in St. John's,

[34]MUNFLA, 66-25/C317/258*.

[35]MUNFLA, 69-15/C604/100*.

they signed on their ships, and then there was much visiting among vessels, "Your friends and men you had met other springs. In our times they had rum, but in other times they had moonshine."[36]

The social life aboard the ships at the ice is the subject of chapter four, and the socializing continued when the men returned to St. John's after the hunt. Essentially, the entire cycle of a sealing trip may be seen in the light of the social aspect, and this certainly would lure men to the fishery year after year.

CREDIT

A final reason for the men to return annually to the seal fishery is perhaps the most important, and it is based on the complex nature of the relationship between employer and employee in a cashless society:

> It wasn't such an easy thing to get a berth to the ice, you know. Now the merchants, in the spring of the year, they used to give out what they called supplies. Now in the fall of the year, you'd give all, whatever fish you got this summer, he'd get the fish. If there was any money left out of what you paid him, he got interest on it, now it'd be all straightened up. Now, skipper, what about a berth to the ice? He had so many berths.[37]

[36]Informant 3, tape 1/357*.

[37]Informant 3, tape 1/068*.

It appears from this that a man would be granted a berth to the ice by the merchant on a merit basis. As mentioned earlier,[38] the merchants did not profit from their relationship with each individual fisherman - some were assets, others liabilities. In the situation described by Mr. Halliday, the man has proven to be an asset to the merchant by paying back his supply money, with interest, and having some left over. He implies that it was only when this excess was established that a man could ask a favor of the merchant.

Obtaining this berth had implications beyond those already mentioned in this chapter:

> There was nothing to make dem days, you had to go, because you'd get a bit of credit for going to the seal fishery, family men, from the merchants, an' dat's how you'd get along.[39]

Participation in the seal fishery increased a man's credit rating with the merchant. There is no mention here of whether the seal fishery for any particular year was or was not successful. The credit did not come from making money at the ice; the credit was a result of going to the ice. In a cashless economy, credit is the most important economic element, and, regardless of whether cash was made from the seal hunt, a trip to the ice earned a man credit.

The system here begins to appear circular. If a man

[38] See pp. 110-11.

[39] MUNFLA, 66-25/C317/294*.

does well at the cod fishery, he may ask for and might be given a berth to the ice. Going to the ice, whether financially successful or not, brings credit or, perhaps, respect from the merchant. The increased credit resulting from the sealing would give a man the chance to improve or replace his cod fishing gear and, thus, make him more successful, potentially, in that occupation.

Apparently, the merchant had to recommend a man for a sealing berth more than once:

> But you'd go two or three seasons in one ship, and you'd go to the captain and get a berth off him, ask him see.[40]

Even when the merchant was no longer directly involved in getting a berth, however, there is no reason to expect that a man would not continue to receive extra credit as a result of continuing to go to the ice.

This extra credit would also affect a family's ability to buy seed and the other requirements for their food growing. It seems, therefore, that sealing - while not a major life support occupation in its own right - had direct influence on the two major life supporting occupations, fishing and farming, and these are what determine a man's ability to be a good provider for his family.

[40]Informant 3, tape 1/074*.

CONCLUSIONS

Thus far, in the discussions of status change, the change has been in relation to an ideal of manhood through hardiness and the ability to provide for one's family. This ideal has appeared to be its own reward, manifested in prestige within the community. The evidence of this chapter shows, however, that the men who went sealing had more to gain than only the respect of the community. Beyond the possibility of earning supplementary income and the elements of fraternity and adventure, the men did gain prestige in the eyes of the merchant. The merchant's business depended on the work of the men in his community, so a good worker is valuable to the merchant. If the seal fishery can establish this reputation with the merchant, then the man who goes to the ice has established a worthwhile prestige for himself. Here one may see that the folklore about the seal fishery can function at the heart of the economic system of outport Newfoundland.

CHAPTER EIGHT - CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this brief, concluding chapter is to restate the major points of the discussion and to emphasize the ways in which folklore functions in the relationship between a community and an occupation. The basic principles at work in this relationship are: 1) all of the members of the industry are members of other groups - principally their home communities - and they bring to the occupation various folklore elements from those other groups. These elements then function in the operation of the new esoteric group created by mutual participation in the seal fishery. 2) The esoteric understanding, as held by the practitioners, differs from the more limited understanding of the exoteric observers. This difference between the folklore of the sealers and the folklore about the seal fishery functions for the members of the esoteric group in their relationship with those who have not been to the ice.

The stories of stereotypes demonstrate the way in which both of these principles operate in the seal hunt. The use of stereotypes is common to all "groups",[1] and as members of other groups, sealers bring the tendency to create stereotypes with them to the seal fishery. The

[1]See pp. 136-37 for a discussion of the concept of a folk group.

stereotypes with which they would be familiar from the other groups function to allow them to orient themselves within the sealing group, by feeling that they know more about some of the other sealers than their actual experience would allow. The sealers' use of stereotypes is perhaps best exemplified by the traditional picture of the captains. Their distance from the common hands created the need for stereotypification, and the characteristic chosen as a basis for the type is the changeable temperament of the captains. By codifying this trait, which is a result of the captains' desire to fill the ships with seals and their need to consider the safety of the men, the men can not only accept this characteristic of the captains, but they can also respect this duality in them.

Stereotypes also function for the sealers as a group, because they create stereotypes for the incompetent sealers and, thus, present observers with the impression that these people are atypical within the group. By this they purify the image of sealers in general, and the exoteric stereotype of the average sealer will include none of the undesirable features.

The discussion of diversions shows clearly how the elements which the sealers brought to the seal fishery can function in this new group. Halpert has suggested that the seal fishery provided a point of contact through which

folklore might be transmitted,[2] and the level of cooperation among the crews of sealing ships supports this suggestion. The success of the diversions shows not only a basic understanding of the need to avoid confrontation in isolation situations, but also the fact that they were successful reveals that the men had an inherent channel of communication which results from their common awareness of traditional play forms, their mutual realization of the diversionary qualities of "times" and their shared understanding of the functions of pranks. It is interesting, further, that the sealers modified the diversions so that their functions would be more effective in the particular circumstances.

Young men come to the seal fishery bearing the criteria for manhood from several of the groups to which they belong, including community, family and peer group. In general, the seal fishery offers young men a chance to meet these criteria. On the esoteric level, however, the seal fishery has other criteria for membership. Once membership is achieved, a man may begin to make the narrative traditions of the seal hunt function for him in the other groups, and this shows most clearly the ways in which the interrelationship of the occupation and the

[2]Herbert Halpert, p. 38.

community utilizes folklore. The community demands some confirmation of manliness; the seal fishery provides a testing ground for manhood; and, the sealers then demand the respect of the community.

The difference between the esoteric and exoteric views of the occupation is perhaps best seen in the lore of hazards. The personal experience narratives of the sealers in many ways act to exchange esoteric information among the members, and this information consists primarily of the ways to combat the dangers. The same narratives, when told to those who are not members and cannot imagine themselves carrying out the instructions of the sealers, are tales of terror and serve to heighten their respect for the sealers' ability to cope with the dangers. In fact, any attempts by the sealers to de-emphasize the risk are usually regarded as bravado, because the non-sealers' concept of the dangers is too well developed to be contradicted.

In spite of these dangers, men continue to go to the seal fishery. The food and sleeping accommodations appear to be neutral factors in this decision, but a combination of the possibility of cash reward, adventure, fraternity and increased credit seem to be enough to draw men back to the industry year after year. The increase in

credit shows again the function of the folklore about the fishery. The reputation as a good and willing worker, which a man may receive as a result of participation in the seal hunt, functions directly to increase his status with the merchant, who had an almost omnipotent hand on the economic status of each individual in a Newfoundland outport community.

The folklore which is related to the seal fishery functions powerfully in the life of the individual Newfoundland sealer and in many ways defines the relationship between the occupation and the home communities of the sealers. It helps him to relate to the abstract body of the entire industry through stereotypes; it provides a common ground from which he may relate to other individuals involved in sealing, through their shared knowledge of traditional forms of diversion; it allows him to consider himself a man and to be so considered in his family and his community; and finally, the status which involvement in an esoteric group gives an individual, through the folklore surrounding that group, may well provide him with a means to better his standard of living. The folklore related to an industry consists of both the elements which individuals bring to the occupation and those materials which are created esoterically within the occupation.

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