DEATH AND WORLDVIEW IN A BALLAD CULTURE: THE EVIDENCE OF NEWFOUNDLAND

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DEATH AND WORLDVIEW IN A BALLAD CULTURE: THE EVIDENCE OF NEWFOUNDLAND

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Abstract

This study investigates death as an expression of worldview in Newfoundland tradition, and with particular attention given to its classical ballads. From the correlation of their people's life style and moral orientations (the pragmatic context), the views and values carried across genres (the symbolic context) and those expressed within the ballads (their poetic context), one claims to find articulated a coherent worldview upholding positive behaviour--in the face of death as in life. While this attitude is found expressed in traditional societies as well as in classical balladry, it pervades past and modern local tradition, and seems particularly appropriate to Newfoundland's maritime culture. The striking prominence of revenant types in the classical ballad repertoire and the exceptional courage of the heroine of the most popular "Sweet William's Ghost" (Ch 77) confirm local concern with bereavement and its successful resolution. This evidence for Newfoundland yields the proposition that, while the meanings carried in a cultural ballad corpus are essentially generic, they are actualized in dynamic relation with specific cultural contexts and worldviews.

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Introduction

All the ways lead to worldview in humanistic research; few humanists get there. Those humbled by the experience can say so: let Alan Dundes speak first. The quest of cultural worldview, of a group's views and values, goes a long and obscure way from the explicit to the implicit, along what people say and do, and along what they know, think and feel without knowing that they do. Worldview is what folklorists get on tape and paper, but cannot play or transcribe, only infer and speculate about.

Dundes regrets that they will not try either. The study of folklore in literature and culture, he reaffirms, implies "identification" *and* "interpretation":

> The first is objective and empirical; the second is subjective and speculative . . . . Identification essentially consists of a search for similarities; interpretation depends upon the delineation of differences. The first task in studying an item is to show how it is like the previously reported items, whereas the second is to show how it differs from previously reported items--and, hopefully, why it differs.[1]

The fact is that "folklorists too often identify without going on to interpret whereas literary critics and anthropologists interpret without first properly identifying folklore"; and the result is that the study of folklore sinks into "a scholarly series of shreds and patches or a motley medley of beginnings without ends and ends without proper beginnings."[2] The past wanderings of ballad scholarship could be an illustration, and its present disfavour, even among song specialists, perhaps another consequence. The classical ballads have been taken at face value, for debris from another age, and their cultural meanings read and interpreted literally from their fossils. The genre, in fact, passed from premature interpretation to mortal ignorance....

So far, the formal features of the classical ballads have all been investigated and repertoried, the genre's transmission and variation process analyzed and expounded.[3] While this "identification" of ballad subgenres, types, versions, clusters and patterns

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[1] Alan Dundes, "The study of Folklore in Literature and Culture: Identification and Interpretation," *Analytical Essays in Folklore* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975) 28.

[2] Dundes, "Study" 28.

[3] See David Buchan, *The Ballad and the Folk* (London: Routledge, 1972) and Tristram Potter Coffin, *The British Traditional Ballad in North America*, rev. ed. with a supplement by Roger deV. Renwick (1950; Austin: U of Texas P, 1977).

grounds the quest of the genre's less tangible aspects, the meanings which its protean forms have transmitted to a particular cultural group have barely been touched on.[1] John F. Szwed underlines the "curious irony" that "Western folksong contains some of the least redundant and most information-laden texts in the world, and yet these texts have gone without serious attempts to understand their meaning in social context."[2] While classical ballad study sorely lacks light on performance contexts, this thesis claims to derive insights into the meanings carried by a regional corpus of classical ballads at other context levels, less readily observable but no less relevant and illuminating of the meanings which these ballads have carried to their audiences.

The present study investigates Newfoundland attitudes about death as expressed in a variety of folklore genres, but with special emphasis placed on an in-depth analysis of its classical ballad repertoire. The amplitude of the extra-ballad data notwithstanding, this thesis claims to be a ballad as much as a cultural study, one which relates the genre to its socio-cultural and multigeneric contexts as a means to assess the ballads' contribution to the cultural discourse on death and the influence of these environments on their meanings. On the example of Renwick discriminating between certain moral orientations shaped by a people's life style (the pragmatic context) from the meanings carried by their cultural expressions (the symbolic context),[3] the analysis proceeds along a separate consideration of the two. Finally, Buchan's and Toelken's studies demonstrating that ballads and folksongs articulate generic sense justifies the third and most informed part of this study: the analysis of the meanings generated by the local classical ballad corpus (its poetic context). The investigation of this corpus with regard to its cultural complex thus is carried out at three distinct yet interlocking context levels.[4]

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[1] Christine A. Cartwright, "Johnny Faa and Black Jack Davy: Cultural Values and Change in Scots and American Balladry," *Journal of American Folklore* 93 (1980): 397-416, John D. Niles, "Context and Loss in Scottish Ballad Tradition," *Western Folklore* 45 (1986): 83-109 and John F. Szwed, "Paul E. Hall: A Newfoundland Song-Maker and His Community," *Folksongs and Their Makers*, ed. Henry Glassie, Edward D. Ives and John F. Szwed (Bowling Green: Bowling Green U Popular P, [1971]) 147-69 are the only analyses that come to mind in Anglo-American tradition.

[2] Szwed, "Paul" 151.

[3] Renwick, *English* 11-12.

[4] "Generic context" here and hereafter will be used in Barre Toelken's sense that "the ballad genre itself may be said to be a context for the functioning and dissemination of figurative language;" in "Figurative Language & Cultural Contexts," *Western Folklore* 45 (1986): 135.

This study of worldview in a ballad culture still "identifies" more than it "interprets." Its research is devoted to a single portion of the genre's territory: Newfoundland; yet, the "identification" of the functioning and relevance of this regional classical ballad corpus within its cultural environment uncovers structural relationships which, as Roger deV. Renwick suggests, might underlie all cultural traditions:

> People change, their environments change, their expressive forms and contents change; but *meanings* in a folk's lore remain remarkably stable, as do the structure and behavior of the interrelationships among the three subsystems of people, environment, and lore.[1]

The mapping of these structures for Newfoundland thus launches a platform onto the deep waters of European balladry towards the far goal of defining the articulating relationship of Genre and Culture.

The thematic angle of this investigation is a means towards this end, but a chosen one. Death not only pervades balladry; it is at the crux of human culture, and as such opens a wider view on these realities than any. Essentially, the organized system of values and structures making up Culture is a challenge of immortality as well as a defensive array against death.[2] Modern ethnological and psycho-medical research corroborates Freud's and Van Gennep's early findings on the effects of bereavement on the individual and collective psyche, showing that communal ritual behaviour engaged in funeral celebration helps resolve the personal as well as social disruption caused by death. Philippe Ariès's master study, *L'homme devant la mort*[3], gives the most substantial testimony to the key that evolving cultural attitudes toward death provides to the understanding of Western tradition. Folklore study brings its own expertise to the decoding of cultural expressions of this salient concern. The evidence that gravestones and witness narratives can be read as metaphors for the relationships which the living keep with the dead encourages the hypothesis that the classical ballads and other folk expressions, likewise, carry cultural views, values and designs.

To opt for a contextual approach to expressive phenomena is not to assume environmental and cultural determinants for the worldview which they carry, but, as David

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[1] Roger deV. Renwick, *English Folk Poetry: Structure and Meaning* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania P, 1980) 7.

[2] Edgar Morin, *L'homme et la mort* (Paris: Seuil, 1970) 21.

[3] This is the full two-volume French edition (Paris: Seuil, 1977) of the original *Western Attitudes toward Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present*, trans. Patricia M. Ranum (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1974).

Hufford cautions, to take a truly scientific stance: one which a priori neither advocates nor rules out "the cultural source hypothesis." Previous analyses reveal that the relation of worldview to culture is neither mechanical nor obvious. In Szwed's apt formulation, "If folklore were simply a matter of 'mirror-image' statements of a culture, then ethnography could be replaced by folklore collections."[1] If cultural worldview is not to be derived merely from circumstances of time and place, neither is it to be found in any individual genre, for none says it all. Folk motifs float from one expressive form to another: Ben-Amos remarks that "not every action of violence passes into folklore in ballad form."[2] Roger D. Abrahams corroborates that, even within consideration of a particular genre, a concern with generic and cultural meaning entails an examination of their symbolic environment. Folklore theorists concur in stressing the need for such a holistic perspective.[3] Robert A. Georges declares comparatism the essence of folklore study,[4] and D.K. Wilgus explains that "in seeking to understand the meaning . . . of a traditional item, we need to examine as many other forms . . . and as many performances as possible."[5]

The analysis of the symbolic environment of the regional ballad repertoire follows the understanding that, while each communicates a certain message, folklore genres essentially articulate meaning within a particular culture; and, that it is from the knowledge of the entire communicative network operating in that culture that the specific contribution of each particular genre can best be approached.[6] This conception of genres relies on Ben-Amos' definition of them as "distinct modes of communication" functioning as "a set of systematically related conceptual categories in culture,"[7] and R.D. Abrahams's similar conception that "genres give names to traditional attitudes and traditional strategies" for the purpose of affecting their audience through the communication of meaning.[8] Dundes has

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[1] Szwed, "Paul" 166.

[2] Dan Ben-Amos, "The Situation of the Non-humorous English Ballad," *Midwest Folklore* 13:3 (1963) 165.

[3] Roger D. Abrahams, "Patterns of Structure and Role Relationships in the Child Ballad in the United States," *Journal of American Folklore* 79 (1966): 449.

[4] Robert A. Georges, "The Folklorist as Comparatist," *Western Folklore* 45 (1986): 1-20.

[5] D.K. Wilgus, "The Comparative Approach," *The Ballad and the Scholars: Approaches to Ballad Study*, Papers Presented at a Clark Library Seminar, 22 Oct. 1983 by D.K. Wilgus and Barre Toelken (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, U of California, 1986) 5.

[6] While not intent on enlightening any genre specifically, such a holistic approach taken from a thematic vantage point has been applied in Stanley Brandes, *Metaphors of Masculinity: Sex and Status in Andalusian Folklore* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1980).

[7] Ben-Amos, *Folklore Genres*, ed. Ben-Amos (Austin: U of Texas P, 1976) xxxvi and xi.

[8] Abrahams, "The Complex Relations of Simple Forms," Ben-Amos, *Folklore* 193.

exposed the problems inherent to genre-oriented folklore research, and Ben-Amos subscribes to the fact that, in looking at genres as ideal categories fit to be investigated one at a time rather than holistically, scholars have largely lost track of the "folk ideas" that underlie and permeate verbal expression.[1] Taking Dundes's warning, this analysis gives precedence to meaning above generic form in following Ariès's interpretive schema of attitudes towards death in Western culture to account for those expressed in Newfoundland tradition.

The borrowing of Ariès's panoramic perspective for this study steps aside from the microscopic angle chosen by modern ethnography in its preference for depth to breadth, cultural particulars to cross-cultural constants. Referring to the general map for the West, however, avoids the trap of discussing cultural attitudes without sound analytical distance and objectivity,[2] and mistaking constant for specific traits and forms. The open-ended and flexible nature of Ariès's framework, as well, has fruitfully revealed the interaction of various attitudes towards death, not just within a single culture but within individual generic expressions. Within Ariès's four categories, the Newfoundland data has been accounted for in terms of "folk ideas as units of worldview," in keeping with Dundes's recommendation.[3]

The utilization of Ariès's model in this folkloristic study, however, remains a challenge. In his remarkable scope and erudition, the historian's data extends from the Tristan legend and official testimonies to letters of aristocratic origin, but mostly ignores popular sources. This conspicuous absence of folkloristic data presumably results from an inherited fixation on accurately dated and located sources--hence discouraging the use of folk materials in historical endeavours.[4] This first attempt to my knowledge at

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[1] Ben-Amos, *Folklore* xiv.

[2] James Overton raises this problem in cautioning against the fallacy of the key assumption of Newfoundland cultural revival that "there exists a distinctive Newfoundland culture, way of life, ethos, character, soul, or ethnic identity (older writers tend to use the term "race") in "A Newfoundland Culture?" *Journal of Canadian Studies* 23 (1988): 8-9.

[3] Dundes, "Folk Ideas as Units of Worldview," *Toward New Perspectives in Folklore*, ed. Américo Paredes and Richard Bauman (Austin: U of Texas P, 1972) 93-103; Gary Butler, introducing the notion of "traditum" or "conceptual unit of belief" comes close to this approach in "Supernatural Folk Expression in a French-Newfoundland Community: A Study of Expressive Form, Communicative Process, and Social Function in l'Anse-à-Canards," PhD thesis, MUN, 1985, ii.

[4] The reasons for this mutual ignorance between the two disciplines are lucidly analyzed in Keith Thomas, "History and Anthropology," *Past and Present* 24 (1963): 3-24 and E.P. Thompson, "Anthropology and the Discipline of Historical Context," *Midland History* 1

accommodating folklore sources within Ariès's schema, besides promoting reconciliation between the sister disciplines, hopefully fills a gap in investigating the connections existing between the high and low ranks of cultural tradition.

This study of ballad meaning in cultural context essentially relies on a structural method, in this following leading interpretive studies of genres, and more particularly those relating to ballad and folksong. Such a method, indeed, derives essential meaning out of abundant and diverse cultural forms. While none of the extra-ballad material has been treated exhaustively, its examination in structural perspective uncovers certain patterns suggesting cultural and ideological links with the ballads. The approaches themselves have been commanded by the nature of the data available for each section: the first surveying the facts grounding the social reality and experience of Newfoundlanders across time, the second examining their extra-ballad expressions of death in terms of Ariès's four mental categories and the third presenting a talerole analysis of their classical ballad corpus.

Newfoundland as a terrain of investigation has proved a fortunate if above all practical choice for this inquiry. This society's "enormous capacity to absorb hardships without sinking into despair,"[1] as was previously remarked, makes it particularly relevant to the thematic angle of this study. Newfoundland's thwarted and painful emergence to modernism and its attending benefits, in fact, only stimulates attention for the function of its traditional culture in supporting this population's morale and achievement. Consideration of the social structures and mechanisms which have grounded this society, indeed, reveals an effective system of thought on the model of traditional societies. Previous research on Newfoundland personal narrative tradition has accounted for it in terms of adaptive strategy; the conclusions of the present study support this function for its cultural tradition at large, while demonstrating the significant contribution of the classical ballads to this vital task.[2]

Essentially, though, my choice of Newfoundland for this study follows from the opportunity of postgraduate study in the Department of Folklore of Memorial University of

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(1972): 43; William A. Wilson, "Folklore and History: Fact amid the Legends," *Readings in American Folklore*, ed. J.H. Brunvand (New York: Norton, 1978) 449-66.

[1] David Alexander, "Literacy and Economic Development in Nineteenth Century Newfoundland," *Acadiensis* 10:1 (1980) 7.

[2] In Lawrence George Small, "The Interrelationship of Work and Talk in a Newfoundland Fishing Community," PhD thesis, U of Pennsylvania, 1979.

Newfoundland. Thus came the challenge of applying current folkloristic theory to research on a culture to which I came as an outsider and complete stranger. Though apprehensive at first of a study largely concerned with worldview in this cultural context, I found confidence in the testimony and experience of many previous ethnographers, Redfield's injunction that the study of cultures and their worldview necessitates objective analysis as well as empathy, and that inside perceptions be translated into analytical conceptualizations.[1]

In this task I have been guided by the already ample anthropological and folkloristic literature pertaining to Newfoundland. Besides published sources, my study has been informed by successive compilations of archive holdings and personal fieldwork carried out intensively in the community of Tilting (Fogo Island) and on specific interviews in Southeast Bight (Placentia Bay), Black Duck Brook (Port au Port Peninsula) and St. John's.[2] In illuminating some relevant phenomena known from other sources fieldwork has provided me with an invaluable feeling and understanding of the issue under investigation. The analysis deliberately brings together these various primary and secondary sources in view of mutual clarification. The corpus as a whole has been compiled and researched in such a scope as to bring Newfoundland worldview into perspective rather than with the aim of presenting a definitive ethnography of death in the province.[3] Temporal, topographical and religious particularities have only been accounted for in so far as relevant to this purpose.

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[1] Robert Redfield, *The Little Community and Peasant Society and Culture* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1960) 82. To Felix Hoerburger declaring that ". . . we cannot rely any longer upon our objective opinion, but we must ask for the opinion of the folk. . . . For us the essential matter is the value of the object in the life of the people," D.K. Wilgus replied: "The student who follows the advice literally is not a folklore scholar; the student who ignores it completely is not a folklorist." In "Comparative" 4, quoting from *Anglo-American Folksong Scholarship since 1898* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1959) 336 and 343.

[2] Archive sources are from Memorial University of Newfoundland Language and Folklore archive, hereafter referred to as MUNFLA, and Dr. Thomas Nemec's personal archive of Anthropology student papers relating to the province kept in his office at Memorial University of Newfoundland, hereafter referred to as MUN. MUNFLA accession and shelflist numbers of these personal tape collections are as follows: MUNFLA 87-159/C10629 to C10659; MUNFLA 87-159/C7638 to C107640; MUNFLA 87-159/C12029 to C12044; MUNFLA 87-006/C9690 to C9699; MUNFLA 87-063/C10027 to C10030 and MUNFLA 88-088/C1111.

[3] Mrs. Violetta Halpert is preparing such a critical study relating to the specific matter of "the three days of the corpse," or the customs and beliefs surrounding the advent of death up to burial.

Chapter 1

The Quest of Worldview:

Methodological Insights

Ever since Bronislaw Malinowski, the father of modern anthropology, declared that "what interested him really in the study of human cultures was the native's outlook on things," his "Weltanschauung" or "worldview," the concept has made its way in the human sciences.[1] It is certainly at home in modern folkloristic research, whose approaches participate in the task of elucidating the meaning that traditional expressive phenomena carry in their living context. A consideration of these phenomena from this specific angle should bring considerable light on their relevance to culture. Enriched by the teachings of cultural anthropology and its own contextual approaches, modern folkloristics is well equipped to address this tantalizing issue. This first introductory chapter presents the theoretical and pragmatic insights which have grounded the following investigation.

Almost two decades ago, Alan Dundes and Barre Toelken introduced the concept of cultural worldview to the student of folklore; they made the point that traditional artistic expressions are prime data for the study of "the native view."[2] To date, the field is mapped out and only awaiting the folklorist's expertise. Folkloristic and anthropological literature specifically addressing this question is still scanty considering the significance of the issue to the understanding of cultural phenomena. A closer look at the scholarship, however, reveals that the study of worldview underlies as well as implies many and more immediate investigations. The study of a culture's inmost dimension--that of the mental universe informing expressive behaviour--poses probably the ultimate question in folkloristics, and therefore necessitates a holistic knowledge of that culture. An increasing interest in the question in the most recent scholarship also suggests that it is the term

[1] Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (New York: Dutton, 1922) 517.

[2] Dundes, "The Number Three in American Culture," *Every Man His Way: Readings in Cultural Anthropology* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice, 1968) 404; "Folklore as a Mirror of Culture," *Elementary English* 46 (1969): 471-81; "Thinking Ahead: A Folkloristic Reflection of the Future Orientation in American Worldview," *Anthropological Quarterly* 42 (1969): 53-72; "Folk"; Barre Toelken, "Folklore, Worldview, and Communication," *Folklore: Performance and Communication*, ed. Dan Ben-Amos and Kenneth S. Goldstein (The Hague: Mouton, 1975) 268; *The Dynamics of Folklore* (Boston: Houghton, 1979) 225-61.

"worldview" rather than what it designates which may have intimidated all but a few folklorists. This makes the survey of the relevant contributions to the study of worldview either a fairly straightforward or a very complex task. By way of compromise, this chapter limits its scope to those contributions which have nourished my application of the concept in the present study, particularly in relation to ballad and folksong.

1.1. The Native View and the Cognitive Process

The ethnographical study of primitive cultures at the turn of the century broke away from a tradition of anthropological research confined to the library. Franz Boas, who brought about this turning point, insisted that culture must be understood in terms of the categories of native people. He drew attention to culture as being a system of meanings elaborated from a relative perception of reality. To grasp the logic of this system, one, therefore, has to apprehend reality in that particular view. Boas stressed the relevance of language in revealing its speakers' worldview, hence the necessity for the analyst to learn the native language of the culture under investigation.

Following in these steps, Malinowski focused attention on the live functioning of a society, and observed the dynamic tension existing between the various elements of its culture. In the close observation of a society's entire way of life, he perceived the interrelated nature of its expressive forms:

> . . . folklore, these stories handed on in a native community live in the cultural context of tribal life and not merely in narrative. By this I mean that the ideas, emotions, and desires associated with a given story are experienced not only when the story is told, but also when in certain customs, moral rules, or ritual proceedings, the counterpart is enacted.[1]

From this correlation between cultural thought and practice, he inferred that all phenomena pertaining to a particular culture are informed by an underlying worldview shared by its members, that "every human culture gives its members a definite vision of the world."[2] Boas's and Malinowski's followers recorded and analysed primitive societies in minute ethnographical detail. Like them, they discovered ways of life differing widely from their own, and sought to understand their meaning by correlating their various aspects. Their analyses further revealed the existence of patterns of thought pervading a society's

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[1] Malinowski, "Myth in Primitive Psychology," *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays* (New York: Doubleday, 1948) 145-46.

[2] Malinowski, *Argonauts* 517.

linguistic and other cultural expressions. This discovery spurred the investigation of cognition, i.e. the tacit rules and premises governing human thought and behaviour, the mechanism underlying worldview.

Cognition involves a web of linguistic, cultural and mental phenomena. Every child learns through the early stage of its socialization a set of cultural as well as linguistic conventions which structure its perception, thinking and behaviour according to the standards of its social group. This correspondence between linguistic and cognitive patterning has established that a language is not only content but organization, a device for categorizing experience:

> Every language is a vast pattern-system different from others, in which are culturally ordained the forms and categories by which the personality not only communicates, but also analyses nature, notices or neglects types of relationship and phenomena, channels his reasoning, and builds the house of his consciousness.[1]

Cultures are analogous to verbal languages in their nature and functioning. A culture is a meaningful system organized according to an implicit frame of reference that its members have learned. Cultures codify reality in specific ways.[2] Every culture has, what Edward Hall calls "a silent language" an idiosyncratic set of assumptions and conventions which prescribes its handling of time, spatial relationships, and attitudes in life.[3] So, even the perception of space and time which underlies man's physical and mental universe is a cultural elaboration.[4] This cognitive set of ideas is based on an underlying pattern of agreed-on cultural definitions or "categories," which enables people to coordinate their behaviour and make sense of their shared experience.

A society reproduces these codes, categories and cultural premises on all levels of expression; hence, from its concrete forms--mental, verbal and material--it is possible to read back to the collective mind which selected and shaped them.[5] As this cognitive patterning shapes any human creation, any cultural expression gives a clue to the total view of its culture:

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[1] Benjamin Lee Whorf, "Language, Mind, and Reality," *Language, Thought, and Reality*, ed. John B. Carroll (Cambridge: MIT, 1956) 252.

[2] Dorothy Lee, "Codification of Reality: Lineal and Nonlineal," Dundes, *Every* 329-43.

[3] Edward Hall, *The Silent Language* (New York: Doubleday, 1959) 15.

[4] Hall, "Proxemics," *Current Anthropology* 9 (1968): 83-108.

[5] Toelken, "Folklore" 266.

> The nature of culture is such that if one finds a pattern in social organization and religion, one is likely to find that pattern manifested in time and language.[1]

To bring this cultural meaning system--the society's worldview--to light, one needs first to identify these categories, then decode their messages. Essentially, cultural categories divide up and define experience in terms of similarity and contrast. Many but not all of these categories have linguistic labels, and research begins with recording the names people use for them. After identifying the categories, the task of the ethnographer is to find their taxonomic relationships and particular attributes. This decoding of a culture's expressive behaviour reveals the cognitive rules and maps which govern the group's life.[2]

Many of these cultural premises and categories are held unconsciously among those who share them. Hall explains that misunderstandings or friction between interacting members of different backgrounds frequently result from their mutual ignorance of their own notions of appropriateness, importance, right and wrong. His work illuminates that beyond its concrete expressions, culture controls the individual's perception, thought, and behaviour in deep and persisting ways.[3] Although the individual's perception of reality is shaped--and inevitably biased--by the views of the culture in which he grew, he tends to regard his deportment as "normal." Dorothy Lee makes the point that every human is born into a world defined by already existing patterns from which he cannot free himself:

> . . . a member of a given society not only codifies experienced reality through the use of the specific language and other patterned behaviour characteristics of his culture, but . . . actually grasps reality only as it is presented to him in this code.[4]

The corollary of this is that if a culture is a means of perception and communication in its own human environment, it is a barrier which channels perception, and influences, or even prevents comprehension outside these bounds.[5] Ruth Benedict's appropriate words, "we do not see the lens through which we look," express this inevitable distance between the

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[1] Dundes, "Number" 414.

[2] James P. Spradley and David W. McCurdy, "Cultural Meaning," *The Cultural Experience: Ethnography in Complex Society* (Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1972) 57-77.

[3] Hall, *Silent* 46.

[4] Lee 330.

[5] Dundes, *Every* vii.

self and the other.[1] Our judgement of another culture is likely to be affected by our own worldview.

The anthropological data, showing the stamp of culture on cognition, must not overshadow the unique and creative role of the individual's personality within culture. Anthropologists Kluckhohn and Kelly point out that "culture is not merely a given, it is only available;" each individual's utilization of his cultural pattern is idiomatic.[2] Juha Pentikäinen's monograph, *Oral Repertoire and World View: An Anthropological Study of Marina Takalo's Life History*, analyses the relationships between the personality, culture and environment of a Karelian tradition-bearer.[3] The study examines the extent to which Marina Takalo's life experiences in different cultural and religious milieux have influenced her repertoire and religious views. Pentikäinen's intimate study of Takalo's life and repertoire shows her worldview to be the original effect of a dialectic tension between the individual and her culture. Devout but undogmatic, she deviates from the views of any of the religious membership groups she has come close to, but combines their specific elements in a personal way.[4] Tradition being transformed instead of merely reproduced in the transmission process has been granted ever since Albert Lord's formulation of the oral-formulaic theory, and since amply verified.[5] The implication as far as cultural meaning is concerned finds axiomatic expression in Michael Pickering's comment as regards folksong:

> The meanings encoded in a text at the moment of its production are not necessarily the meanings made and understood by its various recipients. Certain meanings--certain invited readings--may of course be privileged and preferred in the text itself, but there is no guarantee that such meanings will be preferred by either performer or audience.[6]

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[1] Ruth Benedict, "The Science of Custom," Dundes, *Every* 181.

[2] Clyde Kluckhohn and William H. Kelly, "The Concept of Culture," Dundes, *Every* 193.

[3] Juha Pentikäinen, *Oral Repertoire and World View : An Anthropological Study of Marina Takalo's Life History*, FF Communications no. 219 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1978).

[4] Pentikäinen, *Oral* 330.

[5] Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1960); see also David Buchan, *The Ballad and the Folk* (London: Routledge, 1972); Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin, "Tradition: Genuine or Spurious," *Journal of American Folklore* 97 (1984): 273-90.

[6] Michael Pickering, "Song and Social Context," *Singer Song and Scholar*, ed. Ian Russell (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic P, 1986) 75.

1.2. Definitions

The term "worldview" is so general and self-explicatory that it tends to be used rather loosely. "Cognition," "ethos," "ideology," "cosmology" and other related concepts are often preferred.[1] Beside these, "culture" has come to be used in Clyde Kluckhohn's broad definition, which covers all these aspects. The use of "culture" in this comprehensive sense would account for the sparse mention of "worldview" in anthropological literature. In a chapter seeking to elucidate the concept of "culture," Kluckhohn successively paraphrases it as:

> . . . the social legacy the individual acquires from his group, . . . a way of thinking, feeling, and believing, an abstraction from behaviour, a set of standardized orientations to recurrent problems, learned behaviour, a mechanism for the normative regulation of behaviour, a set of techniques for adjusting both to the external environment and to other men.[2]

Robert Redfield's definition of "worldview"--or rather one of its formulations--comes close to Kluckhohn's description of "culture":

> . . . [world view is] the way a people characteristically look outward upon the universe. . . included in "world view" may be the conceptions of what ought to be as well as of what is; and included may be the characteristic ways in which experiences are kept together or apart -- the patterns of thought-- and the affective as well as the cognitive aspect of these things also. "World view" may be used to include the forms of thought and the most comprehensive attitudes towards life. . . . But if there is an emphasized meaning in the phrase "world view," I think it is in the suggestion it carries of the structure of things as man is aware of them. It is in the way we see ourselves in relation to all else.[3]

Redfield defines "worldview" versus its kin concepts, proposing that:

> . . . if "culture" suggests the way a people look to an anthropologist, "worldview" suggests how everything looks to a people.[4]

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[1] Redfield notes that Kluckhohn in his study of the "worldview" of the Navaho Indians speaks of "primitive postulates," "implicit philosophy," "underlying premises" and "laws of thought," in *Little* 88-89.

[2] Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," *The Interpretation of Culture: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic, 1973) 4.

[3] Redfield, *The Primitive World and its Transformations* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1953) 85-86.

[4] Redfield, *Primitive* 86.

He distinguishes "ethos" from worldview," the one relating to the normative, and the other to the cognitive perceptions of a people, a distinction which Clifford Geertz has since qualified:

> A people's ethos is the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood; it is the underlying attitude towards themselves and their world that life reflects. Their world view is their picture of the way things in sheer actuality are, their concept of nature, of self, of society. It comprehends their most comprehensive ideas of order.[1]

Both anthropologists remark that worldview and ethos are nonetheless more similar than different. Redfield suggests that they border and tend to blur with each other;[2] Geertz points out that if it is convenient to treat the cognitive and the normative separately at the level of analysis, they are in circular relation to each other at the empirical level.[3] Iago Galdston enlightens the relation of "worldview" to "cognition":

> In essence, world view is the end result of a process whereby man imposes a pattern of relatedness, order, and meaning upon the primary chaotic miscellany of experience and impressions to which he is subjected throughout his life.[4]

Dundes's and Toelken's folkloristic definitions of "worldview" both rely on the teachings of cultural anthropology:

> . . . a cognitive set by means of which people perceive, consciously or unconsciously, relationships between self, others, cosmos, and the day-to-day living of life.[5]

> . . . a general way of referring to the manner in which a culture sees and expresses its relation to the world around it.[6]

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[1] Geertz, "Ethos, Worldview, and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols," *Interpretation* 127.

[2] Redfield, *Little* 86.

[3] Geertz, "Ethos" 141.

[4] W.T. Jones, "World Views: Their Nature and Their Function," *Current Anthropology* 13 (1972): 95.

[5] Dundes, "Thinking" 54.

[6] Toelken, *Dynamics* 225.

1.3. A Holistic Approach To Culture

In his methodological essay, *The Little Community*, Redfield reflects on the conceptual framework within which the organized life of a human community may be viewed and understood. While "no words can describe all that a community is," says Redfield, the closest one can come to a holistic description is through a conceptualization of the community as: "ecological system," "social structure," "human career," "personality type," and "worldview." He proposes that it is from these concepts that the essential and all pervading characteristics of human communities can be revealed. In keeping with Malinowski's view of a community culture as a dynamic complex of interacting elements, Redfield's conceptualizations are so defined as to capture as much as possible of these workings. He situates them on a continuum on the model of their interconnections in the living context, and conceives of the holistic analysis as progressing in a "radial" fashion, thus approximating the native perception:

> . . . to the member of the more isolated band or village the community is a round of life, a small cosmos; the activities and the institutions lead from one into all the others so that to the native himself the community is not a list of tools and customs; it is an integrated whole.[1]

To understand the community as this integrated whole, one needs to uncover its underlying organization, the nervous system generating the behaviour and thought of its members. In line with cognitive theory, Redfield proposes that this structure is essentially mental; it is made up of ideas and values shared among community members. In a progression from the manifest to the implicit, from the material to the mental, a holistic description evolves along each of these five conceptualizations of the community. That worldview comes last in the investigation suggests that an understanding of the community in these terms entails a knowledge of all other aspects. It is only when considering the whole fabric of the community that the outside observer has a chance to identify its inherent patterns and assess their individual relevance. As it calls for a comprehensive view of the community, a conceptualization of the community in terms of "worldview" appears to be *the* holistic approach par excellence.

Redfield's reflection highlights the pervasiness of worldview throughout the community round of life, hence its relevance to any ethnological investigation. Even a description of the community as "ecological system," exploring the relation of man to

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[1] Redfield, *Little* 10.

nature, leads the ethnographer from observing his doings to inferring the ideas governing such activities. Redfield cites the following observation he made in a Yucatan community of Maya Indians as an example:

> The good man, the moral man, is he who grows maize and is reverent in doing so. A few men who support themselves in trade nevertheless grow maize, because not to do so is to cut one's self off from the community of good and pious men.[1]

The case is as good as a warning against simplistic deductions based on a purely materialistic interpretation of cultural behaviour. While the environment must be taken into account in seeking to understand a people's mind, Redfield points out that no community is ever merely an "ecological system"; any human environment is essentially mental:

> The world of men is made up in the first place of ideas and ideals. . . . Human mental life has a structure of its own. It is difficult to describe it in terms of its connections with the land and the rain and the trees. The things that men think and feel are only partly connected with adaptation for survival.[2]

The community seen as "ecological system" thus does not go far in accounting for mental structure. To argue otherwise, Redfield contends, would be to consider man anything but "the recipient and creator of a changing organisation of ideas and sentiments."[3]

A conceptualization of the community as "social structure," or in terms of the relationships existing between man to man, gets one further than the former concept, and, again, borders on the mental and the religious. The study of social structure naturally brings one to conceiving it as a system of norms and expectancies.[4] Likewise, to describe the community in terms of "human career" or "typical biography" requires the ethnographer to look at crisis rites from an investigation of the members' motives and judgements as regards good and evil. This form of thought reaches further yet into what Redfield designates as the "stuff of the community," its inner self. If all these conceptualizations of the community inevitably connect with "worldview," what then is the particularity of such an approach? It is in apprehending this reality "so far as possible from the inside out," in reproducing more of the conceptions and categories of the community members themselves:

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[1] Redfield, *Little* 22.
[2] Redfield, *Little* 30-31.
[3] Redfield, *Little* 32.
[4] Redfield, *Little* 145.

> It is the attention to the native's conceptions of the cognitive along with the normative and the affective that distinguishes the world view from other conceptions for describing the whole reality.[1]

> Ethos requires the investigator to take an inside view that is very deep and very broad. It makes him share the intimacies of conscience and the villager's feelings of shame or guilt.[2]

Redfield qualifies "worldview" as "the most inclusive if the less precise" account of the community. The most demanding and the least objective, it is also the least secure:

> Such a conception as world view, so little examined and so little related to limited fact, has as yet little denotative power.[3]

Although Malinowski perceived "the native view" to be the ultimate goal of his discipline, its study has not appealed significantly to the younger generation of anthropologists. Dundes speaks of worldview as a territory on which "most anthropologists fear to tread."[4] They have mostly asked what a culture consisted in, but rarely how significant it is to its people and why. Some have also preferred to describe the observable and tangible aspects of a society rather than seek out the underlying or implicit attitudes which inform these expressions. Yet, to elude that question is to miss the dynamics of the culture,

> the complex of motivations, perceptions, and sets that animates all these various practices and institutions, thereby making them one culture.[5]

The study of worldview poses certain problems, which may account for its neglect. Essentially, worldviews are largely unformulated. Jones speaks of worldview as consisting of "a set of beliefs," "a hypothesis introduced by an observer to explain somebody else's behaviour."[6] Such hypotheses, to be tested in the whole context of individual or cultural expression and behaviour, make this study highly speculative; it involves "reading" the latent meanings of behaviour with the danger of "reading into" them rather than "reading them back" to it. While Redfield proposes that any worldview relies

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[1] Redfield, *Little* 88.
[2] Redfield, *Little* 85.
[3] Redfield, *Little* 163.
[4] Jones 93.
[5] Jones 79.
[6] Jones 79-80.

on a vision of the world as having some order,[1] Geertz warns against the tendency to force the observed reality into some satisfying explanatory model, yet adds that "it is not necessary to know everything to understand something":[2]

> To set forth symmetrical crystals of significance, purified of the material complexity in which they were located, and then attribute their existence to autogeneous principles of order, universal properties of the human mind, or vast, a priori Weltanschauungen, is to pretend a science that does not exist and imagine a reality that cannot be found. Cultural analysis is (or should be) guessing at meanings, assessing the guesses, and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses, not discovering the Continent of Meaning and mapping out its bodiless landscape.[3]

If "worldview" is mostly a matter of latent meaning to be derived from behaviour and expression, it can however be discussed with the inside members of the culture under investigation. At this task, some of these will naturally be more articulate, perspicacious or only more willing to talk than others. Hence, the question of *whose* worldview will eventually prevail in the ethnographer's analysis. Redfield answers his own question by pointing out that any worldview is a construction, and that whoever it belongs to--the analyst or the native--it is always temporary because incomplete.[4] While the point is good to make, it also applies to any other ethnographical endeavour. Any collection of data, however extensive, must be read as a meaningful yet relative indication of the reality from which it is extracted.

Perhaps one could suggest that the study of worldview epitomizes the problems of ethnographical research. For, if the approach is characterized by attention given to the native view of all things observed, Redfield reminds one that any description of cultures requires to

> . . . see things first from the inside and then from the outside, first understand the mental states of other people, then describe them as an object of scientific interest and according to the demands of such a study.[5]

He proposes that "worldview" as an approach best illustrates "the ethnographical dilemma" inherent to any investigation. Once he has perceived the meaning and value of the object from the native point of view and feeling, the analyst, to treat it as an object of scientifc

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[1] Redfield, *Little* 95.
[2] Geertz, "Thick" 20.
[3] Geertz, "Thick" 20.
[4] Redfield, *Little* 91.
[5] Redfield, *Little* 81.

interest and communicate this knowledge to anyone outside the community, must describe it in science's own terms. The study and communication of ethnographical phenomena thus entails a shift from the inside to the outside view. In the process, the analyst faces the difficulty of translating native concepts which may not exist in his own language.[1] Redfield is of the opinion that no worldview is ever totally different from another so to as make understanding and communication between cultures impossible. While differences exist and make understanding difficult, they are not unbridgeable. He denounces the fact that anthropologists have tended to emphasize cultural differences rather than resemblances. That the concept of "worldview" has largely been defined in terms of characteristics, whether individual or cultural, is to him a manifestation of this bias. He declares in one of his essays that there may something like a "peasant view of the good life" among rural societies across space and time,[2] but also more generally suggests that "the outlook on life, or worldview, is one dimension of the common human."[3]

1.4. Folkloristic Applications

Toelken's and Dundes's essential concern in introducing the concept of cultural worldview and its study to folklore scholarship is to bring forth the privileged relationship that traditional expressions bear to their culture's entire perception of life. On the grounds of this close interdependence, both give forceful expression to the prime resources of folklore materials in such an investigation:

> . . . because worldview is communicated traditionally and is expressed constantly in traditional modes, folklore represents one of the best approaches for its study.[4]

> One of the very best sources for the study of native categories is folklore. Folklore, consisting as it does of native documents or autobiographical ethnography, is prime data for investigations of cognitive patterning.[5]

That all productions within a culture bear strong relationships to its members' worldview is now granted. Because folklore is artistic expression sanctioned by the tastes of the group, its materials yield an image more revealing of cultural worldview than individual expressions. Toelken explains:

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[1] Redfield, *Little* 81.
[2] Redfield, *Little* 60-80.
[3] Redfield, *Little* 93-94.
[4] Toelken, "Folklore" 268.
[5] Dundes, "Number" 404.

> . . . folklore . . . constitutes a basic and important educative and expressive setting in which individuals learn how to see, act, respond, and express themselves by the empirical observation of close human interactions and expressions in their immediate society (that is, the family, occupational group, ethnic community). Folklore structures the world view through which a person is educated into the language and logic system of this close society. It provides ready formulas for the expression of those cultural ideas in ways useful and pleasurable to us and to any group with which we share close and informal expressive interactions.[1]

In providing a concrete form in which implicit worldview is often made explicit, its materials offer primary information on the group's attitudes, fears and values.[2] Dundes thus describes folklore as an "autobiographical ethnography of a people," an unmediated testimony of a culture.[3] More than as isolated statements by and about the tradition-bearers themselves, Pentikäinen observes that "the genres form an emic system within which each genre has its own code and grammar as well as message."[4]

To break down the study of this broad field, Dundes recommends proceeding from specific points, "folk ideas as units of worldview":

> By folk ideas, I mean traditional notions that a group of people have about the nature of man, of the world, and of man's life in the world.[5]

In line with previous commentators, Dundes conceives of these "folk ideas" as basic unquestioned premises manifested in folklore but not consciously perceived or articulated by those who hold them. He suggests that they belong to "the unconscious culture or unself-conscious culture of a people."[6] In his two studies relating specifically to worldview he examines definite attributes of American worldview, (the futuristic orientation and the frequency of the number three in American culture), and looks for manifestations of these orientations in folkloristic data. He points out that these tendencies often entail degree rather than kind, but that it is precisely these differences--or variations rather--among similarities between cultures which are revealing of the group's attitudes and particular areas of concern and valuation.[7] While folklore may be thought of as "a mirror of culture," Dundes insists

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[1] Toelken, *Dynamics* 24.
[2] Dundes, "Thinking" 55.
[3] Dundes, "Thinking" 54.
[4] Pentikäinen, *Oral* 332.
[5] Dundes, "Folk" 95.
[6] Dundes, "Folk" 101.
[7] Dundes, "Folklore" 471-81.

that what it reflects is the group's image of reality rather than the objective reality. Likewise, Pickering declares that "cultural texts do not relate in any transparent way to a social context."[1] Anthropologist Victor Barnouw goes as far as to suggest that

> Folklore is selective; important aspects of the culture may not appear in the narratives at all.

His statement, it must be added, makes particular reference to W.H.R. Rivers's observation that mythology is less likely to contain familiar and uniform aspects of culture than elements which have some variety and inconsistency.[2] The case, interestingly, shows that since worldview pervades the continuum of traditional expressions, the investigation must be carried across the folklorist's conventional genre categories, and indeed take the whole culture into account. To limit the investigation to a single expressive genre, on the contrary, would be neglecting the dynamics of folklore, ignoring culture as an "integrated whole," thus opening the way to misrepresentations.

Granting Redfield the complexity of the study of worldview in ethnographical context, it remains that a synchronic study of cultural events, directly observable in the natural context of occurrence, and possibly even, commented on by genuine participants in the tradition, constitutes the safest venture in this field. Studies of worldview have taken the way of current folkloristic trends in favouring attention to contemporary phenomena; conversely, explorations of worldview bearing on traditions of the past are only rare.[3] Black American and native American cultures have been the most frequently investigated. Their analyses indeed demonstrate the very intimate knowledge of the culture that a study of worldview requires. Dundes elected his own culture for investigation, and underscored that the knowledge of one's own native categories is equally important for an understanding of another culture.[4] While such studies focus on a particular aspect or genre, Navaho material artefacts, the Blacks' urban tradition of "playing the dozens," or American English traditional idioms, they all found their analyses of these particular "genres" in a holistic perspective on these cultures.[5]

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[1] Pickering, "Song" 74.

[2] Victor Barnouw, *An Introduction to Anthropology* (Homewood, IL: Dorsey, 1971) 278.

[3] The reader is referred to the extensive and annotated bibliography appended to Toelken, *Dynamics* 256-61.

[4] Dundes, "Number" 402.

[5] Abrahams, *Deep Down in the Jungle: Negro Narrative Folklore from the Streets of Philadelphia* (Hatboro, PA: Folklore Associates, 1964); "Playing the Dozens," *Journal of American Folklore* 75 (1972): 209-20; Toelken, "Folklore" 236-45.

When sufficient evidence has been found to establish that recurrent orientations or patterns reflect cognitive categories, there remains the question of their origin and meaning.[1] Thus the study of worldview connects with the whole question of meaning and function in folklore. While explicit mentions of "worldview" are few and far between in the scholarship, references to "meaning," "cultural values" or "function" are far more common. Such commentaries rather speak of "attitudes" and "values" than "ethos" and "worldview."

1.4.1. Approaches to Worldview in Anglo-American Ballad and Folksong Research

Contemporary ballad and folksong scholarship has produced two major interpretive analyses with regard to cultural meaning. One is David Buchan's application of talerole analysis to classical balladry, the other is Roger deV. Renwick's semiotic study of English folk poetry. Both approaches stand out in contemporary ballad and folksong research in carrying out their investigations in diachronic as well as synchronic perspective. The present study, which examines the meanings of a thematic-defined ballad repertoire in certain regional traditions with a similar concern to ally both perspectives, relies on the methods and findings of Buchan's and Renwick's analyses.

The raw materials of ballad study, to a large extent, consist of a bulk of textual records gathered for two centuries. Because the collectors' aim, up to recently, was to trace the artifacts themselves, their legacy contains little aside from an abundant harvest of texts and tunes. From the earlier collectors' exclusive attention to classical ballads and traditional songs of British origin came gradual consideration of the modern songs of local composition. With our generation, attention shifted from the song to the singing, including the singers, their background and art. Today performance and the social relevance of song have become priority concerns. New horizons have opened up to research and recent investigations of the genre have resulted in better insights into its functioning in tradition. In the process, the ballads' mostly textual and musical records along with their disappearance from living tradition have discouraged study of the genre. Once a stronghold of folklore scholarship, one of its authorities speaks of "the diminished status

[1] Dundes, "Number" 420; Dundes accords with Jones in saying that this inevitably leads to speculation or, at the least, psychological interpretation.

of ballad studies in North America today with only a handful of scholars continuing to devote attention to the form."[1]

With the advent of context and performance theories, many folklorists have turned their backs on a genre, the textual study of which had generated so much strife and so little tangible results despite the concentrated efforts of an earlier generation of scholars. Following the impact of socio-linguistics and anthropology on the discipline, folklore scholarship has turned to the more immediate and accessible phenomena of culture, such as modern popular folk songs. Contemporary materials--the upper crust of tradition--have become the only suitable ones for ethnographic research. Interest in the synchronic manifestations of tradition has been at the expense of the past.[2]

When doomed to death, modern folkloristic research on classical balladry has received a new lease on life. Buchan has addressed the question of applying modern contextual approaches to the lower strata of tradition preserved in mere textual records in a broader understanding of context including the diachronic dimension:

> If the modern folklorist studies the communicative dynamics of the performance event, and if only thin information on this score accompanies non-contemporary folklore, then, the objection runs, is it not anachronistic to study folklore of the past?[3]

Buchan judges that folklorists have erred in assuming the inadequacy of the textual records for socio-linguistic and performance-oriented studies of earlier traditions. He denounces this misconception by pointing out various ways in which textual and contextual analyses of sources can fruitfully be conciliated. One of his insights is that materials recorded in the past can be interpreted in an ethnographical light instead of condemned to oblivion. Talerole analysis is one of these methods.

Buchan has amply demonstrated the benefits of applying a Proppian talerole analysis to balladry.[4] His examination of most ballad subgenres to date has established the

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[1] James Porter, "Ballad Explanations, Ballad Reality, and the Singer's Epistemics," *Western Folklore* 45 (1986): 110.

[2] David Buchan, "Tale Roles and Revenants: A Morphology of Ghosts," *Western Folklore* 45 (1986): 110.

[3] Buchan, "Performance Contexts in Historical Perspective," *New York Quarterly* 11 (1985): 61.

[4] Buchan, "Propp's Tale Role and a Ballad Repertoire," *Journal of American Folklore* 95 (1982): 159-72; "Traditional Patterns and the Religious Ballads," *The Concept of Tradition*

resources of this structural model. First, the method has appeared a welcome tool for the purpose of generic and subgeneric classification in enlightening certain points of differentiation and relatedness of certain subgenres and types. Second but of greater import to the present analysis, his work demonstrates how from the texts themselves can be derived clues to the societies that carried them. His enlightening exposure of the cultural concerns, declarations, and values carried by the various ballad subgenres effectively reveals talerole analysis as a method "deriving cultural meaning from textual analysis."[1]

As an effective structural approach, talerole analysis sorts out the constant from the variable elements constituting the ballad text. The analysis thus is grounded on a bilevel analytic perspective, namely at the concrete level of character and the abstract one of tale role. It is the examination of the characters occupying the tale roles which reveals certain structural patterns. Besides pointing to methods of composition and transmission, such patternings, Buchan demonstrates, are also indicative of particular cultural concerns as well as the cultural functioning of the genre in the ballad society. Some of these are cross-generic, others permeate balladry and others still are specific to the various subgenres. From his analyses spanning classical balladry as a whole, Buchan derives the insight that human relationships lie at the heart of the genre's meaning, "constituting the central element in the ballad-story and its declarations."[2] Such a statement is a landmark in ballad scholarship as it attests the social and psychological relevance of balladry. Under the cover of sometimes grotesque physical action and stereotyped characterization, the revelation of the central purpose of this fictional and poetic narrative genre confirms the scholar in his pursuit of the genre's cultural meaning and functioning beyond that of mere entertainment.[3] As "powerfully freighted songs," the ballads' narrative and dramatic substance is informed by a canvas of cultural statements:

> It is a truism for ballads as well as many other expressive forms that they contain role models of behavior such as the stalwart hero, or the

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in Ballad Research: A Symposium, Proc. of the Ninth International Symposium Organized by the Centre for the Study of Vernacular Literature in the Middle Ages, Held at Odense University on 19-20 Nov. 1984, ed. Rita Pedersen and Flemming G. Andersen, 27-41; "The Wit-Combat Ballads," *Narrative Folksong: New Directions*, ed. Carol L. Edwards and Kathleen E.B. Manley (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1985): 380-400; "Tale"; "Sweet William's Questions," *Studies in Newfoundland Folklore*, ed. G. Thomas and J.D.A. Widdowson. (St. John's: Breakwater, 1991) 111-25.

[1] Buchan, "Tale" 144.

[2] Buchan, "Propp's" 168-69.

[3] Buchan, "Propp's" 169.

> resourceful heroine. But it would seem from analysis of the talerole models in these artifacts that they also contain cognitive models, that is, paradigms of meaning which supply cognitive information, which in turn provides guidelines for actual behavior.[1]

Talerole analysis thus becomes a marker not only in ballad scholarship but also the whole discipline of folklore for correlating diachronic traditions and their bygone context. In so doing, the method illlustrates that meaning is to be found neither in the text nor in its plural context levels examined in isolation, but in their mutual conjunction. In a truly folkloristic approach to expressive forms, "one whose primary concern is not the artefact alone, or the socio-cultural ambience alone, but the interrelationship of the artifact and culture," I have elected talerole analysis as a method in my quest of cultural worldview in classical balladry.[2]

Renwick's *English Folk Poetry : Structure and Meaning* is an analysis of worldview in popular narrative song and poetry. Its author seeks the meaning of folk poetry in the articulation of textual structure and ethnographical data, and relies on the assumption that "the singers of traditional folksongs and the makers of local songs as well as working-class poetry all sought and saw coherence in their poetic repertoire and in their everyday life," from which he derives the conclusion that "one should obtain among a clearly related textual corpus the coherence of a unified system of meanings informing those texts."[3] Once one has "cracked the code of the poetic world view," one looks for similar structures in cultural activities, beliefs, and other information, which might validate these findings.[4] The analysis thus proceeds from looking for coherence in the poetic texts to looking for logical interrelationships between the texts' meaning (the "poetic" worldview) and their cultural matrix (the "pragmatic" world view).[5]

Renwick situates his analysis at a fairly abstract level of interpretation. Considering that the meaning of folk poetry is largely implicit, he insists that it is not to be found at a merely literal and denotative level of textual expression. He reasons that the effort invested in the production and performance of folk poetry as of any folk expression would not be justified if their meaning was simply similar to that of ordinary speech.[6] Renwick

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[1] Buchan, "Tale" 150.
[2] Buchan, "Traditional" 39-40.
[3] Renwick, *English* 11 and 14.
[4] Renwick, *English* 19.
[5] Renwick, *English* 11-12.
[6] Renwick, *English* 164.

conceives that folk poetry exhibits levels of signification that range from straightforward denotative "reflection" to profoundly connotative symbolization," from explicit to implicit meaning. Traditional, anonymously-created and orally circulated songs are closer to the connotative pole whereas the urban local songs tend towards the conversational and the pragmatic reality. Folk poetry, however, exhibits both uncoded, denotative "signs" and coded, connotative "signifiers." The latter, consisting in formulae or cliches, constitute "the deepest language" for carrying implicitly the most significant meanings, and are responsible for the predominant connotative quality of traditional songs.

Like Buchan, Renwick finds structuralism particularly appropriate for the investigation of textual meanings, for essentially the method looks at phenomena in relation to each other.[1] In providing a means of decoding the articulation of meanings in a body of related texts, it brings to light the worldview of the singing community:

> It is how relationships at various levels are conceptualized and manipulated within the imaginative world of a poem's text that provides us with the key knowledge of the poem's signification, or what I shall simply call its meaning--the text's major premises, the world view built on those premises, and the specific messages thus generated.[2]

Renwick examines three different kinds of materials: traditional songs, local songs and modern-day working class folk poetry. He observes that the meanings of English working-class poetry (or worldview) remain remarkably stable despite differences of time and living environment. With the advent of industralization, the working class environment has largely shifted from the small rural community to the larger and more diversified world of urban life. The experience of the population, and particularly that of the working class, evolved from one of "a shared, knowable, and not-widely questioned environment to one of distributed knowledge."[3] The old way of life produced the traditional songs, the new the local compositions and recitations. The comparative analysis of these traditions, however, reveals a semantic continuity with differences in complexity rather than substance; the new urban environment widening the range of choices, and providing for greater heterogeneity in behaviour:[4]

> . . . The traditional songs, therefore, display greater redundancy in their language, topics, themes; likewise their world view, which would be one

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[1] Renwick, *English* 15-16.
[2] Renwick, *English* 16.
[3] Renwick, *English* 8.
[4] Renwick, *English* 8.

> of a people which can easily be considered as a unity. The worldview reflected by the local songs, on the other hand, requires more finely drawn categories to encompass the greater freedom of choice, ideologies of the city life. What remains true of both these kinds of songs is their direct relevance and intimate relation to the "communitas," whatever its setting size, and way of life. . . . all folk poetry is in some important measure a message about, and is designed to influence, human relationships among significant Others and between Self and those Others in a way intimately linked with everyday living.[1]

Debora Kodish applies Renwick's methodology in examining patterns in commonplaces of the Newfoundland and the Maritime Northeast song repertoire.[2] Looking at these patterns in the local life context, she finds a correspondence between issues and actions present in the ballad world and in the real outport world.[3] She observes that while commonplaces neither exactly reflect nor skew outport reality, they always center upon culturally significant matters.[4] Her statement that "songs elaborate matters of community" finds an echo in Kenneth Goldstein's observation of a similar resonance between the prevalence of a strong religious and fatalistic element in sea disaster songs as in the culture's general outlook and behaviour.[5]

Christine Cartwright's study of the Scottish and American versions of "The Gypsy Laddie" (Ch 200) in correlation with their respective cultural contexts similarly uncovers a meaningful correspondence between text and context.[6] She finds conclusive concordance between the ballad's portrayal of gypsies and the general feelings about them in both societies. A projection of sociological facts onto the textual variations of this popular narrative in their respective cultural contexts leads Cartwright to suggest that ballads "must have evoked a powerful complex of cultural anxieties and concerns."[7]

Thomas Burton sees Anglo-American ballads as "an effective indirection by which one may come to an understanding of people," and seeks the "implicit values" extolled in their songs:

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[1] Renwick, *English* 7.

[2] Debora Kodish, "Fair Young Ladies and Bonny Irish Boys: Pattern in Vernacular Poetics," *Journal of American Folklore* 96 (1983): 131-50.

[3] Kodish, "Fair" 139.

[4] Kodish, "Fair" 144 and 145.

[5] Kenneth S. Goldstein, "Faith and Fate in Sea Disaster Ballads of Newfoundland Fishermen," *By Land and By Sea: Studies in the Folklore of Work and Leisure, A Festschrift for Horace Beck*, ed. R. Abrahams, K. Goldstein and Wayland Hand (Hatboro, Pa: Legacy, 1985): 1-12.

[6] Cartwright, "Johnny."

[7] Cartwright, "Johnny" 399.

> The ballads do not teach, they tell stories; but what those stories are about, who is involved, and what actions are approved or disapproved reveal indirectly the values that are common to those who sing them--and it is precisely that indirection that allows one to "find directions out," to know what people really believe instead of what they think they believe or would like to believe; what they are, not what they would be; what to them are the realities of life, opposed to appearances.[1]

Such values carried by the texts receive expression in the testimonies Burton collected from singers in Beech Mountain, North Carolina.[2] Without reducing the dialectic between song and singer to a matter of which informs which, Burton opens the way to possible answers concerning the lasting appeal and cultural meaning of balladry. His reflection, for instance, that one of these singers commenting on the tragic ballads "is a woman who for almost three quarters of a century has borne, besides the harsh demands of the mountains, the pain of human conflict," would suggest that such powerfully emotional ballads, and especially those which have lasted best, have done so not so much perhaps by virtue of some people's natural and cultural isolation, but of the response they might offer to the crises of life likely heightened by such conditions.

George Casey, Neil Rosenberg and Wilfred Wareham's study of repertoire categorization in the Newfoundland context is a pioneering exploration of native generic concepts of song.[3] Their examination of the ways in which folksingers consciously and unconsciously categorize their repertoire follows up Dan Ben Amos's concept of genres as "ethnic" reality rather than "analytical" category, i.e. as cultural modes of communication rather than models for the scientific classification of texts.[4] Contrary to this long prevailing conception, an approach to genre as cultural reality no longer prevents scholars from examining the folk ideas that underlie and permeate verbal expressions.[5] The Newfoundland study, based on two distinct communities, reveals seven levels of repertoire categorization defined in terms of singer and audience interaction, with song categories defined according to the particular dynamics of community expression.[6] The case once again demonstrates the necessity for a holistic and cross-generic approach to culture in

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[1]Thomas G. Burton, "The Anglo-American Ballad: 'By Indirections Find Directions Out'," *North Carolina Folklore* 19 (1971): 186.

[2]Burton, *Some Ballad Folks* (1978; Boone, NC: Appalachian Consortium P, 1981).

[3]George J. Casey, Neil V. Rosenberg and Wilfred W. Wareham, "Repertoire Categorization and Performer-Audience Relationships: Some Newfoundland Folksong Examples," *Ethnomusicology* 16 (1972): 397-403.

[4]Ben-Amos, "Analytical Categories and Ethnic Genres," Ben-Amos, *Folklore* 216.

[5]Ben-Amos, *Folklore* xiv.

[6]Casey, Rosenberg and Wareham 398.

order to uncover the meaning of any particular genre within the dynamic complex of symbolic expression.

Most recently, ballad meaning in relation to context was examined on the wide Anglo-American scene as the topic of a session in the 1984 convention of the Modern Language Association.[1] The participants concurred in the view that context at its many levels profoundly affects behaviour and worldview. This view, Carol Edwards suggests, marks a new area in ballad scholarship, which "has moved away from examining texts in isolation to considering contextual influences upon individually-and community-derived meanings."[2] Accordingly, meaning is perceived to be context-specific and derivable from the particular intersecting contexts of the song event instead of fixed and pre-ordained in the ballad-text. Thus reiterated is Pentikäinen's proposition that the individual incorporates and modifies society's view, and that traditional expression emerges from the dynamic between individually and collectively conceived views.

James Porter's conception of this dialectic somewhat reverses the traditional view. The semantics elicited from singers resonate with community standards and values not because they have been transmitted at an early stage of their socialization but because as members of the community, they arrive at, or negotiate, common or overlapping views on the general meaning of song. He concludes that the totality of meaning of song is derived from all experiences of the song--the singers' "epistemics"--and that these experiences become cultural resonances.[3]

John D. Niles's study of the ballad repertoire of the Scottish travellers argues for the study of the songs' meaning in their full human context, with relation to the ways of life, beliefs, fears, ideas, loves, and prejudices of the people who sing them.[4] He proposes that the ballads have persisted in the travellers' repertoire because they are "an expression of their reality," and thus "make sense to them."[5] The ballads' perception, he suggests, has cultural resonations in this particular group:

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[1] The papers presented on that occasion were published in *Western Folklore* 45 (1986): 77-163.

[2] Edwards, introduction, *Western Folklore* 45 (1986): 77-8.

[3] James Porter, "Ballad Explanations, Ballad Reality, and the Singer's Epistemics, *Western Folklore* 45 (1986): 119.

[4] Niles.

[5] Niles 98.

> If a song tradition exists, then it is recreative at every stage. . . . In a viable song tradition such as we see illustrated among the Scottish Travellers, this process of re-creation will occur because the world presented in the ballads and the worldview of the people who sing them coincide, like two mental templates that are superimposed. . . . The oral lore of the Travellers is sauce for their life, true. It is also "spiritual nourishment."[1]

Barre Toelken draws attention to the poetic context of the genre as expressive of cultural meaning:

> . . . there has existed in balladry a considerable reservoir of potentially connotative references, based on shared cultural values, which have been shaped and used by gifted singers to foreground and give value, depth, and cultural meaning to otherwise neutral actions or situations.[2]

Formulas and connotative units, however, should not be abstracted from their cultural context for it is only through the shared system of customs and values that ballads and other expressive forms make poetic sense to the culture. As yet another contextual level, Toelken introduces that of the generic context or the application of cultural messages to the particular conventions of the genre, encouraging ballad research to further analysis of this connotative language.[3]

These various contributions show a promising increase in interpretive studies in folksong; each opens a door onto the wide question of worldview, none however provides a ready-made methodological model as a magic key. As Renwick suggests, the heart of the matter consists in developing a satisfactory approach to meaning; one which achieves a balance between denotative and connotative interpretation. Such an approach "grounds the analyzed texts in their relevant context" but also recognizes that folk poetry, in selecting some of its significant aspects, "recodes experience through a socially conscious and communicable poetic conception." His recommendation that "the more one knows of the culture's pragmatic worldview ('the ethnography') and poetic worldview ('the tradition') the more meaning one will see in the text" will be a sure guide.[4]

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[1] Niles 105.

[2] Toelken, "Figurative Language and Cultural Contexts in the Traditional Ballads," *Western Folklore* 45 (1986): 128-42.

[3] Toelken, "Figurative" 135.

[4] Renwick, "On the Interpretation of Folk Poetry," *Narrative* 406.

1.4.2. Worldview in Other Genres

The question of meaning in folklore has also been addressed at two international conferences on folk narrative.[1] Scholars agree on the urgency of this study if not on its methods. Linda Degh encourages research in this direction even though she gives echo to some of the hazards of the venture. She expresses the view that folktale research possesses the tools to go beyond the observation of surface features so that one should strive for a deeper understanding of the materials.[2] Jawarharlal Handoo states that "meaning in folklore, whether conscious or unconscious, still remains the most important challenge modern folklorists face,"[3] and quotes Dundes's recommendation that "folklorists of the future must try to answer the difficult question of why an item of folklore exists now or why it existed in the past."[4]

There have been some punctual interests in worldview in relation to tales, personal narratives and riddles before Bengt Holbek's very recent interpretive work of fairy tales.[5] A team of researchers from ethnolinguistics, anthropology, and literary analysis have recently introduced their approach to the study of current West African tales.[6] They declare themselves inheritors of French structuralism, and are guided in this choice by a common and primary interest in worldview. Their study focuses on tales because they are very much alive in these societies, and are a privileged vehicle for the transmission of norms and values. The quest for meaning in studies of Märchen is based on a correlation of the tale variants to sociocultural and psychomental conditions.[7]

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[1] "Journées d'études en littérature orale: analyse des contes: problèmes de méthode," held March 23-26, 1982; The 8th Congress for the International Society for Folk Narrative Research Held in Bergen, June 12-17, 1984.

[2] Linda Degh, "Foreword: A Quest for Meaning," *Journal of Folklore Research* 20 (1983): 145-50.

[3] Jawarharlal Handoo, "Meaning in Folklore: Theory and Practice," *The 8th Congress for the International Society for Folk Narrative Research*, ed. Reimund Kvideland and Torunn Selberg (Bergen: n.p., 1984), 3:377.

[4] Handoo 389.

[5] Bengt Holbek, *Interpretation in Fairy Tales*: Danish Folklore in a European Perspective, FF Communications no. 239 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1987).

[6] Geneviève Calame-Griaule, Veronika Görög-Karady, Suzanne Platiel, Diana Rey-Hulman, Christiane Seydou, "The Variability of Meaning and the Meaning of Variability," *Journal of Folklore Research* 20 (1983): 153-70.

[7] Degh, "Foreword" 147.

In a discussion of "tradition" and the applicability of the term to personal narrative, Sandra Stahl argues that what makes this form of expression a folklore genre is the "traditional attitudes," the "cultural evaluations" which underlie the overt content of this seemingly idiosyncratic story.[1] These attitudes, she feels, represent the point or "meaning" of the genre as beliefs do in memorates.[2] In agreement with Lauri Honko's proposition regarding beliefs, Stahl suggests that attitudes are abstract entities or the unverbalized segment of a group's worldview. She proposes that the personal narrative is the most likely vehicle and maybe the primary narrative genre for expressing traditional attitude.[3]

Elli Köngäs Maranda has analysed the structural rules that generate riddles, and interpreted the relationship between these rules and the worldviews of those who manipulate these rules.[4] The function of riddles and riddling thus would be to question the validity of the cultural system. To this, Michael Lieber has objected that a people's cognitive order could not possibly be put in doubt as it founds its logic and understanding of reality.[5] For him, rather than question the established order with a view to deny its validity, riddles merely explore it, and through this process reaffirm its integrity. So it appears that identifying cognitive categories is one thing, interpreting them another.

The anthropological and folkloristic literatures on worldview, it appears from this survey, show no lack of insights, theoretical or pragmatic, and certainly not as regards ballad and folksong. These various contributions, strikingly, hardly diverge either in their conceptions or recommendations for tackling this delicate object: all agree on the need to approach worldview from a holistic perspective articulating textual and contextual data. If worldview is a unified system of meanings, and cultural expressions each yield but a part of this message, an ethnographic and multigeneric approach appears in order for the investigation of the moral affinities between a ballad corpus and its cultural complex. Being "the structure of things," worldview appears to be sought the most adequately along structural lines.

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[1] Sandra K.D. Stahl, "The Personal Narrative in Folklore," *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 14 (1977):9-29.

[2] For a discussion of the relationship of belief to memorate, the reader is referred to Lauri Honko, "Memorates and the Study of Folk Beliefs," *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 1 (1964): 5-19.

[3] Stahl 22.

[4] Elli Köngäs Maranda, "The Logic of Riddles," *Structural Analysis of Oral Tradition*, ed. Pierre Maranda and Elli Köngäs Maranda (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1971).

[5] Michael Lieber, "Riddles, Cultural Categories, and World View," *Journal of American Folklore* 89 (1976): 255-65.

To neglect the human dimension of worldview for its cultural and individual ones might result in missing the forest for the trees. Relevant readings across the humanities have provided major insights into man's perception and attitudes towards death beyond the mere regional level, and recommended this thematic focus for the study of cultural worldview. The following chapter complements this one in examining death at these different levels.

Chapter 2

Death as an Expression of Worldview:

A Multidisciplinary Perspective

Death is a cultural as much as a natural phenomenon, and a commendable focus for a study of cultural worldview. If it is true that "rituals reveal values at their deepest levels," none do this better than funeral rites.[1] These have been called the most specifically human or cultural aspect of the "anthropos," the channel through which man expresses his whole understanding of life.[2] Culture can even be defined as a defensive array against human mortality: "Toute société repose sur un pari d'immortalité. Ce qu'on nomme culture n'est rien autre qu'un ensemble organisé de valeurs et de structures que la société s'invente pour s'affirmer malgré et contre la mort."[3] So, it is no surprise to find Philippe Ariès, the author of the authoritative work, *L'homme devant la mort*, also a prominent figure of "l'histoire des mentalités."[4] In this classic study, Ariès takes the treatment of death as a yardstick to gauge an entire civilization. His analysis, which relies on a diversity of sources--from iconography to wills and gravestones--first appeared in a condensed version in 1974, to be followed by a full-fledged French edition in 1977. To this was added an illustrated publication devoted to material artefacts in 1983.[5] Ariès's penetrating analysis of attitudes toward death has had an impressive

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[1] Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Cornell UP, 1969) 6, quoting Monica Wilson.

[2] Morin 21.

[3] Louis-Vincent Thomas, *Rites de mort: pour la paix des vivants* (Paris: Fayard, 1985) 119. The author's other studies relating to death are the following: *Cinq essais sur la mort africaine* (Dakar: Fac. Lettres, 1968); *Anthropologie de la mort* (Paris: Payot, 1976); *Le cadavre* (Bruxelles: Complexe, 1980); *La mort africaine* (Paris: Payot, 1982); *Fantasmes au quotidien* (Paris: Librairie des Méridiens, 1984).

[4] Philippe Ariès, *L'homme devant la mort*, 2 vols. (Paris: Seuil, 1977). This work is Ariès's definitive and extended version of the previous publications: *Western Attitudes toward Death: from the Middle Ages to the Present*, trans. Patricia M. Ranum (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1974) and its later French edition, *Essais sur l'histoire de la mort en Occident: du Moyen-Age à nos jours* (Paris: Seuil, 1975). The author's other major works include: *Histoire des populations françaises et de leurs attitudes devant la vie depuis le XVIIIè siècle* (1948; Paris: Seuil, 1971) and *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'ancien régime* (1960; Paris: Seuil, 1973).

[5] Ariès, *Images de l'homme devant la mort* (Paris: Seuil, 1983).

follow-up: more has been written on death and dying in the past decade than during the previous fifty years.[1]

While death rites provide a key to the worldview of their cultural environment, the universality of this most fundamental and enigmatic human experience cannot be discounted. In any investigation of the attitudes and values of a particular group, including this one, one needs to examine the ethnographical reality also in a supra-cultural and transcultural perspective. An inquiry into such a complex issue, therefore, calls for a multidisciplinary approach. This chapter reviews essential scientific understandings of death in both dimensions with a view to inform an investigation of its perception and expression in the ballad repertoire of a particular culture. To this purpose, the following overview proceeds from a reading of socio-historical, anthropological, and psycho-medical literature to up-to-date folkloristic approaches to the study of belief.

2.1. Western Attitudes toward Death from the Middle Ages to the Present

The relative abundance of recent studies on death should not obliterate the hazards of such an investigation. If a society's expression of death is one of the most enlightening, it remains one of the most obscure given the complexity of attitudes, their essentially subconscious nature, and the silence of sources. In addition to the latter's muteness, there is considerable variation between parish records ("mort subie"), expressive behaviour ("mort vécue") and literary sources ("discours sur la mort").[2] Ariès has surmounted these difficulties by compiling, correlating and emphasizing the points of convergence of these most diversified materials (literary, scriptural, administrative and artifactual). Monographs in the wake of Ariès's impressive study covering the Middle Ages to the present indeed testify to a high degree of convergence in their interpretations, and all subscribe to certain distinct changes in attitudes toward death.[3] Essentially, they commonly conclude in the absence of any mechanical link between the number of deaths recorded at a given period and the attitudes held at the

[1] A comment made by Gerald L. Pocius in *Material History Bulletin* 23 (1986): iii-iv.

[2] Michel Vovelle, "Les attitudes devant la mort: problèmes de méthode, approches et lectures différentes," *Annales économies sociétés civilisations* 31 (1976): 120-32.

[3] Vovelle, *Mourir autrefois: attitudes collectives devant la mort aux XVIIè et XVIIIè siècles* (Paris: Gallimard, 1974); *La mort et l'occident de 1300 à nos jours* (Paris: Gallimard, 1983); Pierre Chaunu, *La mort à Paris, XVIè, XVIIè et XVIIIè siècles* (Paris: Fayard, 1978); Jacques Le Goff, *La naissance du purgatoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1981).

time, contrary to the conventional and perhaps less humanistic conception of history. While Ariès has not answered the complex question as to what causes these notable changes in attitudes, his and his disciples' accounts ascribe to the collective subconscious a more prominent part than to any economical, social, or ideological factors:[1]

> Mais à leur manière, avec ce poids spécifique d'angoisse, les attitudes devant la mort nous semblent soumises aux lois générales qui régissent ces domaines de l'inconscient collectif.
> Le poids des facteurs matériels y est essentiel, mais nous convenons sans peine qu'il ne s'exerce pas de manière mécaniste.[2]

Ariès's work is as yet unmatched in scope. His reconstruction of western attitudes toward death imposes itself as a reference to any further work on the subject. If the work's enormous scope (1500 years) exposes it to inevitable simplification, its ambition nevertheless remains its greatest merit.[3] And, unchallenged is Ariès's typology of four distinct attitudes, which he has termed "tamed death," "one's own death," "thy death" and "forbidden death." The first designates what he calls the "traditional" attitude in the popular rather than the folkloristic sense. Thus it represents the oldest attitude, the one which predated Christianity and, even when found currently, yet does not manifest its influence. A slightly enigmatic paradigm, "tamed death," aptly evokes this attitude's characteristic resignation to death as a fatality of human existence. The later Middle Ages saw the Christian ritualization of its immemorial death customs, and along with nascent individualism in western culture inaugurated "one's own death." Towards the thirteenth century death was no longer accepted as a matter of fact of a collective destiny, but feared on account of the Judgment of souls according to their personal merits. The prevailing concern thus was with living and, particularly, dying in such a way as to obtain salvation for oneself and for those expiating their sins in purgatory. Following this, the romantics enhanced the first concern for "thy death," that of the loss of dear ones to the grave. The worst ordeal in human experience, death was dramatized as well as embellished; the contemporaneous culture sublimated the trauma of survival in making joined death the perfection of love. The modern way of death, finally, appears to be the furthest removed from the "traditional" one, and no less than its "inversion."

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[1] Ariès, *Essais* 236.

[2] Vovelle, "Attitudes" 129-31. Ariès's and Vovelle's positions agree with Redfield's account of culture and worldview as essentially a matter of ideas and ideals rather external circumstances.

[3] Vovelle, "Attitudes" 127.

"Forbidden" or "inverted death" is shaped to the materialistic concerns of the age: the ultimate evidence of failure of technological and medical progress, death in the most advanced societies of the west is tabooed as much as feared. Thus, while each of these attitudes appears to have prevailed at a particular time in western history, Ariès insists that they are essentially a-chronic, and often coexist within one particular place, time, and even individual.[1]

2.2. Funeral Rites as Social Therapy

A historical perspective on death-related behaviour in the west has mapped out four attitudes prevailing at distinct times. Next to these definite mutations, the anthropological, sociological, and ethnological literatures attest to the existence of a recurrent pattern, or a universal idea underlying and motivating funeral practices, whether it be in western advanced societies or sub-tropical primitive cultures, the Middle Ages or the present. Arnold van Gennep has elucidated the dynamic functioning of "rites of passage," including death.[2] He proposes that all rites have a threefold structure consisting of three major phases: separation (detachment from an earlier state), transition (an intermediary and therefore ambiguous state of passage), and incorporation (a new stable state marking the completion of this passage). In all rites, and funerals in particular, the transitional phase is of central import; this is the most critical stage of the three for the subject then lies in a state of "betwixt and between" synomymous with symbolic "danger" and "impurity."[3] This position makes him ritually unclean, and dangerous to his environment because its ambiguity contradicts the cherished principles and categories of his group. Mary Douglas explains:

> Danger lies in transitional states, simply because transition is neither one state nor the next. It is undefinable. The person who must pass from one to another is himself in danger and emanates danger to others. The danger is controlled by ritual which precisely separates him from his old status, segregates him for a time and then publicly declares his entry to his new status.[4]

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[1] A detailed synopsis of each of these "attitudes" introduces the following respective sections.

[2] Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizebom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (1909; Chicago: Chicago UP, 1960).

[3] For an introduction to these concepts, see Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966) and Turner, "'Betwixt and Between': The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage," *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1967) 93-111.

[4] M. Douglas, *Purity* 96.

Significantly, in the case of death, not only the deceased but also the immediate relatives are subjected to ritual prescriptions. Through symbolically bearing the contamination of death, the "mourners" partake in the impurity of the deceased, who in the social definition, is no longer a member of the living community nor yet integrated into that of the ancestors. The ambiguity of this liminal status between life and death--the latter to be understood as definitive removal from life--parallels the ambivalent feelings of the survivors, their attachment to the deceased versus their fear of the corpse, a desire of retention as well as removal of the body. Possibly also, the temporary retention of the newly-deceased allows the living community to "kill" it ("tuer le mort"), whereby the living symbolically fantasize control over him.[1] The transitional stage corresponds to the time of decomposition, traditionally thought to be of one year, also corresponding to the period of mourning imposed on the immediate relatives.[2] The social restrictions upon the latter are the symbolic image of the process of integration of the deceased into the world of the ancestors. In the worst case, the deceased is mobilized in this no-man's land between life and death--at the living's expense. Such is the case of "the dead without status,"[3] whose admission to the community of the departed has been hampered by reason of a bad death: violent or unprepared. Newborns, not yet incorporated into the community of the living by baptismal or naming rites, and all other deaths for one reason of another unaccompanied by proper ritual and disposal make up the dangerous dead. These are the uncontrolled and dangerous dead, unpacified by proper ritual and burial. Nothing is more tragic than the case of an unrecovered body.[4] These restless dead, never successfully disposed of, come back to the world of the living, and understandably not with the best intentions.[5]

Death is a cultural phenomenon as an event affecting the community as much as the individual. Like birth and any other salient event in man's life, death has everywhere and always been marked by some ceremony signifying the individual's solidarity to his lineage as well as to his community. A personal and family drama, death is societal in its

[1] As an illustration, Thomas mentions that among the Diola people in Senegal, a wild bull symbolizing the deceased is put to death on the day of burial; Thomas, *Mort* 100-1.

[2] Morin 37, quoting Robert Herz, "Représentation collective de la mort," *Année Sociologique 1905-06*.

[3] Pentikäinen, "The Dead without Status," *Nordic Folklore: Recent Studies*, ed. Reimund Kvideland and Henning K. Sehmsdorf (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989) 128-34.

[4] L.-V. Thomas, *Cadavre* 46; *Rites* 141.

[5] Van Gennep, *Rites* 160.

consequences.[1] More, Raymond Firth calls funerals "a social rite par excellence." The ritualisation of death is part of man's strategic array against nature, which is mostly a defence plan built on prohibitions and concessions.[2] Public enemy number one, death opens a breach in the community, whose essential function, after all, is maintaining the species. Endangered by the loss of one of its members, the community of the living engages in a ritual mourning process--a collective therapy--whereby the community recovers its vitality and unity:

> Le deuil exprimait l'angoisse de la communauté visitée par la mort, souillée par son passage, affaiblie par la perte d'un de ses membres. Elle vociférait pour que la mort ne revienne plus, pour qu'elle s'écarte, comme les grandes prières litaniques devaient détourner les catastrophes. . . . Les visites du deuil refaisaient l'unité du groupe, recréaient la chaleur humaine des jours de fête; les cérémonies de l'enterrement devenaient aussi une fête d'où la joie n'était pas absente, où le rire avait souvent vite fait de l'emporter sur les larmes.[3]

In brief, rites, including the ones accompanying death, function as symbolic means of surmounting life crises upsetting to the life of the group and the individual. They assuage the anxiety fostered by these crises through prescribing certain behaviours securing the successful "passage" of the individual from one state to the next, thus providing a feeling of security:

> Telle est la fonction du rite: à partir d'un système de formes et de symboles, il dicte les recettes et les conduites à tenir pour purger les doutes et canaliser la réussite. . . . Sa finalité profonde est bien de sécuriser; par son pouvoir structurant et apaisant, il constitue, dans toutes les occasions où perce l'inquiétude du devenir, une véritable nécessité vitale.[4]

This psychological function is accompanied by a sociological one, that of reinforcing social cohesion: "Les rites sont la forme indispensable pour exprimer et entretenir les liens, susciter le partage des émotions, solenniser ou valoriser les situations, faire circuler les biens, bref pour assurer et renforcer la cohésion sociale."[5]

Of all, funeral rites offer a supreme example of the adaptative and therapeutical value of ritual, which, though revolving around the dead person, are first and foremost aimed at

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[1] David G. Mandelbaum, "Social Uses of Funeral Rites," *The Meaning of Death*, ed. Herman Feifel (New York: Mc Graw-Hill, 1959) 189.
[2] Ariès, *Homme* 2:314.
[3] Ariès, *Homme* 2:292.
[4] L.-V. Thomas, *Rites* 7.
[5] L.-V. Thomas, *Rites* 15.

the living, as suggested by one of L-V. Thomas's titles: *Rites de Mort pour la Paix des Vivants*. What they symbolically bring to the dead, they effectively bring to the bereaved community: the evacuation of the otherwise potentially dangerous dead into the otherworld, the revitalization of the living, the restoration of order, and a channelling of the bereavement process to its successful completion. This is enough proof that the procedure accompanying death, whatever its form, is a ritual of life, and a universal necessity.

2.3. The Mourning Process as Individual Therapy

As the traditional community recovers its balance and vitality through ritual behaviour, so do the bereaved relatives go through a mourning process which is to rehabilitate them to normal social life. Mourning rites prolong the function of the burial ceremony, in enabling those who are the more deeply and personally affected by the loss of the deceased to sever all emotional links with him. To fully appreciate how these rites ensure the success of the mourning process, one needs to take an insight into the psychology of bereavement.

In his authoritative study, *Death, Grief and Mourning*, Geoffrey Gorer distinguishes three stages in adult bereavement. The first is a short period of shock, usually lasting between the occurrence of death and the disposal of the body, the second is a period of intense mourning accompanied by the withdrawal from the external world following the funeral, and the third is a period of recovery and resumption of normal social life.[1] The second phase is the most critical one, for mourning then is the most intense, and the mourner is mostly left alone to bear it. This stage, Freud points out, comes close to melancholia, and is characterized by inhibition and exclusive devotion to mourning, restless sleep, often with vivid dreams, failure of appetite, and loss of weight.[2] In the last and recovering stage, the subject directs his interest outward again, with sleep and weight stabilized.

Modern psycho-medical research bears out that bereavement is a natural process evolving along these stages. It also demonstrates the necessity for the subject to achieve this progression in order to bring this trauma to a successful resolution. Indeed, while the loss of a dear one inflicts a deep wound, recovery comes naturally provided no interference

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[1] Geoffrey Gorer, *Death, Grief and Mourning in Contemporary Britain* (New York: Doubleday, 1965) 129-48.

[2] Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," *Collected Papers*, trans. Joan Riviere (London: Hogarth, 1956) 4:153.

resulting in delay is taken in healing.[1] Through this process, the mourner effects his own recovery, which amounts to internalizing the deceased. This supposes emancipation from the bondage of the dead person, readjustment to the environment in which he is missing, and the formation of new relationships, a task which psychiatrists describe as "grief work":

> Le deuil est un travail. C'est comme le travail de la perte d'un membre de son propre corps. C'est un travail de séparativité.[2]
>
> Grief, it sems, is a complex and time-consuming process in which a person gradually changes his view of the world and the places and habits by means of which he orientates and relates to it. It is a process of realization, of making psychologically real an external event which is not desired and for which coping plans do not exist.[3]

The duration of a grief reaction, it seems, depends on the success with which a person does this "grief work."[4] The ethnological literature gives ample evidence to show that the bereaved person in traditional societies was supported by the restrictions imposed by social convention throughout this process, and the most strictly during the hardest stage of the mourning process.[5] A temporary outcast, the mourner is excluded from any social occasion, and expected to behave in certain ways signifying his stigma to all. What would seem to be a lack of sympathy, paradoxically enough, is an expression of the community's recognition of the mourner's ordeal and the needs of his condition. Gorer comments:

> On the basis of comparative material and psycho-analysis, it [the ritual celebration of death and mourning] would appear to be the most appropriate technique for mourners to make the complicated psychological and social adjustments involved in the loss of a primary relative.[6]

Mourning, which once was ritually sanctioned in our western tradition, largely disappeared in the later decades of this century. The ceremonials, visitations, and

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[1] Ariès, *Homme* 2:290-91.

[2] Françoise Dolto, "La mort au risque de la psychanalyse," *En face de la mort* (Toulouse: Privat, 1983) 113-14.

[3] Colin Murray Parkes, "The First Year of Bereavement: A Longitudinal Study of the Reaction of London Widows on the Death of their Husbands," *Psychiatry* 33 (1970): 465-66.

[4] Gorer 143.

[5] See, for instance, besides L.-V. Thomas' studies relating to Africa mentioned above, Van Gennep, "Du berceau à la tombe: V. Les funérailles," *Manuel de folklore français contemporain*, (Paris: Picard, 1946) 649-824; William A. Douglas, *Death in Murelaga: Funerary Ritual in a Spanish Basque Village* (Seattle: U of Washington P, 1969); Richard Kalish and David K. Reynolds, ed. *Death and Ethnicity: A Psychocultural Study* (Los Angeles: U of Southern California, 1976); Kalish, ed., *Death and Dying: Views from Many Cultures*, Perspectives on Death and Dying Series no. 1 (Farmingdale, NY: Baywood, 1980).

[6] Gorer 130.

symbolism of the funeral period have mostly been swept away from the pragmatic ethos of our time. Hence, Gorer's thesis that

> the lack of accepted ritual and guidance is accompanied by a very considerable amount of maladaptive behaviour, from the triviality of meaningless "busy-ness" through the private rituals of what I have called mummification to the apathy of despair.[1]

In other words, Gorer defends the view that giving way to grief is a psychological necessity, and that its forced inhibition by the "death denying society," which discards grief as morbid, demoralizing, and contradictory to its "fun morality," is not without consequences. For, the whole apparatus of death and mourning rites channels as well as releases or relaxes the tensions to be dealt with in such a crisis, and this quite apart from belief in immortality. Ritual activity has been called a healing blessing as it carries the mourner past a dead centre and on his way again.[2] There is data to show a relationship between the observance of post-funeral rituals and grief adjustment, particularly after death of a spouse.[3]

The process of bereavement is complete when the afflicted survivor becomes operational again; in the best case, it terminates in relief, quiescence and equilibrium. While the death of a dear one is a curable trauma, some types of death are more problematic than others. "Untimely" death, which is either premature, unexpected, or calamitous, is more liable to pathological reaction for lack of anticipatory grief, which otherwise facilitates the mourning process:

> . . . when anticipatory grief is absent or greatly abbreviated, untimely death usually evokes numbness and disbelief about the immediate fact of death itself. Terrible anxiety and anguish, dejection, awareness of loss, crying, searching, craving for the deceased, intermittent anger, delusions, depersonalization, and hallucinations.[4]

Strikingly, the psychiatrist's proposed remedy is a clear echo of traditional wisdom, the very attitude underlying "tamed death":

> Because death may come at any time to anyone, our basic orientation is that living and dying are concomitant phases of the same process.

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[1] Gorer 127.

[2] Gorer 145.

[3] Christopher Bolton and Delpha J. Camp, "Funeral Rituals and the Facilitation of Grief Work," *Omega* 17.4 (1986-87):343-52.

[4] Avery D. Weisman, "Coping with Untimely Death," *Psychiatry* 36 (1973): 371.

> Consequently, death is always an allotment necessitated by being alive, and not wholly accidental.[1]

Research data reveals some clear patterns in what aggravates the loss crisis. First, age at the time of bereavement is one important variable to have an impact on the severity of depressive symptomatology, showing widows under forty-five years more severely affected than the others. Second, the severity of the response of those who have experienced sudden death is inversely related to the length of time married. Finally, the younger widows in this category continue to show depressive symptomatology at least one year following the death of their spouse. During this period, symptoms, like seeing and hearing their dead husband, and death thoughts occur frequently, the most intensely in the few weeks following his death, and this without abating significantly before a year.[2]

The emotional disbalance likely to result from problematic mourning can cause manic-depressive reactions in the bereaved, and even hasten death. Evidence shows an increase in mortality rates within the first six months of bereavement with rates falling off sharply after the first year. On this basis, another psychiatrist suggests that the traditional belief that one can die of "a broken heart"--that grief can kill, and kill through the heart--is more than a figure of speech. At any rate, if bereavement is unlikely to be the sole cause of death, it may act as a precipitating factor in coronary thrombosis.[3] Some interesting observations have been made regarding grief reaction in relation to the circumstances of death:

> There is a relation between the place at which a person dies and the subsequent mortality of bereaved relatives. The risk of close relatives dying during the first year of bereavement is doubled when the primary death causing bereavement occurs in a hospital compared with at home. . . . If the primary death occurs at some site--for example, a road or field--other than at home or hospital, the risk of a close relative dying during the first year of bereavement is five times the risk carried by the close relatives of people who die at home. . . . People who die following a bereavement are on average slightly younger than the relatives who predeceased them, and they die at an earlier age than is usual for the community in which they live.[4]

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[1] Weisman 377.

[2] Christina Blanchard, Edward B. Blanchard, and Judith V. Becker, "The Young Widow: Depressive Symptomatology Throughout the Grief Process," *Psychiatry* 39 (1976): 394-99.

[3] Parkes, B. Benjamin, and R.G. Fitzgerald, "Broken Heart: A Statistical Study of Increased Mortality among Widowers," *British Medical Journal* (1969): 740-43.

[4] W. Dewi Rees, "Mortality of Bereavement," *British Medical Journal* (1967): 13-16.

Whether "hallucination" or "ghost belief," the impression or experience in the bereaved relative of the lingering "presence" of a deceased spouse has been reported frequently enough to receive scientific attention.[1] A psychiatric investigation carried out in mid-Wales concludes that

> . . . hallucinations are normal experiences after widowhood, providing helpful psychological phenomena to those experiencing them. Evidence supporting this statement is as follows: hallucinations are common experiences after widowhood; they occur irrespective of sex, race, creed, or domicile; they do not affect overt behaviour; they tend to disappear with time; there is no evidence of associated illness or abnormality to suggest they are abnormal features; they are more common in people whose marriages were happy and who became parents; and people are able to integrate the experience and keep it secret. Evidence supporting the claim that these experiences are helpful are twofold--most people feel that they are helped, and among the people least likely to be hallucinated are those widowed below the age of 40, yet it is known from evidence of Kraus and Lilienfeld that people in this younger age group are particularly likely to die soon after widowhood.[2]

This clinical data is enlightened by psycho-analysis. Notwithstanding the fact that mortality may be his only certainty, man does not "believe" in death: his subconscious does not acknowledge it. Thus the popular idea that "love is stronger than death" makes psycho-analytical sense: ". . . il y a quelque chose qu'on ne peut découvrir qu'après la mort de celui qu'on a tant aimé, quelque chose d'essentiel qui relie les êtres. Le plus terrible, c'est qu'on ne peut savoir si c'est imaginaire ou réel."[3] A folklorist confirms:

> People do not cease to be relevant to a person or a society, when they have died. The dead used to live and have relationships, and those who remain are affected by the death, and their relationships to each other are affected by the death, and will continue to be affected until they have readjusted their relationships. . . . Irrespective of the ultimate conclusions reached about these supernatural events, it is important to understand the relationships of living people to the phenomenon, and to treat emotional relationships--be they with the living or the dead--respectfully.[4]

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[1] See Michael F. Hoyt, "Clinical Notes Regarding the Experience of 'Presences' in Mourning," *Omega* 11.2 (1980-81): 105-11.

[2] Rees, "The Hallucinations of Widowhood," *British Medical Journal* (1971): 41.

[3] Dolto 106.

[4] Claire Russell, "The Environment of Ghosts," *The Folklore of Ghosts*, ed. Hilda R. Ellis Davidson and W.M.S. Russell (Cambridge: Archive for the Folklore Society, 1980-81) 113.

2.4. Modern Folkloristic Approaches to Belief

If attitudes toward death open a large window on to cultural worldview, it is certainly owing to its immediate relation to belief, religious or other. Like others, traditional expressions of death combine the official with the unofficial, the religious with the folk religious and the supernatural. Current folkloristic contributions on belief have traced the way for my approach to this ballad study. The works of David Hufford and Gillian Bennett have yielded methodological insights as well as data of direct relevance.[1]

Hufford's greatest contribution to research on belief is certainly his truly scientific guiding in an area which has long been--and often still remains--bogged down in prejudice. His hypotheses obtained from patient and well-documented research on various Anglo-American belief traditions point to the "native view" of belief phenomena and away from the researcher's superiority and own interpretations. Hufford denounces a long-standing academic tradition of a priori "disbelief" of any such phenomena, namely that the "cultural source hypothesis" has often been an implicit assumption in the scientific discussion of supernatural belief issues.

This hypothesis assumes that uncommon experiences, whether reported by living individuals or in various cultural expressions, are either fictitious products of tradition or imaginary subjective experiences shaped (or occasionally also even caused) by tradition. The high degree of correspondence between various accounts of a recognizable experience would but result from the conformity of such experiences to traditional expectations, and popular belief in these occurrences be the consequence of misinterpretation or abuse. Thus the hypothesis predicts that all those who recount or acknowledge supernatural experiences

[1] David Hufford, "A New Approach to the 'Old Hag': The Nightmare Tradition Reexamined," *American Folk Medicine: A Symposium*, ed. Wayland D. Hand (Berkeley: U of California P, 1976) 49-73; "Humanoids and Anomalous Lights: Taxonomic and Epistemological Problems," *Fabula* 18 (1977): 234-41; "The Supernatural and the Sociology of Knowledge: Explaining Academic Belief," *New York Folklore* 9.1-2 (1983): 21-30; "Traditions of Disbelief," *Talking Folklore* 1.3 (1987): 18-31; "Reason, Rhetoric, and Religion: Academic Ideology Versus Folk Belief," New York Folklore 11.1-4 (1985): 177-94; *The Terror that Comes in the Night: An Experience-centered Study of Supernatural Assault Traditions* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania, 1982); Gillian Bennett, "Women's Personal Experience Stories with the Supernatural: Truth as an aspect of Storytelling," *Arv* 40 (1984): 79-87; "Heavenly Protection and Family Unity: The Concept of the Revenant among Elderly Urban Women," *Folklore* 96 (1985): 87-97; "The Rhetoric of Tradition," *Talking Folklore* 1.3 (1987): 32-46; *Traditions of Belief: Women and the Supernatural* (London: Penguin, 1987).

have been in touch with such a tradition. Culture, in other words, would be the common source of all fantastic accounts and beliefs.[1]

What Hufford's data reveals, on the contrary, is that certain belief traditions contain elements of experience that are independent of culture. His research amply demonstrates that some apparently fantastic beliefs are empirically grounded, and that the empirical data have been dealt with rationally by those who have assimilated these experiences to their worldviews.[2] Far yet from advocating a tabula rasa of cultural determinants, Hufford brings important qualifications to their actual role. To start with, a clear difference must be made between the phenomenology of the experience itself and its description, that is distinguishing the impact of culture on the experience from that on its description. One must also consider that physical correlates to certain beliefs--the presence of a particular supernatural tradition in a certain cultural environment--do not exclude the possibility of actual experience. So, if some people revel in the telling of ghost stories, thus recognizing "ghosts" as a meaningful cultural category, this traditional motif rules out neither the possibility of such phenomena nor the credibility of their reported experiences. These hypotheses, Hufford remarks, are nonetheless systematically ignored in most scientific accounts.

Along with the cultural source hypothesis as sole explanation, Hufford also objects to the systematic resort to functional theory. He aptly points out that if certain beliefs serve particular functions, they neither cause nor explain belief or the experience. Such a reductive view, again, only explains belief away. So, the observation as to which supernatural belief tends to concentrate on the least predictable areas of human activity, and attenuates anxiety, yields an interesting correlation but no evidence yet. Like function, context is a tempting "peg" for the scientist as for the humanist. This links up with what commentators on worldview have suggested: that no single factor can in itself account for such a complex phenomenon as culture. Hufford affirms that none of the supernatural experiences he studied was found to be associated with ethnicity, religious background, or any other ethnographic variable. Neither did there appear to be any association between such reported experience and any known pathological state. Last but not the least trap in the analysis of supernatural belief, is the similarly reductive explanation of the survivalists, always applicable in the last resort.[3]

[1] Hufford, *Terror* 14-15.
[2] Hufford, *Terror* 250.
[3] Hufford, "Reason" 179 and 187.

The detection of such failures of scientific rigour has led Hufford to apply an "experience-centered approach" to the study of belief. This approach--not theory--provides no magic key to the mystery of such extra-sensory phenomena, but at the least yields indications as to what they are *not*. As far as supernatural assault traditions are concerned, Hufford is able to conclude in the dialectic--instead of unilateral--relation of tradition and experience, which translates, in these two particular deductions:

> The experience itself has played a significant, though not exclusive, role in the development of numerous traditions of assault.
> Cultural factors heavily determine the ways in which the experience is described (or withheld) and interpreted.[1]

As for the experience of "presences" in mourning, which more closely relates to the present study, there is converging evidence to disclaim a cultural source as sole explanation for these phenomena.[2] These would be cross-cultural if culturally-shaped phenomena:

> It is unfortunate that often in dealing with "transcultural" phenomena, one tends . . . to become fixated at the level of fascination with differences between cultures. Along with this goes an unfortunate implication that one can understand the individual human beings within a given culture simply by understanding thoroughly the differences between cultures. While I firmly believe that an understanding of the individuals within a culture cannot take place without an understanding of the cultural context, I think there is a step beyond this which can and must be made. The next, level, as it were, is where one recognizes that very common universal human needs and universal psychic mechanisms can often be expressed in idiosyncratic ways in different cultures; but in most cases the inner need can be rediscovered by tracing back from the colorful and idiosyncratic external manifestation which society has imposed upon it to the underlying inner feeling, which is familiar to us all.[3]

In line with Hufford, other studies suggest that the role of culture is, as the case may be, in providing acceptable channels of expression for negotiating such experiences:

> Cultural acceptability of visions of the deceased make it easier to experience and accept in oneself what some psychoanalysts are beginning

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[1] Hufford, *Terror* 245.

[2] William Foster Matchett, "Repeated Hallucinatory Experiences as a Part of the Mourning Process Among the Hopi Indian Women," *Psychiatry* 35 (1972): 185-94 and Waud H. Kracke, "Kagwahiv Mourning II: Ghosts, Grief, and Reminiscences," *Ethos* 16 (1988): 209-222; Azula A. Houghton and Frederic L. Boersma, "The Loss-Grief Connection in Susto," *Ethnology* 27 (1988): 145-54.

[3] Matchett 192.

> to regard as a normal part of the mourning process, or at least a frequently occurring part of it in our own culture.[1]

The findings obtained from Indian and Hispanic cultures converge with those of a study based on a variety of white Americans, who besides stress and a feeling of uncanniness, express the beneficial effect of the experiences. This analyst makes the interesting suggestion that the experiencing of "presences" may be part of a process of relinquishing attachments to lost persons--as maybe the real sense of "giving up the ghost."[2]

Gillian Bennett's fieldwork research on supernatural beliefs among elderly ladies in suburban Manchester derives further illuminating findings concerning the concept of revenant.[3] Her general investigation of the "uncanny and the mysterious" reveals that communication with the dead is the prevalent concern. Eighty percent of the main sample--which gathers the oldest women, and represents the largest and the most homogeneous group--respond to questions about encounters with the dead, and eighty percent of affirmative answers are accompanied by personal experience stories.[4] With regard to the dead, Bennett's major finding, in analysing the women's narratives, is a concept of the revenant quite different in nature, outlook and purpose from that of the legendary "ghost," the type which folklorists hold as "the" traditional one. While only forty-one percent of the interviewees in the same sample declare a belief in this type of "ghosts" and "haunts," sixty percent believe in the possibility of encountering "the dead" in this life.[5] This is described as the feeling of their "presence" around them, and the strong belief that these presences could witness and, if necessary, intervene in their lives.[6] While this type of revenant hardly appears in the previous literature on the folklore of ghosts, Bennett finds it an essential part of modern supernatural traditions:

> This important subtype--the single largest category of revenant in the women's philosophy--is distinctly different from the familiar legendary ghost, yet so obviously exhibits traditional characteristics and is so plainly relevant to women's lives, roles, and expectations, that it may well be a widespread element in a modern folklore of ghosts.[7]

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[1] Kracke 220.

[2] Michael Hoyt, "Clinical Notes Regarding the Experience of 'Presences' in Mourning," *Omega* 11.2 (1980-81): 105-11

[3] The term "revenant," here and throughout this thesis, is used in David Buchan's understanding of it as "corporeal being" in contradistinction to "ghost," which connotes an insubstantial one; in "Tale" 145.

[4] Bennett, "Heavenly" 87.

[5] Bennett, "Heavenly" 89.

[6] Bennett, *Traditions* 65-66.

[7] Bennett, "Heavenly" 89.

These revenants, which the women speak of extensively, make little or no appearance in legend, in which "poltergeists," "haunting ghosts," "fetches" and "omens of death" abound. They are plainly deceased parents or husbands. Neither even do they "return from the dead," for they live alongside the living. These "spirits"--rather than "ghosts"--are of two principal types: one is attached to a particular place, hence "domestic," and is directly influenced by literary tradition; the other is "personal," far more common and relevant to the percipients. For want of a generic name, Bennett calls these "witnesses," and defines them as "revenants who remain close to the living, witnessing the affairs of mundane life, responding to crisis, and being powerful for good in the lives of their descendants."[1]

Strikingly, it is this kind of revenant, largely unsuspected by folklorists and absent from folklore literature, which is the most familiar to these women and the most relevant to their life. Bennet finds the success of this revenant revealing of a certain worldview. From the analysis of her informants' narratives and the knowledge of their background, she suggests that for these women the boundary between the spiritual world and the mundane world is flexible and shifting, and that it is moral orientations essentially which dispose them to supernatural belief. The psychic power they claim would be correlations of, extensions to, or substitutes for, conventional religion. Such a belief allows the continuation of relationships of mutual love even when one of the partners is separated by distance or death.[2] The women reporting an experience of such presences all believe in an afterlife in which "we will meet again," and this view informs a worldview in which "the dead never leave" them. Their belief in the power of love over death is part of a mystical view of life in which the world is seen as a semi-magical place governed by unrevealed laws, such as a concept of order encompassing the chaos of fate and chance. Bennett concludes:

> Briefly summarized, optimum conditions for supernatural belief seem to be reliance on, and love for, family; the placing of a high value on interpersonal relationships; a metaphysical philosophy in which chance and fate are seen as part of an unrevealed benevolent plan; and a traditional 'female' morality, which places great value on intuition, caring, unassertiveness, unselfishness and order. These attitudes run like a thread in the women's thinking and, in both general and detail, influence their beliefs about the dead. . . .[3]

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[1] Bennett, "Heavenly" 95.
[2] Bennett, *Traditions* 32.
[3] Bennett, *Traditions* 35.

This revenant, who underpins the women's faith in heavenly protection and family love, is recognizably the one psycho-medical literature encounters in normal grief reaction. According to this, the bereaved person first subconsciously denies the reality of the loss, and seeks to recover the lost one in fantazising his presence. The illusion is so strong as to provoke an auditory or visual hallucination of the dead one. If such is the objective reality, Bennett observes that the percipients' narratives of such experiences essentially show tradition at work, turning the strange states of mind and emotion in grieving into objective encounters with the dead. The narrators, all of whom had lost parents and sometimes husbands, attribute to the dead types of behaviour held to be typical of revenants in our culture, ascribing to them an awareness of the concerns of the living and powers of communication. The modern revenant's purpose, however, is simpler, more domestic, and definitely more secular, active for good in the mundane world rather than admonishing bad behaviour and punishing crime as an agent of divine authority.

Along with traditional themes, these narratives borrow the structure of ghost belief:

> Narratives on the subject have a neat symmetrical structure: an account of the context of the occurrence or the condition of the percipient, a description of the encounter, and a résumé of its outcome--with the first and the last elements neatly matched together. The context of the visitation is invariably given as some sort of a 'lack' in the narrator's life and the consequence is invariably seen to be the liquidation of that lack--as purposeful and safe a supernatural encounter as could be.[1]

This is mostly a lack of health or of peace of mind, but also of experience, or knowledge, so acute as to cause fear or constitute danger. Or else, it is the desperately felt lack of the dead person her or himself. But, in every case, the danger is averted: the sick are restored to health, the problem solved, the absence compensated for. These narratives give an accurate account of the events in their context, and thus are essentially informative; they focus on detail and description rather than on the unfolding of a plot, and leave the end deliberately open for comment, interpretation and follow-up by the audience. The function of these open-ended stories thus appears to be problem-solving rather than entertaining. They invite a discussion of belief, and aim at explanatory comprehensiveness.[2] They endlessly revolve around the question of the truth and actuality of the experience in order to classify and interpret it:

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[1] Bennett, *Traditions* 66-67.
[2] Bennett, "Women's" 86-87.

> The process of traditionalizing an interpretation is accelerated when an experience is spoken of to others and assumes the form of a narrative, for from then on it becomes public, the account is a 'discussion document' whose meaning is negotiated between teller and hearer. Thus in the accretions and elaborations that surround the report of the bare experience or perceptions, one can see the operation of the cultural expectations of the women and their peers--their own folklore of ghosts.[1]

Bennett proposes that this comprehensive worldview within which supernatural "witnesses" occupy a definite place despite the secular and rational values of our age manifests a yearning for something magical and mystical as well as an unchanging need for an effective, organized, and unified Cosmos where the dead and the living can exist side-by-side in mutual harmony:[2]

> Throughout all the accounts run threads that link the humble witness of modern tradition to the great ghosts of the past--their active purposefulness, their awareness of events transpiring in the earthly domain, and their power for good in the lives of former loved ones. The idea of the witness is thus the epitome of a philosophy that sees the creation as whole, ordered, hierarchical, harmonious and more than a little magical. Here, perhaps, in the folklore of the twentieth century we may see the last remnants of the medieval worldview.[3]

This chapter complements the preceding one in providing multidisciplinary insights into death, the thematic focus of this investigation of cultural worldview. The contributions of the "new" history, sociology, psychology and folkloristics attest the particular relevance of death to cultural but also supra-cultural worldview: the evolution of people's attitudes toward death in the West reveals a limited number of patterns across time with only very recent notable variations in space; sociology uncovers the common structure of funerary rites, suggesting constant concerns and meanings underneath different forms and contents; psycho-medical research brings its own evidence for the therapeutical value of the traditional way of death and mourning; modern folklore study no longer assumes the primary role of culture in supernatural belief, and cautions against abuse of the "cultural source hypothesis." This rich and diverse data supplies some parameters for this study in which the supracultural and the cultural, the international-generic and cultural-specific likely intersect. Now fully equipped with methodological and analytical insights to examine worldview from one of its sharpest angles, it remains to sample the expressions of death in a specific cultural complex, defining the particular in the light of the universal.

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[1] Bennett, "Heavenly" 91.
[2] Bennett, *Traditions* 211.
[3] Bennett, *Traditions* 80.

1.

The Pragmatic Context

Redfield recommends that the investigation of cultural worldview progress from describing the milieu in its immediate and objective reality towards less readily observable aspects of culture. To initiate this inquiry, the following two chapters examine the ethnographic reality of the symbolic expressions of Newfoundland's traditional culture on the understanding that

> The singing of songs must, in some manner or other, relate to the unfolding drama that is the human community. Traditional songs--like the community and its institutions--outlive the individual actors involved, so for them to persist through time they must speak to individuals in terms of cultural constants . . . . The locus of the continuity of folklore forms may finally be found in the social roles of a community (. . .) and their relation to the persistent problems of community organization and survival.[1]

The first of these chapters surveys the major external events which have shaped Newfoundland's society; the second looks at the moral orientations of its people in these circumstances with a view to assessing the meanings that classical ballads and other genres have communicated to local audiences in the light of these "pragmatics."

[1] Szwed, "Paul" 150.

Chapter 3

The Scene of Life and Death:

A Diachronic Sketch

Newfoundland has gained a notoriety for its hardship, struggle, misery and slavery under oppressors, the labour involved in fishing or both. Taken with all due prudence, historical records, at the least, project the picture of a living won by enduring effort over a harsh and perilous environment as well as over adverse political and economic circumstances.

3.1. The Political Context

Beginning as an international fishery, Newfoundland became a largely British fishery, then colony, to become a confederate province preserving a distinctive identity and culture within the second largest country in the world. Newfoundlanders' destiny has been shaped by one preponderant factor: the fishery. It is often said--and partly remains for this study to verify--that their character and culture have been moulded by the heavy demands of this way of life and the long-pervading socio-economic conditions of its prosecution. This harsh past lies not far behind. Without denying Newfoundland's modern political, economic and social assets, the earliest province visited in North America to date remains one of the least industrialized on the continent and perhaps one of the closest to its cultural tradition.

3.1.1. The Origins: An International Fishery (1500-1600)

Newfoundland's geographical position has shaped its history, economy and culture. Lying at the entrance of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, leading into the North American Continent, it is the junction point of the cold Labrador currents and those of the St. Lawrence river. Their meeting produces a fish breeding and feeding place making the

island's inshore waters one of the best fishing grounds in the world.[1] In sharp contrast with the riches of the ocean, the land has little to offer: it is rocky and patched with innumerable ponds and lakes, its thin soil limiting agricultural activity to a few places. This rugged landscape is covered by a wide variety of low berry shrubs and stunted trees; the cold ocean winds sweep through this poor vegetation and strip spruce trees to bareness. Inland, the island is covered by thick forests, which to this day remain a wilderness area.

Starting from the fifteenth century, Newfoundland was visited regularly by the fishing nations of Europe. Basque, Portuguese, French, Dutch and English fishing crews all came in the summer to reap the lush harvest of fish, lobster, seals and whales. But, the major economic interest was cod because it could best be salt-dried and shipped back; for its sake Newfoundland became the base for an international fishery off her shores.[2] For a long time, it was better from almost everyone's point of view to commute rather than to settle there. All the goods and provisions needed in the fishery had to come from Europe, the mechants and ship captains all lived in Europe, and there also lay all the markets for fish. The fishing crews, therefore, installed merely temporary settlements to process and store their catches until their return to the homelands at the end of the fishing season. On arrival in Spring, they first had to install "fishing rooms" consisting of "stages" (piers for unloading fish with sheds as storage for the salt and fishing supplies) and "flakes" (large racks to spread the fish on to dry). Despite its six thousand miles of shores, "good shoreline" is rare in Newfoundland. These would be places having enough level land to build facilities and get to the boats, not too many "sunkers" (submerged or half-submerged rocks) and protected from the pounding storms and ice.[3] It is only competition for these places along with the time and work involved in their construction that justified that a few servants or "winter crews" were occasionally left behind during the winter to maintain and guard these facilities from others' fishing vessels.

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[1] G.M. Story, "Newfoundland: Fishermen, Hunters, Planters, and Merchants," *Christmas Mumming in Newfoundland: Essays in Anthropology, Folklore and History*, ed. H. Halpert and G.M. Story (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1969) 10.

[2] G.O. Rothney, *Newfoundland: A History*, Historical Booklet no. 10 (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1964) 27.

[3] Gerald M. Sider, *Culture and Class in Anthropology and History: A Newfoundland Illustration* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986) 15.

3.1.2. A Largely British Fishery (1600-1700)

Of these fishing competitors, only the French and the English persisted in Newfoundland. By 1600, the idea arose that the grounds represented not only the world's place for fish but also "a nursery for seamen." Because sea power at the time meant commercial power, both nations came to regard the fishery as a matter of the greatest strategic importance.[1] At the time, the French had the monopoly on the island: their crews operated from harbours along its three coastlines, along the northeast, the south and the west side of the Great Northern Peninsula. Officially, however, these were only temporary bases to be vacated at the end of the fishing season. Throughout the seventeenth century the English attempted to set up plantations between Cape Race and Bonavista. All these attempts at colonization failed, however, because of the lack of other resources than fish, hence the impossibility of self-sufficiency.[2] Only a few of planters stayed and adjusted to this exceptional environment by becoming both fishermen and hunters.

The failure of its plantations and the success of its fishery convinced the British government that a migratory fishery represented a sure profit, and that colonization did not. The home-based fishery engaged an active ship-building industry and others relating to the needs of this huge operation throughout the West Country.[3] The fishing merchants owned the vessels, and as captains, hired a crew of indentured servants on a contract to fish for one to three summers. Initially, these were young men recruited locally in the mother-country. Later, when exhausted in these areas, recruits were mostly from Ireland, where the vessels called before crossing. For more than two centuries, the migratory fishermen outnumbered the residents with hundreds of ships and thousands of men crossing the Atlantic to prosecute the summer cod fishery. At the end of the summer, it was not unusual for some of these men to violate the terms of their contract, desert their ship, and take their chances as settlers. The numerous coves and inlets of the indented shoreline provided them with plentiful fish and hid them from officials. Like most then, they adapted by leading a semi-sedentary life, living on the coast in the summer and moving into the woods to find fuel, food and protection from the elements in the winter. "Winterhousing" was one way

[1] Rothney 5.

[2] Keith Matthews, "The Beginnings of Settlement in Newfoundland: the Proprietory Colonies and their Failure," *Lectures on the History of Newfoundland 1500-1830*, Newfoundland History Series no. 4 (St. John's: Breakwater, 1988) 65.

[3] Frederick W. Rowe, *A History of Newfoundland and Labrador* (Toronto: McGraw, 1980) 99.

of resolving some of the problems of surviving in a difficult environment, and for many settlements, remained the norm up to the end of World War II. [1]

The harsh and primitive living conditions, the isolation and the danger of stark poverty made Newfoundland a hard place in which to live. When the fishing fleet left Newfoundland in September or early October, the isolated communities were left on their own to survive the long winter with no possibility of outside aid until the following April or May. The nature of the island and its fishery caused colonization to proceed very differently from the mainland. Newfoundland "residents" were no "settlers" or "colonists" in the usual sense of the term. The bulk of the residental population comprised English and Irish servants whom the planters hired from among the fishing ship crews for one or two summers' fishing season and a winter at the most. Like the migratory fishermen on the ships, they came to Newfoundland to work, and left their families behind in the home country. The "permanent" population comprised the planter, his wife and children, and perhaps a few servants who had elected to live there; Newfoundland was home to no one yet. The planters, who also came from the West Country, stayed a few years, owned property, built up a fishery, and often retired back to England in their old age. Many, if not most, of the larger planters who lived in Newfoundland between 1660 and 1705 had no family on the island, presumably because the fishery was too precarious a livelihood. With so few families, an ever-changing migrant personnel, and hard living conditions without the prospect of security, let alone prosperity, the island's population for two centuries was growing with painful slowness.[2]

As it became obvious that the spread of settlement in Newfoundland would ruin their fishery, which had become a very important factor in the whole economy of the region, the representatives of Devon and Dorset engaged in what was to be a long struggle to prevent colonization of the island. Through their influence in the British Parliament the Western Adventurers obtained that in official eyes, Newfoundland became simply "the English fleet moving west across the ocean in the spring and returning back home to England in the autumn."[3] The fishery was to remain a mother-country enterprise, and since Newfoundland settlers had no other occupation, their existence was not considered desirable. Permanent settlement became prohibited, and remained so up to 1824, when the island eventually was officially recognized as a colony. Not until then did the settlers

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[1] Philip E.L. Smith, "In Winter Quarters," *Newfoundland Studies* 3.1 (1987): 1-36.
[2] Matthews, "Settlement in Newfoundland: 1660-1730," *Lectures* 83-88.
[3] Rothney 11.

know any peace from the West Country fishermen. This conflict of interest explains Newfoundland's unique example of deliberately retarded colonization.

The colony grew in spite of the home government and without any formal or institutional organization. As the number of residents increased, clashes occurred between them and the visiting fishermen. Unfailingly, these turned to the advantage of the latter. The migrant fishermen had law and economic power. They were backed by the government, which continued to regard Newfoundland as "a great ship moored near the Banks during the fishing season, for the convenience of English fishermen."[1] The residents had no rights for the simple reason that there was no resident legal system on the island. Whereas in the mainland colonies laws had been created to encourage settlement, the deliberate absence of any civil institution in Newfoundland was meant to discourage it.[2] The migratory fishery had managed to counter the attempts of the successive plantation governors to pass resident laws. Without any legal system locally, criminal matters were brought to the law courts back in England, and to settle disputes within the fishery it was granted by custom that the first captains to arrive in a harbour had full authority in the place as "fishing admiral." These sea captains were hardly qualified in matters of law and justice. As their presence on the island was only temporary, justices of the peace also came to be appointed to act as local magistrates during their absence. Because the population remained small, formal government was not felt to be necessary, and even with the good-will of the home government, the scattering of the population and the lack of good communications made law impossible to enforce.[3] Eventually, the naval convoy commander was given a commission to be governor and Commander-in-Chief in Newfoundland with full civil as well as military authority. The merchants stopped their opposition to this innovation for, being the only literate and influential men ashore, they and their agents became the magistrates, and now dealt with every matter which came before them, and were sitting on a year-round basis. As they often had personal interest in the most common cases of smuggling and debt, the settlers' rights were still no better defended.[4] As contemporary missionary accounts reveal, the population, throughout the

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[1] As reported before the House of Commons by an Under-Secretary of State in 1793, and quoted by Story, "Newfoundland" 13, himself quoting from D.W. Prowse, *History of Newfoundland* (London: Macmillan, 1895) xix.

[2] Matthews, "The Growth of Law in Newfoundland until 1700," *Lectures* 90.

[3] Matthews, "Beginnings"64.

[4] Matthews, "The Creation of a Governor and Resident Magistrate in 1729," *Lectures* 97 and 101-2.

eighteenth and much of the nineteenth century, were self-reliant also in matters of justice--with inevitable risks:

> I learned that before Mr. Pretty [a missionary] came thither, they [New Harbour and Dildo Cove] had been the scenes of some very savage murders, into which, such was the imperfect state of the magistracy of Newfoundland at that period, no inquiry whatever was made. Indeed in some parts of the island which I have visited, infanticide and violence terminating in death, would scarcely create inquiry.[1]

> I was referred to after service respecting 2 men, whom the inhabitants had put in irons, and kept in close confinement, for having cruelly beaten and nearly killed a neighbour. As this settlement is not recognized by the government . . . there is no magistrate, or constable, or office of any degree. The inhabitants, therefore, are obliged to take the law into their own hands . . . .[2]

3.1.3. A de facto colony (1700-1824)

The eighteenth century was a period of change, expansion and increasing prospect in the fishery. The sluggish rate of immigration quickened, and a de facto colony emerged. By the Treaty of Utrecht (1713), which followed the long war between the two European powers, France, defeated in Europe, was to cede her Newfoundland colony to Great Britain. As the French were displaced from the northeast coast, many English and Irish settlers, the bulk of whom were still concentrated on the Avalon Peninsula, started to spread out along that coast and finally all around the island. Although the Treaty of Utrecht had made French permanent resident on the island illegal, the French kept the right to use to catch fish and dry it on land between Cape Bonavista and Point Riche.[3] For two centuries, these fishing privileges caused more or less constant confrontations with local fishermen. "The French Shore" remained inaccessible to them practically until the depletion of its waters and the decline of that fishery at the end of the nineteenth century.[4] Not only was the best farmland found along that shore; the French were allowed to catch lobster, which they sold to Newfoundland's own potential markets.

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[1] Edward Wix, *Six Months of a Newfoundland Missionary Journal: February to August 1835* (London: Smith, 1836) 21-22.

[2] Edward Feild, *Journal of the Bishop of Newfoundland's Voyage of Visitation and Discovery on the South and West Coast of Newfoundland and on the Labrador in the church ship "Hawk" in the year 1848* (London: Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, 1849) 29.

[3] Matthews, "Anglo-French Competition in Newfoundland: 1660-1713," *Lectures* 82.

[4] R.G. Moyles, *'Complaints is many and various, but the odd devil likes it': Nineteenth century Views of Newfoundland* (Toronto: Martin, 1975) 43.

The planters had become a class of resident masters of small scale fishing, furring and sealing operations. They were increasingly more efficient than the migratory enterprise, which depended on them for essential services, such as maintaining their equipment during the winter. When they finally outnumbered the migrants, the "fishing admirals" lost their authority ashore; the English vessels ceased to be a shore-based operation, and turned their attention to the offshore bank fishery. The catch was no longer cured on shore, but salted down aboard and taken back to England as "green fish." As the migrant fishery declined under the ever growing resident population and the collapse of fish prices, the merchants converted their fishing activity to financing middlemen, "bye-boatkeepers," whom they carried over and supplied as well as the planters with all their needs. The bye-boatmen hired local labour, and paid the merchants back with cash and a portion of the cod catch, which the latter shipped and sold to the Mediterranean countries. Many bye-boatkeepers settled in Newfoundland and began a new planter class. The merchants became the main promoters of settlement, and the era was one of almost complete West Country domination.[1]

The American war of Independence (1775-1783) was as profitable to Newfoundland as it was detrimental to the English fishery. Losing its imports from New England, Newfoundland was facing the threat of starvation in the small and remote communitites which lacked a merchant's store. The Newfoundland merchants started to send their own ships down to the West Indies, exchanging their cargo of fish for rum, sugar and molasses. After the war, Newfoundland recovered its regular food supplies from New England, but kept its direct trade to the West Indies and mainland Canada. So, the war's economic repercussions sped up the process of local settlement and development of the island.[2]

The American Revolution and the Napoleonic wars (1793-1815) along with a continuously increasing population brought the decline of the migratory fishery. By the nineteenth century, residents outnumbered visitors by four to one, as most men no longer came to fish but to remain.[3] The wars were making life in Newfoundland less insecure than it was on the fishing ships. The nineteenth century saw the beginning of a dramatic increase in the rate of immigration from southwest England and southeast Ireland. As the

[1] Matthews, "The Expansion of Newfoundland: 1713-1775," *Lectures* 110.
[2] Matthews, "The American Revolution and Newfoundland," *Lectures* 115-21.
[3] Matthews, "The Decline of the Migratory Fishery," *Lectures* 132.

population grew, it also became poorer with the prices going up. From employers, the residents became self-employed fishermen. The old servants found work in the growing mercantile centers of St. John's, Placentia, Harbour Grace, Carbonear and Trinity, and formed a floating urban proletariat owning no property. Most had no regular employment and depended upon the commercial activity during the fishing season, going to Labrador for the seal fishery or for the summer cod fishery. These fisheries created an enormous demand for labour, and the short boom period following the last year of the Napoleonic wars attracted thousands of unskilled poverty-stricken Irishmen. On this short period of prosperity from 1812 to 1815 followed fifteen years of depression, and these latest emigrants, like those who reached America in the 1860's, suffered incredible misery.[1] With markets closing in Europe as a result of wars, the demand for fish dropped, and the island was hit hard by depressed economic conditions. The merchants became bankrupt and the fishermen saw hard times.

3.1.4. A Dominion (1824-1949)

The resident population of the island had grown so large that it could no longer be moved or discouraged from growing. In 1824, agitation finally caused Parliament to recognize Newfoundland as a British colony. The "surrogate" magistrates were replaced by circuit courts and civilian judges. Private ownership became recognized, Representative Government was granted in 1832, and direct British rule terminated in 1855, when Newfoundland attained Dominion status. The residents, however, did not gain full control of the island until 1904, when France gave up her claim to the "French Shore." Newfoundland land forces suffered an exceptionally high number of casualities in World War I when compared to Canada and the other British countries. Of 5,482 men enlisted in the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, 1,305 were killed and 2,314 were wounded. The loss of such a portion of her men in the prime of their lives hindered her demographic, social and economic development in later years.[2] Newfoundland thrived during the war, her fish being in great demand for the forces, but she was severely affected by the Depression.[3]

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[1] Matthews, "The Irish in Newfoundland," *Lectures* 155.

[2] Christopher A. Sharpe, "The 'Race of Honour': An Analysis of Enlistments and Casualities in the Armed Forces of Newfoundland, 1914-18," *Newfoundland Studies* 4.1 (1988): 33, 48 and 51.

[3] For an insider's account of the hardships experienced in Harbour Buffet during those years, see Victor Butler, *Sposin' I die in D' Dory*, ed. Boyd L. Hiscock and Ivan F. Jesperson (St. John's: Jesperson, 1977).

Amidst recession and poverty, Responsible Government was replaced by Commission of Government. Under the Commission definite progress was achieved in the improvement of health care and education: children between 7 and 14 were made to attend school; sanatoriums and cottage hospitals were built in many outports, but Newfoundland was under British rule again.

3.1.5. Confederation: the Rise of Modern Society (1949-)

After World War II, a referendum was held giving the choice between Commission of Government, Responsible Government or Confederation with Canada. Not enough of the people voted for Responsible Government, and in the second round Confederation won by a very small margin. The socio-economic repercussions of this major political event are presented in the following section.

3.2. The Socio-Economic Context

Throughout the eighteenth century settlers not only lacked a civil government, but also roads, medical and welfare services, churches, schools, and stores. When the fishing fleet left the island in autumn, the isolated communities were left on their own to survive the long winters with no possibility of outside aid until the following April or May. If they ran out of food, then they must starve to death. If a man or woman became ill, they must recover or die without the benefit of medicine or the consolation of clergymen. No one could be legally born, married or buried for there were no clergymen to perform the sacraments.[1]

From the nineteenth century to World War II relations between merchants and fishermen were governed by a "truck-system."[2] The fishermen received supplies, such as salt, twine, tea, lard, and clothing in the spring, chiefly food supplies in the summer, all of which was charged to their individual accounts and "paid" for in the late fall by the whole of their salt-cured catch of the season. In numerous small settlements there would only be one merchant, and as the villagers could only trade at his store, there was little need for cash, very little of which was seen in the outports until the end of World War II. The "truck-system" installed by the merchant has generally been described as feudal. On the

[1] Matthews, "Settlement in Newfoundland," *Lectures* 83-4.
[2] Sider 19.

fishermen's side, life spent on credit meant perpetual debt. A common situation was that the summer's catch barely paid for previous debts, and to obtain winter supplies another debt was incurred.[1] Besides, when a fisherman's fish production was interrupted because of age, disability, or death, his sons and grandsons were called upon to pay his debts. Only if no instalments had been paid for a period of six years was the debt automatically cancelled. The merchant being the only source of supply, the fishermen would not risk to offend him, and rather than claim their due, submitted to his will to preserve their family's and their own welfare.[2]

An alternative view contends that this credit system was cooperative rather than exploitative. The truck would work as a kind of insurance, balancing the risks of the merchant's credit and the fishermen's yield. Nothing was less uncertain than the price of fish, which indeed depended on a diversity of variables: the scarcity of fish or bait, the poor weather for curing (drying), the prevalence of ice late in the spring, or low prices. The merchant could never be sure that the fish production would cover the cost of his supplies; the fishermen scarcely lived above bare subsistence level. The merchant played a vital role in the subsistence of the community in operating the egalitarian distribution of wealth between the fishermen and their families. While supplying them evenly at the beginning of the season, he would find compensation for one family's short yield in another's good one.[3] So, if the fishermen were totally dependent on the merchant to sell their product, and were probably exploited, they usually did not starve to death. Conversely, the profit of sale in good times hardly touched the primary producers. Newfoundland enjoyed a monopoly over the world salt cod markets and an economic boom during World War I, yet the decrease of the annual production of fish per man throughout the nineteenth century resulted in the impoverishment of both the merchants and the fishermen, and the gradual collapse of this system of trade in the depression years.

The increased cost of food and the rise in wages brought significant changes in the fishery. The residents employed fewer men but relied more and more on the unpaid labour of their wives and children, and now turned their catch over to the merchants. All these circumstances brought about a shift from the migratory to the sedentary fishery and

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[1] Lawrence. G. Small, "The Interrrelationship of Work and Talk in a Newfoundland Fishing Community," PhD thesis, U of Pennsylvania, 1979, 9-12.

[2] Otto Kelland, *Dories and Dorymen* (St. John's: Robinson, 1984) 146-9.

[3] Wilfred W. Wareham, introduction, *The Little Nord Easter: Reminiscences of a Placentia Bayman*, by Victor Butler, MUN Folklore and Language Publications, Community Studies Series no. 1 (St. John's: MUN, 1975) 15-7.

consolidated settlement.[1] This evolution also corresponded to a shift from a servant to a family fishery. Work became organized around the family household unit and a greater degree of self-sufficiency was obtained from self-supporting domestic activities.

Eventually, mercantile activity became centralized in St. John's, which alleviated the outports from their economic dependence on the merchants. The decline of the migratory fishery and of the merchant economy resulted in the outports becoming increasingly introverted and isolated from the outside world.[2] The range of external contacts of many outports contracted. During the nineteenth century the outports continued to decline in wealth and influence, and as the independent and wealthy merchants disappeared from Trinity, Twillingate, Placentia, Harbour Grace and Carbonear, St. John's loomed even larger in the life of the island.[3] As the nineteenth century progressed, emigration came to an end and the outports became organic and unchanging entities which saw little outside influence. Soon the vast population of Newfoundland was born, grew up and died in the same locality, and a tightly-knit local patriotism replaced the older cosmopolitan outlook. Insularity was inevitable given the isolation and basic self-sufficiency of each region.[4]

Political autonomy gained with Representative Government in 1855 brought about economic diversification. A transinsular railway was built from 1881 to 1893; large-scale iron ore mining started on Bell Island in 1895 and a paper mill was set up at Grand falls in 1905. These developments introduced employment unconnected with the sea, the beginning of a cash economy, and opened the interior of the island for settlement.[5]

Following the Depression years, World War II brought prosperity back on the island. For the reason of her strategic marshalling position, the United States and Canada built several air bases, which had a tremendous economic and cultural effect: "For the first time a salaried mode of life was made available to great numbers of men who had known only the vagaries of the seasonal pattern of life in the outports."[6] The joining of Confederation

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[1] Matthews, "Newfoundland During the French revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars," *Lectures* 142.

[2] John J. Mannion, *The Peopling of Newfoundland: Essays in Historical Geography*, ed. Mannion, Social and Economic Papers no. 8 (St. John's: MUN Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1977) 12.

[3] Matthews, "The Rise of St. John's," *Lectures* 169.

[4] Matthews, "The Regional Nature of Newfoundland Development," *Lectures* 173.

[5] Story, "Newfoundland" 31.

[6] Patrick O' Flaherty, *The Rock Observed: Studies in the Literature of Newfoundland* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1979) 146.

followed soon after the war, and marked a turning point in the history of the islanders. While Newfoundland held a strategic position in translatlantic communication, communication within the island was hardly developed. The advent of electrified power, roads, cars, snow-clearing vehicles, bush planes, etc. have considerably bridged the insularity of the outports. In the wake of Confederation came pensions, family and unemployment allowances, and a diversified cash economy.[1] All this produced a better standard of living and tremendous improvement in health, medical care, public welfare and education, all of which were underdeveloped. There resulted a decline of tuberculosis and infant mortality, the two most serious plagues affecting Newfoundland.[2] Although the mortality continued to be higher than elsewhere in the country, it came down significantly. The rates of tuberculosis, once higher than in any Western country, dropped within the space of one generation. With the highest birth rate of the Canadian provinces, there was slower progress, though, in the eradication of the child-killers (gastroenteritis, poliomyelitis, and diphtheria).

A major factor in these improvements was the government's plan of resettlement. At the time, there were 1,500 communities scattered across the island, each containing less than 300 inhabitants. From the beginning of the century, smaller places had been left for larger ones, and increasingly so after 1949. People left the islands and isolated hamlets for better medical and educational services and transportation facilities. Those who could afford to leave were better off, but the ten or fifteen families they left behind found themselves without any hope of a road, school, or electrical connections.

Confederation, which was the culmination of a modernization process after the war, marked a decisive turn in the province's overall development, transforming the old economy and society.[3] A native evoked this radical change in terms of "before" and "after the road."[4] From a historian's perspective, Confederation has been described as a physical, social and psychological revolution,[5] an impact which folklorist John Widdowson confirms, if not ascribing it to the sole political event:

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[1] Melvin Firestone, *Brothers and Rivals: Patrilocality in Savage Cove*, Social and Economic Studies no. 5 (St. John's: MUN Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1967) 21.
[2] Rowe 518.
[3] Story 31.
[4] Dona Lee Davis, "Occupational Community and Fishermen's Wives in a Newfoundland Fishing Village," *Anthropological Quarterly* 59.3 (1986): 137.
[5] Rowe 525.

> At a time of very rapid change, accelerated by Confederation with Canada in 1949, the older patterns of life are being eroded with unprecedented swiftness. Even during the past twelve years, as I have witnessed in my own fieldwork in many areas of the province, the changes have been traumatic for those living in the outports.[1]

While the numerous material benefits of modern civilization undoubtedly revolutionized the traditional way of life, life in rural Newfoundland, on the other hand, perhaps has not changed that radically. The island's 42,734 square miles provide a home for a population of only a little more than 570,000--about the same area as Pennsylvania but roughly one twentieth of the population. This sparse population is concentrated on the Avalon Peninsula, where St. John's, the only large city in Newfoundland with a population of over 100,000 is located.[2] With the exception of the inland towns of Grand Falls, Corner Brook and Deer Lake, half of the population of the province still live in these relatively small communities dotting the coastline. Newfoundland mostly remains a land of small villages.

Modern houses are covered on the outside with vinyl and aluminium, yet they belong to the community as much as the old wooden ones, which occasionally still lack water and sewer facilities. The diversification of the economy has broken the enslaving dependence on the sea for survival, and lessened the necessity for self-sufficiency, cooperation and the social and family interdependence which supported the life of each and all in the community. Drastic changes have come to the fishery--motor engines, the industrial processing and freezing of fish and a different market, yet fishermen continue to fish with their kin. Newfoundland is as yet unable to match the deep sea efforts of foreign fishing using modern technology, and often still looked upon as "a great ship moored near the Banks."[3] Also, the omnipresent environment of the ocean, the bitter climate and the geographical isolation from cities and the mainland remain, if they are much easier to cope with. Socially and economically, Newfoundland still lags behind the rest of Canada with a high unemployment rate which has beset the province for two hundred years.[4] The recent growth of the offshore oil industry, like sealing and mining in the past, carries on the

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[1] John Widdowson, preface, *The Little Nord Easter* ix; a reflection of this sudden and dramatic change of the cultural environment has been seen in a modern tradition of jokes and anecdotes revolving around the experience of the older generation, see James G. Calder, "Humor and Misunderstanding in Newfoundland Culture," *Culture & Tradition* 4 (1979): 49-66; Peter Narváez, "The Folklore of 'Old Foolishness': Newfoundland Media Legends," *Canadian Literature* 108 (1986): 125-43.

[2] Hufford, *Terror* 1.

[3] Rowe 32.

[4] Rowe 491.

necessity for many Newfoundlanders to gamble their life in order to achieve employment and economic security.[1] The tragedy of the Ocean Ranger offshore oil platform, in which eighty-four workers died on 15 Feb. 1982, provides a sad illustration of the fact.[2]

3.2.1. Health

Health, sanitation and medical services generally were still primitive in the mid-nineteenth century.[3] Epidemics were rampant. In the earliest missionary account, one reads:

> oct. 21 1796 The fever [measles] has been very fatal to Carbonear, and three Coves adjacent; I have had to bury more than forty, and daily visit the sick, so that I have not spent any time unemployed . . . .
> Feb. 5 I walked from Blackhead to Adam's Cove to attend the funeral of Elizabeth Hudson; she died of a fever which she caught on a visit at her relations. I don't remember that ever I saw a more affecting scene than on this day; the people were afraid of coming near the corps [sic]. When the remains of the deceased was brought to the door, the people stood at so great a distance, that my mind was very much pained, to think that she who had gone at all hours by night and day to attend the sick, and now scarcely any would come near her, who had been so kind to many of them when living! After we had sung a hymn at the door, I said to the women, if you are afraid and unwilling to bear the pall, I will . . . .[4]

St. John's was plagued with diphtheria in 1860, by smallpox and typhus fever in 1889. At the same time, diphtheria raged through the colony for three years with more than 3,000 cases, from which over 600 deaths were officially recorded. Even though smallpox vaccination was compulsory, and diphtheria antitoxin was introduced in 1893, other diseases struck town and outport from time to time and hundreds of settlements had no regular medical services. Diphtheria took its toll for another thirty years.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, a few of the more prosperous outports, such as Grand Bank and Twillingate, built and supported hospitals. Other communities recruited doctors who were supported by a prepaid system. An outport nursing

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[1] Cato Wadel, *Now, Whose Fault is that? The Struggle for Self-Esteem in the Face of Chronic Unemployment*, Newfoundland Social and Economic Studies no. 11 (St. John's: MUN Institute of Economic and Social Research, 1973).

[2] This is suggested by the account of the tragedy as given by the survivors and the victims' families in, Douglas House, *But Who Cares Now? The Tragedy of the Ocean Ranger*, ed. Cle Newhook (St. John's: Breakwater, 1987).

[3] Rowe 207.

[4] William Thoresby, *A Narrative of God's Love to William Thoresby* (N.p.: Redruth, 1801) 45 and 54.

programme began in 1920 to remedy the lack of trained personnel. These services, however, were cut back in the depression years. The 119 doctors on the island in 1911 came down to 93 in 1935. With the population increase, the ratio of doctors to the population was one for 4,050 people, or one for 7,000, when excluding the capital. Following the Commission of Government real progress came after 1934. St. John's Public Health Clinic offered a six month course to train nurses for outport duty. In 1938, there were ten cottage hospitals each serving a district and run by one doctor, assisted by a nurse. Each family paid a flat fee and had access to all medical services. On the southwest coast, which to date has no road access, Dr. Rusted, in 1935, started a medical boat service visiting the then eighty settlements along that coast, yet did not pursue the venture over the year. Newfoundland had the highest rate of T.B. on the North American continent during the first half of the twentieth century, besides a prevalence of typhoid epidemics and vitamin deficiency diseases: beri-beri, rickets, scurvy and night blindness. The constant influx of foreign vessels caused St. John's to be regularly infested.[1] While a kind of barter economy went on in most villages sparing anyone from starvation, malnutrition was common enough. Families were large, sanitation and insulation non-existent or poor. As most villages had no resident doctor, nurse, priest or clergyman, the village midwife and healer remained the most frequently sought help, and played a significant social as well as spiritual role.

Tuberculosis and malnutrition-related diseases persisted up to the first quarter of this century, and devastated settlements on the south coast where poverty and slavery under the merchant system were some of the worst. When foreign interests opened fluorspan mines in St. Lawrence in 1937, the local labour welcomed this working opportunity, yet to an already weakened population were added the ravages of industrial disease, silicosis and lung cancer induced by silica and radiation. These conditions were finally denounced on the evidence that one household in three in St. Lawrence and Lawn had a dead or dying miner.[2]

To poverty, malnutrition and disease one must add a record of disasters. Newfoundland and Labrador have been the site of hundreds of shipwrecks throughout the last two centuries. Strong currents, the lack of lighthouses and aids to navigation, the "sunkers" bordering the indented coastline, thick fog and frequent storms, make these

[1] Rowe 229.

[2] Elliott Leyton, *Dying Hard: The Ravages of Industrial Carnage* (Toronto: McClelland, 1975) 11-12.

waters extremely hazardous to sailors.[1] Of a memorable encounter at Isle-aux-Morts on the South West Coast, the Cambridge geological surveyor, J.B. Jukes, writes in his diary:

> He and some more men, he said, were once employed five days in burying dead bodies cast ashore from a wreck, from which circumstance, I believe, arose the name of "the Dead Islands," or as the French call them, "Ile aux Morts." In short, the whole coast between La Poile and Cape Ray seems to have been at one time or other strewed with wrecks. Every house is surrounded with old rigging, spars, masts, sails, ships' bells, rudders, wheels, and other matters ... Mr. Antoine afterwards told me, at La Poile, that there was scarcely a season (meaning an autumn) but he had four or five shipwrecked crews thrown on his hands to maintain and send away, he being an agent of Lloyd's, as well as the only merchant in the neighbourhood.

and reflects:

> . . . surely it seems reasonable that a great commercial nation such as England should not suffer the borders of the great high-road to Canada and her North American possessions to be thus strewed with the property and bodies of her subjects. A lighthouse on Cape Ray, with a large bell as gun to be used in fogs, together with a smaller lighthouse, and a pilot or two, either at Port-aux-Basques, the Dead Islands, or La Poile, as a harbour of refuge, would be the means of great good.[2]

Archdeacon Wix remarks likewise that "many vessels and many lives might each year be saved from destruction by such a measure."[3]

Besides the constant sea disasters, the nineteenth century by a combination of circumstances saw a condensation of hardships, particularly between 1800 and 1840. These years have been called the most dramatic in Newfoundland history: political trouble, an unstable fishery, the influx of Irish and the French control of the Treaty Shore put Newfoundlanders on the edge of starvation. As the merchants wanted it, St. John's was a fishing depot rather than a town. The houses were torn down by order of the governor in St. John's as late as 1799, and it is only after 1820 that the restrictions imposed on permanent houses and cultivation were lifted. The influx of more than 20,000 immigrants in St. John's following the relaxation of the anti-settlement laws was the greatest contribution to its growth; this concentration of population in a place lacking proper and sufficient housing became an invitation to contamination, epidemic disease and fires. To

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[1] J.P. Andrieux, *Marine Disasters of Newfoundland and Labrador* (Ottawa: OTC, 1986) 9 and 13.

[2] J.B. Jukes, *Excursions in and about Newfoundland during the years 1839 and 1840*, 2 vols. (1842; Toronto: Canadiana, 1969) 186-87.

[3] Wix 142.

this must be added poverty, bred by the single and seasonal occupation of the inhabitants, and to top it all, a series of natural disasters and periodic reversals: calamitous fires in St. John's, the failure of the fishery, potato blight and harsh winters resulting in perilous conditions.[1] The 1892 great fire left 11,000 people homeless in St. John's. While Newfoundland was striving to pay off her railway, the bank crashed in 1894, and the factories closed resulting in disastrous inflation.[2]

The harsh conditions and work brought the plague of alcoholism. From the beginning, rum had played a disproportionately large role in the economic and social life of the people. Newfoundland shipped fish to the West Indies and was forced to exchange it for rum, which made it abundant and relatively cheap. Other liquors, such as port, were similarly traded in from Spain and Portugal. Along with the illusion of escape from poverty, isolation, exploitation and misery, alcohol brought further degradation. Wix reports:

> The arrival of a trading schooner among the people, affords an invariable occasion for all parties . . . to get in a helpless state of intoxication. Women, and among them positively girls of fourteen, may be seen, under the plea of its helping them in their work, habitually taking their "morning" of raw spirit before breakfast. I have seen this draw repeated a second time before a seven o'clock breakfast.[3]

While police statistics maintain the picture of Newfoundland as an alcoholic civilization, until the late 1970's, or the introduction of a modern capitalist economy, Newfoundland's violent crime rate was amongst the lowest in the world.[4]

3.2.2. Mortality

Vital statistics for the island are available from 1901. For the earlier period, one must rely on the information received from the head of each household for the census. The earliest record shows a death rate of 10.3 per 1,000 in 1857 rising to 22.0 in 1891 as a result of concentrated epidemics and down to 17.0 in 1901. These extremely low yet increasing death rates over the earlier year are to be explained by a very youthful population; as this aged, the crude death rate grew. The chief cause of mortality in that

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[1] O'Flaherty, *Rock* 69.
[2] Leslie Harris, *Newfoundland and Labrador: A Brief History* (N.p.: Dent, 1968) 134.
[3] Wix 169-70.
[4] Leyton, "Drunk and Disorderly: Changing Crime in Newfoundland," *Contrary Winds: Essays on Newfoundland Society in Crisis*, ed. Rex Clark (St. John's: Breakwater, 1986) 76-88.

period and for the long time after was infantile mortality: as late as 1921 33.7% of all deaths were of children under 4 years old.[1] This geographical analysis bears out Archdeacon Wix's far more frequent mention of baptisms and churchings than funerals in his 1835 journal and Bishop Feild's observation in 1848 that "one funeral in three years is about the average."[2]

The first vital statistics report shows a total population of 210,000 and 3,525 deaths, which represents less than 2%. Of this toll, the prevalent category (800) concerns babies under one year, followed by consumption (636), and well before old age (337) drowning (98) and other accidents (33). Taking 1925 as the next checkpoint, the figures hardly change: 3,772 deaths in total, of which 807 are under one year of age.[3] Previous studies retain 1935 or so as the beginning of change and explain the decline of the mortality rate by the advances of education, hygiene, sanitation, medical services and communications.[4] The greatest decline occurs between then and 1951, and most markedly concerns the age group under one year.[5] At the time, though, the infant mortality rate in Newfoundland was still considerably higher than in Britain. Out of 1,000 babies, 59 died in England and Wales, 70 in Northern Ireland and 78 in Scotland against 102.82 in Newfoundland and Labrador.[6] Between approximately the same bracket, the principal causes of death have shifted from a pattern dominated by infections diseases and child mortality to one dominated by chronic and degenerative diseases characteristic of an older "modern" population. As compared with Western Europe and the rest of North America, Newfoundland to date retains a much younger population as a result of its sheer drop in the mortality and only feebly declining birth rate.

3.2.3. Religion

Starting from the early nineteenth century, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel sent its first Anglican missionaries to Newfoundland. The inhabitants' response, at

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[1] Michael Staveley, "Population Dynamics in Newfoundland: the Regional Patterns," Mannion, *Peopling* 66.

[2] Feild 55; Wix 30.

[3] *Newfoundland Department of Health Vital Statistics Division: Report on the Births, Marriages and Death, 1900-04.*

[4] Michael J. Barrett, "Mortality Patterns in Newfoundland, 1935-66: An Introductory Analysis," Hon. Diss. MUN 1972; Eric Hugh Larson, "Spatial and Temporal Trends in Human Mortality in Newfoundland, 1937-1971," MS, U of Calgary, 1985.

[5] Barrett 29.

[6] *Newfoundland Department of Health Vital Statistics, 1935.*

first, appears to have been poor; successive missionaries were recalled owing to the people's failure to honour their obligations towards their maintenance. Whether or not ". . . having been without the restraining influence of churches, schools, law enforcement agencies and other civilized institutions, they had reached a point where religion and morality, church and clergymen meant little to them,"[1] religious influence penetrated very slowly. What is sure is that the missionaries' visits were too spaced out to be of much consequence on the people's lives. Except for the Avalon Peninsula, some communities existed for decades without any religious ministrations, or as missionaries report, without even a visit from any minister of any church for the same length of time if at all.[2] A large number of adult baptisms were performed in the early nineteenth century, and until then the population relied on itself for spiritual as for secular matters. Bishop Feild reports:

> None of the children born here have been baptized otherwise than by lay hands, except the few baptized by the Roman Catholic clergyman seven years ago. The marriage service is generally read by some captain of a vessel. . . .
> Before the Morning prayers, Mr. Harvey married a couple who had been united by a Roman Catholic man-servant, who read the marriage service out of our Prayer book![3]

By the end of the eighteenth century the island's three major denominations had all made their appearance. Denominational affiliations were determined partly by racial origin, and partly by the work of missionaries. The southern half of the Avalon Peninsula and the southern section of the west coast are predominantly Roman Catholic, the western part of the south coast is predominantly Anglican, and Notre Dame Bay is predominantly United Church and Salvation Army.[4] In more recent times, evangelism has pervaded many Protestant areas of the province, its restraining influence for many meaning "change to another type of life," and resulting in a willing abandonment and even rejection of traditional culture.[5]

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[1]Rowe 191.
[2]Rowe 193.
[3]Feild 44 and 46.
[4]Rothney 18-19.
[5]The idiom is from one of Gordon Cox's informants, a singer relating his own experience, in "'I've changed from that type of life to another': Some Individual Responses to Social Changes in a Newfoundland Outport," *Folk Music Journal* 4 (1983): 385-400; see also his "Some Aspects of Musical Acculturation in the repertoire of a Newfoundland Singer," *Culture & Tradition* 2 (1977): 91-105; MacEdward Leach, *Folk Ballads and Songs of the Lower Labrador Coast*, National Museum of Canada Bulletin no. 201, Anthropological Series no. 68 (Ottawa: Queen's, 1965) 8, and Cartwright, "Charismatic Culture in St. John's, Newfoundland: A Cross-denominational Study of Religious Folklife in Three Groups," PhD thesis, MUN, 1983.

3.2.4. Education

The Society for the Propagation of the gospel sponsored the first schools. These were Sunday schools, staffed by lay readers or catechists, who in some measure also supplemented the work of the missionaries. The Sunday schools were better attended than the day schools; during the fishing season all children aged twelve worked in the fishery during the week in addition to which the day schools charged fees to those families who could afford it. Children of the wealthy merchant families either had private tutors or were sent to England. By the nineteenth century the Society had schools in most of the larger settlements. The other churches, which had only recently been recognized, had no schools yet. Catholic priests and Methodist ministers held schools in private houses. For the majority, however, there was only illiteracy; many did not attend school, and contributed early to the family income.[1] Statistics show Newfoundland literacy lagging behind other countries in the Western world. Between 1860 and 1876 the average school attendance was between 50 and 65 %, rising to a mere 68% in 1901. In the mid nineteenth century 40% of the potential labour force had a capacity to read, 18% of which were fully literate, rising respectively to 56% and 25% by the end of the century. These figures would be considerably higher on the Eastern Avalon, and rather less in the rest of the country.[2]

Sir Wilfred Grenfell, remembered today as one of Newfoundland's greatest benefactors, made an important contribution to education on the island, and not only in Labrador and the northern part where he had engaged in medical missionary work in 1892. He perceived that an educated people would less easily be victimized by unscrupulous traders. The few existing schools on the coast were opened only during the summer months. These were church schools each serving but a few children of their denomination. Grenfell sought to replace this wasteful system by Mission schools where all could attend and, through his reputation in Britain and the States, managed to attract qualified volunteer teachers as well as nurses for his Mission.[3] Elisabeth Greenleaf, then a twenty-year old Vassar graduate, first came to the island as a Grenfell teacher in 1920. In a letter to her parents, she voices the crying needs of education on the island a century after its institution:

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[1] Rowe 202-04.
[2] Alexander 29.
[3] J.L. Kerr, *Wilfred Grenfell: His Life and Work* (New York: Dodd, 1959) 156.

> School is not held regularly year after year, but only by fits and starts, so that results are poor. . . . all the people who have taught up here say the children are so anxious to learn that there's no question of discipline . . . .[1]

The dispensation of post-secondary education on the island had to await the twentieth century.[2]

3.2.5. The Fisheries

To get an insight into the workaday existence of Newfoundlanders, one needs to revert to its fishery where we started. Settlement and dwelling, community and family life, work and play revolved around the fishery. The infertility of the soil and the shortness of the growing season meant that until the development of a diversified economy in the mid twentieth century the majority of Newfoundlanders derived their subsistence from the ocean. In this peasant economy, dependency on nature resulted in the seasonality of work and play. While the inshore cod fishery was the mainstay occupation all over the coastline, different fisheries were prosecuted depending on regional weather conditions and availability of resource. Beyond these circumstances, the precariousness of fishing remained the most pervading feature: the only certain thing about it was its uncertainty.[3]

3.2.5.1. The Inshore Cod Fishery

All Newfoundland communities were primarily dependent on the inshore cod fishery. The season lasted from May to September or October, its shortness making it a period of intense activity. A family would have to live through the year on its product. In the early days of the inshore cod fishery, men fished the shore in small flat-bottomed "dories" and other boat types.[4] Before the marine motor was introduced in the 30's, they rowed or sailed distances between five to eight miles , and had to put up with dense fogs, high seas, sudden storms, racing tides as well as offshore rocks and shoals. The renowned stability of these small craft was yet far from ensuring safety:

> The dory, despite her sprightliness and buoyancy cannot rise on a broken sea; no boat can. Instead, while her bottom is floating on firmer water,

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[1] From a letter to her parents, dated June 18, 1920, MUNFLA ms 82-189, folder no. 2.
[2] Rowe 30.
[3] Hilda Chaulk Murray, *More than 50%: Woman's Life in a Newfoundland Outport, 1900-1950* (St. John's: Breakwater, 1979) 8.
[4] See David Taylor, "Boatbuilding in Winterton: The Design, Construction and Use of Inshore Fishing Boats in a Newfoundland Community," MA thesis, MUN, 1980, p. 97-146.

> this foam, comprised of bubbles, will encircle her, then boil over her bow, gunnels and stern, swamping her. In 99 cases out of 100 the dory will capsize to drown her crew. If the wind is blowing towards the land, the dory will heave ashore, very often in a badly damaged condition. Sometimes the bodies of drowned fishermen will wash ashore also, with their pitiable remains lying half covered by sand and rolled up in seaweed.[1]

Fishing was prosecuted on a family basis: fathers and sons fished the nearby grounds each day with hook-and-line ("jiggers") or cod-net, while wives and daughters split and salted ("cured") the catch between each haul. The whole process of preparing fish ("making fish") for shipping to Europe involved cleaning, gutting, and salting; once salted, it was washed out and spread on the flakes to dry. Fish plants were introduced about 1945.

3.2.5.2. The Seal Fishery

Early in the eighteenth century, sealing (or "swilin'") became an important commercial winter activity in the more northerly areas of the island. Initially, it was conducted inshore by "landsmen" equipped with long barrelled muzzle-loading guns, and soon meant an important source of income for these communities. Towards the end of the century, the number of winter inhabitants was sufficient to make a large-scale seal fishery possible. High fish prices and plenty of labour encouraged merchants and planters to outfit fishing ships and send them to the northern coasts of the island and the Labrador coast for the summer fishery. Then, in the 1790's, a few ships from Conception Bay and St. John's were sent there to look for seals, which resulted in a capital-intensive seal-hunt offshore.[2] From March to April, the people of the east, northeast and Labrador coasts engaged in the annual sealhunt. [3] The vessels pursued the seal herds amid icefloes far out at sea; the crew went out on the ice in groups of two to ten, and covered miles leaping on the tightly packed pans. Boats could be crushed by colliding icefields or fail to pick men up when driven away in blizzards. Men carried out this brutal adventure in feudal working conditions, without proper clothing or safety equipment. For the length of the voyage, they slept in the ship holds without bedding; they were improperly fed and lived in utter filth amidst the bloody cargo heaped on deck.[4] Despite the hardships and risks involved, the seal hunt

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[1] Kelland, *Dories* x.

[2] Shannon Ryan and Larry Small, *Haulin' Rope and Gaff: Songs and Poetry in the History of the Newfoundland Seal Fishery* (St. John's: Breakwater, 1978) 1-3.

[3] Cassie Brown, *Death on the Ice: The Great Newfoundland Sealing Disaster of 1914* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1972) 1.

[4] Guy Wright, *Sons and Seals: A Voyage to the Ice* (1984; Halifax: Lorimer, 1986) 14-5.

was looked forward to with great excitement. Besides procuring cash income, its challenge made it a rite of initiation for young men, "a spring ritual in which men slew and were slain."[1] The first schooner went to the ice off Labrador in 1794, and although it was lost in the ice with all hands, it was followed by many others. More than a thousand Newfoundlanders lost their life in this now practically extinct adventure.[2]

3.2.5.3. The Bank Fishery

The increasing size of the boats used in the seal fishery led to a deep-sea fishery prosecuted on the Banks. The banking vessels ("bankers") operated off the principal south coast ports, and went to the Grand Banks and George's Bank, lying between 100 and 300 miles offshore. Except for sealing, the Bank fishery was the only fishing industry which could be prosecuted during winter owing to the absence of ice down the southcoast. The bankers left home for the Banks in February and from there went up to Labrador in late August; returning around the 15th October, these fishermen spent most of the year away from home.

These schooners ("bankers") were built to contend with the worst of Atlantic storms; they carried a crew of sixteen to twenty-eight men and up to twelve or fourteen dories. These crews, unlike the inshore fishermen, remained at sea for two to three weeks. Once on the Banks, the dories were hauled off the ship, the men got into them in pairs, and the schooner remained cruising around in the vicinity. Each dory carried four tubs of trawl which were set up to over two miles from the parent ship. Dorymen usually underran their trawls three times a day; and, after recovering their trawls, the schooner picked them up. When dorymen returned to the vessel with the first load, they became the dressing and salting crews. Back in port after a journey on the Banks, the men still had to unload the fish, wash it and place it on the beaches or the flakes.[3]

Bank fishing was often proclaimed to be the sea's most dangerous occupation. There were a variety of ways in which men, in the ordinary course of its operation, could suffer injury and death. As the men were paid according to the cargo brought aboard, they tended to load their dories so deeply that the water was actually lapping the edges of the gunnels.

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[1] John R. Scott, "The Function of Folklore in the Interrelationship of the Newfoundland Seal Fishery and the Home Communities of the Sealers," MA thesis, MUN, 1975, 141.
[2] Brown 13.
[3] Kelland 155-57.

Even aboard the schooner there was danger: they could be washed overboard by giant waves, particularly while stowing jibs on the bowsprit--"the widow maker" as it was called. On deck, crew members could be belted to their deaths by wildly flailing booms and slatting sails, or struck by heavy gear falling from aloft.[1]

3.2.5.4. The Labrador Fishery

The Labrador inshore fishery flourished between 1850 and 1950. As cod was getting scarce on the northeast coast, fishermen from Conception and Trinity Bays spent the short summer season fishing "down on the Labrador." This was a kind of migratory inshore fishery prosecuted by Newfoundlanders. Like the seal-hunt, this fishing expedition was looked upon as formative for young men. This fishery, lasting from June to September, was particulary intensive. The cod traps were hauled three times a day except Sunday, in addition to which there was also salmon and cod-jigging to augment the catch. In Labrador as on the Banks, the fish was salted and shipped without being dried ("green fish"). Except for those fishermen who went to the Labrador on schooners, most crossed as passengers on the coastal boats, taking their families, dogs, goats, fishing supplies, food and all their belongings with them. These families ("stationers") for the time occupied a rudimentary house, stage and bawn, (altogether called "room") and all hands got busy cleaning the fish as this had to be sold before they left to go back home.[2] The floater codfishery knew its maximum development between 1875 and 1910, and declined in 1954 as a result of unfavourable marketing conditions. It was revived in the 1970's.[3]

Schooner-fishermen ("floaters") held the highest prestige among fishermen; the crews, consisting of the skipper, five or six "sharemen" and a cook, seldom came ashore. These schooners, like the bankers, were manned by merchants. At the end of the season, half the catch was taken by the skipper to pay the expenses, and the other was shared among crewmen. Fishing off Labrador was far less hazardous than on the Banks: most schooners operated only one mile or two off the fishing stations, only during daylight, and anchored in a sheltered place before nightfall. A considerable number of Labrador schooners, however, were old and poorly-rigged vessels

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[1] Kelland 131-2 and 155.

[2] For an insider's account of the "stationers"' life on the Labrador, see Greta Hussey, *Our Life on Lear's Room, Labrador* (St. John's: Robinson, 1981).

[3] W.A. Black, "The Labrador Floater Codfishery," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 50.3 (1960): 267-93.

recuperated from the Bank fishery, for which they could no longer be trusted. The greatest danger was the return voyage, which corresponded to the season when hurricanes, spawned in the Gulf of Mexico, swept these shores. Nine schooners and eighty people were lost in 1929. It is only in the last decade of this fishing industry that most Labrador vessels were equipped with gas or diesel engines.[1]

3.2.6. The Lumbercamps

Along with the ocean, the forest played a pervading role in the life of Newfoundlanders. Following the summer fishery, many men spent a few weeks or months of the fall and winter in the lumberwoods situated inland the western, northeastern and central regions. Work was manual, intense and hazardous, the greatest perils occurring in the expert operation of the spring drive. Wages were low yet supplemented the family income. For, apart for the expert few who were retained for the winter haul-off and spring drive, neither the fish nor the woods provided a year-round employment. Working and living conditions were substandard, and only alleviated by the socializing, singing and storytelling which followed the day's work. The traditional wood camps disappeared in the 50's to be replaced by industrial enterprises hiring commuting and professional loggers.[2] In the attempt to diversify Newfoundland's economy at the turn of this century, a huge paper mill was built at Corner Brook in 1923-5, and beside Bell Island's iron ore, lead and zinc mining commenced in Buchans in 1928. Both places grew into modern communities, and by 1930 resulted in Newfoundland's greater dependency by 1930 on the export of minerals and forest products than fish. Thousands of fishermen quit the fishery, either to be absorbed by the new land industries or emigrate to the United States and Canada.[3]

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[1] John Feltham, *Setting Sail for Bonavista Bay: The Story of Nine Schooners Driven out to Sea in the Fall of 1929* (St. John's: Cuff, 1988) 3-5 and 93.

[2] John Ashton, "A Study of the Lumbercamp Song Tradition in Newfoundland," PhD thesis, MUN, 1985.

[3] O'Flaherty, *Rock* 128-9.

3.2.7. Women's Work

In this economy where, as a woman puts it, "you never saw a man from May until October unless they were old or bad in the head," women played a vital role in taking charge of all home-related matters--raising their family, tending gardens and animals besides helping in processing the fish:

> But--the women worked harder than the men. . . my dear, I've seen my own mother with a drudge barrow--you don't know what a drudge barrow means--it's a big long tin edge, you know--like a vase. An' with two hands on it. And when we'd cut the throats and split the fish, to drop down this barrow, mother'd take it up the whole length of a big stage--and heave that out of the soft powdered salt--every fish--and come back for another. There's be another cut for her--and she'd be ready. She was up to 65 or 70 then. . . And it had to be eleven o'clock and probably twelve o'clock in the night.[1]

Women's responsibilities have been accounted as representing "more than 50%" of the work, not to speak of the moral and psychological implications attending to their role within their family and community.[2]

. . . . .

Drawing up this survey of historical facts has been more hazardous than ever suspected. The fruit of my reading of local historical literature--a prudent summation of facts rather than a synthetic account of their significance--admittedly, is less than ideal. The problem is that, while these facts are historically true, they cannot speak for their significance and impact on the life of ordinary people, and while this is typical of traditional political and economic historiography, this all too restricted compilation of sources has left the non-native and non-expert researcher with some problematic "progressive" versus "conservative" views of life in the old outports. The strongest and most passionate of these authors' opinions have deliberately been discounted here. This survey, at any rate, reveals the need for in-depth research on Newfoundland's social history.

Whatever the responsibilities for Newfoundlanders' retarded progression to modernity--the fatality of nature, the evil of men or both--theirs was probably no easier life than their proletarian peers' living in pre-modern urban or rural areas of North America and

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[1] Virginia Preston, "Attitudes Towards the Sea and Toward Fishing on the Cape Shore," 24; uncatalogued paper from Dr. Nemec's personal archive.

[2] The phrase is taken from the title of Murray's memoirs; moral and psychological aspects relating to the traditional role of women are of particular relevance to the present investigation and dealt with specifically in the following chapter.

Europe. Neither perhaps, the social accounts of these literatures suggest, was it all that worse. For those privileged by a richer soil and a gentler climate than Newfoundland fisherfolk, the lack of means and education resulted in efforts and achievements never reaching far above subsistence level or vital concerns. David Alexander's substantially documented study examining the relationship of literacy and economic development in Nineteenth century Newfoundland goes the furthest in analysing the actual causes of the islanders' impoverished condition.

Whereas it has not been proved yet that literacy is a factor rather than an effect of economic development, the comparison of Newfoundland's situation with other richer as well as poorer areas of the old and the new continent discards the accepted views according to which the island's economic problems would be accountable to "inadequacies in the resource endowment," "the inadequacies of the merchant class, the iniquities of the credit system, the horrors of denominationalism, the smothering superiority of the British Empire, or the rapacious self-interest of foreign investors."[1] Whereas Iceland and Scandinavia were endowed with no more enviable soil, climate or territory, these countries, strikingly, reached one of the best rates of economic development--and literacy. Newfoundland's literacy level at the turn of this century, on the other hand, does not compare at all favourably with other countries of the Western World. That "there was no *country* responsible for its affairs and the progress of its people which drew upon such a meagre supply of educated people for its entrepreneurial, managerial and administative requirements" would be the only particularity of Newfoundland and the most likely explanation for its underdeveloped potential.[2] Such an academic statement on the quality of the island's human capital, Alexander insists, does not detract from the merits of a people or their society, but yields a sharp insight into "the complexities of Newfoundland's culture--its enormous capacity to absorb hardship without sinking into despair, and the deep conservatism which assures survival but may indicate an inclination to absorb change rather than to initiate reform."[3]

[1] Alexander 5-6.
[2] Alexander 10.
[3] Alexander 7.

Chapter 4

Community Tradition and the Sea

From drawing up a picture of Newfoundlanders' living circumstances, this investigation proceeds to mapping their moral orientations. The following inquiry relies on anthropological and folkloristic accounts, enlightened by theoretical and comparative insights, and proposes that these orientations are rooted in the traditional as well as maritime character of their culture.

4.1. A Folk Society

A current of radical regionalism has surfaced in Canada in recent years, and apparently reached Newfoundland. James Overton offers a first analysis of this phenomenon in the province, which, he suggests, pervades the academic literature on cultural issues. Overton thus analyses the essential ideological foundations of this "academic regionalism":

> This cultural revival rests on certain essential ideological foundations. The key assumption of the revival is that there exists a distinctive Newfoundland culture, way of life, ethos, soul, or ethnic identity (older writers tend to use the term "race"). This unique culture, centred on the outports, has been undermined by industrialization, the welfare state, urbanization, and the introduction of North American values in the period since the Second World War.[1]

The phenomenon deserves attention in any further scientific study of Newfoundland culture and "character." Overton situates the full expression of this cultural revival movement in the seventies and eighties, or the most recent academic literature on Newfoundland referred to in the present study. Relatively little, indeed, has come to supplement community ethnographies researched in the sixties and seventies.[2] The fair

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[1] James Overton, "A Newfoundland Culture?" *Journal of Canadian Studies* 23 (1988): 8-9.

[2] Casey, "Traditions and Neighbourhoods: The Folklore of a Newfoundland Outport," MA thesis, MUN, 1971; James C. Faris, *Cat Harbour: A Newfoundland Fishing Settlement* (St. John's: MUN Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1966); Firestone, *Brothers*; John Szwed, *Private Cultures and Public Imagery: Interpersonal Relations in a Newfoundland Peasant Society*, Newfoundland Social and Economic Studies no. 2 (St. John's: MUN Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1966).

number of personal memoirs published recently on the side of general public literature seems to manifest a similar regional interest and perhaps Pre-confederation nostalgia.[1]

For the sake of objective analysis and avoiding a simplistic description of Newfoundland society before Confederation as "unique," it seems appropriate to start from Redfield's model of "the folk society" epitomizing the common features of pre-industrial societies. Taking his warning that no real peasant society totally conforms to this ideal, such a society is characteristically small, isolated, non-literate, homogeneous and showing a strong sense of group belonging and solidarity.[2] Sacred and family tradition prevail above legislation and individual choice.

With a view to judge the applicability of these key traits to the Newfoundland context, here is Redfield's account of them. Because the folk society is small, it is the lieu of intense and lasting personal relationships; the circle of social interaction remains the same for a lifetime. Communication is personal and familial. The group's essential rootedness and relative isolation entail solidarity bonds in the form of cooperation in work activities and mutual responsibility in general. In this self-sufficient society, the members are egalitarian and economically dependent on each other. This communal way of life engenders homogeneity of experience and ideology. Non-literacy means that communication is essentially by word of mouth, which puts memory and speech at a premium. Knowledge is transmitted orally and experience accumulated with age; the recurrent problems of life are dealt with in conventional ways resulting from long intercommunication. As tradition prevails, behaviour is highly formalized. Thus, the folk society exhibits culture--as a coherent system of conventional and collective conceptions, sentiments and understandings--to the largest degree. Through enforcing community norms, the folk society articulates a consistent and effective "design for living:"

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[1] For instance, Florence Grant Barbour, *Memories of Life on the Labrador and in Newfoundland* (New York: Carlton, 1973); V. Butler, *Little; Sposin' I Dies*; Elizabeth Goudie, *Woman of Labrador* (Toronto: Martin, 1973); Hussey; Murray, *More;* Helen Porter, *Below the Bridge* (St. John's: Breakwater, 1979); Gary L. Saunders, *Rattles and Steadies: Memoirs of a Gander River Man*, Folklore and Folklife Series, no. 12 (St. John's: Breakwater, 1986); Aubrey M. Tizzard, *On Sloping Ground: Reminiscences of Outport Life in Notre Dame Bay, Newfoundland*, Folklore and Language Publications, Community Studies Series, no. 2 (St. John's: MUN, 1979); R.F. Sparkes, *The Winds Softly Sigh*, ed. Richard E. Buehler, Folklore and Folklife Series no. 6 (St. John's: Breakwater, 1981).

[2] Redfield, "The Folk Society," *The American Journal of Sociology* 52 (1947) : 293-308; the following studies relating to Newfoundland have referred to this model: Casey, Rosenberg, and Wareham; Szwed, *Private*; Narváez, "Folklore" 125-43.

> . . . its [the folk society] power to act consistently over periods of time and to meet crises effectively is not dependent upon discipline exerted by force or upon devotion to some single principle of action but to the concurrence and consistency of many or all of the actions and conceptions which make up the whole round of life.[1]

Was Newfoundland ever "a ballad society" conforming to Redfield's model? The diverse anthropological and folkloristic accounts of life in the outports prior to 1949 leave little doubt as to the fact. From their field experience in various areas of rural Newfoundland, MacEdward Leach reports witnessing "a culture closer to a pure folk culture than perhaps any other in North America," and Kenneth Peacock, "one of the rare examples in recent centuries of a neo-primitive white culture."[2] Other accounts give historical explanation for the rare persistence of this "folk society" on the continent embodying technological advancement and economic prosperity. This is native F. Lin Jackson's bitter account:

> . . . as a truly viable and successful society, Newfoundland has never yet existed. . . . While communities elsewhere flourished under deliberate cultivation, communities in Newfoundland had to struggle to survive as unwanted or neglected weeds. . . . For almost all our history in fact, a community of sorts persisted, but one which, without the benefit of proper government, remained retrograde and primitive. . . . Five centuries of the plundering of Newfoundland's resources on the part of outsiders unconcerned with the advancement of local people left a legacy of political impotence, retrograde economy and a cultural life thwarted by the unrelieved rigour of bare subsistence, isolation and alienation.[3]

The proposition further holds on every point. Newfoundland communities were typically small communities: in 1949 they amounted to roughly 1,500, most of which had fewer than 300 inhabitants.[4] To this day, social life remains mostly confined to the village level and everybody knows everybody else, not only within their own community but the two or three neighbouring ones. The closed character of these societies is such that all social relationships are intimate and personal, as habits reveal: no door is locked at night, visitors are expected to make their way into the kitchen without even knocking. Crime is unthinkable for the offender would easily be identified.

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[1] Redfield, "Folk" 299.

[2] Leach, *Folk* 12; Kenneth Peacock, *Songs of the Newfoundland Outports*, 3 vols. National of Canada Bulletin no. 197, Anthropological Series no. 65 (Ottawa: Queen's, 1965) 1: xix.

[3] F. Lin Jackson, *Surviving Confederation* (St. John's: Cuff, 1986) 35, 36 and 37.

[4] James. G. Calder, "Humor and Misunderstanding in Newfoundland Culture," *Culture & Tradition* 4 (1979): 50.

Pre-1949 Newfoundland has been described as an island-arrested society, and isolation probably remains one of the most common complaint about the island in our days.[1] Until recent years, the outport settlements dotting the coastline, indeed, remained remote and undisturbed, lacking roads, railroads, electricity and telephone service. Isolated it probably was, yet more so in the eyes of the occasional outsider than those of the locals themselves. Canon Earle's view indeed suggests that a culture turned in on itself might be a more accurate qualification:

> We rarely used the word before Confederation. I never felt "isolated" on Change Islands when navigation closed in December, because there were nearly a thousand people there and plenty of grub and good company. . . . Our island was our world and what happened there was our business, be it a wedding, a death, a sickness, a trick or a big fish.[2]

Foreign visitors to the island have noted that the great events of the earlier part of the twentieth century had but a limited effect on the nature and life of the rural communities, be it the advent of Responsible Government, the construction of the railway built across the island, or the development of mining and logging industries.[3] Enclavic as they were, the outports had various and frequent occasions of contact with each other as with the outside world.[4] Much to her dismay, Maud Karpeles reported from her visit in the early 30's that "the sea does not isolate to the same extent as does a mountain range."[5] This comment from the fastidious collector of traditional ballads alluded to her much greater harvest of songs never yet committed to writing in the Appalachians against the abundance of popular sentimental songs known on both sides of the Atlantic. One remembers that through her international fish trade, Newfoundland entertained regular contacts with the American colonies, the Maritimes, Atlantic Europe and the West Indies. Besides mail service, the outports were regularly supplied by coastal steamers and, for the purpose of the regional fisheries, visited by fishermen from other parts of the islands. Likewise, the lumbercamps offered annual occasions of exchange between men from all over the island and sometimes beyond, so that despite the complete absence of roads until the second half of this century,

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[1] Story, "Newfoundland" 12.

[2] George Earle, *A Collection of Foolishness and Folklore* (St. John's: Cuff, 1988) 12-3 and 43.

[3] Story 31; see also Elisabeth Bristol Greenleaf, introduction, *Ballads and Sea Songs of Newfoundland*, by E.B. Greenleaf and Grace Yarrow Mansfield (1933; Hatboro, PA: Folklore Associates, 1968) xxvi-vii.

[4] Taft, "The Itinerant Movie-Man and His Impact on the Folk Culture of the Outports of Newfoundland," *Culture & Tradition* 1 (1976): 107-19.

[5] Maud Karpeles, *Folk Songs from Newfoundland* (London: Faber, 1971) 17.

there was considerable mobility and social fluidity.[1] Battery radios came to the island in the 30's.

In the time of the family fishery, outport communities were largely self-reliant. Their subsistence economy made them self-sufficient; the males of every household fished, built houses, made boats, traps, and nets; the women, among all other domestic activities, tended vegetable-gardens, made the family clothes and quilts, wasting nothing. This independence was largely reduced by the introduction of the merchants' truck-system, whereby fishing gear, foods and clothes were essentially supplied from their store to each family household. Work was cooperative and unspecialized; every man was a Jack of all trades.[2] Occupational homogeneity and versatility produced an egalitarian society between the fisher families, and was partly kept in place by the truck-system.[3] At the top of this egalitarian majority were the one or two local merchants, the priest and the teacher. All, even when residing in the community, were looked upon as "superiors" and "outsiders."[4] This social equality was also consciously maintained by the fishermen themselves: any attempt or pretence to raise oneself above others in any way was controlled by ridicule and satire, or verbalized, such as "if you want to be different you best leave" and "we all come up together or we do not come up at all."[5] The democratic nature of outport society was further reflected in the informality of terms of address used: "boy," "maid," "my dear," "my love" between men and women of equal age, "aunt/uncle" and "Miss/Mr." to elderly persons who not related, but only the latter to the merchant, teacher, mission nurse.[6]

Traditional societies such as the outports were homogeneous not only in occupation and status but also in terms of belief and ethos. The English and Irish immigrants tended to segregate themselves geographically from each other as neither group looked forward to being neighbours again in the new country.[7] Cases of marked violence between the two,

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[1] The Trans-Canada highway crossing the island was laid in the sixties; Story, "Newfoundland" 24; Smith 3.

[2] Leach 7.

[3] See Pocius, "Hooked Rugs in Newfoundland: The Representation of Social Structure in Design," *Journal of American Folklore* 92 (1979): 273-84.

[4] Wareham, introduction, *Little* 17-18.

[5] Linda Dale, "A Woman's Touch: Domestic Arrangements in the Rural Newfoundland Home," *Material History Bulletin* (1982): 20; Dona Lee Davis, "'Shore Skippers' and 'Grass Widows' in Newfoundland," *To Work and to Weep: Women in Fishing Economies*, ed. Jane Nadel-Klein and Davis, Social and Economic Papers no. 18 (St. John's: MUN Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1988) 225; "Occupational" 137.

[6] Faris, *Cat* 105.

[7] Rowe 197

however, were confined to large communities of divided religious denominations.[1] Political identity and social solidarity, indeed, were mostly governed by allegiances of religion.[2] Some humorous anecdotes related to me by Canon George Earle from his own experience as an Anglican growing up in Fogo in the 20s concerning their Roman Catholic Tilting neighbours, illustrates the point:

CE: Growing up we had very little to do with them. It was seen more as a ghetto; they wanted it that way. They were different from us. It was *the nest*[3] of Irish people and they *were* different from us, but anytime I went there they were always very friendly and all this sort of stuff, but they didn't *mix* too much with others so that they kept intact the Irish dialect, you know, customs and beliefs and superstitions.
IP: Did they do so willingly?
CE: Oh, yes, I'd say willingly, yes, very much so.
IP: Did they avoid contact with other people?
CE: No, they didn't *avoid* it; they seemed self-contained and on their own, but some, of course, we used to meet in business. . . .
IP: Did they marry within their community?
CE: They married within the community, mostly. Now, the southside of Joe Batt's Arm had another nest of Irish, you see, pockets. Apart from that, there were some in Fogo itself, but none in Change Islands at all, no Irish there, no Irish in Seldom or any other places but Fogo. I was about 14 before I saw the first Irish people, the first Roman Catholics, we called them, 'cause they were one and the same, you know, and I tormented them and everything. I thought they had horns and everything.
IP: There were stories about them?
CE: There were stories, humorous stories. Some of them were, both sides would tell stories, you know, they're not like us, all this sort of thing, yes.
IP: Do you remember any of these funny stories about the different groups?
CE: When I went to White Bay that time and in the house where I was staying there was this old lady from Englee, the mother of the woman of the house where I was staying and so she used to come to the services when I took the services and by and by the Methodist man came, you see, so she took off for his service--I think you'll read that in my book. I said, now, "the Church of England" is good enough, that'll get you there, and she said, "I don't know," she said, "when I'm down in Englee, I sometimes go to the Salvation Army too," and I said, "well, you're not all that well." "I'm not sure which is right, I wants to go to heaven," she said, "I want to make sure I cover *all* the roads, you know, possibly to get there." So, I said, "I s'ppose if you went a little further on to Conche"--that was a real Roman Catholic community--"I s'ppose you'd go to the Roman Catholic church then?" And she said, she paused a bit, she said, "no, couldn't go that far, not even to get into

[1] Story 28.
[2] Tom Philbrook, *Fisherman, Logger, Merchant, Miner: Social Change and Industrialism in Three Newfoundland Communities*, Newfoundland Social and Economic Studies no. 1 (St. John's: MUN Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1966) 3.
[3] Italics here and hereafter in transcriptions designates the speaker's emphasis.

> heaven."[laughs]. . . . When we came from England, cause I belong here but I was over there a long time but we came in 1957. I came over to go in charge of Queen's College, so we'd get our meat and we liked the meat from Lawlor's and so we used to have orders of it and the Church of England butcher was quite annoyed about this, and he said, "I thought you'd get your meat from us, you see, and my wife said, "Well, I just only wanted good meat. I didn't know there was Church of England meat and Roman Catholic meat," she wasn't used to this stuff; but, t'was the same: you were supposed to get the Anglican plumber to do your plumbing because you *knew*. We used to know that everything Roman Catholics wanted done, they would only use their own, always would.
>
> IP: How would you know that this plumber was Anglican or Roman Catholic?
>
> CE: Oh well, you just know that [laugh], we used to say. I can tell one by looking at them [laugh]. You'd be surprised how much you can tell by looking.
>
> IP: Like what, for instance?
>
> CE: I don't know, he looked Irish. We could smell them out, b'y [laugh].[1]

Homogeneity of thought and practice had for effect a high degree of cohesiveness. This congruence of kinship, religion, economics and residence over a long period of time resulted in expected behaviour within the community members. By contrast, the "stranger" in these closed societies represented the outside world, unknown and unpredictable; the outsider was regarded as potentially dangerous, maybe malevolent, and in such a close-knit society, might even function as scapegoat. "You can't trust strangers," was a community idiom.[2] Typical aliens to that community were "catholics" and "mounties;" their evocation for the purpose of threatening children to obedience is another illustration of the local residents' strong sense of "belonging" to a place, as they say.[3] While relationships among one's peers were personal, informal and friendly, a rigid etiquette prevailed in relationships between persons of all ages. Residents were tacitly bound by solidarity and reciprocity; though individual pride was put in relying as far as possible on oneself, help could not be refused but had to be reciprocated:[4]

> Reciprocity was the community norm. People helped each other build houses, care for the sick, shear sheep, and raise children, and fed and fuelled those who had a bad season. People with disfiguring birthmarks, operable cripples and others, were helped by the pooling of community

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[1] MUNFLA 87-159/C12033.

[2] Peggy Martin, "Drop Dead: Witchcraft Images and Ambiguities in Newfoundland Society," *Culture & Tradition* 2 (1977): 39.

[3] Faris, *Cat* 135-36.

[4] Szwed, *Private* 106-08.

> resources to provide medical treatment. Before the road everyone was equal and willing to help.[1]
>
> To help one another came as naturally to them as breathing. Long ago they had learned that true independence can only be won by recognizing the necessity of interdependence.[2]

Although help could never be refused, the demand would have to be brought into some casual conversation, but not in a direct manner. This procedure is one of many serving the strict avoidance of physical conflict. In small and isolated communities where the social networks are so totally entwined there was a vital need to avoid or at least repress conflict and hostility.[3] Several studies relating to Christmas mumming in Newfoundland reveal the particular vitality of this worldwide phenomenon on the island.[4] Their inquiries based in different communities converge as to the function of the tradition as a ritual of social reaffirmation. The twelve days of Christmas during which this takes place are themselves a time of social interaction, characterized by hospitality and generosity. Each of these studies focuses on different aspects of the custom, all of which contribute a part to the ritual departure from normality. As their disguise and behaviour suggest, the mummers simulate aggressivity by reversing all ordinary rules of social behaviour. The rite provides the group with socially approved means of displaying hostility where the social tightness of the community normally represses the expression of hostility. Their visit, which is only to non-kin residents, strengthens the ties of friendship. Such rituals of social hostility occur in societies where life is highly organized. They operate as safety valves where the accumulation of hostility threatens the unity and cooperation of the group. Such mechanisms of social control in such small and remote places may have compensated for the absence of formal political, judicial and religious agency until the nineteenth century. Community life appears to have been imbued by "a social mystique," attested by Deborah Kodish's study, and expressed by her elderly informant as "never had a word between us," concerning a friendly relation.[5]

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[1] Davis, *Blood and Nerves: An Ethnographic Focus on Menopause*, Social and Economic Studies no. 28 (St. John's: MUN Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1983) 75.

[2] Sparkes xvi.

[3] Faris, *Cat* 139.

[4] *Christmas*; Rex Clark, "Romancing the Harlequins: A Note on Class Struggle in the Newfoundland village," in *Contrary Winds: Essays in Newfoundland Society in Crisis*, ed. Clark (St. John's: Breakwater, 1986) 7-20; Sider, "Christmas Mumming and the New Year in Outport Newfoundland," *Past and Present* 71 (1976): 102-25; Margaret Robertson, "The Symbolism of Christmas Mummering in Newfoundland," *Folklore* 93 (1982): 176-80.

[5] Kodish, "'Never'."

In the absence of any external restraints in the isolated outports, family and religion functioned as core institutions, both assuring social and moral control. The whole organization of life revolved around the economic subsistence of the community. In the last century, more than nine tenths of the labour force was engaged in the fishery, which in certain communities up to twenty years ago constituted the community's primary activity. In this activity, the extended family was the basic unit of production: a father fished with his sons, and grown up sons with their brothers.[1] For the sake of preserving the father-sons working unit or "crew" and its capital, men customarily settled within their own communities when they married.[2] The religious, social, and occupational homogeneity of outport communities produced stability and traditionalism. Their centuries old reliance on fish as the single economic resource, domination by merchant capitalism, and primitive fishing methods created an economic and social system resisting change, and all contributed to maintaining them into a "pre-industrial" age up until recent decades.

Orality was the prevalent mode of communication in "pre-literate" Newfoundland, and, as in other such cultures, nurtured typical conceptions of expanded time and contractile space. These cultures show what Harold Innis calls "a time bias," i.e. an overemphasis of the time concept. Such a notion of time perceives past, present and future in continuity, but dichotomizes space into known and unknown territories. Mircea Eliade explains that this conception opposes the inhabitants' own "world" to the unknown "otherworld:"

> Ce qui charactérise les sociétés traditionnelles, c'est l'opposition qu'elles sous-entendent entre leur territoire habité et l'espace inconnu et indéterminé qui l'entoure: le premier, c'est le "Monde" (plus précisément:"notre monde"), le Cosmos; le reste, ce n'est plus un Cosmos, mais une sorte d'"autre monde," un espace étranger, chaotique, peuplé de larves, de démons, d'"étrangers" (assimilés, d'ailleurs, aux démons et aux fantômes).[3]

In oral societies, thus, time is perceived as "continuous" and space as "discontinuous." Peter Narváez proposes that these notions are tacitly enforced by Newfoundland verbal traditions.[4] Legends about fairies and ghosts, personal experience narratives, tragic sea

[1] Faris, *Cat* 88-96; Firestone 47.

[2] See Firestone, *Brothers*.

[3] Mircea Eliade, *Le sacré et le profane* (1957; Paris: Gallimard, 1965).

[4] Narváez has perceptively applied and illustrated these conceptualizations with regard to Newfoundland traditional society in "Folklore" and "Newfoundland Berry Pickers 'in the Fairies': The Maintenance of Spatial and Temporal Boundaries through Legendry," *Lore & Language* 6.1 (1987): 15-49.

ballads, tokens and threats would all establish proxemic boundaries associating "the known" with purity and "the unknown" with danger. One of his studies focuses on fairy narratives, which recount women's personal experience with fairies while picking berries in the barrens and marshlands situated on the geographic fringe of small communities. These berry grounds, therefore, constitute a border or liminal space between security and danger, to which the fairies' "liminal" nature as supernatural beings endowed with human attributes associates them cognitively.

Through demonstrating discontinous space, these stories would serve as geographical markers on the community maps of community residents. Through recounting the psychic or physical harm inflicted by fairies, they functioned as cautionary tales and agents of social control. The narrated misadventures befalling those venturing beyond the areas frequented by the group subordinated individual initiative to community good. As the residents depended on communal cooperation for survival, one way of preserving the dynamics of their social networks was to restrain excessive individualism, or reduce the chances of any member's capacity to threaten the community's subsistence. Individual over-achievement and prestige would endanger the social harmony and egalitarian basis of the group. Jealousy apart, a view of limited good saw the one's success as implying another's loss. Such stories would also enforce norms regarding sexual morality. As the majority of berry pickers were young women, these stories likely inspired caution and obedience to parental authority. From Narváez's conclusion, the fairy functioned as boundary marker and protected the self-supporting outport society spatially and morally against pernicious external forces.

Narváez's proposition regarding the temporally-biased worldview governing Newfoundland traditional culture finds confirmation in his analysis of more recent local traditions contemporaneous with the modern spatially biased media technologies. These, indeed, have contributed to the development of an expansionist worldview or the reversal of the former cognitive orientation. Narváez concludes that contemporary media legends mock the elderly's inability to deal with modern technology, while Newfie jokes exploit the stereotyped view of the Newfoundlander as a "foolish, old-fashioned, rural bumpkin in competition with the sophisticated, modern, mainlander."[1] In deriding the spatial incompetence and obtuseness of the past, these modern expressions of local tradition reject

[1] Narváez, "Newfoundland" 35-41.

the old contractionist worldview derived from a universe shaped by orality and physical isolation.

On the grounds of these changing conceptualizations, Narváez argues for the evolution rather than loss of traditional phenomena, and provides a positive answer to the question whether the revolutionary changes brought into outport life following confederation, including the diffusion of the radio and the telephone, have affected the traditional worldview. This opinion meets Wilfred Wareham's analysis of the demise of his native Harbour Buffet. The socio-political changes brought in the wake of confederation in the form of salaried jobs and subsidies brought about a new ethos responsible for the desertion of this once large and thriving place in Placentia Bay. The old egalitarian society was replaced by a class-system which put fishing nearly at the bottom of the scale. People gradually came to feel that fishing was not good enough for their children, who became employees of merchants or left for work on the mainland. As most left and very few engaged in fishing, the old community did not survive the people's changing concept of "the good life."[1]

While neither Narváez's nor Wareham's views are questionable at their own sociological level, others offered in a psychological perspective present an interesting counterpart. One is that of a native Newfoundlander,

> To look closely at Newfoundland life as it is lived, rather than fancied, is to be struck with the force of continuity rather than change. . . . whatever has changed, the elements of wind, tide, and crag remain; and the people may be already too irresistibly altered, the stamp of an old land too firmly implanted in them, to respond as readily as some think to new influences. Their character perhaps, has been formed, and
>
> ... will go onward the same
> Though Dynasties pass.[2]
>
> . . . in spite of changes, methods of gaining a livelihood, and therefore the inner life of a people and its everyday experiences are little changed.[3]

the other, that of one most familiar with the "soul" of mariners in its proper spiritual sense:

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[1] V. Butler, *Little* 155-59.

[2] O'Flaherty, *Rock* 187.

[3] J.R. Smallwood, "Life Today in Newfoundland," *The Book of Newfoundland*, ed. Smallwood (St. John's: Newfoundland, 1937-75) 1: 4.

> La technique modifiera son [le marin-pêcheur] activité extérieure mais sa mentalité, comme toute mentalité d'homme du faire, demeurera sans doute traditionaliste.[1]

The questions stand thus: does tradition change with its evolving expressive forms? Can cultural worldview be disrupted by improved technique and human will? If no longer a peasant society as such, does Newfoundland not remain "a kingdom by the sea"?

4.2. A Maritime Culture

That Newfoundland is a maritime society and that the ocean surrounding it has shaped its people's lives and worldview, is a plausible enough hypothesis. Native views and voices on the matter make it hard to challenge:

> What, then, is Newfoundland culture? Like any, it is a way of life that first of all owes a great deal to the natural setting. It makes a difference that we are not an agrarian people living on fenced inland or encircled by a prairie horizon; that we are not primarily city-folk whose life is spent among avenues of brick, glass and steel. We inhabit a rocky coast in a northern clime with an icy foggy sea as our daily vista. The very bluffs are part of our perspective; the sea is in our blood; the bays and woodlands are the basic canvas upon which our lives are stretched.[2]

> The carved and rugged headlands of this sea-worn rock witness to the might and fury of the tempest. The marks it has made on our souls are as deep, and perhaps as abiding, as the seams in the granite cliff.

> Tell me thy secret, O Sea,
> The mystery sealed in thy breast;
> Come, breathe it in whispers to me,
> A child of thy fevered unrest.[3]

Language is a revealing index of the experience of life, and also of worldview.[4] George Story, the eminent lexicographer and specialist in Newfoundland English, observes the conservative as well as innovative quality of the local speech. On the one hand, the socio-economic history of the island has created unusual conditions for the preservation of original syntactic, lexical and phonetic features; on the other, the residents

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[1] Benoît Lacroix, *Folklore de la mer et religion* (N.p.: Leméac, 1980) 16.

[2] Jackson 11.

[3] Cyril. F. Poole, *In Search of the Newfoundland Soul* (St. John's: Cuff, 1982) 101; quoting E. J. Pratt, "The Secret of the Sea," in *Here the Tides Flow*, ed D.G. Pitt (Toronto: Macmillan, 1962).

[4] This statement makes reference to Whorf's analysis of the cultural aspects of language reported in Chapter 1.

have created new terms and uses relevant to their activities and concerns. Studies of this local idiom reveal riches with regard to the fishery and its whole context: words relating to fish and seals (bedlamer, white-coat), conditions of water (clean water, dirty water), ice (pack ice), wind (wind gall, wind hound) and others still. Many terms from this semantic field also appear in local proverbs and phrases (a spare oar, a spared life; as far as ever a puffin flew).[1] In addition, a study of fishermen's designations of particular fishing grounds has uncovered the existence of an emic idiom specifically relating to fishing and shared among the men of the community.[2]

To gauge the extent of the sea's influence on the natives' character, one needs some knowledge of maritime cultures in general.[3] The intrinsic danger of wrenching a living from the ocean is such as to inspire universal human behaviour. Such is Michel Mollat's explanation for finding great similarly in maritime people's attitudes towards death:

> En conclusion, les attitudes de l'homme en face du péril en mer sont un des moments les plus signifiants de sa relation avec le sacré, que ce dernier soit bénéfique ou maléfique. . . . Il faudrait d'ailleurs bien mal connaître le milieu marin pour imaginer des différences profondes de comportement devant le danger commun, à l'heure où personne ne peut plus mentir ni tricher.[4]

The immensity and instability of the sea, analysts accord, always and everywhere have aroused a sense of mystery and inspired symbolic interpretations. Translating his natural fear of the depths in Christian ideology, Man has viewed the sea as a remnant of original chaos, a realm inhabited by monstrous creatures (Jonah's whale) or the dreaded universe of the otherworld (spirits or even the devil boarding phantom ships). Within the pre-modern conception of space, the sea is the "unknown" par excellence, "the ultimate in

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[1] Story, "The Dialects of Newfoundland," in Smallwood, *Book* 3: 559-63. For an explanation of the terms cited and more examples, see *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, ed. G. M. Story, W.J. Kirwin and J. Widdowson (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1982).

[2] Gary R. Butler, "Culture, Cognition, and Communication: Fishermen's Location-Finding in L'Anse-à-Canards, Newfoundland," *Canadian Folklore canadien* 5.1/2 (1983): 7-21

[3] Major studies include Horace Beck, *Folklore of the Sea* (Middleton, CT: Wesleyan UP, 1973); Peter F. Anson, *Fishermen and Fishing Ways* (East Ardsley, Eng.: Rowman, 1975); Michel Mollat, "Les attitudes des gens de mer devant le danger et devant la mort," *Ethnologie française* n.s. 9.2 (1979):191-200; Lacroix. As this thesis is about to be submitted, Laurier Turgeon sends me a copy of his edition of *Identité Maritime Identity. Canadian Folklore canadien* 12.2 (1990), most contributions to which relate to outside and inside views of maritime people.

[4] Mollat 198.

profane space," or very much like death itself:[1] It is "devil deep" in Newfoundland.[2] For fisher folk death at sea is the worst that can happen:

> Quand arrive la mort en mer, celle-ci prend un sens plus tragique. Elle signifie vraiment ce qu'elle était autrefois chez les peuples moins instruits: la régression, le chaos, les ténèbres.[3]

The sea, nevertheless, is a provider of life as well as a killer; answering no voice but God, it is also an image of spiritual purity. For centuries, sailors have sought absolution before going to it and feared to find themselves aboard with a murderer, criminal or adulterer. The sea, thus, is sacred as much as cursed space, the ominous terrain of the immanent confrontation of Good and Evil. As popular practices attest, its evil can effectively be exorcized. This ambiguity of feeling also shows in the sailors' irreductible attraction to the sea despite an instinctive fear of it.[4]

Mountaineers, desert people, and sailors appear to share a common worldview, which is likely owing to their hazardous life environment and occupation:

> Chez ces trois catégories d'hommes, la fréquentation du danger mortel détermine une vision du monde différente de celle des autres hommes.[5]

Deriving a livelihood from unforgiving elements, they gain a feeling of their smallness in nature and a sharper consciousness of the absolute and fatality. Amid the awesome immensity of their environment, notions of time, space and of oneself are minimized and the consciousness of death heightened. Experts underscore fisher folk's powerful appeal to religious and supernatural forces out of an acute sense of vulnerability. For Horace Beck, "the mind of man is repelled by mystery and he must solve it through either religion, folklore or science."[6] Michel Mollat agrees with Benoît Lacroix that insecurity fosters "un besoin religieux d'apprivoiser l'espace."[7] Maritime people tend to perceive angels, devils and saints as real beings, and willingly depend on them. Underlying their belief there is the fear of not receiving the last sacraments and a proper Christian burial, conditional to

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[1] This is Janet McNaughton's proposition with reference to Eliade in her article: "'I've always believed in spirits, from that time, anyway': Aspects of Belief in the Song 'The Ghostly Sailors,'" *Culture & Tradition* 6 (1982): 21-31.
[2] Kelland 16.
[3] Lacroix 24 interpreting Eliade 109-16.
[4] Mollat 192.
[5] Mollat 191.
[6] Beck 15.
[7] Lacroix 14; Mollat 191.

salvation.[1] Many and various spiritual "insurances" are taken--the boats are blessed in spring and religious objects taken aboard. Danger, besides, entertains a petty and constant "bargaining" of promises in return for protection from death at sea, which--for the living as much as for the dead--jeopardizes the chances of peaceful rest:

> Should a man lose his life at sea without any funeral rites, it was a general and popular belief that he would haunt the area, returning to his old ship when it passed the spot where he was lost, or that he would climb aboard another ship should his own fail to return. This was especially true when a vessel foundered with all hands. . . . these ghosts are either malevolent, or helpful to distressed mariners and either warn them of impending trouble or save them in their hour of need.[2]

There was great concern in tragedy to recover the victims' bodies and commit them to the earth as they should. Superstitious belief runs free along with belief in God, and is also largely concerned with death:

> Perhaps the largest single body of lore concerns the supernatural and in particular, the dead. Living as he does a hazardous life where no man can be sure of seeing the sun rise on the morrow, it is only natural that the sailor should be inordinately concerned with the spirit world, and his concern is augmented by sea conditions, where fog, ice, mirage, exhaustion, bad food and isolation from normal living enable a man to hear and to feel things not ordinarily experienced by other mortals.[3]

Beck's statement smacks dangerously of "academic disbelief" for dismissing supernatural experiences as "mirage" resulting from incapacitating circumstances.[4] The explanation overlooks the hypothesis that people whose existence depends on the right anticipation of weather and sea conditions develop an acute sensory, and perhaps also, extrasensory perception. "Le marin anticipe toujours," Mollat remarks, and so do his dear ones living in expectation of his return from sea. Fisher folk are known to be visual people, always awake and attentive to the least sign.[5] From the testimony of a Newfoundland fisherman, "the sea would catch you if you didn't watch it every moment."[6] Dreams are interpreted as premonitory and taken seriously. The anxiety involved in this quest for meaning in natural observations, indeed, suggests an educated

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[1] Some Acadian "complaintes" relating to sea disaster indeed reveal that fear of improper rites and burial at sea are stronger than the loss of life itself; see George Arsenault, *Complaintes acadiennes de L'île-du-Prince-Edouard* (N.p.: Leméac, 1980).
[2] Beck 286-87.
[3] Beck 280-81; see also Anson 41.
[4] Hufford's expression; see chapter 1 for a full reference.
[5] Mollat 194.
[6] Preston 26.

sense, rooted in accumulated experience and transmitted by tradition, when life is at stake. As a matter of fact, weather and death signs abound in the lore of maritime cultures.[1]

Fishing is eminently unpredictable; its success depends on a complex of factors lying beyond human control: the vagaries of fish, weather, currents and season make it a matter of luck as much as skill. When livelihood entirely depends on its success, one may posit the functional relevance of traditions in encapsulating life-saving empirical knowledge. This accords with John Szwed's proposition concerning folksong,

> A folksong may be thought of as one of many means by which man adapts to his natural and social environments over time; that is, as one of many means by which life chances are maximized through a human design.[2]

and Gary Butler's hypothesis concerning the ability of L'Anse-à-Canards fishermen to accurately locate their fishing grounds:

> . . . fishing is an unpredictable undertaking, and success depends largely upon a combination of skill and luck. However, a fisherman who depended entirely upon chance would not only eventually fail, but would also be in a constant state of uncertainty as to his ability to provide for his family and himself. . . . Not only does this information reduce the fisherman's anxiety, it also helps him to determine a precise course of action for the next fishing trip, thereby minimizing the role of luck and maximizing that of skill.[3]

Solidarity and sociability are the norm in maritime cultures. It is as if the omnipresence of the "unknown" and the awesome fostered an intense feeling of belonging with blood as with occupational kin. Anxiety is shared among families and crews, and this solidarity even extends beyond death:

> La solidarité des gens de mer se maintenait ainsi au-delà de la mort, dans la communauté des vivants et des morts, expression vivante, si l'on peut dire, de la communion des saints.[4]

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[1] See, for instance, Ellen Badone, "Death Omens in a Breton Memorate," *Folklore* 98 (1987) 99-104; Helen Creighton, *Bluenose Magic: Popular Beliefs and Superstitions in Nova Scotia* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1968); A.G. Waghorne, "Death Signs and Weather Signs from Newfoundland and Labrador," *Journal of American Folklore* 13 (1900): 297-99.

[2] Szwed, "Paul E. Hall: A Newfoundland Song-Maker and His Community of Song," *Folksongs and their Makers*, ed. H. Glassie, E.D. Ives and J.F. Szwed (Bowling Green: Bowling Green U Popular P, 1970) 147-69.

[3] G. Butler, "Culture" 18.

[4] Mollat 197.

> How closely does Newfoundland society resemble this portrait? Pretty well, it seems. History very evidently points to the residents' dependency on their environment: not only the sea, but the poor soil, the bitter climate and the stranglehold of the merchant's credit system.

My personal experience of Newfoundlanders' attitude to nature in the modern context of leisure suggests a noticeable difference with that prevailing in places in which nature has long been mastered, such as in industrialized areas. Whereas value there is put on a simple life in communion with an unspoilt natural environment, Newfoundlanders tend to value the modern benefits of progress, and fantasize domination over it. In outports, dogs are not allowed in and essentially function like guards rather than pets; horses roaming free in Tilting for the lack of adequate pastures are not welcome in the vicinity of the houses. Garden decorations--old tyres, rocks, plastic smurfs, flamingoes, or windmills--are all carefully painted in contradistinction with their natural environment of turf and "natural" rock, which is always part of the scene. Around St. John's, it was a wonder to discover the prevalence of oilskin tablecloths spread on the rocks as of portable radio sets at picnics; and, in La Manche natural park, on the Southern Shore, stranger even to find gravel pits crowded with caravans and people sitting by, only a short distance away from the most majestic scenery of cliffs, whales, seals and birds. How come during my five-year residence in town I practically never met any locals walking on the cliffs surrounding St. John's, but found Quidi Vidi Lake unwalkable on Regatta Day for amusement booths, people, and noise? This impression was reinforced on visiting outport kitchens filled with a profusion of artistic (because useless) "knick knacks," and small bedrooms filled with giant and brightly-coloured soft toys, star posters, sophisticated toys or romantic dressing tables in diaphanous frills? My question is partly answered by local poet E.J. Pratt's comment, not on frills, but on the local response to Marconi's wireless telegraphy across the Atlantic in 1902,

> Those of us who remember the announcement may recall the sense of conquest over Nature that visited the hearts of men, the trust in science for the prevention of the grosser human calamities. Wireless had not only given a richer meaning to the phrase "the brotherhood of the sea," but it was considered as having eliminated for ever the horror of the huge tolls after collisions and storms.[1]

[1] E.J. Pratt, "Memories of Newfoundland," Smallwood, *Book* 2:158.

along with F. Lin Jackson proposing that "in Newfoundland, nature never reaches into the background; it is never benign" and Faris, that its people do not "conquer" or master the sea but only "adjust" to it.[1]

Along with its degrading dependence on the elements, outport existence was of the most precarious: "fishing is a gamble," says a local phrase. Survival required perpetual vigilance: according to the proverbial saying, "nofty was forty when he lost the pork," meaning that one could never be too careful. Life was a succession of ifs and chances, which circumstances are known to breed fatalism.[2] The occasion of a fire in St. John's in 1840 made J.B. Jukes comment on "the stupid indifference of a large part of the population, as compared with the great, and sometimes self-baffling readiness and eagerness of the population of any large town in England in similar circumstances" yet appreciate the motivation for this passivity in its proper context:

> I was afterwards told, indeed, that by far too many of the population looked upon a fire as a godsend, more especially, if it reached or threatened a merchant's store, when a regular system of plunder was carried out unblushingly and, as it were, by prescriptive right. . . . The former state of vassalage in which they were held by the merchants, the adventurous nature of their pursuits leading them to look on danger or misfortune as necessary and inevitable, as also the want of education, and community of feeling, and of popular opinion, are among the causes alluded to.[3]

This fatalism, Kenneth Goldstein argues on the basis of local sea disaster songs, is woven with providentialism as much as stoic resignation in the face of tragedy.[4] This attitude, as Goldstein suggests, is not to be taken in the ordinary sense of negativism or passivity. Lawrence G. Small has remarked how fishermen in his native community constantly manipulated language in a positive manner to cope with hard circumstances, such as talking about "a sign of fish" when little is seen around.[5] As much courage shows in these local proverbs: "those who live by the sea take hope from the sea," and "there's hope from the ocean but not from the grave."[6]

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[1] Jackson 12; Faris 23.
[2] O'Flaherty, "Looking" 6.
[3] Jukes 8.
[4] Goldstein, "Fate" 84-94.
[5] Small, "Interrelationship" 36.
[6] MUNFLA Proverb Index.

From a contemporary ethnographic perspective, Dona Lee Davis has analysed the ideology of a Southwest Coast community and proposed that this fishery ethos functions as collective strategy for survival. She underlines the crucial and dynamic role of women in the single and male-dominated occupation of this small Anglican community. Its women have a lot on their "nerves." The expression, in local usage, is widespread and designates a "normal" condition with Newfoundlanders, particularly women:[1] "'Nerves' is one way in which Newfoundlanders verbalize their life stresses, for nerves are viewed as a normal way of coping with life's trials."[2] As their men are mostly absent from home for a period varying between a day and months, they spend all their time working, waiting and worrying at home, their lives oscillating between lonesome worry during his absence and excitement at his homecoming:

> The major drawback to being a fisherman's wife is worry. You never get used to it, especially when "it comes up blow." When the weather is rough, I sit up all night in the kitchen and just hope he's all right. Don has told me of narrow escapes he has had on boats. Once he was on a long-liner that lit up in flames and ran up on a rock. They all had to be rescued. His foot got crushed once; it could have been his leg. He keeps saying it was nothing. He doesn't worry about it, why should I? He has no insurance. If anything happened we'd be left with nothing. I worry most when I'm not busy or alone.[3]

This long and stressing expectation, luckily, is filled by the women's many responsibilities, some of which are shared: besides performing their household roles as homemaker and acting as father and mother to their children, they often run women's voluntary associations. From a short stay in Southeast Bight, Placentia Bay, I learnt that it was the women of the community who had fought with the government to obtain funds to build a new church--and built it themselves. They also ran the dart club to which practically all of them belong. On Sunday morning, as the priest happened to be out of this all-Catholic community, a group of four or five said the Liturgy of the Word for a congregation which, except for myself, was either male or under fifteen. Coming out of church, the kitchen smells escaping from the open backdoors told me that the women were busy cooking lunch to be served after mass. Frank Galgay, who for years was on the Catholic School Board for the Southern Shore, confirmed to me this essentially female

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[1] The typical expression, "Oh, me nerves!" appears on T-shirts sold in the capital's tourist shops.

[2] Davis, "Blood" 139.

[3] Davis, "Woman the Worrier: Confronting Feminist and Biomedical Archetypes of Stress," *Women's Studies* 10.2 (1983): 142.

involvement in all public and cultural community matters, saying it was very hard to get the men to attend school meetings, even when free from work.[1]

Besides such responsibilities, women, Davis declares, have a crucial role in supporting their husbands' morale. The community image of the ideal woman is that of "grass widow"--which in the local use Davis interprets as "the long suffering ever dependable fortress of community and domestic life."[2] In filling this expected role as "woman the worrier," the fisherman's wife shared in his work in a deeply felt spiritual empathy, and supported the community ideal of stoic endurance as well as learnt to adapt to her plight. Do they not know that "the sea is made of mothers' tears"?

> Women play an important role in the symbolic life of the community. Their major duty as fishermen's wives is to worry about their husbands at sea. The burden of worry is left to the wife. In a way it is the women's worry that symbolically keeps his boat afloat. By leaving the worry to his wife, the fisherman is freed to get on with the mechanical aspects of fishing. Men deny the danger of their job. Women almost seem to revel in it. Women believe that the emotional support they give to their husbands is one of the most important contributions women can make to the survival of their own husbands and the Newfoundland tradition of fishing. Every man knows that his wife will be functioning properly if he meets with disaster. It is the duty of women to prepare for the worst every time their men go out to sea. They do so by imagining and rehearsing what will happen if they do not come back. This does dramatize the female contribution to the fishery, yet it prepares the females for collective action if indeed disaster does occur.[3]

For, when it did occur, it still was a shock and a bitter trial. An eighty-three year-old widow remembers:

> I was 22 when I got married. My husband was a McGrath from Patrick's Cove. John William McGrath. And he was a fisherman-farmer, y'see--he went at the two jobs. He'd go out on the vegetables and kept out on the stables, cattle, an' horses an' sheep--an' our own vegetables--an' then he'd fish, besides. We had eight children in twelve years. An' then he went up Georges--on the Banks, yes. An' he was only there three months when he was drowned. . . . To earn more money. He went in October, 1928. That's when the fish prices were real bad here. . . . An' he went . . . an' he was dead in January. *January,* he was drowned. An' then I was left with the children. An' I was only married 12 years. . . . I always did . . . loved it [the sea]. But after the . . . after John Willy was drowned, I hated it. Yes . . . you can call it a--I don't know *what* you would call it. Kind of a *sensitive feeling*. That you couldn't get over the, the evil turn o'

[1] MUNFLA 87-159/C12034.
[2] Davis, "Shore" 221.
[3] Davis, "Occupational" 138.

> death. 'T was a big shock you know. Yes, when you're left with eight, an' only married twelve year, you know, you're not very . . . .[1]

From her revealing analysis contributing some answer to the question of the relation of environment, culture and worldview, Davis infers a portrait of the ideal woman, the trials and qualities of whom, are nothing short of those of the *prima inter pares* of local ballad heroines, "Lady Margaret (Ch 77)":

> Fishing was a dangerous occupation, and many women have been "widowed by the sea." The tendency of some men to drink a lot, and the harshness of winter and danger of exposure have left women widowed too. Many widows remarried out of necessity and inclination; those who did not usually had a large family. Widows left with many small children could not move in with relatives, and most kin could not help out, being poor themselves. Therefore, the widow who managed to keep her family together is accorded a great deal of admiration, by her children and the community.[2]
>
> The middle-aged woman, the woman who functioned and survived through the "hard times past" continues to be the model of the ideal woman for all generations and both sexes.[3]

To conclude, this chapter yields revealing insights into the internal mechanisms underlying Newfoundland society. The community studies made in the 60's and 70's present converging data suggesting that, from its emergence up to these dates marking the first effects of Confederation, this was a "folk society." Typically thus, it functioned on a social and moral basis geared to the primary concern with survival, and social interaction essentially revolved around village members. This communal way of life fostered as well as sustained a certain worldview and ethos, encapsulated in egalitarianism and solidarity. In effect, this powerful ideology, enforced by church and family, produced spatial and moral protection against all potential aggressors, "the evil of death" included.

Pre-confederation Newfoundland, besides, was essentially a maritime society. Though the men were practically at all jobs, their work, season and weather permitting, was fishing; the women, whose tasks around the house, garden and animals were no less numerous or diverse, also worked "at the fish." Here also, the unpredictability and hazardous nature of this way of life appears to have enhanced moral orientations known to maritime cultures: sociability, stoicism, faith, anxiety for loss at sea and solidarity even

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[1]Preston 45-6 and 48; the punctuation and underlining are the collector's.
[2]Davis, "Blood" 70.
[3]Davis, "Shore" 228.

beyond death. To this general portrait, the local data adds a less common, or, at any rate, more obscure trait: the moral burden of the seaman's wife as lone parent, potential or actual widow. Such respect held for widows draws attention in this male-dominated society.

Whereas by the "cultural context" of traditional expression, folkloristic as well as anthropological research has often understood "pragmatic" aspects of culture in exclusion of "symbolic" ones, the question of cultural meaning in ballads and other genres conceived of in terms of interactive functioning naturally calls for a holistic conception of "context." Such is the justification for the following section of this study, in which the "natives," at last, have the floor.

2.

The Symbolic Context

The second section of this study reviews the extra-ballad expressions of Newfoundland deathlore (the "symbolic" context). The multigeneric complex of which the ballads are but a part considered in relation with the socio-cultural reality (the "pragmatic" context), hopefully, will illuminate the extent to which the ballads' views on death are shaped by the life circumstances and recreative talent of their audiences. Are the ballads' declarations consonant with the cultural discourse on death as a whole? Do their views show affinities with those of certain genres more than others? Has their message outlived the classical repertoire in modern tradition?

This section overviews major genres in past as well as modern tradition. While this extensive corpus is considered structurally rather than exhaustively, the quotation of texts and interviews inherent to this multigeneric examination amounts to considerable amplitude relative to the two other sections of this thesis. None of the genres considered, however, is studied in any comparable depth or breadth with those of the classical ballads. The generic expressions making up the ballads' symbolic environment have been delineated with a view to highlight the place and relevance of their own declarations. This cultural-specific inquiry into Newfoundland attitudes about death relies on Philippe Ariès's interpretive model for Western culture.

Tamed Death

By "tamed death," Ariès designates that attitude which is the oldest, the longest held, and the most common.[1] He traces it from Homer to Tolstoï, and from the great medieval epic and romance heroes up to an English contemporary. For, if it is exceptional in our days, "tamed death" has not entirely disappeared. Contrary to what the paradigm would suggest, death was "tamed" before it turned "wild." In its oldest conception death was familiar, awaited and accepted. From this serene resignation to human destiny, the evacuation of death characteristic of modern industrialized society is a far cry. Ariès explains:

> Il y a deux manières de n'y [à la mort] point penser: la nôtre, celle de notre civilization technicienne qui refuse la mort et la frappe d'interdit; et celle des civilisations traditionnelles, qui n'est pas refus, mais *impossibilité d'y penser fortement* , parce que la mort est proche et fait trop partie de la vie quotidienne.[2]

It could be that the imminence of death attenuated ("tamed") much of its brutality. Death was forewarned, and more usually through an inner conviction than supernatural occurrences or magical means. Most warnings came through casual observations of daily life, and if the apparition of a revenant was a sure sign, it was uncommon and held as fantastic. In any case, death hardly hit in the back:

> La mort commune, normale, ne prend pas en traître, même si elle est accidentelle à la suite d'une blessure, même si elle est l'effet d'une trop grande émotion, comme cela arrivait. Son caractère essentiel est qu'elle laisse le temps de l'avertissement.[3]

These warnings, even when accompanied by prodigies, were very positively received.[4] The most desirable or "good" death typically was the natural passing away of an aged person, which provided both the dying and his community with the comforting thought of a life duly fulfilled. As "good" was the heroic death of the knight, for if falling on the battlefield and in his prime, his heroic death allowed due respects. But, "bad death," such as caused by accident or murder, was a different matter. Unprepared, unwitnessed or

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[1] Ariès, *Western* 55.
[2] Ariès, *Homme* 1:29-30.
[3] Ariès, *Homme* 1:13.
[4] Ariès, *Homme* 1:16.

unaccountable, sudden and violent death was as shameful and terrifying as the other is pacifying.[1]

"Feeling his end approach," the dying person orchestrated his departing of life in a solemn way, yet with no great show of emotion. He prepared for death in a way set by custom: he lay down facing east (toward Jerusalem) as once prescribed by the Christian liturgy, and gathered his relatives and companions around his deathbed. The presence of relatives, friends, and neighbours was essential, and the dying person indeed presided over the ceremony.[2] The plain recognition of impending death, for Ariès, had nothing in common with the wonderful or supernatural world of the Round Table. Even though in the best case death was a public event, it was as natural and simple as it was familiar. According to custom, the "gisant" lamented about the sadness of dying, but did so with no thought of either escaping death or glorifying it:

> . . . the man of the late Middle Ages was very acutely conscious that he had merely been granted a stay of execution, that his delay would be a brief one, and that death was always present within him, shattering his ambitions and poisoning his pleasures. And that man felt a love of life which we today can scarcely understand, perhaps because of our increased longevity.[3]

The dying person proceeded to pardon his companions and commend his survivors to God. This was followed by the religious rites: prayers and absolution, sprinkling with holy water, and "Corpus Christi." When all this was done, there only remained to wait for death. No sooner was death declared than the wildest scenes of despair burst out amidst the gathering. What might be taken for morbid and hysterical behaviour today allowed the full and free expression of loss. This behaviour was customary, but not yet ritual, the emphasis being on spontaneity rather than control:

> Le deuil devait par principe, dépasser la mesure.[4]

Outbursts of emotion lasted throughout the wake, and were only interrupted by praising of the deceased. This should not be confused with the romantic outpouring of sentiments for this kind of affectivity was unknown until the nineteenth century. Not that

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[1] Ariès, *Homme* 1:18.

[2] Ariès reports that up to the last century, it would be normal for passers-by meeting the priest bearing the last sacrament to accompany him in procession into the sickroom.

[3] Ariès, *Western* 44.

[4] Ariès, *Homme* 1:145; for an illustration of this, see Seán O'Súilleabháin, *Irish Wake Amusements* (Dublin: Mercier, 1967).

grief for a beloved would be absent, but as people kept a much larger circle of relations in daily life, they tended to overcome bereavement more easily and quickly. Up to the advent of the nuclear family and its accrued emotional investment in the individual person, the loss of a spouse or a child scarcely caused irreparable harm to one's affective life. Widowed spouses were strongly encouraged to remarry, and parents' emptied arms were soon filled again. [1]

The ecclesiastical authority acted to repress the unrestrained manifestations of emotion at wakes, which was part of a larger move towards the "clericalization" of funerary custom.[2] As the wake became an ecclesiastical ceremony, religious dignity brought the survivors' behaviour under effective control. The whole custom was purged and ritualized. What could no longer be expressed in spontaneous gestures and words would be signified symbolically in costume and colour. Mourning was strictly enforced: for a close relative, the application of its social taboos usually lasted for one year following the decease. Thus ritualized, mourning was meant as an opportunity to negotiate and control grief; first, by symbolically enforcing it from the time of the decease, then by gradually reintegrating the mourner back into normal social life.

Along with the imminence of death in everyday experience, the living had the dead as neighbours. Whereas the ancients enforced a strict separation of both by keeping cemeteries far removed from their cities, from the Middle Ages up to the eighteenth century the cemetery bordered the church so that church and "churchyard" equally belonged to the living and the dead. More even, the churchyard was the foyer of social life as its ground was used also for non-funerary purposes, such as for market. Ariès draws attention to the significance of the churchyard in this conception as collective space more than as resting place for one's own dead. In this, also breaking with antiquity, burial sites all over that period became both anonymous and temporary. The remains were buried only as long as decomposition, following which the bones were dug up and stacked in "galeries" surrounding this common ground.[3]

[1] Ariès, *Homme* 2:291.
[2] Ariès, *Homme* 1:164.
[3] Ariès, *Homme* 1:37-67.

The "traditional"[1] conception of the afterlife offers another expression of the easy proximity of the living and the dead. Rather than "dead and gone for ever," even when buried and long departed, the dead led some kind of attenuated life in a realm which was synomymous with rest, and not yet divided into the Christian "heaven," "hell," nor the later "purgatory."[2] In the best case, they slept and rested peacefully, but their own impiety or that of their own in life could cause them to come back as "revenants." This and any other aspect characterizing "tamed death," Ariès suggests, owed nothing to Christianity.[3]

[1] The brackets, here and hereafter, indicate that the word is used in Ariès's specific sense as referring to "tamed" death, in distinction from the folkloristic acception of the term.

[2] Ariès, *Homme* 2:314.

[3] Ariès, *Homme* 2:20.

Chapter 5

Omens, Lights, Phantom Ships, Ghosts, the "Good Wake" and Tales of Magic

The folk traditions held in Newfoundland roughly until the aftermath of Confederation reveal a coherent code of prescriptive behaviour ensuring the successful resolution of the death crisis on the "traditional" pattern. The lasting prevalence of "tamed death" up until the fifties and sixties in the province is borne out by its reflection through the largest part of the data gathered for this study. This chapter takes a bird's eye view of the various "folk ideas" making up the ideological framework of "tamed death" across a wide range of cultural expressions. The "traditional" idea of "hard death" provides the whole subject of the following one, and receives specific expression in personal experience narratives, broadside ballads and locally-composed sea disaster songs. Accounts of misadventures at sea, both narrated and sung, remain living traditions locally, and as such testify to the persistence of "traditional" attitudes towards death in modern Newfoundland. Furthermore, the even brief consideration of contemporary ways of death and dying on the island, including the capital, reveals striking continuity with "tamed death."[1]

Ariès comments that while the "traditional" attitude has not completely disappeared yet, it has become exceptional in our days, and confesses his surprise at tracing even a single example of it in contemporary literature.[2] This is a passage in which the author, Lily Pincus, reports the last moments of her mother-in-law, an elderly Victorian lady suffering from cancer. Her state had caused this perfect lady to become totally dependent except for one thing: the orchestration of her death. On her seventieth birthday she gets a stroke, which leaves her unconscious for a few hours. When she comes round, she asks with a blissful smile and beaming eyes to be sat up in bed and see everyone in the house. She says good-bye to each of them individually as if leaving for a long journey, and leaves thank-you messages for all her relatives, friends and those who have looked after her. Finally, after warmly greeting her son and daughter-in-law, she sends them all off: "Maintenant, laissez-moi dormir." The doctor, arriving half an hour later, pays little attention to the daughter's recommendation that her old mother asked to be left in peace;

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[1] This point is fully developed in chapter 13.

[2] The reference is to L. Pincus, *Death and the family* (New York, Vintage, 1975) 4-8.

indignant, he rushes into the bedroom and prepares to give an injection to the dying lady. Though seemingly unconscious, she opens her eyes and with the same kind smile as she had for everyone else, she puts her arms around his neck and murmurs: "Merci, professeur." The doctor is moved to tears, and there is no more question of the injection. He leaves as a friend and ally and his patient resumes her peaceful sleep to wake no more.[1]

Maybe I was more fortunate surveying Newfoundland than Ariès was the rest of the western world, for my field data includes quite a few deaths similar to that of old Mrs. Pincus. Asking whether there was much fear of dying in her community, I received this answer from an elderly lady from Tilting:

RB: No, they're reconciled to it. There's a man down here now and he had diabetes and he was up. Before he went, he was four nights sitting up on a bench and he'd just as soon die, he was suffering so much. He's in the Health Science now and they cut the leg right from up here. They got him fixed up for a while. I suppose anyone who's got cancer--not too many had that around here--they've got to be reconciled to it, maybe they won't be.

IP: "Reconciled," does that mean make one's peace with God or with oneself?

RB: Oh, yes, both, with God first I suppose, and He does that, He helps them to be reconciled to it, like the girl I told you about. She got reconciled to it. She had, the last baby, she had trouble, that's when it began, and she kept going, working, but she knew, she was an intelligent woman. She knew that she had something that wasn't going to get better, but eventually it got worse and she had to go to the hospital, she had three or four, all small children, four and five, but the youngest was only a year or so when she died. And, you couldn't believe that they said how she was, how peaceful she was about it, accepted it, and talked about it, and told how to do this and that to her husband, what to do and what not to do, just took it for granted she was going, reconciled. . . . and that's one but there's lots. The other old man that I told you about, that used to work down here, he was old, and he was in a war, and he always had a drink. Anyway, he died up in the hospital. The last thing he asked the doctor for was a bottle of beer. He said, "yes, b'y, go on, you can have your bottle of beer." He wasn't afraid to die, he was afraid of nothing. That's the way he took it. Stella, Fergus' wife, she had every complaint in the book. It started with, she had something on her chest, T.B., but then she got goiter, and had that operated on, and then she had her appendix out, and then she got kidneys failed, she went up to Twillingate, and then they took out part of her kidney and she got home and laughed and played cards, and carried on till the very last. Anyway, he took her in to the hospital and Ferg and I went to see her in the night, and she was turned in to bed. She said, "I'm not very good company." I said, "no girl, that's alright." I think she knew then that she was going. Anyway, Fergus

[1] Ariès, *Homme* 1: 27-8.

said to her: "Rose and I will stay up tonight and we'll stay in hospital with you." "No, firm no," and by twelve o'clock in the night, after we went to bed she died. Nobody there saw her. The nurses, when they made their rounds at bedtime, she was OK, and when she went again, she was dead.

IP: You think she knew?

RB: She knew; and I forgot my bag, left my bag of course, and went out to the elevator and had to run back, and I came back. I said: "I forgot my bag as usual." She laughed and she said, "good-night." That is the last I spoke to her. Fifty-eight, I think she was.[1]

I got this other account from Father O., a retired Catholic priest, who for most of his active life travelled all over the island as a mission father:

FO: I found with people who are very sick that they would believe the priest sooner than they'd believe the doctor, "am I going to die?" and if the priest was honest enough with them, he'd say: "yes, Mary--or whatever your name is--you know, you're dying, you're not going to get over this." They'd accept that. Now I buried a first cousin of mine about a month ago and she was diagnosed as having cancer, and in the beginning she took that pretty well, then they told her it had travelled to her liver, and they couldn't do anything for her. They told her it was terminal, and she accepted that, and I couldn't believe my ears. She said to me: "Father John," she said that, "I'm going to die," she said, "the doctor said in another six months." I said, "Margaret, are you accepting that?" She said, "yes," she said, and she would talk to her husband and said, "now, Charlie, when I'm gone, don't forget to do this, to do that, just the same as she said, "I'm going downtown," and she got worse and worse. Some days she would be fine, and then she would have a bad period about a week as she was taking chemiotherapy. She lost her hair, she put on a wig, but then she got thinner and thinner. Finally, she got so weak that she couldn't get out of bed, but she never complained and she wasn't afraid. That's amazing, isn't it? She was a fairly young woman. She wasn't sixty-five. In fact, she laughed about that. She said, "you know," she said, "I won't be able to collect my first pension cheque." She said that as if [laughing] she was mad at the government not putting it on sixty-four!

IP: Was your cousin typical in her attitude, do you think, or was it inspired by her faith?

FO: Well, it could be her faith; it was her outlook on life. [pause] Now, I don't know whether that would be typical but I have met other people, who the doctor told that they had six months to live, and they weren't bitter. I can't say they were bitter, but they were falling back on their faith, see?

[1] MUNFLA 87-159/C12035 and 12036.

5.1. "It was just another part of life"

Faith runs through these accounts like a leit-motiv.[1] Religion, however, is not intrinsic to the "traditional" attitude towards death. This peaceful way of dying, consciously and serenely prepared, Ariès contends, owes less to Christianity than to precarious circumstances of life. Keith Thomas's study of medieval England, indeed, expounds how extremely liable people were to sickness and premature death, an argument which can be stretched to pre-twentieth century America.[2] Life was short and uncertain as a result of large-scale epidemics, under-nourishment, poverty, ignorance of antiseptics and lack of sanitation. This portrait, one must admit, largely holds for rural Newfoundland prior to Confederation, let alone the hazards of the ocean. As an explanation for the "easy" acceptance of tragedy, commentators on Newfoundland convergingly suggest that familiarity with death made it an inevitable part of life:

> We were familiar with a country churchyard long before we read Gray's "Elegy." Neither "David's Lament for Absalom" nor "the Joy at his Master's Grave" told us anything new about grief. Before I was ten years old, I saw a mother walking her porch in grief for the son who sailed out of the harbour mouth one day and never returned. In more than one village cemetery headstones stand where there never was a grave, but we also saw how Time softened bereavement and that people learned to laugh again and the life of the village went on. . . . Thus, from our earliest years we knew the inevitability of death. . . . What was more important, we learnt that death was a part of life, an unpleasant part to be sure and to be avoided as long as possible, but sure to come some day. We were taught the simple lesson that "to every thing there is a season and a time to every purpose" and so in the time for laughter we laughed and in the time for tears we wept.[3]

This memory from a White Bay community, along the eastern side of the Great Northern Peninsula, accords with that of a native of Grand Falls. Father P. was parish priest in Tilting from 1955 to 1964:

> FP: But I loved it here [Tilting]. I didn't like the isolation, you know. I hated every moment of it, but the people made up for it, you know. If I felt lonely or depressed, if I went out and walked around the community and went into any house I would come back really uplifted because of their attitude. They made me laugh, they never really made

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[1] Chapter 9 largely deals with the increasingly religious impact on the traditional substratum.

[2] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-century England* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971) 4-9; Margaret M. Coffin, *Death in Early America: The History of Customs and Superstitions of Early Medicine, Funerals, Burials, and Mourning* (Nashville: Nelson, 1976) 15.

[3] Sparkes 67.

> me cry, you know what I mean, I would grieve for them at their funerals with them, at the same time they took that with a great sense of humour too, even the wakes, there could be fun, there could be entertainment. In that respect, they were like many, many communities in Newfoundland because death was not taken all seriously, it was just another part of life.[1]

Even in town, where medical care was accessible, death held a recognized place in the ordinary course of life. Newfoundland writer Helen Porter remembers the days of her early life in St. John's in the 1930's:

> I think we knew a lot more about death than young people, or even older people, do now. Most people died at home, and since nearly every house had grandparents or old aunts and uncles living in it, death was a fairly frequent event. None of us had ever seen a funeral parlour; the body was laid out in the front room after old Mrs. Critch had washed it and prepared it for burial. She also washed with Jeyes' Fluids all the sheets and quilts from the deathbed. Nobody was embalmed, the faces in the coffin were deathly pale (they were dead, after all) and nobody ever said: "My, doesn't she look just like herself?"[2]

The end-formula occasionally found in the local versions of Märchen, "and if they're not dead, they're living yet,"[3] likely echoes this casual acceptance of death. As much can be said of certain local idioms, such as "once to live and once to die," and, "if he gets over this, he'll never die,"[4] said in acknowledgment of extremity. Other local expressions like "he went on," "he passed out" or "he passed away," rather than modern euphemisms for death, could evoke its medieval conception as a passage from one state to another written in human condition more than as an "inversion" and rupture of life.[5]

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[1] MUNFLA 87-159/C12043.

[2] H. Porter 7.

[3] This end-formula occurs in five out of the twenty-one tale types collected from the two major French Newfoundland representatives of the "private tradition", in Gerald Thomas, *Les deux traditions: le conte populaire chez les franco-terreneuviens* (Montréal: Bellarmin, 1983); it appears consistently in the eight tale types collected from one of these tellers by Marie-Annick Desplanques, and edited by her in *Folktales from Western Newfoundland*, Cahiers de l'IPEC no. 1 (Rouen: Institut Pluridisciplinaire d'Etudes Canadiennes, Université de Rouen, 1985).

[4] MUNFLA Proverb Index.

[5] MUNFLA 87-159/C12034 and MUNFLA ms 70-27; Ariès 1:15.

5.2. "Ye'll not die, son, till yer time is come"

If death was a fact of life, it was even truer of those whose life unfolded "a few boards away" from its abyss. The constant threat of danger made death immanent; when disaster struck, it was met with resignation:

> Oh, and when you'd see there's *too* much danger, you'd get nervous over it, you know--we knew--it was only just *something* we come clear. . . I had two uncles, got drowned, Yes. They fished with their father--my grandfather. They were young--and no engines, that time, either. And a big breeze went on, y' know--a big gale o' wind--an' that hove a great big wave. Breakers, then, they's break away off here in the cove. And when he came to come in, the big waves came--he knew there were danger--but he didn't know what t'do, see; and they broke on the boat, and turned her over. And his two sons got drowned. He was a good swimmer. And he got up on the bottom o' the boat, and the waves 'd wash him off. And then he swam for the land. And the crowd crossed out, then, when he got handy to the land. All the men--they rolled him on a barrel--that's what they used t' put 'em on, t' get the water out of 'em. And--he lived. And she got one of her sons, hove ashore on the beach. An' the fishermen, the next morning--they got the other son. You know--that was the tragedy o' that time.[1]

Ariès remarks that the belief and resignation that one was promised to a particular and inevitable destiny fed on poverty and long fared in its milieu: "chaque vie de pauvre a toujours été un destin imposé sur lequel il n'avait pas de prise."[2] So it appears to have been in Newfoundland, where death, whether tragic or not, was thought to be written. In its hazardous milieu, this stoic belief conveniently reduced the necessity of fear. Cyril Poole declares a sense of fatalism one of the striking traits of his own people, and accounts for it by centuries of dependence on the stormy North Atlantic, and qualifies its actual positive sense in this context: "Fatalism . . . is not a conviction that our dory will fail to make it, but a sense that it is beyond one's control whether she makes it or not. Fatalism permits of struggle and battle though the outcome rests with the gods."[3] So, if "time had come," all one needed was to be ready. This was very appropriately the sealers' rationalization when going to the ice, one of the most perilous of sea expeditions:

> The sea each year must claim its share of victims, the men in the hold assured each other. It wailed and shrieked in its demand for human life. They were firm believers in faith. When a man was marked for death

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[1] Preston 20.
[2] Ariès, *Homme* 1: 139.
[3] Poole 96.

nothing could save him. This belief helped to support them in danger, for its corollary was "Ye'll not die, son, till yer time is come."[1]

Canon G. Earle was "lucky" enough to appreciate the fortunate application of this belief in actual context:

CE: Another time I was caught on Bonavista Bay on a boat, not a very big boat, but we got caught, suddenly. The barometer was going down. We got caught in a terrible storm and everything was washed away. Same kind of a storm that a lot of schooners got lost in years ago; and the captain, he brought us through. He didn't know how because the next morning when daylight came, we were in the shelter of an island. He looked out and we didn't know how we got in, but it was all shoals and rocks, but we got through it and stayed there, and I said to him--you see there was quite a bit of fatalism. I said to him, "were you scared at all that you wouldn't make it?" "No," he said, "if my time has come, I'm going." They were fatalists, they believed that. "But," I said, "there were seven of us aboard." "Yes," he said, "seven; the time has to come for all seven." If I had known that, I wouldn't have cared at all, because that's so coincidental, seven people, the time has to come, that is somewhere back in eternity. You were born to die at a certain point in a certain way. It just strikes me as crazy still, you know, but he firmly believed that and I wouldn't argue with him under those conditions. [pause] A lot of people assumed that when a ship was wrecked their time had come and you accepted these tragedies.[2]

5.3. "God's will be done"

The border between providentialism and fatalism is thin in Newfoundland, both encouraging the acceptance of death and even tragedy.[3] Father O. recalls a mother's comment on burying two young men, one her son, the other her son-in-law, who had been caught in a storm while hunting and were found frozen in the ice. He explains:

FO: "Well," she said, "Father, God's will be done, He wanted them, so ...." But they were good living people, you know. Well, they had a real deep sense of faith, so they knew that death is a part of life. And, a fisherman knows that. Fishermen by and large don't know how to swim and refuse to learn because they'll tell you: "Father, when I hit the salt water it won't be long, so what's the point?" 'Cause if somebody fell overboard today outside St. John's, he wouldn't last five minutes in the water, eh, it's too cold. He'd die of hypothermia. So, they don't bother; they go out in a small boat ten or fourteen or fifteen feet long and they go out three or four miles, you know with their fishing lines. They know that if the motor stops, that they may very well not come back, so

[1] Brown 50.
[2] MUNFLA 87-159/C12032.
[3] K. Goldstein, "Fate" 84-94.

> they're facing death every day and because they face it every day it becomes commonplace to them.[1]

Death was part of human destiny, and it was part of God's plan; some of life's trials, on the other hand, were worse than death. Frank Galgay, the established writer on local history, reports from his personal experience on the Southern Shore:[2]

> FG: The ethnic background of Newfoundland is mostly English and Irish. All these people had their roots in Christianity, and Christianity, of course, espouses a life hereafter, that you don't have here a lasting city, and having accepted that, there was a sort of resignation of the older people towards death, that death is inevitable, you see, that it is coming, that there is a life hereafter and you know, that we have to prepare for this. For instance, one widow on the Southern Shore stated that her husband, she said, "this is God-made trouble and bearable," since it is not totally evil as opposed to some man-made misfortune. I could stretch this, for example, if she found that her husband had left her for another woman, you see what I mean, that would have been devastating, demoralizing, and she would have to cope with that, and work it out whatever way her emotions, in other words, life can be worst but God-made trouble was bearable.[3]

5.4. "Death never comes without a warning"

A major defensive device against death was the ability to prepare for it--psychologically as well as materially. Trust in Providence and the acknowledgment of fatality functioned as support against all odds; "nerves" or constant worry about husbands and sons at sea was training women for widowhood. Death therapy has revealed that the recognition of imminent death, in sickness or old age, triggers in the closest survivors a process of anticipatory grieving, which facilitates the achievement of grief work. Besides recognizing symptoms of imminent death on the sick person--the rattle, cold feet and legs, staring out into space, the "thrush" (a rash on the skin) or "the smell of death"--traditional societies held a belief that also tragic death could be sensed in advance.[4] Ellen Badone, who studied omens in a modern context, provides an enlightening insight into the worldview underlying this conception.[5] Her indication of the popularity of "*intersignes*" echoes Gary Butler's observation of the widespread belief in "signs and warnings" in the

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[1] MUNFLA 87-159/C12030.

[2] He co-authored with Michael McCarthy, *Shipwrecks of Newfoundland and Labrador* (St. John's: Cuff, 1987).

[3] MUNFLA 87-159/C12034.

[4] MUNFLA FSC 69-11/15; MUNFLA 70-27, p. 3; MUNFLA ms 70-11, p. 2.

[5] Badone 99-104.

French-Newfoundland community of L'Anse-à-Canards despite a fast dwindling belief in supernatural beings[1] and Helen Creighton's findings for Nova Scotia:

> Forerunners are the most common form of supernatural event found in this province. Many people have had them, people who insist that they do not believe in ghosts, but that they do believe in warnings of approaching death.[2]

The French word *"intersigne"* is more revealing of cultural worldview than any of its English equivalents. From its literal sense Badone infers that the phenomenon bridges two time dimensions, the present and the future, as well as two levels of reality, the natural and the supernatural. The Newfoundland data verifies that the apprehension of omens requires no special knowledge or talent, merely the recognition of some unusual and unexplained occurrence ("the unknown") erupting amid daily activity and its immediate surroundings ("the known"). Omens thus violate casual domestic and occupational life in its very intimacy, just as death upsets and threatens the very life of the group. Of a hostile person, Newfoundlanders might evocatively say, "he's death on me."[3]

Though death omens vary in their interpretation of the person to die, this would be someone, perhaps yet undefined, but belonging to the community. Probably Badone's most crucial perception in this analysis is her suggestion that, whether these signs are observed before or after the occurrence of death,

> In certain narratives, the *intersigne* appears as the cue which changes the status of the dying person. By those who have observed the *intersigne*, he is no longer viewed as a sick person who may recover. Rather, he is considered to belong in the liminal state of those for whom there will be no return, 'betwixt and between' the social categories of the living and the dead.[4]

Her understanding of the significance of this belief to her Breton informants agrees with Peter Narváez's perception of continuous time in traditional Newfoundland, and further

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[1] G. Butler, "Supernatural Folk Belief Expression in a French-Newfoundland Community: A Study of Expressive Form, Communicative Process, and Social Function in l'Anse-à-Canards," PhD thesis, MUN, 1985, 181; see also Waghorne. The overwhelming material contained in MUNFLA Death Sign Index further confirms the popularity of this tradition in maritime cultures.

[2] Creighton 5.

[3] P.K. Devine, *Devine's Folk Lore of Newfoundland in Old Words, Phrases and Expressions: Their Origin and Meaning*, (St. John's: n.p., 1937) 18.

[4] Badone 99-100.

illustrates the symbolic extensions of proxemic boundaries which he perceives throughout Newfoundland traditional expression:

> As orality (language use, dialect formation) nurtured notions of contractile space in the folk communities of Newfoundland's past, specific folkloric mechanisms (e.g., mummering, ghost legends, Jack O'Lantern, mysterious lights, tokens, tragic ballads, strangers, fairies) established proxemic boundaries on the cognitive maps of community residents, boundaries which demarcated geographical areas of purity, liminality, and danger.[1]

Badone's suggestion of omens essentially signifying a person shifting from life to the liminal space is particularly well illustrated in Newfoundland in omens of a more definite and personal nature referred to as "fetches." The word designates the apparition or double of a living person, and although it has become obsolete in contemporary standard English, it remains in use in the province.[2] Fetches invariably are associated with imminent death: unidentified apparitions, such as of "white women," or the stranger below, usually warn their percipients of their own death:

> Mrs. Alexander went down to the beach and was resting on a log. Suddenly a man sat down besides her. He didn't speak. (This man had been dead many years.) This was a warning to her that she would die. Within a month she was dead.[3]

More notable in Newfoundland, however, are visions of lifelike and often identifiable people informing their dearest ones of their death occurring at that very moment. Ariès mentions the prevalence of such intimate family records in the nineteenth century, and relates them to the concentration of affective ties emerging with the nuclear conception of family.[4] Whatever the case, belief that "coming events cast their shadows before them,"[5] or "death never comes without a warning"[6] fits a conception of reality as extending between two polarized yet connected realms, as this schema suggests:

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[1] Narváez, "Newfoundland" 16.
[2] *Dictionary* 172; Story, "Dialects," Smallwood, *Book* 3: 559.
[3] MUNFLA FSC 71-9/25.
[4] Apparitions of dying or deceased relatives in Newfoundland are discussed in chapter 9 and 10.
[5] MUNFLA Proverb Index.
[6] MUNFLA ms 70-27/87; see also MUNFLA ms 70-27/87.

PURITY	LIMINALITY	DANGER
The Known		*The Unknown*
The Natural		The Supernatural
Present	OMENS	Future
The Living		The Dead

Spatial liminality between "known space" (the community) and "unknown space" (outside the community), on the one hand, and omens bridging the present and the future, or the natural and the supernatural, on the other, yields a synthetic conception in which time, space and symbolic reality stand in a parallel relation to each other. One might posit the validity of this interpretive model across other expressive forms pertaining to death.

The so-called fatalistic outlook of Newfoundlanders among other maritime people supplies a rationale for the bridging of these different reality levels. The correlation of omens and tragic deaths in her Breton corpus makes Badone reflect that omens provide an explanation for that which has none apparent. Where "the natural" comes short of explanations, "the supernatural" is an unfailing resort. I found this view expressed by one of my Tilting informants questioned on the subject:

> RB: . . . Omens? Everybody used to have that. Certain persons, you'd hear knocks, they say, and the next thing next morning then someone is dead. That used to happen all the time.[1]

In reconciling apparent contradictions, such as death versus youth, good health and productive life, omens, in whatever form, conveniently restore confidence and belief in an ordered universe in which man merely achieves a predetermined destiny set by the gods.[2] Badone's interpretation of the worldview underlying omen belief agrees with Gillian Bennett's suggestion that the idea of dead relatives appearing to their own expresses "a philosophy that sees creation as whole, ordered, hierarchical, harmonious and more than a little magical."[3]

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[1] MUNFLA 87-159/C10636.
[2] Badone 101.
[3] Bennett, *Traditions* 80; a discussion and full quotation of this statement was given in 2.4.

The following examples largely cover my data for the province and illustrate the preceding propositions. The unusual occurrences interpreted as omens take an unended variety of forms, but commonly manifest the extraordinary in the shape of perceptual contradictions, oddities and coincidences. Such phenomena are variously associated with death: the sound of knocks, lumber falling, a dog howling, carriage wheels, a boat coming in, a ringing in the ear, a mirror or picture falling, a clock suddenly stopping or ticking, strange dreams, mysterious lights, a smell of sawdust or roses, a cake baked with a hollow in the middle or an oddly-shaped cabbage, a shiver, the aces of spades turning up in the hand of the player who cut the pack on it, two church congregations meeting, etc.[1] Other phenomena show a reversal of the ordinary, such as a bird in the house, a person acting out of character, a hen crowing.[2] To have eyebrows which meet or to sleep face down predispose a person to drowning; generally though, divination reflects the idea of a community-based pattern of death, such as death occurring in threes, that the gender of the person first leaving the graveyard foretells that of the next one to die.[3] A few lucky counterparts are found in this category: dreaming of a funeral announces a birth, a wedding, or any other good news.[4] Earlier on, it was suggested that weather signs and death signs are particularly abundant in maritime cultures; the Newfoundland material shows their frequent combination. Besides sayings, such as "lucky is the corpse the rain falls on," "a green Christmas a fat graveyard," "when the rainbow spans the bite [bight], death will follow in the night," or "a rainbow at morn is a sailor's mourn,"[5] this collusion pervades narratives of mysterious lights, phantom ships and ghosts seen at sea.

5.5. "There's a light in the bight"

Next to omens observed in the immediate surroundings of female activity, men report mysterious phenomena observed in the midst of their own life and work setting: the open sea. While lights, phantoms and ghosts may be seen from the land, the same sightings, when observed at sea, take an understandably more dramatic turn. These phenomena easily combine: ghost ships are only seen at night, and their glimmering lights sometimes

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[1] This is a quasi-exhaustive list of the sample data. The following references illustrate each item in respective order: MUNFLA FSC 66-3/37; 69-30/21; 69-11/19; 63-001u, pp. 106-07; 66-010B, p. 24; 67-5/55; 68-17/12; 66-18/66; 68-21/41; 67-22/89; ms 70-27/87; 63-1/121; 64-5/74; 66-6/81; 65-1/54; 65-1/45.

[2] 63-1/124; 65-003, pp. 4-8; 63-1/103.

[3] 69-19/6; 69-7/17; 66-9/22; 64-5/70.

[4] 69-18/7; 68-17/14; 69-7/14.

[5] MUNFLA Proverb Index.

project the awesome view of their ghostly crew operating on deck. More essentially, though, these narratives hinge on two constants: weather and loss of life. When proposing an explanation for these phenomena, the accounts consistently relate both concerns in a direct cause-effect relation: sea sightings predict weather changing for the worst. Frightening as these strange manifestations may appear on the moment, the percipients' reports recount their narrow escape from peril. For instance:

> There is a phantom ship in Trinity Bay which is a sure sign of a bad blow from the South East, whenever she is seen. People think it's the ghost of old "Lion." Now the "Lion" was an old steamer and she left St. John's in the spring of the year around 1900 bound for Trinity. She passed Baccalieu and they never heard tell of her after. Not a trace except for the body of Mrs. Cross and a sea chest belonged to her which had been tied on deck when they left St. John's. On the night of October 2 (year about 1930) we left Seldom Come By about 4 o'clock in the morning and came on up around Cape Freels. It was a nice fine day but when we were about half way across Bonavista Bay the wind died out completely. We waited about two hours and then Father decided to get the big motor boat out off the deck and to tow the schooner. We towed then until about 7 pm from 2 in the afternoon and by 7 o'clock in the night the wind was up enough to put some sail on and get underway again. We were across the Bay and heading around Cape Bonavista and towards Catalina by 9 o'clock. Then we noticed a ship about a mile astern. I was on watch at the wheel. She kept gaining on us and when we got up about broad side and off a couple of gunshots she turned and started to head in towards Catalina. We could see the lights of Catalina by this time. Father thought it might be the "Prospero." She was a coastal vessel. But when he said that we saw her turn and head away from Catalina and on up the Bay again, Father then figured it was a fish steamer heading up to Ryan's (a then prospering fish processing plant in Trinity). She kind of faded away and we forgot about it since we were anxious to get home and all. We only did see her lights, mast head light, running lights port and starboard, and a few porthole lights, as she caught up to us and passed us. When I think about it now I don't know if the lights were very clear or not. Strikes me they were a bit fuzzy or glimmering. Anyhow, we forgot about her when she faded in the distance. I was still at the wheel since my watch went on till midnight, and about 11:30 it came on a living gale. Uncle Dan took over at 12 o'clock and he stayed, lashed to the wheel all night until daylight because we couldn't get a man aft to relieve him cause she was shipping too much water. The skipper started to haul the canvass off her and in an hour we were down to mainsail and jumbo. About 12:30 someone spotted her (the phantom) again for a few minutes. We could see the lights for a bit and then they turned sideways and disappeared. We figured she had gone around the Horse Chops and was beating on in to Trinity. For about six hours, until daylight, there was a terrific storm. Father said after it was the worst one he was ever out in and he been out in a good many. We had all sails off except the foresail, and just could keep her to the wind. By daylight we had been blown right over on the Southside of Trinity Bay down somewhere off Heart's Content near as we could figure. Anyhow come daylight we squared away and eventually got in around Bonavista Head and on in to Trinity. When we got in Uncle Baxter came on board

> and he said to Father "where did 'e come from Ken?" Father said that we had been out in the Bay all night. "Couldn't have." "We were there," said Father, "because we were right off the bite [bight] when that steamer come in here to Ryan's." "Haven't been a steamer in to Ryan's in three days," said Uncle Baxter, "and no vessel came in here last night." So we figured that it must have been the Phantom Ship, and when she headed in toward Catalina about 9 o'clock that must have been a sign for us to head in there too. If we had we wouldn't have been out in the storm at all. It sure did blow from the South East too and that's they say always happens.[1]

The narrative opens with an interpretation of the phenomenon: "there is a phantom ship seen in Trinity Bay which is a sure sign of a bad blow," and "people think it's the ghost of old 'Lion'," followed by a minute reconstruction of the event in terms of location, time, weather conditions and manoeuvring. So, the narrative is offered to substantiate the proposed meaning of the phenomenon. A ship is spotted at some distance and coming straight by both fishermen. Relying on their knowledge of the area and local ships, successive logical deductions are made as to the ship's identification. At that point, nothing yet arouses the men's suspicion of a phantom. Even the gale, the worst in the experience of the elder one, and totally unpredictable, is not yet interpreted as having any relation to the uncanny. The storm is such that they only just manage to land but way off their harbour. The revelation, finally, is prompted by a third, who squarely disproves their logical assumptions as to the ship's identity and even their location. Confronted with the evidence of their misjudgement, the only explanation left is that of "the" phantom ship. The definite article suggests their hearsay of a phantom in the area yet not their suspicion to have encountered it until all other possibilities have been tested. Acknowledging their reason's defeat, they draw the--again--logical conclusion that the ship must have been the phantom and its flashlike occurrence prior the storm related to it. The supernatural interpretation, finally, is inferred from the empirical knowledge that such an unsuspected and particularly heavy storm has occurred following all previous sightings of the phantom in the area.

It is hard to question the analytical rigour of this interpretation or the percipients' concern for objectivity in relating their adventure. As Hufford argued about local Old Hag personal experience narratives and, more recently, Diane Goldstein about phantom ships, such factual and unsensational accounts allow no simple dismissal of such reports as cultural tradition, sham or incompetent observation--a fortiori that of a familiar

[1] MUNFLA ms 63-001T, p. 100-03.

environment.[1] The case clearly suggests that "belief" follows rather than precedes personal experience of such occurrences. Other examples confirm the view that rational thinking is not lacking behind traditionally-sanctioned phantom phenomena, whether they be lights, ships, or other. They verify that the "phantom"--the supernatural--is identified as such on the grounds of its contradiction of fundamental natural laws:

> She was goin' like the devil and not a draft of wind. . . . Uncle Saul said, "that was, she had to be the Flying Dutchman."[2]

> About thirty years ago I was coming back from Bonavista around 11 o'clock at night on my old horse. T was about December month and everything was dark, dreary and covered in snow. All of a sudden the horse became startled, his ears cocked back, his tail stuck out, and he started going very fast. When I looked to my right, I saw a train with one light shining on it coming down the track. It really startled me, but within a few seconds it vanished before my eyes. I knew it was a ghost train, because it was impossible for a train to go on tracks that were completely covered in snow. Besides, no train ever travelled on those tracks, that hour in the night. . . .[3]

Folksong collector Elisabeth Greenleaf, likewise, reports:

> The phantom ship has been seen at different points along the coast and is regarded as a warning of a heavy gale. Sometimes it is seen as a small boat, called a punt, rowed by two men. Stephen John Lewis said in response to my inquiry, "The sperrit punt? Yes, I've seed it meself. Sometimes people has seed it close enough to count the buttons on the men's coats. But I never seed like that. It was about a quarter of a mile away, and it was a boat where it was not possible for a boat to be. How many was in-to it? Well, I couldn't tell ye that. It was a dull day--and it grew duller. There was men in a little dark boat, rowing away from the land, and it was not possible for them to get back, yet we never heard of anyone was drove off, so it was a sperrit boat. That boat have been seen from cape to cape on this coast. I suppose this can't be so, but I seed it just the same."[4]

Whatever the veracity of these ghostly experiences, their interpretation, as for experiences of supernatural assault, is traditional: like their land-based counterparts, the spirits of seamen lost at sea haunt the location of their death:

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[1] Diane Goldstein, "Modern Rationalism and the Structure of Supernatural Personal Experience Narrative," a paper read at the 4th SIEF Congress, Bergen, June 19th-23rd 1990, forthcoming in the proceedings of the conference, vol. 2.

[2] MUNFLA ms 79-729, p. 16.

[3] MUNFLA ms 73-5, p. 7.

[4] Greenleaf, *Ballads* xxxii.

> We thought it was just a ship making her way into Catalina but the strange thing about the ship is it didn't bother to move anywhere, just swaying back and forth. Early in the morning the ship slowly faded out, as it began to get daylight. A little while after we saw the ship we learned that a ship and all the crew had sunk near the island many years ago. Then I knew for sure it was definitely a phantom ship that we saw.[1]

The frequency of casualties off Newfoundland's shoreline over (continuous) time easily explains that the majority of these sea phenomena, in the folk memory, are related to memorable disasters and treacherous weather. My data suggests the view that these phantoms, in accordance with the community ethos, are interpreted as manifesting themselves out of benevolence for their own, whether in terms of family, community or occupational kinship. Such phenomena, indeed, mostly appear to function as a helpful message communicated from the dead to their living comrades:

> As fishing was about the only occupation years ago, many fishermen have died out on the fishing grounds. I can remember one incident in particular, when two fishermen from my community left home and went to the fishing grounds. The water was calm, not a breath of wind was in the air and only a few snow flakes were falling. After half an hour later, after the two men had gone, the wind came up suddenly. The waves began to rise and a big storm had begun. Then the fishermen left the fishing grounds for home, because it was stormy. All boats arrived home, except the boat in which the two men had got out last. Some of the fishermen said that they saw them near Low Point. The storm got worse and no one could do anything until the next morning. So, the following morning we set out to look for them but all in vain. We searched all day but found nothing. About a week after myself and two of my partners went out to fish on the grounds near Low Point. It was a beautiful day and all was calm. But as we drew near this point the wind began to rise. We could hear voices saying "keep off, keep off," and the hollies would echo "there's a storm coming up." We turned our boat and headed away from this Point but at a long distance away until we still could hear the voices echoing "keep off, keep off." When we returned home that evening, most fishermen of the community that had gone near Low Point said they heard voices echoing the same words. Everytime afterwards when someone went near this point the same thing would happen. A storm would start to brew, and then the echo of the voices. As a result it became an abandoned fishing spot for a long time.[2]

Warning against danger is the most common motivation, but, as the following example shows, the message can predict good as well as bad, or bridge the unknown future for the benefit of life and survival. This help, transmitted by spirits as well as non-human phenomena, again suggests that boats and their lights make one with their crews:

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[1] MUNFLA ms 73-5, p. 7-8.
[2] MUNFLA ms 73-5, p. 1-2.

> Well out here (pointing) farther out there just out off Northern Head there's a light called Sticklen's light and you'll see that probably once or twice a year. And it comes up almost like a moon. I've never seen it come. I've never seen it when it appeared but you'll see it while it's there and I've see it now in past years, probably 12 or 14 times. An' usually it's about the same, the time it stands out most in my mind is one night when I was watching it from the bridge. First it looked like just about a three-quarter moon. Then it would change shapes, and then it would blaze up like a big yellow light. Then it would change colours, it would become black and greyish and it would move, it would seem to explode. That's about 20 years ago. That was the first time I saw it, but I had heard about it lots of times. I told the old fellows about it and they said,"Look out tomorrow, there'll be a gale, a northerly wind." This was in March month. And it was a perfect month, not a cloud in the sky. And sure enough the next morning the wind was northern, a storm and snowing. And it kept us for 3 or 4 days and the old fellows said, "Yes, that's how you'll always see it, when you see Stickler's [sic] light. We always marked it, they marked it, as long as they could remember, an [sic] their father before them that when you see Stickler's light, if the bay wasn't full of ice, and it was the time of the young seals, look out for the seals. We was goin' to have a gale a Northerly wind and a lasting gale, which meant that the Arctic ice would come in. This time there wasn't any ice in the bay, not in either bit close and when the storm abated and the snow held up, the bay was crammed full with ice. I don't know if there was any seals or not, but I believe there was seals, a nice way off. But I know that bay was full of ice and the storm lasted for 3 or 4 days an' sleet. Since then I've seen it a lot of times. Always the same thing. When you sees Stickler's light, look out for a gale, a Northerly wind. But I've seen it in the summer, but I usually see it in the winter. Apparently way back when there was a man drowned out there named Sticklen. I don't know where the man came from, and actually how long it is ago but the old fellows used to say that ever since Sticklen was drowned out there, against a gale of Northerly wind, then you'll see this light. But I haven't see it this year. I don't think I saw it at all last winter; but most years you'll see it once or twice.[1]

Ghostly sailors seen to come aboard and take command of the ship until she is safely brought near to shore are reported more rarely than phantoms or lights. While the latter are the subject mostly of personal experience narratives, the motif in Newfoundland immediately brings a song to mind:

[1] MUNFLA ms 79-729, p. 14-16.

The Ghostly Sailors[1]

Smile if you have a mind to, but perhaps you'll lend an ear,
For boy and man together nigh on for forty years
I sailed upon the water to the Western Banks and Grand
And in some herring vessel that went to Newfoundland.

Oh I've seen storms I tell you when things looked rather blue,
But somehow I was lucky and always have got through,
Now I'll not brag, however, and won't say much but then
I'm not much easier frightened than most of other men.

'Twas one drear night I speak of we were off the sore a way,
I never shall forget it in all my mortal days,
'Twas in the dim, dark watches I felt a chilling dread,
It bowled me down as if I heard one calling from the dead.

Then on the deck there clambered all silent one by one,
A dozen dripping sailors, just wait till I have done,
Right on the deck they clambered yet not a voice we heard,
They moved about together and never spoke a word.

Their faces pale and sea-wet shone ghostly through the night,
Each took his place as freely as if he had a right,
And they all worked the vessel, the land being just in sight,
Or, rather, I should say, sir, the lighthouse tower's light.

And then those clambering sailors moved to the rail again,
And vanished in the deep ere sun could shine on them,
I know not any reason in truth why they should come,
And navigate the vessel till just in sight of home.

It was the same poor fellows, I pray God rest their souls,
That our old craft ran under one night near George's shoals,
So now you have my story, it was just the way I say,
And I've believed in spirits since that time, anyway.

Janet McNaughton analysed the belief system underlying this tale, originally a nineteenth-century poem by Harry L. Marcy, and since known as a song from sailors and fishermen throughout the North Atlantic region. McNaughton surveyed four versions from Newfoundland and an indefinite number of Nova Scotian narratives pertaining to this belief "that men who are killed when one ship accidentally runs down another will board the surviving vessel when that ship again crosses the site of the accident." These ghosts, she proposes, function as arbiters of traditional values, serving social control rather than personal comfort, and are more indifferent than malevolent to those who caused their death.

[1]This is the A version of the song published in Peacock, *Songs* 3:873-4. For an annotation and analysis of the song, see McNaughton, "'I've'" 21-31.

Granting the chilling effect of their at first ambiguous command of the ship, their initiative, however, finally reveals benevolence on their part as they lead the vessel safely out of the far and dark towards land and light. The success of this operation, moreover, turns out to be their only motivation to appear as they leave the ship as soon as their presence aboard is no longer useful. I have found a single local narrative somehow related to the motif,[1] and this, obviously, owes more to the helpful "witness" pattern than to the threatening or--at the least disturbing--ghost of legendary tradition. While not personal, it is also reported as experience:

> Old man Dumphy was a fisherman, fishing off the coast of Argentia. He had a pretty big boat and used to stay out fishing for about five days at a stretch. One night when he was out a storm came up. He was at the wheel and got washed overboard. The rest of the crew managed to get back to port. The boat then fell to his son. About four or five years later his son was out fishing when another storm came up. They lost all sense of direction but knew that they were close to land. The whole crew feared for their lives. Suddenly a figure appeared on the bow of the boat that was recognized as his father. The figure gave directions to get the boat to safety. The figure stayed there until all danger was past and then disappeared.[2]

This favourable first impression of sea ghosts in Newfoundland finds some support in the local treatment of ghost ships. Catherine Jolicoeur's comparative study of 600 versions of the motif from French Canada, observes that the idea underlying phantom ships, and also lights, werewolves, revenants, etc., is that of immanent justice.[3] While this seems surprising on consideration of the Newfoundland material itself, her description of skeletal crews screaming and wriggling in flames led by a skipper, who is the devil himself, easily verifies her interpretation. My sample includes no such hellish suggestion. Of the two major explanations Jolicoeur derives for the phantom--expiation of sin or weather prediction, only the latter applies here, and rather than damnation for past behaviour, the local ghosts merely appear to be innocent sea victims.[4] Seen in the light of French Canada's prevalent religious influence and its traces left in other traditional expressions, the Newfoundland view of the phenomenon and its explanations is clearly more profane and

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[1] MUNFLA ms 65-005A and MUNFLA ms 72-025, p. 17.

[2] MUNFLA ms 66-004C, p. 16-17.

[3] Catherine Jolicoeur, *Le Vaisseau fantôme: Légende étiologique*, Les Archives de Folklore 11 (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1970). See also Marie-Claude Roy and Mireille Trudelle, "Vaisseau fantôme et bateau de feu," *Culture & Tradition* 3 (1978): 17-35. On sea ghosts, see also Horace Beck, "Tales of Banks Fishermen," *American Neptune* 13:2 (1953): 125-30 and Helen Creighton, *Bluenose Ghosts*, Toronto: Ryerson, 1957, p. 118-55.

[4] There is confirmation of this in Casey's account of the tradition in Conche in "Traditions" 271.

humanitarian. Even when the spirits of lost sailors are heard screaming on the shore, their footsteps heard walking on the cliffs and their naked bodies seen washed ashore,[1] helplessness and compassion for kinsmen cry louder in these narratives than the laments of damned souls.

This lay treatment of the motif, showing feelings of human solidarity lasting beyond death regardless of individual moral integrity, indeed, reveals a "traditional" ethos owing little if anything to Christianity. As McNaughton points out, the very belief of the dead coexisting with the living in a physical way departs from Christian dogma. The examples above show the dead making contact with their occupational kinsmen for the benefit of the latter. While their manifestation under whatever form arouses natural anxiety, in all cases, their intervention secures the preservation of the living from the menace of the chaotic environment which their dead comrades now inhabit. Sea ghosts along with omens, therefore, can be qualified as liminal agents; as such, they give vital warnings or direct assistance to the living on a terrain shared by live and dead fishermen concretely and symbolically.

With regard to the Newfoundland character, the Canadian writer, Norman Duncan, who made several visits to the province at the beginnning of this century, noted the contrast between the farmer's and the fisherman's lot:

> Now the wilderness, savage and remote, yields to the strength of men. A generation strips it . . . a generation tames it and tills it, a generation passes into the evening shadows as into rest in a garden, and thereafter the children of that place possess it in peace and plenty, through succeeding generations, without end, and shall to the end of the world. . . . But the sea is tameless: as it was in the beginning, it is now, and shall be--mighty, savage, dread, infinitely treacherous . . . yielding only to that which is wrested from it, snarling, raging, snatching lives, spoiling souls of their graces. . . . The deep is not . . . subdued; the toiler of the sea . . . is born to conflict, ceaseless and deadly , and, in the dawn of all the days, he puts forth anew to wage it.[2]

The preceding observations concerning the phantom tradition suggest some qualifications to this hard fact. While the Newfoundland coastline is sadly reputed for its dangers--weather, rocks and, up to the 1840s, the absence of lighthouses--these verbal traditions "mark" this hostile "unknown" territory. They sustain the view that one is never left to

[1] MUNFLA ms 72-025, p. 17 and MUNFLA 65-005A.
[2] Poole 92-3 quoting from Norman Duncan, *The Way of the Sea* (New York: McClure, 1903) 309-10.

oneself in this lethal environment and make sense of one's comrades' tragic and premature death, which confers on it almost sacrificial value. These traditions thus equip the seafaring community with a body of knowledge likely to augment their confidence in agreement with Jolicoeur's account of legend as "expression de besoins emotionnels,"[1] and Linda Degh's understanding of it as "product of social need."[2]

5.6. "I was told"

The existence of tradition apart, Newfoundlanders not only were literate in the things of Nature, and read her signs, as it has been observed with seafaring people elsewhere, they were able to perceive happenings beyond their sensory manifestation. This particular ability developed by vital necessity more certainly than esoteric fashion, provides a moderating view on the impact of folk tradition on their reported extraordinary experiences. Canon Earle recounted this personal experience:

> CE: I was 19 and I had finished my two years at Memorial, 1933, and I was going to go schoolteaching, and I went to a little place in White Bay, William's Port, it's called. It's between Harbour Deep and Englee, and completely isolated. There was no road out to any other community and there was no telegraph office, no way to get news and the coastal boat would come about every two weeks, and the, I'd get the newspaper, but there was one, being the teacher, I had to take the services, give advice to people and I didn't know anything, but you pretended you did, but I could read, so I could read services. But one Friday, one of the little girls in school, about 9 years old, I suppose, she was fine--the school closed at 4 o'clock--and then that evening, that night, her father came to me, and said, "Georgie--Georgina her name was--is not well." So, I had to go over, and pretend that I was a doctor or a priest or something. And I said, "yes, she does not seem to be well at all, she is swelling." Anyway, Saturday she got swelled, oh my, and I hadn't a clue what it was, and nobody else did. Saturday night she died, or early Sunday morning, and my Goodness, he came over and knocked. The next place to it was Hooping Harbour, about ten miles, and the father of this child had a sister in Hooping Harbour that was always called upon in times of tragedy. She was good looking after the family when there was something sad happened. So, they said, "go down for Auntie so and so." Three or four men got in a motor boat, there was no way to get a message there, no telegraph, nothing. I didn't go, but I stayed back because they needed a lot of consolation and, but the boat was back in, dead on, just the time it would take to go, turn round and come back, and I said--I was there when the boat came in--and I said "you were very quick." "Well," she said, I knew they were coming." And I said, "how

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[1] Jolicoeur 8.

[2] Degh, "Some Questions on the Social Function of Storytelling," *Acta Ethnographica* 6 (1957): 91-147.

> did you know?" "Well, I was told." Now, I mean, I suppose it's telepathy, that's all it can be, eh? And I said, "here, I heard about this, tell me." "Well," she said, "I knew somebody was coming for me; the message came to me early in the morning"--that's about the time that they were going for her, you see--and she said, "I packed my case and when I saw a boat come, I knew that was it, I was down on the wharf," and she said, "we don't need to stop, I'm ready, go on, who's dead?" she said. And they said it was Georgie died last night. That was that and 't is the only case I know of transmission of a message mentally, which I read about, but this is the case that I experienced. So I had to take the funeral on the Monday or Tuesday . . . .[1]

As medievalists have pointed out, in a worldview yet unsubordinated to rational thinking, the sensory and extrasensory, the material and the spiritual, life and death, were not yet confined into distinct cognitive categories, but coexisted in a conception of "nature" comprehending also its mysterious dimensions. In this worldview, ghosts, like omens, and other phenomena, which we categorize as "supernatural," probably were not thus discriminated, if recognized as unusual.[2] The term itself, in this context, could be anachronic, and the reality it designates for us, have nothing in common with "wonder" in its medieval conception. A previous researcher in supernatural belief in the province observes:

> The supernatural does form a part of the treasure traditions of Atlantic Canada, but it sometimes seems to be merely an extension of the natural for the people who tell it. There is, throughout the region, an acceptance by the folk of extraordinary happenings as natural which might be regarded as supernatural in other cultures.[3]

5.7. "Ghosts? 'T was just an ordinary thing"

If present and future were easily bridged by virtue of continuous time, and the things of this world were symptomatic of the next, so was the relation to the past--including the dead. Community ties lasted beyond death and as long as living memory, so that the line, in effect, was never quite drawn between the living and the dead:

> . . . the clan is not simply those agnates now resident in Cat Harbour, nor, it would seem, even those patrikinsmen still living, for dead patrikinsmen are often spoken of as if they were still aging. In fact, listening to a conversation, one knows who is living and who is dead only by the prefix "poor" attached to the name of the deceased. A man, on attempting to

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[1] MUNFLA 87-159/C12032.

[2] Ariès, *Homme* 1:15; K. Thomas 57.

[3] Joyce I. Coldwell, "Treasure Stories and Beliefs in Atlantic Canada," PhD thesis, MUN, 1977, 21.

> establish the date of a particular event, said, "Well, it was the same year Grandfather Gray lost his boat in the ice, and poor Grandfather must be 140 now."[1]

As this testimony from Tilting suggests, ghosts were part of the scene, and had to be put up with--perhaps not unlike the sheep and horses, which, up until very recently, were left wandering around the community for want of suitable pasture:

> RB: . . . There was a big store there by Greene's, down there where Dan's house was, and a grey big old place, and there was a man, a cooper. Well, he died, well that cooper was down there for years and years, thomping at his barrels. 'T was just an ordinary thing, nobody took any notice of it. The cooper was there, that was the cooper.[2]

The same familiarity with ghosts prevailed among Change Islands' Protestants:

> CE: When a woman a few years ago died, she was a character home, and I said to my cousin some time later, "have you seen Celina yet?" "Yes, someone saw her on the canal the other night." All you had to do was go there, bend your head and lean toward the canal. Nobody stopped to check. As soon as you saw a person passing along the canal you assumed that it was the one who died two weeks ago. There's a lot of this.[3]

The overall stability and self-sufficiency of outport villages, which generated the view of continuous time and contractile space, explain that a lot of ghosts were identified. Out of forty-three accounts of ghost apparitions collected in Conche some twenty years ago, about half were in human form, all of which were recognized by the seers.[4] It is reasonable to posit that these apparitions were no more frightening to Newfoundlanders than they once were in the early medieval conception. The Conche ghosts, recognized as known individuals, obviously, related to the sphere of "the known," hence they would not be dreaded as such. A common saying reported from Avondale taught that "there was no fear of the dead hurting you: if they didn't hurt you when they were alive, they won't after they're dead."[5] Tradition, besides, had its own remedy:

> In the days when I was a child most people believed in ghosts but I never knew anyone who went in terror of them. Most people knew how to protect themselves from the dangers of the unseen world. Everybody

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[1] Faris, *Cat* 67-68.
[2] MUNFLA 87-159/C12037; for other examples see also MUNFLA 87-159/C12030 and MUNFLA 87-159/C10636.
[3] MUNFLA 87-159/C12032.
[4] Casey 260.
[5] MUNFLA ms 68-20, p. 9.

> knew that if you met Jack-o'-lantern, he could have no power to lead you astray if you simply turned your jacket inside out.[1]

Along with bogeymen, devils and fairies, ghosts were effective agents of child control: "don't go near the water or the ghosts might drag you in," "go to bed now so Jack o' Lantern won't get you," "you 'd better go to church, or else the Devil will take you when you die; you will be burned in the Devil's fire."[2] Ghosts, not the least of all frightening figures, helped to get children indoors before dark, which was one of the most common functions of threats. Canon Earle reports from his Anglican background:

> IP: Did people really believe ghost stories?
> CE: You'd be amazed how they believed, but whether it was belief or fear, I don't know. I think there was a terrific mixture of both. Mine was all fear. I was so frightened that I was sure there was something there. As a kid, we'd have to go outdoors, say, to get something, an armful of wood or something, well, you grabbed it, you'd be looking in all directions, you see. The door happened to close on you, you'd be scared stiff, dashing back and forth, and I don't know what it was but you just grew out of it. I got in my late teens, I had no fear in the world.
> IP: Did parents use these ghost stories to control children?
> CE: They did, they did, not in our case, but they did. A lot of people did. There were other kinds of fear; they were the bogeyman, you know, and the black man. That was another one for us, if we were bad. If we were bad, the black man would get us, and that was another name for the devil, you know, and we were more drilled in the devil than we were in ghosts. . . . Whether, why they wanted to come back here after life? They used to get frightened of them but it is not that the person came back to frighten them.[3]

Whether Protestant or Catholic and inspiring thrill or control, ghosts fitted very naturally in the pre-electrified Newfoundland landscape. One of my informants said that her community was "full of ghosts once," and concludes an impressive enumeration of cases known to the place as: "and then, the lights came, and there were no more ghosts."[4] In evidence of the ill-effect of light on these nighttime visitors, the MUNFLA Motif-Index relating to death in Newfoundland shows "road ghosts," whatever their intentions and dispositions towards the living, to be one of the most prominent categories. Their

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[1] Sparkes 21.
[2] Widdowson, *'If you don't be good': Verbal Social Control in Newfoundland:* Social and Economic Studies no. 21 (St. John's: MUN Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1977) 48.
[3] MUNFLA 87-159/C12032.
[4] MUNFLA 87-159/C10636.

frequency is only matched by lights and ghost ships, or, darkness apart, phenomena connected with tragedy.[1]

That such familiar and harmless ghosts belong to "tamed death" receives support from Bennett's tracing the neutral or "good" supernatural" earlier than "the bad." The popular Medieval revenants were mostly "warnings," until clerics adapted them for their own purpose. Yet, until the Reformation, these often repentant ghosts, even when sharing their knowledge of hell, were devoid of any tricky or unpleasant connotations.[2] Bennett's study of sixteenth and seventeenth-century ghosts, on the other hand, reveals their connection to witches in the contemporary worldview, which makes her account for this evolution for the worse as "a transmutation of the morally neutral ghost into the servant of a higher, moral power (usually the Power of Evil)" which "would lead not only to short-confusion but to a longer-lasting fear of ghosts, ghouls and things that go bump in the night."[3]

5.8. "A wake and a wedding is pretty well the same"

Like ghosts and certainly other Newfoundland expressive forms, the traditional wake is the synthetized product of various mentalities. The literature on the old Newfoundland wake offers structural accounts of the phenomenon bringing in evidence the sociological and psychological relevance of its various rites. For the purpose of this study as well as to complement these enlightening analyses, it remains to consider the mental structures which have generated the event and speak for its meanings to the people themselves.

In other words, the so called traditional wake includes more than the "traditional" attitude to death in Ariès' strict sense. In light of his account of the earliest behaviours surrounding death in the medieval West, the "good wake," besides bearing the marks of Christian sanction, in some of its aspects attests a new anxiety for the afterflife (more even than death itself), a mentality which Ariès suggestively terms "one's own death." This new attitude, nevertheless, has coloured more than modified "traditional" death. Essentially, it would seem to originate in the "clericalization" of funeral, which made a formal religious

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[1] The MUNFLA Motif-Index, as far as the section E (the dead) is concerned, was primarily compiled on the basis of questionnaires indexed in 1968, and subsequently complemented by data obtained from various other MUNFLA sources indexed before and after that date.

[2] Bennett, *Traditions* 155.

[3] Bennett, "Ghost and Witch in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Folklore* 97 (1986): 12; ghosts illustrating the latter conception are discussed in chapter 7.

ritual out of a solemn yet banal gathering.[1] What follows under this section is an account of the "traditional" substratum of the Newfoundland rite in order to assess its impact versus that of religion and the new fear of death.[2]

In line with the acceptance of the inevitable as a fact of life, "tamed death" was duly prepared for. Like medieval man and old Mrs. Pincus, outport people serenely and lucidly provided for all the practical necessities of their last journey. It was common for the elderly to have their burial clothes ready, possibly some "burial fund" put aside, sometimes even a prepurchased coffin kept in their store and a ready-painted headstone![3] In this careful "preplanning," requests could be made about how one's wake and funeral would be conducted, and stood a good chance to have one's will respected:

> The dying words of a person are always taken very seriously by everyone. If the dying should make a request, no matter how difficult to grant it may be, the request must be fulfilled, otherwise the dead will surely haunt you in some way or other until it is. To do something contrary to the wishes of the dead is inviting trouble.[4]

To recognize and submit to death's hour applied in natural as in tragic deaths. In Newfoundland, it was known that when a sick person asked to be moved to the foot of the bed, or picked at the blankets the end was felt to be near.[5] Death was to take its natural course with as little interference a possible. No therapeutic struggle was engaged in so as to delay or postpone it to all extremity: a dying person who was "rafted" (transferred from one bed to another, or taken out of bed for any reason) would be sure to live for an extra nine days.[6] From the recognition of the end, however, everything was done to speed it up and facilitate its natural process:

> . . . there was an old belief in England that no person could die peacefully on a pillow of dove feathers. When I was a boy, pillows were frequently taken away when it appeared that the dying person was wrestling with death. I once heard a man describing the death of his aged mother. He said, "I thought she had struggled enough, so I took away the pillows from under her and right away she gave a little sigh and she died."[7]

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[1] Ariès, *Homme* 1: 110.
[2] Chapter 7 further discusses the traditional wake with regard to its ritual aspects.
[3] MUNFLA 80-127; MUNFLA 79-428, p. 2.
[4] MUNFLA FSC 68-10/25.
[5] MUNFLA ms 70-27.
[6] *Dictionary* 402; see also MUNFLA ms 71-063, p. 15-6.
[7] Sparkes 164.

Another custom possibly motivated by this effect was to open the window (or door) in the room (or house) of the dying or dead person. This would be done so as "to permit the deceased's soul free egress from the house."[1] In accordance with this material and corporeal conception of the soul, is the report form an elderly woman from Avondale that "they always left a bed made the first night someone in the family died in case they might return."[2] Locally, there is sometimes question of a white butterfly or bird escaping with the last breath of the dying person, or of these phenomena as death omens.[3]

Contrary to general modern practice in the industrialized West, the occasion of a death in pre-confederation Newfoundland as in all traditional societies involved a community-wide celebration of the event. The old outport community, one remembers, was largely self-reliant in sickness as in health,

> We lived on New World Island and the two doctors, Dr. Albert Wood and Dr. Ledrew lived on Twillingate Island in the Town of Twillingate. . . . Both doctors would come, but it was not always they could come because of the stormy weather or rough seas. Therefore, many home remedies were used when no doctor was available. A doctor was called only in an emergency, for two reasons I suppose: it was hard travelling and many people had no money to pay him when he came or made a house call.[4]

As the whole round of life and work depended on a communal ethic of egalitarianism, solidarity and reciprocity, so was it depended on for resolving the disjunction and confusion brought by death. The feeling that "people outside the family seem to think that it is an obligation to help at the time of death without even being asked" was a guiding principle.[5] The family losing one of its members was not abandoned to their grief or the prosaic duties which accompanied death. Jobs like laying out the body, making a coffin, cutting a shroud, or digging a grave were graciously offered on the tacit principle that "someone would do it for you one day."[6] Shrouds, habits and coffins, if need be, were often borrowed and replaced.

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[1] G. Butler, "Sacred and Profane Space: Ritual Interaction and Process in the Newfoundland House Wake," *Material History Bulletin* 15 (1982): 31.

[2] MUNFLA ms 71-42, p. 44.

[3] There are direct testimonies to the corporeal conception of the soul as well as to this particular belief in Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou, village occitan de 1294 à 1324* (1975; Paris: Gallimard, 1982) 589-90.

[4] Tizzard 74.

[5] MUNFLA FSC 67-16/31.

[6] Certain people, and women especially, fulfilled this task in the community, and looked upon their service as a vocation, much like midwives, and sometimes were both; see, for instance, MUNFLA ms 73-044 and MUNFLA ms 79-479.

In the oldest tradition, the wake was held in the house of the deceased and lasted over two days and one night, the funeral and burial taking place on the third day. This event has left outside or lay observers perplexed by its socializing, nocturnal licence and occasional "disrespect" allied to sadness, solemnity and diurnal restraint.[1] Gary Butler explains the symbolic sense of these dialectic aspects:

> When a death occurs, the sacred enters into uncomfortable contact with the profane and is embodied in the deceased, who is suddenly neither profane nor sacred; the wake, through an organized synthesis of sacred and profane relationships, literally puts things in their proper place.[2]

Diversion apart, a wake, as a "time," brought the community together, and functioned to maintain its values of cohesion and solidarity.[3] The news of death was shared among all and all were expected to make an appearance at the wake of a deceased community member. This mutual sharing of tragedy, as Mandelbaum observes concerning funerals in Barra (Scotland), more even than breeding familiarity with death, intensified the awareness of belonging to the community.[4] Besides paying their respects to the relatives and the deceased, the custom was for visitors to bring some food gifts, which tradition ensured would be a genuine help in the circumstances. It was bad luck to the givers if the family refused them; coming empty-handed exposed one to haunting by the deceased.[5] This contribution of food, the more so to poorer families, kept everyone from the shame of providing "a mean wake."[6] Such gifts were meant to discharge the closest relatives from cooking for the three days; this and the many other taboos preventing their participation in any of the logistics allowed them intense grieving over their loss.

Modern grief therapy has borne out the benefit of such withdrawal in the first stage of mourning to the natural and easy resolution of the death crisis. The three-day length of the wake thus formalized the psychological necessity of acknowlegding one's loss and

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[1] For an explicit account of these concepts with regard to the traditional wake context, see Butler already quoted and Anna-Kaye Buckley with Christine Cartwright, "The Good Wake: A Newfoundland Case Study," *Culture & Tradition* 7 (1983): 6-13. For a general reference to licencious behaviour at wakes, see Seán O' Súilleabháin.

[2] G. Butler, "Sacred" 31.

[3] Wareham, "Towards an Ethnography of 'Times': Newfoundland Party Traditions, Past and Present," PhD thesis, U of Pennsylvania, 1982, 437.

[4] David G. Mandelbaum, "Social Uses of Funeral Rites," *The Meaning of Death*, ed. Herman Feifel (New York: McGraw, 1959) 189-217.

[5] MUNFLA FSC 67-8/8.

[6] MUNFLA ms 80-120, p. 52.

progressively internalizing the deceased. Their night rest or peaceful negotiation of their feelings, and own distancing from their dear one were "paid off" by the licence offered to the nightwatchers, a tacit arrangement which worked to the advantages of all. Testimonies abound that for them "a wake was as good as a ball sometimes:"

> When I was young, going to a wake was the most enjoyable thing of all. In those days, you see, there were no TV or radio, but a wake was exciting and all the young crowd went.[1]

> In the daytime people would just drop in for half a hour and leave again. Towards late evening people would come to sit up with the corpse all night. These were mostly young people with an older person to chaperone. It was said that more matches were made at wakes than there were matches made at weddings. There would be light conversations going on at the wake all during the day. But at night with the same crowd being there all the time, there would be some carrying on as much as the person in charge would allow. There would be some singing if a good singer was present; ghost stories would be told; and tricks would be played. If someone fell asleep, he would awaken and find his face blackened with soot or shoe polish. Sometimes, when a corpse wouldn't be laid out straight, someone would press on the knees of the corpse to make it rise up to frighten someone. They would also play games such as tossing dice for pennies and playing poker for matches.[2]

Death, indeed, was exorcised through a communal celebration of life. Revealingly, in Cat Harbour, and it appears, elsewhere in Newfoundland, "funerals" are associated with "times" (the latter including "birthdays," "weddings," "scoffs" and "mummers") for being both "occasions" or "special" events.[3] The surprising connection of "funerals" with these various happy events, apart from their being extra-ordinary happenings in the workaday life of the community, is due to the fact that "funerals" and "times" are social events of sanctioned deviation from normal and rigidly observed role expectations. A student fieldworker also reports:

> Funerals do have a somewhat diluted value as a "time" or social event. They provide an opportunity to release emotions and partake in alcoholic beverages. Also with the entire community expected to attend the funeral it provided a rest from the drudgery of daily work.[4]

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[1] MUNFLA ms 73-13, p. 11.

[2] MUNFLA ms 79-328, p. 8.

[3] For a full account of the nature and contexts of "times" in the province, see Wareham, "Towards" and "Aspects of Socializing and Partying in Outport Newfoundland," *Material History Bulletin* 15 (1982): 23-26.

[4] Ann Bennett, "'My, he looks just like himself' : An Analysis of Newfoundland Funerals, 1979, 16, uncatalogued paper from Dr. Nemec's personal archive (MUN).

While the holistic context of the traditional wake marked the transition between life and death, it requires little effort to demonstrate its function as "farewell party" offered to the deceased. Burial clothing was festive: one wanted to look one's best, and some clothes thought "too good to wear" could be spared for the occasion.[1] Presiding over the feast in his/her best attire and in a room almost exclusively used for this occasion, the deceased was solemnly visited by each attendant. As soon as introduced in the wake room, the visitors would pay some compliment to him/her, such as "Poor Dan, he looks some good," "My, I never seen him lookin' better," or "I never seen him lookin' more like hisself."[2] It was a general rule never to speak ill of the dead--"Hush, boy, let the dead rest"[3]--and the more so in the house of a waking deceased. So it was said that "a man had to die to get a good name,"[4] Conversation started with reminiscing about his good deeds and favourite stories to proceed to daily matters, such as weather and fishing, and even the entertainment was sanctioned by the deceased's own taste: music, singing and dancing, which were occasionally found at Irish wakes, took place particularly if the deceased had been a singer or music lover himself.[5] One informant remembers hearing that "everything you ate was for the dead person, not for yourself."[6] As host of honour, the corpse was never left unattended. Liquor or rum was often seen at Catholic wakes, and glasses clinked together after a short toast to the dead man.[7] Thus the wake was meant as a celebration of the deceased's "good life"--"ya know he wouldn't mind us having a drink, he loved it himself,"[8]--and, while organized "for" him/her, it gave the living the opportunity to terminate their relationship with him/her in the best of terms. As this "rambling young fellow" suggests, a "good" death coming at the end of a "good" life was a blessing to be thanked for in celebration:

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[1] Murray, "The Traditional Role of Women in a Newfoundland Fishing Community," MA thesis, MUN, 1972, 293. On top of this clothing came a white shroud with Protestants and a brown habit with Catholics; for a detailed description and picture of the art of cutting a shroud and other technicalities concerning the logistics of funeral and burial, see Tizzard 94-100.

[2] Maureen Walsh, "Irish Aspects of St. John's Wakes and Funerals," 9, uncatalogued paper from Dr. Nemec's personal archive (MUN).

[3] MUNFLA FSC 66-10/126.

[4] MUNFLA ms 80-127, p. 88.

[5] MUNFLA 80-120, p. 57; this kind of entertainment indeed only occurred in the case of an elderly man.

[6] MUNFLA ms 71-42, p. 35.

[7] MUNFLA ms 71-42, p. 35; Protestant wakes were as a rule far more "serious" occasions, and apart from a few pranks, allowed little entertainment other than talk, see, for instance, Wareham, "Towards" 122.

[8] MUNFLA ms 79-428, p. 21-2.

A Rambling Young Fellow[1]

1. When I was a rambling young fellow
I never took care of me life,
A-rolling and rambling forever,
In every port a fresh wife.
But give me the girl that will love me,
And bless me in this happy life,
And dance unto me a fresh caper,
A country girl for a wife.

2. I have been in cold frosty weather,
I have been in love hot and cold;
I ventured me life on the ocean,
I ventured me life for gold.
But now since the wars they're all over,
And we are safe landed on shore,
Now blow me and bless me forever
If I goes to sea anymore.

3. I'll send for me friends and relations,
I'll send for them every one,
And all for to make them quite welcome,
I'll send for a cask of good rum, boys,
And two or three barrels more beer;
It's all for to welcome the lassie
That meets me at Derrydown Fair.

4. Oh when I'm dead and gone,
And there is an end to me life,
Don't never lay sighing or sobbing,
But do a good turn for me wife;
Don't never lay sighing or sobbing,
There's one single thing more do I crave,
Dress up in blue jacket and trousers,
And fiddle and dance to my grave.

5. Let there be six sailors to carry me,
And may they be damnable drunk,
A-rolling and rambling forever,
And p'rhaps they might fall in me trunk;
Let them all fall a-cursing and swearing,
Like men that is going to run mad,
Just tip a glass over my coffin,
Saying, "There goes a jolly brisk lad."

So far, the evocation of the Newfoundland wake suggests the largely secular and social more than religious character of the event. Historical evidence indeed speaks for the exceptionally long absence of any "professional" accompaniment--be it medical or sacred--

[1]Peacock, *Songs* 3:880-1.

in death as any other lucky or unlucky crises affecting community, family and individual life. Death, thus, essentially, could have been secular and convivial by necessity rather than choice. While religious and prophylactic practices gained favour in response to increasing fear of the afterlife, their success, to this date, has not taken anything from this inherited character of wakes, not even in the modern context of funeral parlours. It struck me that, over the almost two and a half hour conversation I had with an elderly widow from Tilting answering my questions concerning the recent death, wake and funeral of her husband, the funeral mass--despite her deeply-rooted faith--was not remembered by her--or even spontaneously mentioned--as significant or comforting to her, at any rate, not as much as the community wide attendance at the wake held in her house, or the numerous and distant sympathy cards, mass cards, enrollments given or sent to her on the occasion.[1]

7.9. "Brave Jack"

In the modern folkloristic conception, the differences between Märchen and legend are subtler than thought of in the past. Rather than as "exclusively entertainment," Max Lüthi proposes that "the folktale simultaneously entertains and illuminates the nature of existence."[2] Märchen, like all symbolic or "fictive" literature, renders a poetic vision of the world in its essential traits. As such, it demands--not belief in what it tells but--faith in the inner truth of what it relates.[3] The local folktale repertoire projects certain views about life and death which largely reflect the ethos of Newfoundland traditional society.

Of a sample comprising about ninety tale types, eleven directly relate to death. Their plots are of two kinds, largely corresponding to the Aarne and Thompson tale-type categories of "tales of magic" and "jokes and anecdotes."[4] The six types of the first group show the hero engaging his life in the task of assuring his subsistence; the five types of the second group focus on his relation to the dead.[5] This distinction, to some extent, parallels

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[1] MUNFLA 87-159/C12041.

[2] Max Lüthi, *The European Folktale: Form and Nature*, trans. John D. Niles (1982; Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986) 92.

[3] Lüthi, *European* 104.

[4] Aarne, Antti & Stith Thompson, *The Types of the Folktales*, FF Communications no. 184, rev. ed. (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1961).

[5] The types of the first group include: AT 313 (MUNFLA 66-24/C284), AT 955 (MUNFLA 65-21/C148), AT 313/AT 329 (MUNFLA 65-21/C438), AT 327B (MUNFLA 76-485/C2953), AT 300 (MUNFLA 65-21/C444) and AT 304 (MUNFLA 66-24/C269); those of the second group include: AT 1350 (MUNFLA 64-13/C59 and 60), AT 326A* (MUNFLA 64-17/C133), AT 506B (MUNFLA 65-12/C214), AT 1536A/AT 326A* (MUNFLA 71-50/C968 and 969) and AT 1791 (MUNFLA 71-50/C971). I thank Dr. H. Halpert and Dr. J. Widdowson for

David Buchan's subdivision of the revenant ballad types into a group of types in which the revenant is not essential as such and a "core group," where the figure consistently appears in one of the taleroles.[1] The first group of tales promotes a "traditional" attitude to life and death; the second considers relations to the dead in response to the fear that they inspire.[2]

The majority of the types of the first and larger category are "ordinary tales" belonging to the subcategory of "supernatural adversaries" of the Aarne-Thompson Index. In this as in the other group, one is struck by the explicit Newfoundland setting of local Märchen. One hears of people striking "poor times" and the hero, "Jack," leaving his native "settlement" for the city where he expects to earn a living. His courageous decision and confidence in his project sets him apart from his kin, who passively resign themselves to their lot. Equipped merely with "a gun" or some spare "lunch," he ventures away in "the unknown," where, one would think, his chances of survival, let alone success, are few. And, for sure, as soon as out, he finds himself in an "otherworld" whose inhabitants are witches, giants, a big black cat or the devil himself. Our "bayman," though, is never intimidated by these "strangers" or even hesitant to confront these superior adversaries in a match, the outcome of which--like fishing--is a case of double or quits. His wit, however, takes the better of their physical or supernatural advantage, and wins himself his victims' substantial fortune or meal.

If not by wit, the hero owes his success to the appropriate help of some humble creatures in return for his generosity to them. Contrary to his brothers, who in the same endeavour miss their chance owing to sheer self-seeking, the third brother, for instance, willingly leaves his crumbs to a bird begging for them. This moral responsibility towards one's peers, supported by the egalitarian ethos of the traditional outport community, is further reflected in the hero's disinterested rescue of a queen or princess from the attempted assault of a villain in her husband's absence. While luck seemingly plays a tremendous role in the hero's success, the preceding episodes clearly suggest that his destiny unfolds according to his personal merit. Typically, the folktale's moralistic pattern of virtue justly rewarded and its unfailing counterpart projects belief in an ordered universe in which good rules supreme, a view commonly expressed in traditions of the good supernatural. So,

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their kind permission to consult these sources extracted from their field collections and annotations.

[1] See Buchan, "Tale" 143-63.

[2] The tales of this second group are discussed in chapter 10.

whatever the deeper meaning of these tales, at a concrete and literal level they propose an optimistic, yet also dynamic worldview: if no good deed goes unrewarded, it remains that who nothing risks, nothing gains. Life, in other words, may have to be spent in the omnipresent danger of death, and spare no "nerves," the courageous acceptance of its demands is the price of survival, happiness and material security.

In conclusion, the various cultural expressions overviewed in this first account of "traditional death" commonly equipped the community with a supporting response to the precarious way of life of pre-Confederation Newfoundlanders. While life danger was omnipresent, familiarity with death built up an effective defence all along the daily process of community life through enforcing a positive and courageous attitude towards its imminence and inevitability. "Traditional" death was recognized as an integral part of life; as such, it was prepared for, diagnosed in its earliest signs, and celebrated in reconciliation with its reality. Thus anticipated and accepted, the natural shock that all death causes, even when expected, was smoothed through this gradual process, or "tamed." A funeral, hence, came to be an "occasion" similar to any other social event. This cultural recuperation of death already reduced its awesomeness in introducing the idea of a liminal stage, which would be completed in its ritual celebration.

The separate consideration of the secular or merely social aspects of the wake and funeral underlying the Christian rite has revealed how, contrary to the modern "privatisation" and "deritualization" of the event, the "traditional" way of death reinforced social ties within the group. In itself, the significant social dimension of "tamed death" laid down a structure of moral and material support, which eased the emotional brunt suffered by the mourners. The three-day halt, sanctioned by social custom, provided them with a maximal opportunity to acknowledge their loss and solve their emotional shock. This halt being extended to the group as a whole ensured complete material and moral support from their peers, thus facilitating the relatives' emotional rehabilitation.

While grief was short-lived, the dead were not forgotten or completely evacuated from the living's consciousness. More than clung to out of deep personal affection, they kept their community status, hence the privilege of occupying their former locations. Traditions of men lost at sea, including mysterious lights, ghost ships and sailors give evidence of harmonious cohabitation with the dead--who were somewhat disturbing if co-operative. As for their privilege of making contact with the living, they were neither feared nor envied for it. Still free of any Christian connotations, these revenants, in the terms of Emmanuel

Le Roy Ladurie's evocation, moved about in a "horizontal," and not yet "vertical" traffic flow amid the living.[1]

[1]Le Roy Ladurie 589.

Chapter 6

"Hard Death":
Personal Experience Narratives and Narrative Songs

While death traditionally was accepted as a part of life, a diametrically different view was held in the event of unnatural circumstances. Premature, violent or solitary death was as "bad" and abhorred as much as death occurring among one's own after a life duly fulfilled was hoped for. Thus, in the traditional view, there was "natural" and "tragic" ("hard") death, and this distinction directly conditioned funeral behaviour:

> CE: . . . the best death was, you know, of course, he wore out, he had a long good life, that's the natural way, it's just as natural to die as it is to be born, you see, in that sense, but you felt it more though when there were younger ones.[1]

> Quite often wakes took various forms. Sometimes they were very reverent and solemn, but often they [there] would be real celebration at a wake. It depended on how the members of the family and friends reacted to the death. If it was sudden and unexpected everyone would be very sad and mournful but very often people would have a jubilant time at a wake. If a celebration did take place it took the same form as the one which occurred when people stayed up all night with a sick person. People would stay up all night long, a meal would be cooked and a great deal of liquor would be consumed.[2]

The amount of sorrow was directly related to the age and community status of the deceased: the least for the old, for whom "it was time for them to die,"[3] and young children,[4] who were not yet recognized as full community members. The distinction of age and community status found symbolical expression in the colour chosen for the shirting, which covered the exterior of the coffin and hid its plain pine boards. This crepe was white or blue for a child, brown for a young person and black or purple for older people; or the older the darker.[5] The "good wake," complete with pranks, as this

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[1] MUNFLA 87-159/C12032.
[2] MUNFLA ms 79-392.
[3] MUNFLA 87-159/C12034.
[4] MUNFLA 80-127, p. 158.
[5] Frederick F. Jardine, "Wakes and Funerals in Irish Catholic Communities," Dr. Nemec's personal archive, 6.

humorous anecdote suggests, was only in order in the case of an elderly person, particularly male:

> When Skipper Ben died at 92, we were all sorry but no one was sad. He had lived a long and fairly happy life and his death came as no surprise. It was January, and on the day of his funeral, the wind blew half a gale. The harbour ice was like polished glass, so they put Skipper Ben on a catamaran slide with a reefed punt's sail spread to take advantage of the fair wind which blew from the house on one side of the harbour to the church on the other. The parson and the sexton were waiting in the church porch, peering through the frosty window from time to time to see if the funeral was coming. The sexton was the first to catch sight of the cortege and burst into yells of laughter. Shocked at this unexpected and unseemly behaviour the minister exclaimed: "William! William! What on earth has got into you? Remember where you are!"
> "That's all right, Parson," said William, and slapping his thighs and pointing to the window, he said through his laughter: "look! What a surprise the Almighty be goin' to get when He sees old Skipper Ben comin' into port under double reefed canvas."[1]

The greatest sorrow was for those whose life prospect was interrupted before their ambitions and responsibilities had been achieved, especially young adults, spouses and parents. Their wakes were sadly solemn: "All were saddened by the death of my father (72) but all concluded that "he had led a good life, but the whole community was shocked by the death of my sister (35) who left six little children behind (she died by accident)."[2] Father O. testifies: "Now I never saw--and I'm 46 years a priest--I never saw uncontrollable grief in my life. The only time--not for an ordinary death--nor for people they knew were going to die--for unexpected deaths, yes."[3]

A fortiori, the death of those who were lost at sea and whose bodies were not recovered was the "hardest." Local tradition did not leave people hopeless or, at the least, unsatisfied that everything humanly possible had not been attempted:

> To find the body of a drowned person: place a lighted candle in a loaf of bread and pull it after the boat, when the candle goes out the body will be found underneath.

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[1] Sparkes 150. Elisabeth Greenleaf collected the well-known story locally of the corpse wrapped and buried in sail for want of anything more suitable. The punchline, "I was just thinking what the Lord will say when he sees mother coming under double-reefed foresail," is easy to recognize here; in *Newfoundland Summers*, ed. R.D. Madison, (Westerly, R.I.: Utter, 1982) 29.

[2] MUNFLA ms. 80-120, p. 50.

[3] MUNFLA 87-159/C12030.

> My grandfather says he saw this actually done, and the body was recovered near the spot where the candle went out.[1]

Almost as bad was the case of fishermen dying on the Labrador, for their bodies were boxed in salt "just like fish," and only shipped back at the end of the fishing season.[2] What aggravated the reaction to such deaths was the impossibility of honouring them with a proper funeral and wake, whether down on the summer station or at home. A wake without the presence of more than one of the family was not appropriate, and, the preserving qualities of salt notwithstanding, the body was never viewed back on the island for fear that, like fish, "it might have gone bad."[3] Such predicaments take their full measure in light of the focal importance of the corpse and its "viewing" by all wake visitors. Funeral celebrations everywhere physically revolve around the remains, which, in fact, provide a necessary support for grief work. Different Newfoundland widows whose husbands perished in the Ocean Ranger tragedy testify to the relevance of the corpse in acknowledging death as physical separation, which initially conditions the normal healing process:

> As Jack's body was never found, it seemed to me at the service that it wasn't real and that Jack would be found alive. It's terrible to want something to happen and it never does. I wanted him found so I could bring him home and maybe accept what had happened. To this day I can picture Jack and the rest of the men in the water, and I don't think I will ever get that out of my mind. Jack used to call me every second night or so when he was away, so whenever the phone rings I jump knowing it won't be him, but I can't seem to let go. . . . Every day I think of Jack; he is always with me. Right now I cannot commit myself to anyone. I don't want to be hurt again and my memories of Jack are very strong. I have never been quite so alone before.
>
> The first four days I just kept saying that I wasn't worried, the lifeboats were still out there, they just had to find them. My husband was on board a lifeboat. I was convinced he was alive and on a lifeboat. Then on Wednesday they found his body and brought him in on Saturday. It still took me a long time to accept that he was dead. I realized when I did get his body that he was dead, but still expected him to come home. I don't know for how long. It would definitely have made a difference if his body had not been found. I don't know how long I could have lived with that.[4]

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[1] MUNFLA FSC 67-14/62.
[2] Jardine 2.
[3] MUNFLA ms 87-132, p. 6.
[4] House 63-4.

In keeping with the recognized place of death in daily life, even tragic death, for the psychological horror that it inspired, was neither hidden nor swiftly evacuated, but recorded and dearly reminisced:

> CE: So many stories we heard as children were to do with shipwrecks. I wouldn't say they probably enjoyed tragedy, but they certainly liked repeating it and reminding themselves of it and never letting themselves forget it. Yes, that's a kind of enjoyment of a morose kind but that's it.[1]

The following personal experience narrative is told by the skipper of a fishing schooner, and relates to the sadly-famed gale of August 1929. Typically, it speaks for the tragedy of human defeat against the stronger elements and the unspeakable ordeal of having to abandon comrades to inevitable death:

> We shoved up the foresail and jibs and let her reach on and took the anchor in tow. When we got around the rock, we just lowered down the jib and pumped in the anchor. When we had the anchor pumped in we just hauled down the jibs and tied them up and let her lay under the foresail. We figured now that perhaps the wind would blow out after daylight. By 7 o'clock the next morning, though, it was still freshening and "the glass was again bottom up." We had about 150 quintals of fish in her and it was getting up for September, so we wanted to get it made to take to St. John's. We decided to give it up and go home and land it. We just got around to the west of the cape. However, we saw a schooner had chopped its cable, the Lockler from Red Harbour. She was only about 3 months old, about 35 tons, I suppose. We never saw her again, it was thick by now. He never saw the land, they was all drowned them fellows. When we got in breast with Cape St. Mary's, I said to the boys: "heave out the log" and we'll log her for one hour, nine miles under the foresail--that's a good breeze. Anyway we lowered the foresail down and took a reef in it, and the next hour she went 10 miles. It was blowin' a gale now, that's 19 miles, we're after going now and it's only 30 across the cape to Long Island. I said "Haul in the log and heave it on the quarter, we've only got 11 miles to go anyway." We had one fellow who stood up on the main gaff. Everyone was up in the rigging. "I see something, Jim," he says. It was Roger my brother. I said, "you don't see land yet, we're 11 miles off." "I don't mean land," he said, "but I see a boat on her beam ends (bottom up)." Well you know the kind of feeling you get when someone says a boat on her beam ends. Anyway the water barrel starts to drive along by us and we saw the name, the Danny Sheveland from Rushoon. I imagine he was a cable length from the windward of us. I called on hands on deck but many wouldn't come. They were prayin', you know. The sun come up and we set our horizon sail and jumble [jumbo], took the reef out of the foresail and brought her by the wind. Now we're reachin' out to the southern first cause the sea was heavin' in the bay. I had the boys strappin trawl kegs on the sides of the dories in case she started to slew around and take on water. I was figurin' that if I

[1] MUNFLA 87-159/C12032.

could get to the windward of her, I'd throw the dory overboard, and without a doubt I would have gone in her. I don't know for sure but I had a feeling I would have them slack me down. There was 5 men on her side, holdin' on to the rail and her mast was flat on the water. We found out later, that there was one fellow strapped to the mast, and he was drowned, of course. Anyway, we couldn't get around to the wind on the tack we were on so we tried again. We were losin' a lot of ground afore the wind but I was handy enough to see the shape of the men and I said, that's Danny Parker from Morgan's Cove, I knew him well. We tacked again, and lost some more ground. We would have come pretty close to her this time, when one of the men said, "look, old man, it's Immersion Bank." Now Immersion Bank is 10 miles off. It only has 4 to 5 fathoms of water, and this was all breakin', goin' mountains. Now what could we do? There was nothing left for us to do, see. We couldn't go any more. We had to come around again, to just get past the Immersion Bank. Well, we got to leave them! But it was pretty tough, I promise you, to go leave 5 men there, but we straightened her away for Grand's Point. I said, "Roger, go down by and get me a course for Grand's Point," and so he went down and he came up and said, "Northeast by East." I said, "that's wrong." "No," he said. I said, "goddam, that's wrong." So he went down again, "Northeast by North," he said. I said, "yes, that's handier to it." So we went on for Grand's Point. That day from early in the morning, until 2 o'clock in the afternoon, I chewed three plugs of Jumbo. I was strapped to the wheel and every time a wave come over, you'd lose your chew, so I'd have somebody cut me off another one. So we went into Clappet's Harbour after we turned Grand Point. We were in the loon [looward, leeward]. Now, as we turned the point, there was little islands facin' us and a boat beatin' up against one of them. There was 2 men jumpin' ashore as we came abreast of them. We didn't find out until afterwards that there had been 2 men and the older son had let his father and younger brother go first, but then it was too late and he went overboard and drowned. Anyway we went ashore in the community and I was so hoarse that I couldn't tell anybody about the men on the island. I had to write it down for the priest, and then he went to get them in his big motorboat. They took the 2 fellows off the island and we found out about the man's other son. That same evening anyway we went jiggin for squids, and we jigged some too, I'll tell you!" After he had finished his story, I asked how it felt inside, to have to decide to leave the men in the water. "Yes, sir," he said, "I tell you that was a bad thing I had to do, to leave those five men but I could do no more with it. I had to think about my own crew and it was something that had to be done."[1]

The "occupational jargon" of this account clearly suggests an audience of seamen, to which it makes both sense and purpose. In common with those dealing with phantom lights and ghost ships, disaster narratives focus on navigational operations and dilemmas in hair-raising circumstances. The tragedy itself--the rational decision of abandoning five men to their doom--tends to be overshadowed by a profusion of technical details concerning the tentative rescuers. As Donna Davis observed, these narratives, shared between men in

[1]MUNFLA ms 79-711, pp. 7-9.

kitchens, stages or forecastles of boats, relate tragedy and danger with objectivity rather than emotion:

> Only women would publicly admit the tragedy of a loved one; men were fixated on describing the technicalities of the ship going down and the technicalities of the search in bad weather. It was the kind of death they were all prepared for, much different from an automobile accident or death from disease.[1]

The narrative above conveys the difficulty and stress, inducing error, of negotiating physically-taxing manoeuvres under the tricks of rapidly changing weather and other unpredictable circumstances. The focus is on the living and their responsibilities towards their peers rather than on the dead or dying, doomed without remedy. The narrator, who was responsible for the tough decisions taken in this hazardous rescue attempt, aims at justification. His account is a statement that he attempted rescue of the victims as far as safety for his own crew commanded, even though this implied abandoning the other crew to their fate. His meticulous reconstruction of the facts strives towards putting the listeners into the picture, and winning their approval. In the meantime, his vivid account probably stimulates individual thinking and communal deliberation on this case. Like legend, this personal narrative evokes a working session between experts, or at the least, purposeful entertainment. Such narratives, like those dealing with phantoms and ghost ships, likely added to the men's individual expertise while also hardening their "nerves." George Casey proposed that the constant reminiscence of the worst catastrophes fostered a sense of security in demonstrating that "things could be a lot worse" than minor local accidents.[2]

Song, however, was and remains *the* expressive means par excellence for "archiving" catastrophes in the popular conscience. Casey counted that ninety-seven percent of all songs he collected in his native Conche in the late sixties "dealt with some aspect of tragedy and disaster, such as death, suffering, sea disasters, crime and murder." At one time, these tragic or sentimental "songs, " among which were counted British broadside ballads and native American ones, were valued above the non-serious "ditties" as the songs considered worthy of singing and listening to and exciting both interest and pity.[3] The same attitude prevailed in South Labrador and could likely be generalized for the province:

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[1]Davis, "Woman" 144.

[2]Casey, "Traditions" 142.

[3]Casey 141 and 164; such "songs" in this community of Irish Catholic origin were called "stories" in another of Anglo-Protestant tradition; see Casey, Rosenberg, Wareham, 399.

> The songs of the Labrador Coast are almost all ballads; they outnumber the 'ditties,' the humorous and sentimental songs, by twenty to one. I asked about this and got such answers as: "These are better because they are not just da, da, da, but give you something to think about." These are good because they are about people." "I like these because they teach you something." But of the ballads, it is the sentimental ones that are the favourites. . . . Certainly here in Labrador and, I think, among the folk in general, the story is the thing, and the music is incidental and, in some instances, almost non-existent.[1]

McEdward Leach's published song collection includes mostly eighteenth and nineteenth century broadsides, and Kenneth Peacock, who has published the largest local song collection so far, estimates that traditional songs outnumber the native compositions, approximately five to one.[2] Caution is in order though, for, if traditional ballads hold a prevalent place in the published Newfoundland collections, this prevalence reflects the collectors' own choice as much as that of the singers and their audiences. Maud Karpeles, as a case in point, gave exclusive attention to the "rare gems," but neither did Greenleaf and Peacock publish everything that was offered to them. Whether motivated by contemporary editorial constraints, academic interests or personal reasons, songs popularized via radio, phonograph and various published sources were largely left out of their published collections.[3] Be that as it may, one needs to go beyond the published material to gain insight into the actual attitudes articulated throughout the repertoire. Besides imported ballads, Casey's high percentage of songs dealing with tragedy and disaster also includes "old songs" (songs referring to Ireland and war songs up to the First World War) as well as "new songs" (locally composed songs, songs about Newfoundland, and Country and Western songs).[4]

The classical ballads apart, and starting with the oldest stratum of the local song repertoire, the British broadsides deserve initial interest in relation to "hard death."[5] Malcolm Laws divided their large corpus into themes of "war," "sailors and the sea," "crime and criminals," "family opposition," "lovers' disguises," "faithful" and "unfaithful lovers," and "miscellaneous and humorous" ones. Throughout these various and

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[1] Leach, *Folk* 11.

[2] Peacock, *Songs* xx.

[3] Such published sources would mostly be the widely distributed Gerald S. Doyle songbooks and the "Family Herald," a farm paper published in Montreal.

[4] Casey, Rosenberg and Wareham 399-400.

[5] The native American ballads and nineteenth. sentimental songs of the local repertoire largely illustrate the attitude characterized as "thy death," and are discussed in chapters 9 and 10.

sometimes overlapping categories, their topics--calamities, violence, love, sex, trickery, revenge, remorse, etc--cover "the most moving, dramatic, and exciting occurrences of life itself," hence their universal appeal.[1] In the literal "reading" of these song texts, Roger Abrahams and George Foss interpret the "remarkable preponderance of themes of love and death" in Anglo-American folksong as the expression of a pervading defeatist worldview. Because death from the classical ballads to sentimental songs appears to be the inevitable outcome of courtship and love, Anglo-American song, they claim, is suffused with "stories of futility, destruction, and death."[2]

My understanding of traditional ballads--their classical ancestors included--challenges this interpretation of their message, which makes one wonder about their relevance and function to people who certainly did not need reminding that "in the midst of life we are in death." If one agrees with Laws that "death is the favourite subject of all balladry," one knows, as he does, that most ballads owe their existence to sensational events.[3] That the genre deals with but a few recurring themes, and that the protagonists' eventful course inevitably leads to the worst, therefore, should be no surprise. Sensation apart, the rest of this chapter claims to demonstrate that tragic ballads, whether imported or native, are not concerned with violence, death and calamities for their own sake, but rather highlight fundamental qualities and weaknesses of human nature to some positive and instructive purpose.[4]

6.1. Imported Songs: Danger, Defiance and Death or Achieving Social Status

Debora Kodish's extensive and minute study of the verbal art of a Newfoundland woman, indeed, supports a dynamic sense for these ballads in light of their socio-cultural context.[5] Her analysis of the pattern and commonplaces found in these songs in correlation to the Newfoundland background proposes that their immediate concern is with life in its material as well as symbolic aspects. The commonplaces of youth, family and material goods, which pervade the twenty-one ballads making up the affective core of her

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[1] Laws, *American Balladry from British Broadsides: A Guide for Students and Collectors of Traditional Song*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1964) 28.
[2] Abrahams and Foss, "Contents" 92-131.
[3] G. Malcolm Laws, Jr., *Native American Balladry: A Descriptive Study and a Bibliographical Syllabus* , rev. ed. (Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1964) 15 and 22.
[4] Laws, *American* 30.
[5] Kodish, "'Never'"; "Fair" 131-50.

informant's repertoire, speak of reproduction of life, regeneration of social relations as well as productivity. Altogether, these related concerns "articulate anxiety, belief and heartfelt commentary about an individual's responsibility to her or his fellows," a motivation which, Kodish observes, is shared with recently-composed sea disaster songs, i. e. men's as much as these women's love ballads. Her contextual as well as literary consideration of Mrs. Caul's repertoire, consequently, projects the view that these would-be "love ballads," rather than of happy or unhappy romance, essentially speak of cultural dilemmas met by young Newfoundland adults. Her holistic study of this individual repertoire leads Kodish to posit that Anglo-American folksong at large is a symbolic language which elaborates matters of community, and particularly focuses on rites of passage into adulthood.[1]

If ballads promote a positive view of life and love, the question is: why do they more often unite lovers in graves than wedding beds? Both Roger Renwick and Kodish have reflected on the reasons why the antithetical resolutions of love ballads-- ending either with funeral or wedding bells--are equally acceptable to singers and audiences. Renwick's answer is that love ballads, whether happy or not, rely on a particular structure and mentality according to which the achievement of love entails a tension in terms of transgression and redemption:

> . . . what major premise could underlie the poetic conception of love relationships so that a coherent world view is sustained, a premise that resolves the apparent contradiction between the two coexisting poles of, on the one hand, fidelity, hope, joy, unification, and love--of Life, in short--and, on the other, of infidelity, despair, fear, alienation, and exploitation--of Death? The repertoire of English traditional songs about love relationships indicates that the most likely answer is an intimate connection between transgression and redemption, a principle that accounts for more of the data than any other I can think of. It appears that, in the folksong universe of meaning, practically any love relationship is *ipso facto* a transgression and to succeed must be neutralized by a redemptive act before the ideal state of grace, union in marriage of two lovers, can be achieved. . . . Ballads of the *un*sucessful-courtship type, in which a maid's refusal to accept a suit honestly tendered is allowed to stand, of the lover's-infidelity type, and of the more extreme seduction-and-abandonment type may, individually, take on the surface a more one-sided view of either of the two partners, but the results are ultimately similar: the wronged party achieves his or her redemption in being victimized by the false lover, while the victimizer is punished--at the very least--by losing the chance to achieve happiness in true love. In the murdered-sweetheart story-type the girls are condemned, of course, not to a "living death" but to a real one, which seems in keeping with their more extreme transgressions of not only entering a love affair in the first place

[1] Kodish, "'Never'" 135.

> but of becoming pregnant to boot; their redemptive suffering is, presumably, proportionate to their crime.[1]

Renwick's proposition underlines the moral message of these stories of violation and punishment. All villains get their deserts: false lovers as well as abusive parents, who, hoping to preserve their daughter from a poor match, plot against her humble lover, and lose her in grief for him. Revenge, if needs be, is effected by supernatural means, such as by revenants, duly visiting their wrongdoers and giving them their due for their past treatment. Voiced here is the popular idea of immanent justice, which is commonly found among religious people of low instruction.[2] Renwick's suggestion that all love somehow entails transgression could be surprising; the sense in which I understand and support his view is that in which it relates to morals in social and family conflict. The course of love never did run smooth, not even when it is innocent and sincere, and its achievement entails impediments, such as exile, separation, and trickery conflicting with social and family rule. The often failing lovers in this attempt, at the worst, achieve in death--i.e. beyond the power of any earthly authority--the union which they were not granted in life. So, for those victimized in life, there is redemption in death, but far yet from any romantic idea that death, for that matter, is preferable to life:

The Rosy Banks of Green[3]

1. Come all ye good people, I pray ye will attend,
To the faith of those two lovers in sorrow will remain,
It was by her lords and squires, and she said it was in vain,
But she dearly loved the sailor on the rosy banks of green.

2. These two they had been school-mates in childhood's early days,
He was but a schoolboy, he stole her heart away;
It was by her lords and squires, and she said it was in vain,
But she dearly loved the sailor on the rosy banks of green.

3. It was on one morning early down in her father's grove,
Sat Josephine conversing with the boy she dearly loved;
With your kisses and embraces and your own dear Josephine,
And we never shall be parted on the rosy banks of green.

4. The father overheard them and his anger could not stand,
He jumped around upon them with a loaded gun in hand,
Saying, "Die ye bloody hoopers and no more you'll plow the main
And tonight you shall be parted on the rosy banks of green."

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[1] Renwick, *English* 42-3.
[2] Lacroix 46.
[3] Peacock, *Songs* 3: 701-2.

5. He drew the deadly weapon, pulled the trigger with fingers two,
And Josephine like lightning to her lover's arm she flew;
The bullets took their course and so truly was the aim,
That these two they fell together on the rosy banks of green.

6. When Josephine was dying these words I heard her say:
"I'm glad my dear old mother never lived to see this day,
I hope she will rest in glory with her own dear Josephine,
And the murdering of her daughter on the rosy banks of green.

7. "O Charlie, dearest Charlie, we will meet on a distant shore,
But your old aged parents will never see you more,
But I hope you'll rest in glory with your own dear Josephine,
And we never shall be parted on the rosy banks of green."

8. Come all ye good people I pray ye will attend
To the faith of these two lovers in sorrow will remain,
It was by her lords and squires, and she said it was in vain,
For she dearly loved her sailor on the rosy banks of green.

Kodish ascribes the alternative endings of marriage or death, and their equal success with singers to their being both changes of state, or rites of passage, which the young adult is to go through to attain adult status. In my own understanding, the unhappy ending addresses the problem of mourning as the happy one relates the lovers' effort to defeat the impediments to their recognized union. So, whatever their outcome, these ballads encourage real life protagonists, like the young ballad lovers, situated "betwixt and between" parental dependency and responsible adulthood, to engage their efforts towards independence in marriage, and I would add, also in widowhood, i.e. to become autonomous social units of production, reproduction or survival. As for the lovers joined in the grave, and only defeated by stronger evil or fate, their heroic death suffered for their unrewarded efforts in life holds the mirror to their deserving qualities. Vanquished in life, they are "contented" in death, which grants them the consummation of love, and frees them from their life trials. In this perspective, which combines those of the previous commentators, these "love" or "tragic ballads," as they are conventionally referred to, impress by their appropriate and, in all cases, supportive stance. Their teaching appears to be that marriage and widowhood, the two major crises which await the mature adult, must be "well met" for life's sake. This hypothesis could explain how these songs have crossed four centuries and one ocean. This life-saving message, it remains to say, is not exclusive to traditional songs, but, as Edgar Morin, the eminent sociologist and specialist on death, claims, to Culture, whose raison-d'être, under all latitudes, is to preserve and promote life:

> Je m'efforcerais de montrer que la société fonctionne non seulement malgré la mort et contre la mort (. . .) mais qu'elle n'existe en tant qu'organisation que par, avec et dans la mort. L'existence de la culture,

> c'est-à-dire d'un patrimoine collectif de savoirs, savoir-faire, normes, règles organisationnelles, etc., n'a de sens que parce que les anciennes générations meurent et qu'il faut sans cesse la transmettre aux nouvelles générations. Elle n'a de sens que comme reproduction, et ce terme de reproduction prend tout son plein sens en fonction de la mort. . . . Ceci débouche sur un comment vivre, dont la dimension est à la fois personnelle et sociale.[1]

Beside this symbolic or poetic interpretation of the meaning of death in fictive song, Ariès's study gives reason to envisage the "death for love" of ballad hero(ines) for their partner in a casual sense. The puzzling appeal of ballads, like also the famous Tristan story, and others borrowing their sad ending, for ever leads to the question of the extent to which their portrayal of human feelings refers to real events. For instance, can love grief be fatal in life or is this a literary image of "love stronger than death?" For modern psycho-medical research, grief, such as caused by the death of a dear person, can be the straw that breaks the camel's back, but hardly more. In literary accounts of the Middle Ages, however, death from grief, or at least fainting, is common, not only with delicate ladies fading away of despair, but valorous and distinguished warriors--Charlemagne himself on sighting the battlefield at Roncevaux, and Roland, his best knight, on finding the body of his friend Olivier. In these notable examples Ariès sees a reflection of the "wild" grief which "tamed death" provoked among the bereaved, as attested by the hysterical wailing and gesticulations, which originally were not merely tolerated but expected around the death-bed. In the face of such complex phenomena, one feels that the truth is always on the side of reconcilation rather than rejection of any hypothesis. Other studies referring to various folk phenomena relating to death--Spanish proverbs and nineteenth-century American tombstones--emphasize rather the conscious ambivalence of their symbols.[2] Carl Lindahl thus suggests that the dove, shaking hands, broken column, etc. represented on such headstones "function as vehicles for expressing diametrically opposed views of death," and that "these ambivalent responses to the markers crystallize our ambivalent feelings about death."[3] Death, as traditional ballads show, indeed separates as well as unites lovers. The twining plants growing from their graves are the paradoxical expression of their posthumous reunion.[4]

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[1] Morin 13-4.

[2] Shirley L. Arora, "'To the Grave with the Dead...': Ambivalence in a Spanish Proverb," *Fabula* 21 (1980): 223-46; Carl Lindahl, "Transition on Tombstones," *Western Folklore* 45 (1986): 165-85.

[3] Lindahl 166-67.

[4] Eleanor R. Long, "'Young Man, I think You're Dying,': The Twining Branches Theme in the Tristan Legend and in English Tradition," *Fabula* 21 (1980): 183.

However remote the trials of "fair young ladies" and "bonny Irish boys" may seem from Newfoundlanders' everyday concerns, these ballads, like the tragic tales previously dealt with, are amazingly responsive to their problematic survival. The particular performance context and style of these songs, "ritually" shared in attentive listening and duly acknowledged, enhanced their instructive meaning:

> In the outports of Labrador there is a time to sing and a time to be silent. One does not sing at work, and one does not sing to one's self. Singing is for a group but not by a group. The time must be right, and the right time is after supper with a long evening ahead, or a day or night during the festival time of the Christmas season. . . . Almost all the singing is done by the men and always without accompaniment. . . . He [the singer] does not look to the group as he sings, but straight ahead of him, as if he were deeply concentrating on the song. He uses no gestures, nor any interpretation by changed tone or volume. . . . But he always lets the story-songs speak for themselves. The audience never participates beyond comments on the songs; there is no applause or extravagant praise. Rather there are quiet remarks here and there, "that's sure a good song," or "a song like that, it's got more truth than a preacher's sermon."[1]

6.2. Local Songs: Solidarity in Life and Death

Locally-composed sea disaster ballads were once as popular in Newfoundland as the trials of "bonny Irish boys" and their sweethearts. Leach reports from the Southern Labrador Coast:

> Understandably in a close community like this one, it is the local songs that are the favourites. Songs like "The Game Warden Song," and "Captain Shepherd," and the local wreck songs, such as "Mariposa," are listened to over and over. They are crude in metre, form, and style, and often the tune is pedestrian and halting; yet the listeners immediately identify with the song and live in it. When it is over, then every omitted detail must be brought forth and reminisced. One evening in Lance au Loup all the gaffers in the room engaged in a spirited debate over what had happened to the timbers salvaged from the wrecked "Mariposa." The talk after such a song is concrete and dramatic and more interesting than the song itself, which is likely to be bare generalities. This suggests that song may be just a stimulus, prompting memory and leading the listeners to re-live the event. . . . --the local ballads--are interesting for their close connection with the culture of the Coast. The shipwreck songs, the songs telling of struggles with the ice, like "The Slob Song," with blizzard and sea like the fine "Trinity Bay Tragedy," these are to them the most dramatic and most meaningful, expressing as they do their constant

[1] Leach 9.

concern with the dangers they all face as they go to sea and to the wilderness.[1]

The point I wish to develop concerning local wreck songs is that, despite differences of age, style, language, poetic distancing and popularity, they draw on the imported ballads' heritage, and, beyond divergences of form, also reflect a traditional attitude towards life and death. Continuity in tradition is now granted where it was long denied. Recognition that the folk's categorization of song ignores differences of age, origin and transmission has revealed complementarity of contents between the three layers making up the Anglo-American ballad tradition. Love, which looms in most classical ballads and imported broadsides, hardly appears in the native American pieces, which are primarily concerned with the vicissitudes and hazards of physical labour.[2] Likewise, love and murder,[3] which are so substantially treated in the British and American broadside ballads, are strikingly absent from the local compositions, which mostly report sea disasters and comic anecdotes. So do local tragedy and comedy balance the trauma of the worst of deaths with stinging humour, satire and zaniness. Commenting on the contrasting components of native songs, Peacock remarked that "even the sea loses its sinister quality and is content with a playful joke now and then."[4] At yet another level, there is complementarity also of women's and men's songs, the former dealing with social and moral conflict, the latter, among them sea disaster songs, dramatizing their own daily conflict with fate.[5]

Greenleaf observed that "Newfoundlanders make up a song about any happening, usually tragic, which affects them."[6] Vital statistics and individual testimonies, however, give the lie to this generalization.[7] Just as one suspects that murder and love grief were never the most common causes of death in ballad societies, in Newfoundland infant mortality and epidemics always made more victims than the ocean. Knowing this, an

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[1] Leach 9-10 and 12.

[2] Laws, *Native* 26 and 35.

[3] Native murder ballads form a tiny percentage of the total local repertoire; see Doucette, "Murder Ballads in Newfoundland," *Canadian Folk Music Bulletin* 18:3 (1984) 23 and McNaughton, "Variation and Stability in Two Murder Ballads of Placentia Bay, Newfoundland," *Canadian Folk Music Journal* 12 (1984): 3-19.

[4] Peacock, "The Native Songs of Newfoundland," *Contributions to Anthropology*, 1960, Part II, National Museum of Canada Bulletin no. 190 (Ottawa: Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, 1963) 213-39.

[5] Kodish, "'Never" 58.

[6] Greenleaf xxvii.

[7] 3.2.2. included a reading of mortality figures for the island.

interesting--if all too obvious--point is that tragic songs of local composition, apart from two murders, consistently relate the exceptional ravages of the sea but never those of the far more frequent killers--tuberculosis and childbirth. The case justifies "l'histoire des mentalités," which denies any mechanical link between demography and ideas in the face of a historiographical tradition which entirely relied on the hard facts and figures of official sources, but consciously ignored others, such as those of traditional culture.[1] Canon Earle's suggestion of "a native view" of tragedy is in line with Laws' explanation concerning the prevalence of disasters dealt with in native American balladry, namely that "multiple deaths in one calamity always seem more terrible than the same number geographically distributed:"[2]

IP: Was there more grief for a tragic death and a young person dying?

CE: Yes, we used to feel, we had one or two drownings and all pouring to the funeral, and the whole place would feel it, yes, but, yes, most of the deaths home were older ones and apart from these families where T.B. set in, you know, it's surprising how few drownings there were when you think they were all using the water and boats. . . .

IP: That wasn't the major cause of death?

CE: Not the major cause at all, no, not the major; they were emphasized more because they were something like aircrashes now, when a lot of people went down. Tragedies was when you got the schooner from Fogo that ran aground and everybody on it was drowned. I think, three from one family, yes, that's the one of great tragedies that's still talked about, and leaving the orphans behind, this sort of thing. . . . We had a complete absence of violent deaths. I think, the hard ones, yes, I'll tell you the hard ones, they were mostly connected with the sea but, we had two brothers on Change Islands, I was a very small boy, I just remember the occasion, and these two brothers Scammel, they went off in their boats to get seals and they were never heard of again and they assumed they swamped. They had too much of a load in the punt and the wind came; that was very tragic because they were still, they were my father's age, they were probably in their late 30's or 40's, there were young families left, two or three children, and in time the widows packed it up and left Change Islands, and you still go back there now 70 years later, and "that's where Alex Scammel used to live," and that really shook it, that kind of a sudden drowning, these two brothers.

IP: Were the bodies recovered?

CE: No, no sign of it, yes, they got the bodies, yes, they didn't mind so much, you see, they understood; oh yes, they were drowned. They wondered what they went through before they died. Now, they had some in Joe Batt's Arm, three or four sealers drifted off on the ice and were never heard of again, but somebody found a gaff, that is a boat hook, and somebody had cut in it "this is the day we lie down to die,"

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[1] This point was made earlier in section 2.1 of this thesis, and referred to Vovelle, "attitudes." 120-32.

[2] Laws, *Native* 108.

with the date. So, exposure and starvation, one thing and another, they knew they were finished.[1]

So, "tragedy" was synonym to plural deaths, such as caused by sea disaster. Puzzingly, it was "tragedy" crystallized in such songs which filled a good part of the rare leisure of this fisherfolk, during the long winter evenings as well as after a full day's work on the Labrador in the summer. One reads in Greta Hussey's personal memoirs:

> When the ship anchored for the night, everyone on board would gather in the large cabin where we were and many a pleasant hour was spent. We had much fun playing forfeits. This went for old and young, men and women, and you never knew what you would be called on to do to redeem your forfeit. Quite a bit of singing went on. Sometimes, we sang a few hymns from the old Sankey songbook. Other times, someone would sing a song.
> One thing that we all enjoyed, time after time, was Willie George Bishop, of Hatchet Cove, Trinity Bay, singing "The Wreck of the Ella M. Rudolph." This was a song about a local schooner that went ashore at Catalina with the loss of the girl cook and all the crew except one man. The story was well told in song and it had a beautiful tune which Willie George could do justice to. He was a very talented singer.[2]

The Ella M. Rudolph[3]

1. Attention all ye fishermen,
   and toilers of the sea,
   While I relate those lines to you,
   of an awful tragedy,
   Which leaves so many families
   in sorrows to bewail,
   The loss of sons and husbands,
   caused by the dreadful gale.

2. The Rudolph was a vessel
   and a clever sea boat too,
   The skipper's name was Blackwood,
   and eight composed her crew,
   a female also was on board,
   so gaily and bright,
   She with the rest did meet her doom
   on that sad fatal night.

3. On the eighth day of December
   the Rudolph left the town,

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[1]MUNFLA 87-159/C12032.

[2]Hussey 103.

[3]This text is as collected by Gordon Cox and transcribed in "I've" 392-96. Cox notes that this song was well known in the Trinity Bay South area, and appeared in print in a 1926 issue of the local paper, the *Trinitarian*. The song was also collected in Cape Broyle and Lethbridge.

Full load of general cargo
for Port Nelson she was bound,
With gently breeze, a south-west wind,
as she did sail along
The sky looked thick and heavy,
and night was coming on.

4. At five o'clock that evening,
through the tickle she did pass,
While threatenings of a violent storm
was showing by the glass;
When from south-east the wind did veer,
with storms all through the night,
When the skipper's intention was to try
and reach Catalina light.

5. Not very far out in the bay,
the schooner she did reach
When the skipper changed his course again
from north unto north-east,
Thinking that she would round the cape,
reach Bonavista Bay,
All under her foresail and jumbo,
unfortunately made leeway.

6. Eight fine strong men, this very night,
upon her deck did stand,
With eager minds and piercing eyes,
all on the lookout for land,
When the wind blew strong and the seas ran high,
oh what a terrible plight,
When the Ella M. Rudolph end her day,
on Catalina shore that night.

7. The vessel scarcely struck the rocks,
before covered with the waves,
All of her crew except one man
did meet a watery grave,
This poor young chap jumped overboard
mid blinding snow and drift,
By the guiding hand of Providence,
got hurled up in the cliff.

8. He went his way up in the cliff,
mid blinding sleet and snow,
O'er mountains, fields and valleys
not knowing where to go,
To look for hospitality
and comforts for the night,
When to his surprise before his eyes,
saw little Catalina lie.

9. It was early in the morning,
'twas at the hour of four,

After eight long hours of travelling,
reached Levi Dalton's door,
Who kindly answered to his knock
and sad the sight did see,
A lad standing there with his oilskins on
a miracle from the sea.

10. 'Come in, come in, my lad, come in',
this man did kindly say,
'And tell us what had happened,
and how you come this way.'
The boy was so exhausted,
and all that he did say,
'A schooner lost, and all her crew,
not very far away.'

11. Now at this kindly woman's
this poor lad did reside,
And with hot drinks and clothing warm,
for him she soon provide
And after rest and medical aid
a story told anew,
The sad, sad news of the Rudolph,
and the loss of all her crew.

12. This man soon told his neighbours,
and soon the news was spread,
And then before so very long,
was rising from their beds,
With ropes and gaffes and lanterns too,
on a night so dark and drear,
And all the path was trimmed with men,
for Brook Cove they did steer.

13. And as they arrived upon the scene,
and sadly heard no sound,
They searched with all endeavours,
but no creature could be found,
And as the dawning broke again,
a sadly sight did see,
To see a body washed ashore
upon the heavy wave.

14. This chanced to be a female,
who once so gay [?]
An Abbott girl from Hare Bay,
whose name was Mary Jane,
And all the kind and willing hands
her body did prepare,
And send her along with her burial rights,
to her mother's home so dear.

15. Not many days had passed away
when those men were on the spot,

And after days of toiling
five bodies more they got,
And now they're resting in their graves
beneath the churchyard sod,
And their souls has fled to their place of rest,
neath the Paradise of God.

16. And now my friends and comrades,
I will tell you what to do,
Let us not forget our widows,
nor the little orphans too,
Who through this great disaster
left fatherless in their homes
For the Lord knows what is best
and His will must be done.

6.3. "A watery grave"

How could one possibly enjoy hearing of storms, collisions and their victims when, like Greta Hussey among other "floaters," living, fishing, and sleeping on a boat for months? Various explanations have been proposed for the appeal and relevance of this repertoire. Shipwrecks were far more relevant to outport communities, which so largely depended on the sea, even than world events taking place on the island, but not affecting their inhabitants' lives. How to tackle the sea, foil its dangers, and rescue comrades from its jaws, understandably, were immediate concerns as compared with the laying of the first telephone cable on the ocean floor, Lindbergh's or Marconi's exploits.[1] Morgiana Halley's study of the local repertoire of sea disaster songs proposes that they functioned as memorials to sea victims.[2] Commemoration, indeed, appears to be the obvious motivation for these songs carefully recording the identity of the vessel and its crew, the place, date and circumstances of the accident.

In addition to these justified explanations, personal attention has been drawn to the recurrent mention in these songs of "a watery grave," and encouraged by Renwick's finding that such "clichés" in folk poetry "may constitute the 'deepest language' of the genre and carry implicitly the most significant meanings."[3] Knowing that the dread of loss at sea pervades all maritime cultures, this concern yields some hypothesis as to the

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[1] Greenleaf xxvi.

[2] Morgiana P. Halley, "Marine Disasters in Newfoundland Folk Balladry Including a Classificatory System for Sea Disaster Narrative," MA thesis, MUN, 1989; "'For those in peril on the sea': The Locally-Composed Sea Disaster Ballad as Memorial," a paper read on Feb. 15, 1989 for the Wessex Society, MUN.

[3] Renwick 15.

relevance and meaning of local wreck songs. Sea disaster songs' frequent evocation of the afterlife in terms of rest belongs to "tamed death." This conception predates any notion of either heaven or hell, and does not yet truly recognize the autonomy of body and soul. Revenants or spirits of the dead come back in bodily form, and the soul escaping from the mouth of the dying necessitates a physical passage such as through an open door or window. In keeping with this view, the soul cannot rest without the body; so, the worst death is that which does not allow for their repose together. The same popular idea holds that resurrection necessitates the physical reunion of body and soul, and explains the anxiety felt for the bodies lost to "a watery grave":

> "Your father's ship, my darling child, his face you never shall see,
> For the hurricane of the ocean sweeps his body in the sea;
> The fish that's in the water swims over young father's breast,
> And his body lies in motion, and I hope his soul's at rest."[1]

IP: Why was it so important to recover the body?
CE: They liked to bury them because of the conviction, I suppose, that soul and body meet again, you see, and they used to feel that in some mysterious way, without knowing why, that there was a Judgement Day, that there was a last day, and that they'd rise.[2]

The same undogmatic view was held among Catholics. Casey thus explains the strong feeling that a story such as that of the loss of the *Ella M. Rudolph* arose among them:

> The strong feeling in Conche is that the dead are sacred, and that each man is entitled to a proper wake and burial in an individual coffin and grave to understand the feeling of sympathy such a story arouses among the local people.[3]

> To singer and audience the fact that two bodies were not recovered for proper burial was tragic. The song praises the hospitality and neighbourliness of people from Catalina and neighbouring communities in searching for the bodies.[4]

The dread of "a watery grave" had mental extensions "on land": the rocky and wet Newfoundland soil is barely fit for burial. The earliest graveyards were situated on a hill, which accommodated one's love for the ocean with one's repugnance towards a wet

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[1]Peacock, *Songs* 3:795, st. 3.
[2]MUNFLA 87-159/C12032.
[3]Casey 246.
[4]Casey 179.

grave.[1] Concern about this added predicament can be traced from missionary Julian Moreton writing in 1849 to recent memoirs and personal field data:

> Scarcely any one of the many inconveniences which arise to the inhabitants of such places [Greenspond] is more painful than the want of ground of sufficient extent and suitable for the burial of the dead. . . . The water was baled out when at the time of a funeral the corpse was brought to the grave, but I have seen the coffin of an adult person float and career before the prayers were ended. Where this ground was dry it was shoal, or was bare rock only, and sods of turf had to be brought in to build a grave above the natural surface. Once I remember burying a corpse, by laying it on the rock above ground to be thus walled in and covered. It was not very uncommon for a dry grave to be less in depth than the coffin.[2]

> In winter there would be quite a lot of snow and many times it was very cold. But the service would proceed at its full length just the same. There would be no outside box in the grave, and it would seem a pity sometimes to have to lower the coffin down in a watery grave.[3]

Quoted earlier is Father O.'s testimony of never having encountered "uncontrollable grief," but his following memory is the exception confirming the rule. The case, interestingly, related to two young fellows who had been laying rabbit traps in the woods in winter, and whose bodies were found frozen in the ice:

> FO: Now, when the parents of that, you know, when they were found out that, when they went back and told them they really, they'd break down, but not. The parents didn't have the uncontrollable grief, it was their daughter, the boys' sister, and in their grief, they went, they did things that you wouldn't think would be rational. They sent to Moncton, New Brunswick, for a steel casket for each of them and not only a steel casket but a steel box to put the casket in. When they buried them, that's what they buried them in for they were afraid that of their lives that they'd get wet. [pause] Isn't that funny? That cost thousands of dollars and they couldn't afford it. They wouldn't have done that if their grief was rational, I don't think, but nobody dared say anything to them.[4]

Locally-composed sea disaster songs belong to the tragic ballad tradition. Whether they deal with frustrated lovers, sea or woods accidents, personal or communal pain, the highest common denominator of all such songs is a dynamic structure consisting in conflict,

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[1]Pocius, "The Transformation of the Traditional Newfoundland Cemetery: Institutionalizing the Secular Dead," *Material History Bulletin* 23 (1986): 27.
[2]Moyles 42.
[3]Tizzard 96.
[4]MUNFLA 87-159/C12030.

denunciation and resolution. In recounting the difficulties and injustice of the protagonists' plight, tragic songs, local and traditional, recent and old, pay homage to true lovers, shipwreck victims, their rescuers and God himself, yet not without a hint of protest against cruel parents, protest in the name of widows and orphans, or warning against fatality. Also in sea songs, antithetical resolutions are found in terms of lucky rescue or loss of life, without virtual change either in structure or meaning. Love triumphs, here below or beyond the grave, and whatever the trials endured, He, who rules the waves, has all in hand. Local tragic song shares certain "ideas" with imported ballad:

TRAGIC BALLAD

IMPORTED	LOCAL
innocent lovers	unsuspecting men
young	in their prime
plotting parents/false lover	treacherous elements/fate
courageous opposition	courageous fight
prefer death for love to life	accept death on the job
violent death (murder, suicide)	sudden death (accident)
reunion in life/death	rescue/rest
mourning of parents	mourning of families
warning	warning

This sketchy comparison between imported and local, "fictive" and "non-fictive" songs, reveals their equally "traditional" or conventional character. Like the protagonists of tragic ballads, the victims of local wreck songs are wrenched from life in their prime in an unyielding effort against stronger and treacherous opponents. Both die for a cause greater than life, survival, one set as prospective husbands and wives, the other as breadwinners to their families. Their deaths take emblematic or sacrificial value, yet the message, in the one like the other scenario is pragmatic enough: prepare and beware while you are alive, and when your time comes, you will be safe on God's shore and your family will be taken care of.

The preceding comments bring one closer to an answer to my initial question, which long remained unsatisfied:

IP: How does it help people to sing of disaster when they have to face these tragedies every day?

FO: O, they write books about them and so they immortalize.... The Ocean Ranger, they wrote a ballad about it and they sing it, and they sang it even in places where one of the victims came from. I don't know, would it be because they're afraid that the memory of these people will disappear if they don't sing these things?[1]

Concerning "complaintes," the Acadian counterparts to Newfoundland disaster songs, there is some evidence that their authors indeed sang their compositions to the bereaved families.[2] The preceding comments suggest commemoration of the dead, but as much of tragedy, and as the case may be, rescue. Such events, with or without loss of life, would seem to prepare the community for the worst. Leach is struck by the fact that sea disaster songs were enjoyed as much for the discussion that they aroused concerning navigational and technical matters relating to the disaster in question. Faris's observation, likewise, suggests that the meaning of sea disaster songs is as much a record of helpful experience for the living as a homage paid to the dead: "The dates of these tragedies are remembered and the stories told over and over again--not so much for their content, but because they relate people to the elements and the sea."[3]

Newfoundland disaster songs as well as Acadian "complaintes" mingle narrative and emotive discourse.[4] Even though the actual facts of the specific tragedy are known, such elements as the number of victims is often exaggerated for the obvious purpose of enhancing the emotion. At the concrete level, local wreck songs display a structure following very closely that of woods disaster ballads.[5] Like the Proppian functions of Russian folktales, they are rarely all present in any given song, but consistently occur in the following sequence:

1. the "come all ye" invitation
2. the identification of the ship and its crew (name, destination, etc.)
3. the crew's gay spirits and unsuspicion of their imminent doom
4. the superior power of the elements (wind, sea, etc.)
5. the crew's courageous fight and suffering
6. the men's realization and lucid acceptance of the end
7. the sadness of bereaved families
8. the rescuers' bravery
9. the identification of victims and bodies
10. the envoi

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[1] MUNFLA 87-159/C12030.
[2] Arsenault 72.
[3] Faris, *Cat* 40.
[4] Arsenault 28.
[5] See Edward D. Ives, *Joe Scott: The Woodsman-Songmaker* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1978) 157.

This structure and its conventional elements suggest that, beyond the realistic "commemorative" information, these ballads carry a toast to the rescuers' courage as much as to the victims, and, like traditional song, exalt inspiring human qualities and, as the case may be, denounce human error, evil or fatality.[1] Even with Patrick O'Flaherty's warning against Newfoundland poet E.J. Pratt's "huffing and puffing about the heroism of Newfoundlanders,"[2] the latter's evocation of his father, a Methodist minister, is revealing of the songs' relevance to community ethos:

> It was a source of perpetual wonder to him, illuminating his faith, to observe the native courage and devotion with which men would set out to accomplish a task of rescue with sacrificial effort. Often the drama was a short one, a matter of a few hours--where the mind was not concerned very much in assessing the slim chances of survival or in weighing the issue with the risk, but where the blood naturally counted on its iron for the job. And when the deed was done, whether in failure or success, it came back on the village, raising the moral temperature of the community. It had the effect on us as if a flag had been run up to the masthead bearing the signal--"Let no one do a mean deed today."[3]

I propose that sea disasters songs, whatever their indebtedness to romantic, religious and obituary diction, essentially validate traditional values.[4] Disaster, these songs express, does not merely affect the victims or even their families but the whole community. Like traditional ballads, their anonymous voice is that of community, and not yet that of widowed mothers or sweethearts lamenting in the later native American ones and other sentimental songs. Neither do sea disaster songs underline irreparable grief or loss as much as mutual responsibility in a close-knit and self-supporting society:

> They [the songs performed in the forecastle of boats] were didactic in every sense. Some praised, others ridiculed. Mack Masters said he used to think about his responsibility as one of the crew on the schooner when he heard the song sung about a man on watch who carelessly let the light go out and is said to be responsible for the ramming of the boat by a British man-of-war in the darkness.[5]

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[1] Besides the "good history" plus emotion that these songs carry, they may also express criticism at human circumstances, such as the lack of security aboard ships manned by greedy merchants; see T.B. Rogers, "The Southern Cross: A Case Study in the Ballad as History," *Canadian Folk Music Journal* 10 (1982) 12-22.

[2] O'Flaherty, *Rock* 121.

[3] Pratt, "Memories," Smallwood, *Book* 2: 159.

[4] The facts related in such songs, indeed, were often derived from newspaper columns, and the songs composed from them clearly reflect the particular style of such obituaries. A reference to the use of papers as source is found in Cox, "'I've changed'" 167.

[5] Wareham, "Towards" 249.

In paying tribute to victims, heroes and sympathizers, these songs, or the whole community, reinforce solidarity and cohesion, or, in reviewing exorcized catastrophe and tragic death, finally, crystallize the community's values in life. Implying danger, skill and bravery, work on the sea was "a man's place" in the traditional ethos. Along with this physically and morally taxing work, "singing at times" was *the* quality with which a man "fitted the company."[1] In this light, one understands that these songs of disasters, but also of life given in self-sacrifice to the support of families and communities, came to be as relevant as traditional ballads, and owing to their literal immediacy to daily life, also outlived them.

6.4. The Break-up of Ballad Tradition along with Community Ethos?

If the "old songs" were once deeply relevant to generations on both sides of the Atlantic, as instructive of their meaning is their present rarity--if not unpopularity--except with revivalist singers and their audiences. The phenomenon likely is related to the substantial changes brought by modern times in local life, along with evolving aesthetics as well as worldview. As a teacher in Sally's Cove in the summer of 1920, Greenleaf observed that, as schools promoted short songs for group-singing, they were far from aiding in the preservation of folk-song, such as of long unaccompanied ballads.[2] From South Labrador and Newfoundland communities, various other collectors have reported the detrimental effect of evangelical Protestantism on traditional culture, its ministers "preaching against cards, profanity, drinking, dancing, modern dress, secular education, and old-time songs and stories."[3] But, also in Conche, a Catholic stronghold immune to such an influence, young people were found to hold a negative attitude towards old songs.[4]

Gordon Cox's study of the folk music complex in Green's Harbour, Trinity Bay, has revealed that rejected with the "old songs" is an entire way of life associated with the poverty and failure of the old days. This social phenomenon might be reinforced by the fact that, for many, unemployment and the declining of the inshore fishery kept this past uncomfortably close. Country music, on the other hand, became associated with the mainland, its advanced technology, wealth and success. The young now have turned to

[1] Wareham, "Social Change and Musical Tradition: The Role of Singing in the Life of a Newfoundland Traditional Singer," MA thesis, MUN, 1972, 110, 112 and 119.
[2] Greenleaf xxxvi.
[3] Leach 8; Cox, "Some Aspects of the Folk" 55.
[4] Casey, "Traditions" 146.

rock, which, more than country music and Newfoundland popular song, they associate with the city.[1] These particular musical affinities run parallel to the appeal of modern media legends, for ever ridiculing the "folklore of old foolishness" and its discrepancy in the modern world of technological media.[2] Last but not least, change in musical taste could be related to a change in function; as shanties disappeared with mechanization, and Märchen grew shorter and shorter under the influence of TV soap operas,[3] so the ballads, which once filled the long winter evenings, are now replaced by the entertainment provided by the media.[4]

As far as song aesthetics go, primary concern has shifted from words to music, and more precisely, from dramatic story to musical accompaniment. John Ashton quotes the following testimony as typical of the lumbercamp tradition, but once also of western folk music as a whole:

> 'Well, a good song was a song, well see, lumbercamp singing, a song had to have a story, y' know, it had to tell a story. . . and the funnier that story was the better the song would be rated or the better story it told, y'know. . . . Some people liked to hear those, the sad songs and some more liked the hear the funny ones, eh? But whatever, funnier the better or the more tragic the story that was being told the better, eh? . . . . definitely back then, more importance on the words than the tune. The tune of course was important too, but not so important as the words.[5]

On the other hand, Pam Morgan's bitter evocation to me of the doom of traditional unaccompanied song in the public context of outport audiences, illustrates the "new aesthetics":

> IP: So, most of the songs you sing are accompanied?
> PM: Nowadays yes. I've noticed that in the years that I've been playing music, people's abilities to listen have decreased rapidly. It's frightening. People don't want to hear a song that's really long. The only time when I ever sing folksongs is when someone like yourself comes along or myself and Anita get together and present a special folk show. Generally speaking, you can't sing unaccompanied songs for general audiences any more. Lately, even not too long ago, I think it was the night after Hallowe'en night, we played in a bar around the bay

[1] Cox, "Some Aspects of the Folk" 146 and 153.
[2] Narváez, "The Folklore of 'Old Foolishness': Newfoundland Media Legends," *Canadian Literature* 108 (1986): 125-43.
[3] G. Thomas, *deux*, and also for a precise reference to this point, "The Folktale and Folktale Style in the Tradition of French Newfoundlanders," *Canadian Folklore canadien* 1.1-2 (1979) : 74.
[4] Cox, "Some Aspects of the Folk" 170-3.
[5] Ashton 165.

a little while ago. We emptied the club in the first set. They all went out one by one.

IP: That's because the songs were too long?

PM: Well, I think it was because it was something new to their ears. That particular night, we played well, we had a good sound, there was no reason why they should all have left. We did three, four folksongs, we also threw in some of our own originals. We also played some jigs and reels. But the reason why, of course, is that it was stuff that they had never heard before and they didn't want to listen. They didn't want to spend the kind of energy it would have taken for them to listen to these songs. You find that more and more. It's frightening. It's particularly true in Newfoundland; places like Toronto, or across Canada in the larger centers, where people are a little more cosmopolitan and open and they have the population whereby there's enough people to frequent a bar where people want to listen to intelligent music and the other ones who don't, they can go somewhere else. The town is not so bad but on the bay, it's sort of a lost cause since the older people had died and the younger people don't really give a shit about the older songs. General audiences, it's just going down and down and down, especially with the young people at the bar scenes, people who listen to disco and stuff like that, the music is so tuneless, and formless and lyricless that they just can't listen any more, they just don't have the power. It makes them really uncomfortable.[1]

Community concerts attended on Fogo Island in the summer of 1987 and interviews with performers, from teenagers accompanying themselves on guitar to choir singers singing country and western with electric band and pensioners delivering old and long narrative songs unaccompanied, bore out Cox's observation of the blending of musical styles, under the effects of "abandonment," "hybridization" and "juxtaposition."[2] While I found ample illustration of the latter two phenomena, the first, in my experience, appeared less obvious than assumed. The songs performed in concert by Gordon Willis, one of Newfoundland's "last" representatives of the old singing style, were either humorous or evocative of the hard life past; none of his public performances, I noticed, included any tragic love ballads. An afternoon's visit and personal interview at his home and special request for such songs, however, revealed that his repertoire was not lacking in them. This suggests that the performance context determines the active repertoire more than the subject or mood of particular songs. So, while Cox relates an audience's vehement rejection of "The Ella M. Rudolph," a long shipwreck ballad sung unaccompanied by an elderly man at a concert dominated by "acculturated music," there is reason to claim that the disaster song tradition had been adapted rather than abandoned. Keith Donahue, one of the young starof

[1] MUNFLA 87-159/C7639.

[2] Cox, "'I've" 385; the full recordings of these concerts are catalogued as MUNFLA 87-159/C10631, C10632, C1064O, C10641 and C10642.

the Fogo Festival, received enthusiastic applause for his delivery of "Bound Down for Newfoundland," accompanying himself on guitar; his song was equally greeted when he sang it the next Saturday for a concert in the neighbouring community.

Further suggesting that it is not the subject of "sea disaster songs" which has gone out of taste, but merely its unaccompanied style was Maxime Bailey and Aaron Cobb's equally well received performance of "The Loss of the Ranger," composed on Newfoundland's latest sea disaster in 1982. I heard this performance at a concert in Tilting in 1987.[1]

In brief, my lasting impression of the contemporary singing repertoire as far as Fogo Island is concerned, is one of harmonious accommodation of the old with the new through adaptation of textual patterns to modern musical technology. While a case can be made for the particularly lively or revived musical tradition of Fogo Island, the area, however, is not devoid of disco bars; the same friends who had got together and rounded up neighbours to throw a kitchen party for my sake enjoyed the community concerts and their repertoire but preferred the more impersonal setting and atmosphere of "the motel" to their community club for a dance. This acculturation of music styles supports the hypothesis of "continuous" or complementary meaning underlying the various facets of the song complex.

In conclusion, this perspective on "hard death" within the "traditional" conception illuminates the full size of the concern and indeed anxiety felt for "tragic death" in sharp contrast with serenity and acceptance accompanying the natural termination of earthly life. Yet, beyond this dichotomous view of death, omens, personal narratives, Märchen and tragic songs commonly put up a lucid and courageous defence against the worst while reiterating caution for its fatality. When death strikes as treacherously as the elements, narrators and composers still draw positive lessons for the future, relying on their confidence in personal expertise, solidarity and faith in God. This community ethos sustained by "fate" as well as "faith" indeed maintains a powerful morale, one which across song genres, styles and origins, affirms victory also in defeat, i.e. the ultimate reunion of lovers, eternal rest beyond its abyss, and comfort to widows.

Far though from mystifying the trials of life and death under naive or edulcorated representations, the positive teachings of tragic song promote women's and men's

[1] Jim Payne's version is another song on the subject, in Lehr 99-100.

respective responsibilities--for themselves, their partners, family and community. In this light, these songs of love and death do not so much proclaim the impossibility of love as measure its price. Through the mediation of their hero(in)es tested to the extreme, tragic song as well as Märchen train real life protagonists for adulthood or their ability to establish themselves as effective "survivors." No more than "Jack" confronted with impossible tasks should one let oneself go to despair or panic, but hope in rescue, and in the worst case, "lay down to die" in serene and lucid acceptance, thoughtful of God and comrades.

"Hard death" is the common denominator of imported broadsides and local wreck songs, and their "obsession" with calamitous and untimely death appears to be commanded less by morbid diversion and sensationalism than by sympathy and respect for the victims and those affected by their sad loss. Mutual responsibility was no less the message of the songs. Psychiatrical practice and literature indeed give right to the folk's long-standing perceptions of the pathology relating to unprepared grieving. Besides paying homage to the dead in recounting their tragedies, these songs address the living, especially in the moral resolution they unmistakably lead up to. Their effectiveness apparently is their inherent amenability to address this universal issue in familiar terms to their public. Along with formal ritual behaviour, these public expressions of sympathy for the survivors as for the victims suggest genuine communal sharing, bearing and overcoming of disaster.

"The Ocean Ranger Tragedy" testifies that sea disaster songs continue to be composed and sung by young and popular local singers to public audiences, and carry on the traditional message of "the Southern Cross" and "the Ella M. Rudolph," only perhaps in a different performing style. Likewise, the creation of The Ocean Ranger Families Foundation, as an initiative taken by the bereaved families themselves to assure mutual support, along with such a statement that "it was amazing really, the way people helped," go a long way to suggest that what has changed essentially is style rather than ideas. For all the advances of navigational technology, the ocean remains the ocean, and across time and generations, Newfoundlanders' destined and beloved partner against all woes:

The Seagulls Still Follow on Freedom[1]

1. In Placentia Bay there sat on the shore
A young girl who mourned for her love who's no more;
The pride of his manhood is the price of the sea,
And the seagulls still follow on freedom.

2. She reached out her hand to an old man passed by,
And she lifted her head with a tear in her eye;
Said "sit and I'll tell you a tale of some woe,
While the seagulls still follow on freedom.

3. I come from Toronto up on the mainland,
And there's many's a thing here that I don't understand,
Like why are these young men still slaves to the sea,
While the seagulls still follow on freedom?"

4. He said to this young maid as he held her small hand
That the sea and its fury are part of this land,
And them who can't take it had better not stay
With the seagulls who follow on freedom.

5. Those men who quote figures and count the cause lost;
They see only the high seas and the lives it has cost.
They don't see the life as we know it to be
Like the seagulls who follow on freedom.

6. So they cheat us and they rob us and continue to say
That our only salvation is leaving the bay,
But I'll soon be ninety and there's one thing I know:
That the seagulls still follow on freedom.

[1] MUNFLA 87-159/C10651; this song was composed by Pat Byrne. Ron Hynes' song, Sonny's Dream, is another telling evocation of men's absence and women's loneliness; see Peter Narváez, "'I think I wrote a Folksong': Popularity and 'Sonny's Dream'," Fourth Congress of the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore (SIEF), Bergen, Norway, June 20, 1990.

One's Own Death

The second attitude towards death prolongs the first rather than replaces it. As its paradigm suggests, it introduces "subtle modifications which suddenly give dramatic and personal meaning to man's traditional familiarity with death."[1] This growing consciousness of the self, first traced in the late Middle Ages, brought forth the feeling of death's "insolence."[2] Along came anxiety and revulsion against the corpse, which would lead to the removal of cemeteries away from the towns in the eighteenth century.[3]

This new mentality took away much of the serenity and peace of mind of the dying person, instead dramatizing the circumstance, and particularly the moment of death. His first concern was for the destiny of his soul, no longer the social group which he left behind. The *artes moriendi* at the time reflects this new anxiety in the face of death through its recurrent motives of the weighing of souls, the separation of the just and the damned, and the intercession of the Virgin and St. John. The prayers for the souls in purgatory and devotions for a good death also date from that time: a scapular or a rosary worn in life warranted a good death and a shorter penance in purgatory.[4]

More even than fear of death and the afterlife, Ariès sees in the proliferation of the death theme in art the expression of a ferocious love of life. Death was no longer seen as the natural termination of life, but as the ultimate failure to which man is condemned. While these conceptions and feelings apparently break from "tamed death," Michel Vovelle suggests that they had always been present but kept inhibited under its stoic face:

> Mais le complément de cet endurcissement à la mort en est la présence insinuante, lors même qu'elle est refoulée: dans sa revanche, elle peut s'enfler jusqu'à l'obsession.[5]

Ariès situates the ritualization and "clericalization" of death in the intersection of "tamed death" and "one's own death," yet without ascribing the growing impact of religion

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[1] Ariès, *Western* 27; *Homme* 1:154.
[2] Morin 41.
[3] Ariès, *Western* 41.
[4] Ariès, *Homme* 2:17.
[5] Vovelle, *Mourir* 41.

merely to the "new" horror of death and fear for the afterlife. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's study of the mental universe of Montaillou's villagers under the Inquisition bears out the symbiotic relationship of the traditional and Christian ideologies:

> Il y a là un remarquable processus d'insertion ou greffe culturelle, sur un tronc de tradition mentale qui par avance était réceptif.[1]

Le Roy Ladurie's statement, I suggest, holds for Newfoundland tradition. The following chapter shows that the traditional funeral "ritual" is largely the institutionalized form--with some purging--of the wake custom.[2] It proceeds to demonstrate that while religion and Catholicism in particular played a prominent role in the battle waged against death and its realm, the popular conscience in turn "adapted" its principles and recommendations to agree with traditional ideas about death, the body and the afterlife. The non-recognition by the Reformed Churches of the sacrament of the sick, masses for the dead, intercession from saints is the reason for the particular attention given to Catholic tradition in these pages. The first chapter related to "one's own death" is largely concerned with the fear of death and after; the second deals with that inspired by the dead and its ventilation in humour.

[1]Le Roy Ladurie 590.
[2]The reader is referred to the previous discussion of these aspects in chapter 5.

Chapter 7

Comfort and Control: Ritual and Belief

Religion has suffered from clerical and popular uses of certain supernatural beliefs for social, moral and religious purposes. Partly as a result of this abuse perhaps, some scientists have roundly dismissed it as "superstition" or included it under the supposedly encompassing categories of "popular belief" and "folk religion." Kenneth Goldstein, who observes the juxtaposition of "faith and fate" in sea disaster ballads of Newfoundland fishermen, traces the lack of proper discrimination between the two also among folklorists:

> . . . almost all the work of folklorists who deal with maritime beliefs concentrates on "superstitions" and "popular beliefs" and rarely mentions religion as part of their belief system unless they intend to make the point that such beliefs are part of "folk religion."[1]

The lumping together of religion and folk tradition, religious and supernatural belief, it appears, can result in misinterpretations of the attitudes and values involved in cultural behaviour. This particular example concerning Newfoundland reveals the pervasiveness of an academic tendency to see "tradition" rather than "religion" at work in cultural phenomena. Granting that anthropologist Donna Lee Davis refers to a community on the Southern Coast, and native Greta Hussey writes about people of the South Labrador Coast, their explanations are hard to reconcile:

> People did not appear to resort to religion for comfort: they had been prepared for disaster beforehand.[2]

> Many people on the coast, as elsewhere at that time, had a strong faith in their Eternal Creator. I guess that they needed it to survive some of the many tragedies and misfortunes that befell them and their fellow fishermen and their families.[3]

The following pages reveal that "faith" and "fate" offered largely compatible responses to everyday concerns; they, however, support Le Roy Ladurie's findings of an ancient mental

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[1] K. Goldstein, "Faith" 84-5.
[2] Davis, "Woman" 144.
[3] Hussey 84.

substratum which combined with Christian thought but neither supplanted nor blended with it.[1]

7.1. From Custom to Ritual

Custom in Newfoundland was never far from ritualized behaviour. James Faris noted that the hazardous fishing occupation of practically all men meant that predictable behaviour and expected response were at a premium while all random, highly emotional and unpredictable behaviour was avoided as much as possible in outport society.[2] As ritual mostly translated custom into Christian terms and meanings, there resulted overall continuity between the secular and the sacred. If human life was precarious, the small outport community was anything but resourceless or passive in the face of a crisis which endangered its survival. In Newfoundland, as in pre-modern Europe or present-day rural Africa, the social group possessed an effective defence against the incursion of death. The traditional response to this aggression against community life was vigilance, anticipation and predictable behaviour, for it was known that "death knows no standards," that "it is no respecter of persons."[3] The group relied on a rigid code of behaviour, which was to see them through this crisis. Social control, nourished by empirical knowledge, supernatural belief and ritual symbolism was pushed to its limits in this communal battle for life against the uncontrollable and superior forces of destiny. Typically, the community of the living came out of this struggle not only victorious but stronger.

Tradition equipped Newfoundlanders with "preventive" strategies against death. Protection was ensured by observing a number of taboos in everyday life. There should never be two candles or lamps on a table, because "that's too much like a wake."[4] One perceives the safety measure contained in prohibitions made to children to count stars or walk backwards, the violation of which "would bring about their mother's death."[5] The interdiction against putting a pair of shoes on the table, or sweeping its crumbs with a broom could simply be hygienic principle,[6] and that against putting a shovel in the porch[7] enforce standard proxemics sanctioned by the group. Yet, these as well as other taboos,

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[1] Le Roy Ladurie 607.
[2] Faris, *Cat* 145.
[3] MUNFLA Proverb Index.
[4] MUNFLA 87-159/C12042.
[5] MUNFLA FSC 69-6/21.
[6] MUNFLA FSC 66-14/70.
[7] MUNFLA FSC 69-13/20.

less obviously accountable, perhaps above all consolidated the social and symbolic values of the community: dig a grave on Monday,[1] stand on the doorstep when a funeral is passing,[2] or have green blinds.[3] Such prescriptions, as the following account suggests, reinforced homogeneity of thought and practice, a requisite of all communal and ritual activity:

> Birch brooms were widely used at Williamsport, e.g. for sweeping bridges (platforms around the houses) and especially for sweeping the stage-head and splitting table after the codfish was "put away" (cut, headed, entrails taken out, split, washed and salted in bulk). The birch from which these brooms were made was always "picked" (broken by hand) before the month of May started; usually some time in April. The people put strong confidence in this little jungle that I remember hearing, at least once or twice every spring around "broom-birch picking time:" "Pick your brooms in May, you'll sweep your family away" (meaning that if you pick your brooms in May, one of your family would die within the next twelve months). I know from experience that my parents never dared to "pick" birch in May. If there was no "broom birch" procured before the beginning of that month, we would just have to do without the broom for that year.[4]

One, nevertheless, wonders about this concern in traditional cultures with the strict observation of such arbitrary constraints and obligations only adding apparently to the burden of life's ordinary routine and, in the case of death, to the mourners' emotion. This modern and pragmatic point of view finds (sarcastic) typical expression in the following journalistic piece of a reputed French magazine. The author, relating his attendance at the funeral of an old friend in a village of the south of France, denounces "the cruelty of the funeral rite" with its rigid conventions and repressed emotion:

> Me voici confronté une fois de plus à ce cruel rituel de l'enterrement, qui me fascine, car il célèbre le grand départ vers l'inconnu, et que j'exècre, car il exacerbe la douleur de la famille et des proches. A ces moments-là tous les rapports, toutes les habitudes, tous les caractères sont faussés: les grandes gueules parlent bas, les audacieux baissent les yeux, les hypocrites les relèvent, les vrais amis tentent par pudeur de dissimuler leur peine, les vagues relations font semblant par opportunisme d'avoir du chagrin.
> Une seule certitude, mais de taille: le psychodrame funéraire est inhumain, puisqu'il tend désespérément vers le divin.[5]

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[1] MUNFLA FSC 63-1/126.
[2] MUNFLA FSC 65-1/55.
[3] MUNFLA FSC 64-1/50.
[4] MUNFLA FSC 69-5/3; see also MUNFLA FSC 68-17/13; MUNFLA FSC 67-12/33.
[5] Philipe Bouvard, "L'humeur de Philippe Bouvard: mort d'un ami," *Figaro-Magazine, ed. intern.*, 6 oct. 90, 38.

In his pointing to "rapports faussés" between the participants, the commentator comes close to evoking "role reversal," which indeed plays a part in funeral rites; he is off the mark, though, in ascribing this, as he calls it, "inhuman" behaviour to the divine, and in judging this formal celebration as aggravating natural emotion. Experts on ritual give profound sociological and psychological reasons for this elaborate social event, indeed organized for the sake of the mourners as much as for the deceased.

Also in Newfoundland, strict control of the situation from the expectation of death to after its removal was in order. The community ethos and morale were at no time more upheld than on the decease of one of its members; nothing was less left to chance than a funeral. The whole procedure was laid out in terms of customary obligations and prohibitions, which together effected a subtle compromise between the benefit of the living and that of the deceased. The latter must be honored without running the risk of contaminating the living, yet had to be disposed of without offence for fear that the spirit should linger among them. While "the dead should receive the utmost in the way of respect," their safe committal to the otherworld was of such import to the survival of the collectivity as to justify this communal effort.[1] The funeral ritual offered a structured pattern or channel for the healthy release of grief, as it has appeared from the detrimental consequences of its disintegration in modern life:

> The critical problems of becoming male and female, of relations within the family, and of passing into old age are directly related to the devices which the society offers the individual to help him achieve the new adjustment. Somehow we seem to have forgotten this--or perhaps the ritual has become so completely individualisitc that it is now found for many only in the privacy of the psychoanalyst's couch. The evidence, however does not bear out the suggestion. It seems much more likely that one dimension of mental illness may arise because an increasing number of individuals are forced to accomplish their transitions alone and with private symbols.[2]

So, while the French critique above denounces the contrived sympathy of the participants, the scholarly explanation reveals that this reversed behaviour, which is at the core of the funeral ritual, symbolizes the conversion of death into birth of the reaffirmation and consolidation of the living community. This "reversal" from ordinary behaviour finds expression throughout the different stages of the ritual. As all clocks were stopped in the house where it had occurred, death marked a halt in the everyday life of Newfoundland

[1] May Ronald, "Funeral Practices at Belleoram" 25, uncatalogued paper from Dr. Nemec personal archive, MUN.
[2] Solon T. Kimball, introduction, *The Rites of Passage*, by A. Van Gennep, xvii-iii.

traditional society.[1] As a polluted and dangerous state staining the ordinary "profane" course of life, it introduced a special or "sacred time." An essentially different behaviour was to be substituted for that applying to everyday as symbolic expression of this exorcisizing of death, the enemy and "stranger:"

> In Richard's Harbour as soon as someone got sick to a degree where there was little hope, to me it seemed as if a sort of different atmosphere took over. Everyone became concerned about the sick person and the first words spoken to anyone you met would be an inquiry into the condition of "poor old uncle/aunt ...." . . . When the person was lying on his deathbed and his death seemed obvious, the people seldom went fishing. I can remember my mother telling me to behave myself because somebody was dying.[2]

The cognition of death, indeed, was drawn from the symbols and behaviour Newfoundlanders regarded as characterizing the stranger, the most abnormal category with which they were familiar. Outsiders to the small and stable outport villages were once apprehended as suspicious if not roundly malevolent. A "non-resident death" occurring in the community, as in the case of shipwrecks, meant symbolic contagion of the worst kind. The strange corpse would be waked in the church, but never in any of the community houses for fear that "the corpses of two residents of the house would soon be brought out."[3] Through their association with death, the deceased but also his/her close survivors, the "mourners," were temporarily set aside from the group owing to their symbolic contamination with the deceased and its own unfixed (liminal), hence dangerous, status:

> During mourning, the living mourners and the deceased constitute a special group, situated between the world of the living and the world of the dead, and how soon living individuals leave that group depends on the closeness of their relationship with the dead person.[4]

The transitional period of the mourners was a counterpart to that of the deceased. In Cat Harbour and many other Newfoundland communities, this discrimination was signified in terms of a general black and white symbolism: outsiders could be spoken of as the "blackest kind of strangers," the devil was "the black man," men were "getting black" when drunk and violent, Catholics were held to be "pretty dark" in this all Protestant community, and mummers and mourners were referred to as "the dark ones." This symbolism confined the latter into a distinct category:

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[1] MUNFLA FSC 68-3/98; other such practices consisted in covering all mirrors and suspending all cleaning in the wake room.
[2] MUNFLA ms 68-20, p. 1-2.
[3] MUNFLA FSC 65-2/86.
[4] Van Gennep, *Rites* 147.

> Those categorized as "mourners" wear small black ribbons on their lapels. They are in a real sense, removed from normal intercourse and their behaviour, symbolically and actually, is distinguished from that expected in the usual course of events; they are placed in an "outsider" position, peripheral with regard to the mundane prosaic aspects of daily life. Their role, symbolized in the small black ribbon, is cognitively similar to the other conceptually "black" categories in Cat Harbour--those surrounded with an aura of pollution, danger, and potential contamination.[1]

While promoting the accomplishment of grief work in due time, the traditional rites also set a limit to it. Not that all grief would be dissipated with burial, for restrained behaviour would still be imposed on the closest relatives for a definite period. All the blinds in the house were drawn for months after a death; a black ribbon or "crepe" was tied to the outside doorknob, and mourning dress would be worn for a whole year.[2] The funeral and burial ritual effected physical separation from the deceased, but the mourning process was only completed with the internalization of affection for him/her. The whole ritual process thus laid down a "winning" pattern for the healthy termination of earthly relationships.

Of this secular heritage, the church merely objected to the participants' "wild" lamentations on the corpse and their offerings on the tomb, which it took for means to placate the dead.[3] Religious dignity replaced the unrestrained expression of emotion, and a special funeral mass was introduced in substitution for the sharing of food around the deceased. [4] Such measures, however, affected form more than meaning:

> . . . since approximately the twelfth century, the excessive mourning of the Early Middle Ages had become ritualized. It only began after death had occurred and it was manifested in the garments and manners and had a specific duration, precisely fixed by custom.
> Thus from the end of the Middle Ages to the eighteenth century mourning had a double purpose. On the one hand, it constrained the family of the deceased to demonstrate, at least for a certain period, a sorrow it did not always feel. . . . On the other hand, mourning served to protect the sincerely grieving survivor from the excesses of his grief. It imposed upon him or her a certain type of social life--visits from relatives, neighbors, and friends--which was due him and in the course of which the

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[1] Faris, *Cat* 156.

[2] MUNFLA ms 71-42, p. 31. For the first six months there was "deep mourning" following by another six of "light mourning." These restrictions particularly applied to women, and were severely enforced by the community; some wore black for the rest of their lives; MUNFLA ms 89-078, p. 16.

[3] Ariès, *Homme* 1: 145.

[4] Ariès, *Homme* 1: 167.

> sorrow might be dissipated without, however, allowing its expression to exceed a level fixed by social conventions.[1]

Whereas many cultures maintained the funeral meal, but placed it after the religious service and the committal of the body, the sharing of food and drink to this day remains part of the funeral home wake in Newfoundland; practice reported from Conception Bay in the seventies even suggests the integration of secular (verbal) and religious (symbolic) expression in popular tradition:

> Men had a black crepe ribbon around the left arm and the hat or cap for the same length of time. These close relatives were the "mourners" and would break into loud wailing and sobbing when they came into the parlour to look at the dead person. . . . Mourners again cried and wailed at the gravesite and were last to leave the grave.[2]

7.2. Disaster Song as Ritual for the Dead

The prosaic details surrounding the recovered body of the young girl in the song text of "The Ella M. Rudolph" and the insistence of all attempts made to recover the other bodies spoke for the hatred of lonely death and especially that of "a watery grave." The loss of bodies at sea hampered the ordinary course of funeral, but essentially, deprived the mourners of symbolic and psychological support in the grieving process. The tension arising from concern with proper burial and loss at sea leads to the suggestion that wreck songs might function, not only as memorial, but as reinforcement or substitute for ritual celebration in the event of "hard death." Even though gravestones occasionally erected to their memory provided a focus for the negotiation of emotion, there could be a lingering feeling that these dead would be restless in the afterlife:

The Tidal Wave Song[3]

1. Attention all good people all, come listen unto me,
   About the sad disaster that we record today;
   That happened on the Western coast around that rugged shore,
   Where families were swept away to see their friends no more

2. Last Monday week just after four they heard a rumbling noise,
   But used to storms on that wild coast it gave them no surprise,
   When suddenly an earthquake shook and then a tidal wave,
   When six and twenty precious souls soon met a watery grave.

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[1] Ariès, *Western* 66-7.
[2] MUNFLA ms 71-42, p. 31-4.
[3] MUNFLA ms 78-236/C3542B, p. 192-3; the events related took place on Nov. 18, 1929.

3. The tidal wave, with fearful force went fifteen feet or more,
The fishermen's snug little homes were swept from off that shore,
Their boats and nets and stages and all their fishing gear,
Was carried away by the tidal wave and soon did disappear.

4. Parts of Burin on that coast and also Lamaline,
The place is strewn with wreckiness and scarce a house is seen,
Poor helpless women on that day were paralysed with fear,
To see their homes and families and children they loved dear.

5. The Aaron Mark and company, those strangers in our land,
Was the first to hold a concert and give a helping hand,
To those poor souls in poor distress, a grand ornation gave,
Who suffered most severely by that fatal tidal wave.

6. Success in this world is good to have and great fortunes fall for sure,
On those who give out freely to help the hungry poor;
For Newfoundland was always known and always did its share,
And she never let a Christian die when she had a crust to spare.

7. Now let us pray for those away here on the sea must rove,
Guide them in their tiny craft and send them safe at home;
But put your trust in Providence and always heed your prayer,
And give your strength and fortitude your heavy cross to bear.

8. They now are in that heavenly land, they're free from toil and care,
To rest with God in heaven, His splendor for to share;
They done their part, they played their game like heroes brave that day,
Their work being done upon the earth when God called them away.

Wreck songs share the dynamic structure of funeral celebration for articulating the successful resolution of the anxiety caused by death. The "come all ye" address as well as the exhortation of the envoi in such terms as "let us not forget our widows," or "we trust they have reached the heavenly shore" suggest a communal wish or prayer for the repose of the dead. The songs' formal and highly conventional diction adequately contributes to this ritual function. In analogy with funeral rites, they reaffirm serenity and trust in the victims' rest, communal solidarity and support to their families, and finally successful exorcization of death. Disaster songs thus present a script of the concerns underlying the wake and funeral celebration, which reveals their symbolic meaning underneath apparent morbidity, and their appeal closer to ritual celebration than to sensational entertainment.

As funeral practices came to be ritualized in Christian terms, so disaster song, a popular form of obituary verse, draws on religious references. The songs' concluding evocation of "God" granting "rest" to the victims, indeed, manifests the "juxtaposition" or "hybridization" of traditional and Christian elements. Kenneth Goldstein's observation of

a "fatalistic belief in God's way of handling the afterlife of fishermen and sailors who die as a result of sea disasters," is suggestive of the easy combination of traditional and Christian elements.[1] He points out the positive character of the fatalistic as much as religious overtones of these songs:

> The fatalism of Newfoundlanders is based on the idea that it is their lot to live with, fight with and to otherwise deal with the sea and related elements--not to give in to them but to recognize their force and power.[2]

The literal message of these songs is that accidents will happen despite men's expertise and judgment, but that all is well for even the victims of such pitiful death are in God's hand. Where there is no explanation for tragedy, belief in fate has the advantage of leaving confidence in one's knowledge and ability unhurt:

> The men took deliberate chances with the sea and often they were out when it was dangerous to be there. The best seamen were those who could do so and survive. Such daring acts were commonplace and economically necessary. The stories helped to place them in an atmosphere of normalcy. In this competitive community, the whole economy depended upon the maximum utilization of time and effort. . . . If disaster did strike, it was blamed on fate. The existence in Great Harbour of a strong belief in predestination made tragedy easier to accept.[3]

The prevalence of votive behaviour among seafaring people is attested by a fair body of ethnological literature dealing with such traditions from Prince Edward Island to Malta, including Christian as well as pre-Christian cultures.[4] One of these studies dealing with Breton and Norman votive paintings reveals a structure largely reminiscent of both Newfoundland and Acadian disaster ballads.[5] These paintings consist of three parts or levels: the first showing hostile nature, the second portraying the men helpless and invoking heaven, and the last attesting the fulfillment of their prayer. In common with this pictorial pattern, the songs' narrative structure shows man's destiny as being disputed between two superpowers, God and Fatality; this tension is heightened by the emotive discourse, which contrasts the wildness of the sea with God's merciful granting--of eternal rest.

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[1] K. Goldstein, "Faith" 86.
[2] K. Goldstein, "Faith" 92.
[3] Wareham, "Social" 110.
[4] For a selected bibliography, see Micheline Galley, "'Voto fato, Grazia Ricevuta:' Ex-voto d'hier et d'aujourd'hui à Malte," a paper read at the 4th SIEF Congress, Bergen, June 19th-23rd 1990, forthcoming in the proceedings of the conference, vol. 2.
[5] Mollat 198.

The popularity of votive expression in maritime cultures has been related to the feeling of helplessness in the face of adversity:

> L'acte votif s'inscrit parmi les gestes naturels et instinctifs de l'homme en détresse. L'Eglise l'a christianisé. Ce qui est vrai, c'est qu'il y eut des formes populaires et des formes cultivées de l'acte votif et de l'ex-voto. Il faudrait d'ailleurs bien mal connaître le milieu marin pour imaginer des différences profondes de comportement devant le danger commun, à l'heure où personne ne peut plus mentir ni tricher.[1]

Disaster song as votive act may not be obvious: storm or collision at sea was mostly fatal in the old days. Thanksgiving, though, is expressed in practically each of these songs: to rescuers for their courage and devotion, and to God for granting eternal rest to victims. Hussey reports that, just before "Uncle Tom" went under on the Labrador, he sang:

> With His Loving hand to guide, let the clouds above me roll,
> And the billows in their fury dash around me,
> I can brave the wildest storm with this glory in my soul,
> I can sing above the tempest, praise the Lord.[2]

If, as Sparkes remembers from his childhood, "there was a wreck in every sea song," rescue appears to have found expression in another typical genre. The following specimen was sent in a letter from Newfoundland addressed to "Madonna" magazine, and printed in its December 1961 issue:

> Enclosed please find an offering in return of thanks to St. Gerard, who protected my son and grandson in heavy seas. They could not land and I turned to good St. Anne and St. Gerard and pleaded with tears for their protection. Thank God they landed safely.[3]

7.3. "There was only faith"[4]

There is concurring evidence that up to the 60's religious thought and practice were an intrinsic part of life, in Catholic Tilting, Fogo Island,

> Their lives revolved around their faith, faith came first to them, and that was the most important thing in their lives.[5]

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[1] Mollat 198.
[2] Hussey 85.
[3] Marion Bowman, "Devotion to St. Gerard Majella in Newfoundland: The Saint System in Operation and in Transition," MA thesis, MUN, 1985, 86.
[4] MUNFLA 87-159/C12036.
[5] MUNFLA 87-159/C12043.

as in Protestant Jackson's Arm, White Bay:

> Life in our village, like that in all others in those days, revolved around the Church and its customs. The secular calendar merely told us the days of the month; it was the Church calendar which set for us the "season and the time for every purpose."[1]

One must bear in mind that the Church was long the single local institution catering for the needs, spiritual but also educational and social, of Newfoundland's resident population. Whereas the first Irish migrants arrived in the mid eighteenth century, they were not allowed to practice their religion until the turn of the nineteenth century.[2] So, Catholics had reasons to identify with their faith and hold onto it. Local historian Frank Galgay explains:

> IP: What was the place of faith, of religion, in daily life?
> FG: Very important in the daily life because a lot of people, of course, their ancestors, came over, especially the Irish came over, and especially the Irish, in difficult times during the penal days and the conflicts between the Irish and the English over land ownership, their practice of their faith, their religion, of course, was inhibited, and it was inhibited when they landed in Newfoundland for a significant period of time. In fact, I think on the Southern Shore, they used to have masses in their homes, private homes, or the boats among fishermen; the priest would go incognito, and they had to do it very secretly. So, their faith became very precious to them, and, then, of course, the hardships they encountered, like the fisheries and the struggle to make a living and just everything.[3]

On the Protestant side, if ministers stood only second to merchants at the top of the outport social hierarchy,[4] their pastoral care frequently fell back on lay readers. Tizzard writes in his memoirs:

> My father never held church services, although there were times in great necessity, when no minister was available, he baptized infants and conducted Committal services for children.
> My grandfather Thomas Tizzard baptized a large number of babies, because presumably of the belief that if a child died without baptism the child would go to hell. . . . He also baptized many adults; when they realized they were dying, if the minister could not get there immediately they would call on my grandfather.[5]

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[1] Sparkes 91.
[2] Rowe 225.
[3] MUNFLA 87-159/C12034.
[4] V. Butler, *Little* 20.
[5] Tizzard 92-3.

The priest, on the other hand, held the "spiritual monopoly," which, along with his vowed celibacy, symbolically put him at an irreductible height from his flock. His authority, likely in consequence of this prestige, bordered on supernatural power. His competence extended beyond the Church, and if this mostly meant blessing and healing, it could be cursing and harming as well.[1] "Dr. Jones" was parish priest in Tilting in the thirties, and is well remembered for his medical expertise, let alone several miraculous cures and rescues. I heard from my host that her father suffered from paralysis of the legs, and could hardly support himself. He was leaning against a fence one day when Dr. Jones came to him, and asked if he needed any help. As he said yes, the priest laid his hands on him, and he was rid of his paralysis for some time. Another lady reported how her successful delivery and recovery after complications and fever for three weeks were one of the many effects of the priest's saintly prayers, and added:

> RB: Yes, he had power. He performed miracles, there's no doubt about it. I told you about bringing out that man from the ice. He cured him; he opened up the thumb and it was black to the arm. There was no doctor and they'd come to him. . . . Such a hand, infection and puss, rising pain, and he opened it up, squeezed all the bad inside of it. . . . He was like wood, and he was very particular. If a person came in with a sore hand, the knob of the doors would have to be scrubbed. There was a certain person had excema: "wipe these knobs now he's gone," but he cured him. Even in the Northside of Joe Batt's Arm, there was a Jacobs had a sore throat, terrible throat. He cured that, and they all knew he cured it, the Protestant people. That man, K's brother, that was driven up on the ice, several times people were nearly lost and this day D.B. was one of the ones that went out, and the first thing everybody knew, the wind had changed and the ice was starting to move off, and there was a sea came in. Well, they went to Dr. Jones, of course, and they told him. "Where is he going to land?" He told me this himself, and they said: "well, there's only one place down behind the last house on Green's Point. If he don't come ashore there, he won't come ashore at all." Well, everyone in the harbour was over there watching for him to land. You know the swell of the sea, the ice was broken in little bits, little small tiny bits, and he just came in on the swell, and he [Dr. Jones] went to the church. He told me, he said: "I went to the church." St. Anne was his saint and he said:"I said to her," and he told me this, this is gospel truth: "if you ever did it, you've got to do it this time," and he said: "she did it." He came ashore, people had their eyes closed watching, and he was going to go down. He was thrown ashore. There's no one in this place did you ever ask about it, and they'll tell you the same thing.[2]

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[1] Bowman, "Devotion" 32 and 34; MUNFLA ms 65-001C; see also MUNFLA ms 66-009A and MUNFLA ms 71-84, p.9.

[2] MUNFLA 87-159/C10636.

Even though "there was only faith," as one lady in the sixties evoked the old days, up until the second half of the nineteenth-century, there was very little in the way of "tangible" religion. Settlements, one remembers, existed for decades without the benefit of any religious ministrations,[1] and for a long time after that the small ones did not have a resident priest, but shared one between three and sometimes more. Many even lacked a church:

> 'T was only religion then, and your day's work. There was no televison, and there was no cars coming. You done your day's work and then there was your religion, and the rosary, and your religious books. You know, it would be only just religious books coming into the house. It was a different type of life then altogether. You don't sit now and talk about the saints.[2]

The harsh physical conditions of life in Newfoundland until the second half of the century along with the inadequacy of medical and social services, reflected in such statements as "we had no doctors round here, so we only had our faith to rely on,"[3] "everything was faith,"[4] or "it was only prayer that saved her," promoted resort to supernatural assistance. Religious belief and practice gave confidence in the face of dangers which would otherwise be overwhelming.[5] Religion was as present at home as in church, and on all ordinary days besides Sundays and festivals. Tizzard's childhoood memories of Methodism in his community include a filled church, especially on Sunday evening, and the offer never meeting the demand:

> Everyone paid for their pews and they sat in them. No-one else dared sit in that pew; if they did they would often be told, sometimes not too politely, they must get out. This was Methodism. There were many people who could not go to church because they did not have a pew, as there was not enough around, and they had no place to sit. . . . There was really only one way to get a seat for a new family, and that was if someone died.[6]

As for Catholics, Father K. confirmed that his generation attended daily mass at six and said rosary, sometimes along with the litany of saints and prayers for the dead, after supper. Religion supported the struggle against all odds: disease, accident, storm, fire and evil--be it devils, spirits or ghosts.

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[1]Rowe 193.

[2]Bowman, "Devotion" 183; "'T was only the statue on his dashboard saved him:' Narratives Affirming the Efficacy of Devotional Objects," *Arv* 37 (1981): 7-10.

[3]Bowman, "Devotion" 36.

[4]From personal fieldnotes.

[5]Bowman, "Devotion" 73-4 and 68.

[6]Tizzard 87-88.

The strong religious orientation of Newfoundland traditional culture, including its expressive behaviours and forms, appear to be typical among maritime people.[1] In Tilting, my question as to the means of confidence and protection from the danger of braving the sea prior to motor boats and modern equipment, received an automatic answer: "they'd go out and they had the faith."[2] Faith was sustained by a number of attending practices and beliefs. On visiting the cabin of a longliner, I found a small bottle of holy water, a religious picture with the words "bless us, Father, ere we go" and some medals fixed by the wheel. To this day, holy water is kept in a large aluminium container placed in front of the church nave for individual tapping. Some houses have several smaller receptacles fixed to the wall, and filled from this supply. From several elderly ladies in the community, I heard of the practice of "shaking the holy water," or dipping one's fingers and making the sign of the cross. My host explained that she did so before entering her bed at night and during a storm.[3] She signed herself from a receptacle hanging in the porch each time she left her house, even, she said, when going to the grocer's only a hundred yards away.

Religious pictures and objects are displayed in practically every community house, and provide much of the interior decoration. Of all representations, the most common are those of Mary's Immaculate Heart and the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Both show tortured and bleeding hearts, with flames and lovebeams radiating from them: the first represents the Blessed Virgin's heart pierced by a dagger and the other, Christ's head bleeding under a crown of thorns. The dedication printed underneath this sizeable frame undersigned by each member of the household and the parish priest suggests the assurance of His protection in return for faith and fidelity to the Church:

> The Sacred Heart of Jesus has been solemnly enthroned in this home on the 22nd day of May 1957 by the consecration to Him of all the members of the family present or absent, living or dead. By this act of love and reparation we desire to recognize Jesus as our Lord and Master. We accept in their entirety the Commandments of God and of his Holy Church; we express our horror at the sacrilegious violation of his Sovereign Rights by individuals, by families and by nations; we condemn the attacks upon the holy laws of Christian marriage, and finally we submit with our whole heart and mind to the authority of the Roman Pontiff Our Holy Father the Pope. Filled with gratitude for the honour which Jesus confers on us by coming to take up his abode with us, we

[1] Lacroix 13.
[2] From personal fieldnotes.
[3] See also Lacroix 25 and 46; MUNFLA FSC 63-001u.

> humbly and lovingly ask Him to dwell for ever in our home and in our hearts.[1]

I was told that no matter where you stood in the room, the eyes of Jesus on this picture were always looking at you. Other popular representations are small framed pictures in relief equipped with a small electric bulb. Plugged in, their dim light suggests the intimate presence of the biblical characters portrayed. Such frames, I found, were appreciated by widows living on their own. One of them said she never turned it off when she went out at night, and found its light reassuring when she came back. Another explained that she never turned her back to it. Hers represented the Holy Family, and provided the only source of light in the room during my visit one evening. The realism of these "life-like" human representations of Christ and the Blessed Virgin, thus "actualized" in the middle of one's own kitchen, sitting room and bedroom, reflects an emotional response to religion and confident and faithful submission of one's lot to Providence.

The prevalence of pictures of Christ's suffering and death decorating the walls of Newfoundland bedrooms, where death would normally be endured, echo the representations of the Blessed Virgin and Christ on the Cross in fifteenth century *artes moriendi*.[2] Gerald Pocius aptly points to their symbolic and significant meaning:

> The concern with the death of Christ and, to a lesser extent, the death of Mary, in images found in the bedroom speaks of the didactic values of these artifacts. Many prints stressed the importance of suffering and death, both having to be expected and accepted. As the images depicted Christ accepting suffering and pain, so too must the individual in his or her daily life. And as Christ accepted death, so must the individual.[3]

The letters "IHS" embroidered on habits and obviously borrowed from the Jesuit motto locally were accounted for as "I have suffered" or sometimes as "in hoc signo" in ignorance of its official meaning (Iesus Salvator Hominum).[4] Other religious symbols also received immediate or literal sense. Blessed ashes dealt on Ash Wednesday were put in the kitchen stove as protection from fire; the palm blessed on Palm Sunday was placed over the door of the house and stable to ward off any harm or misfortune, and Candlemas provided the house with blessed candles. These were used during times of sickness serious enough

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[1] See also MUNFLA ms 78-293, p.11.

[2] Ariès 1:111.

[3] Pocius, "Holy Pictures in Newfoundland Houses: Visual Codes for Secular and Supernatural Relationships," *Media Sense: The Folklore-Popular Culture Continuum*, eds. Peter Narváez & Martin Laba (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State UP, n.d.) 142.

[4] I thank Soeur Suzanne F.C.M. for her information concerning the latin abbreviation.

to warrant calling of the priest and placed in the hands of the dying person. On its reception, the new blessed candle was lit and a little wax was dropped on hats, caps, guns and axes as a blessing and charm to prevent accidents while using these implements.[1]

One of Vatican II's resolutions was to shift personal devotion to particular saints to closer participation in the communal celebration of mass. In its wake, many statues were removed from the churches. Marion Bowman's penetrating study of popular devotion to St. Gerard in Newfoundland, however, reveals widespread and pervasive worship of this saint, Ste. Anne and St. Joseph. Numerous medals and relics were used as channel of these saints' power. One informant, referring to her mother and her medals suggested that "if she wore them all at the same time, she couldn't walk."[2] Narratives relating to this concern commonly affirm the efficacy of such objects as repository of this power.[3] An elderly lady told me that her mother slept with a copy of Ste. Anne's Annals under her pillow. Many of the elderly women and couples whom I met in Tilting proudly showed me some statue of the Blessed Virgin or other devotional object brought back from visits to the Shrine of Ste. Anne de Beaupré in Quebec.[4] Bowman's research also uncovered the considerable number of Newfoundland enrollments into St. Gerard's League in the sixties. Her findings shed some light on the absence in local song of deaths relating to childbirth and tuberculosis. The pervasiness of popular devotion to St. Gerard, who, in Newfoundland is known both as "the mothers' saint" and "the san(atorium) saint" largely answers the question.[5]

Medals, statues, and relics were kept at home and on board ships, but scapulars were worn day and night; no child was let out without them, and one was buried with them:[6]

> It was mostly the brown scapular people had here. It's a little square with a picture struck in the front and there was a cord and most people wore it over the shoulder. One came down on the back. I had one; I pinned it on. It's a Catholic custom; everyone wore them in older times. When you died then you wore the brown scapular, that was put on and they had the habit.[7]

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[1] Casey 98-101.
[2] Bowman, "Devotion" 8 and 146.
[3] See MUNFLA ms 72-51/C1175.
[4] Hufford, "Ste. Anne de Beaupré: Roman Catholic Pilgrimage and Healing," *Western Folklore* 44 (1985): 194-207.
[5] Bowman, "Devotion" 3 and 86-7.
[6] MUNFLA ms 78-304, p. 10.
[7] MUNFLA 87-159/C12042.

While this is mostly forgotten locally, the brown colour of this scapular, like that of the habit, in which Catholics were buried, relate to the Franciscan order.[1] Most people of the past generation, however, refer to the "green scapular." In its present version, it is a small square picture of our Lady stuck on green felt, encased in plastic, and hung on a green string. The back represents the Blessed Heart of Mary with the words: "Immaculate Heart of Mary pray for us now and at the hour of our death."

Seafaring people, including Newfoundlanders, are known to be concerned about assuring themselves providential protection from the unforgiving danger to which they are exposed. Father P. reports concerning his Tilting parishioners:

> In the springtime their boats were blessed and they had great faith in the sign of the cross. It was one thing I discovered here, when they set into the boat, the first they would do was bless themselves. . . . Sometimes the seas came rolling in and when they'd see a big one coming, they'd make the sign of the cross and they were never swamped; they had so much faith in the sign of the cross.[2]

Father K. told me of his father, who fished thirty years on the Grand Bank, and was only thirteen when he found himself in "the August Gale." On the eve of the disastrous gale, the boy dreamt of a ship going down and some men rescued. The next day, as the sea was still calm, he saw a light, and informed his captain that they should hit for the land. The latter, trusting the sea condition, saw no reason to do so until the storm suddenly broke out, and the crew pressed the boy on deck to "charm" the seas. He first said he would not do it, "didn't charm." When they made clear to him that they would be lost if he didn't, he took a piece of bread, "crossed the sea," and there was not another wave after that.[3] The implicit point of the narrative seems to be that the boy, being the only Catholic aboard, alone received warnings which proved to be accurate, and rescued his crew by a gesture which, as is emphasised, was performed in faith, and not magical belief.

To defend the view that in pre-modern Newfoundland, faith was faith before it was insurance, medicine or social convention, one must look at other things than quaint behaviours. People, I would suggest, genuinely put their lives and trials in the hand of God. When asking about local disasters in Tilting, it was often reported that while the men of the community were out to rescue the endangered, the women were praying the rosary

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[1] I thank Père Réginald Endriatis for this information.
[2] See also Lacroix 30; MUNFLA 87-159/C12043.
[3] From personal fieldnotes; see also Lacroix 25 and 46.

together in church. When three men were jammed by the ice while hunting seals, it was shared faith which inspired the courage of those fighting for their lives:

> RB: They got squashed up and they got on this great big pan of ice and the fog was so thick. You couldn't see one blessed thing, and they used to ring the church bell. Now they do this for to let them know they were thinking about them and praying for them.[1]

This poem, composed by one of the men rescued on the occasion, and paying tribute to the community for their prayers, supports this view:

> On Wednesday morning May 3rd 1944
> We left our home seal hunting,
> And rode three miles from the shore.
> We met the ice, t'was very slack,
> Into it we did go,
> Expecting every moment to get a shot or two.
>
> About 2 o'clock in the afternoon
> We found we were jammed.
> We knew it was no use to try
> And get back to the land,
> So we poked into the water on
> The back of all the ice,
> And we rode on for the Barracks,
> And it's there we spent the night.
>
> When daylight broke next morning
> It was a dismal sight
> To look toward our island
> And to see three miles of ice.
> About nine o'clock that morning
> Two motors hove in view
> With food on aboard
> To save our lives
> Likewise two sturdy crews.
>
> About 4 o'clock that evening
> A little speck was seen.
> To our surprise we soon found out
> It was the T 14.
> She came right close in reach of us,
> The skipper gave a roar:
> "Put your boats into the water, boys,
> And I'll land you safe on shore."
>
> I'll tell you we made no delay
> For we had no time to lose,
> And pretty soon we were on board

[1] MUNFLA 87-159/10636.

We lazing all our news.
We must give thanks to the skipper,
He is a sturdy man,
Likewise Lieutenant Oliver
Who tried to get a plane.

But we won't forget the people
They prayed with all their might
Likewise the boys who lit the fires
And shot the guns that night
I hope t'will never happen
To anyone again
And the author of this little poem
His name is Nicholas Lane.[1]

On my first visits to widows in Tilting I was often told the story of their husbands' death; this was mostly cancer or heart attacks, both resulting in untimely and sudden death.[2] These spontaneous evocations and my own observations suggest that faith, along with remembrance, is a major source of comfort in bereavement. One of the ladies I visited soon handed me the family albums and a luxury white-leather edition of a Bible, which were the only "books" on the shelf. The Bible was a gift presented to her by the Steelworkers' Union, to which one of her sons belongs, on the death of her husband. Inside the cover was kept his death certificate delivered by Fogo Hospital. Another widow whose husband had run the grocer's store, had a picture of her husband placed in the middle of the sitting room. He died of a heart attack which killed him in a few hours. Framed with the picture was a poem cut from a magazine:

The Door

The door it closed so quickly
That I scarce could catch a gleam
From the eyes of my beloved;
And I miss the kindly beam
Of the lovelight turned upon me,
In the days of which I dream.
Yes, a dream is all that's left me
In the stilly hours of the night,
As I think what so bereft me
In the early morning light.
For the door it closed so quickly
That took him from my sight.

[1] As copied from a scrapbook with kind permission of the owner.

[2] Bonnie J. McKay, "Old People and Social Relations in a Newfoundland Outport," *Aging and Cultural Diversity: New Directions and Annotated Bibliography*, ed. Heather Strange, Michele Teitelbaum & Contributors (South Hadley, MA: Bergen, 1987) 69; the author uses "Grey Rock" as a pseudonym for Tilting.

Oh, where is my beloved?
I have sought him near and far:
But alas, he does not answer
The door will not unbar,
And the days seem all so lonely
And the nights without a star.
But I know the Great all Father
Who called for him to come
Will think of me grieved,
Within our broken home
And will give me strength and courage
For the years that are to come
So I will not grieve or worry
But bravely pass along
For grief will give me weakness
But work will make me strong
And will brighten up the pathway
That guides my steps along.
And when my work is ended
And I stand inside the door
And the Master leads me to him
And I see his face one more
Oh, the joy, my beloved
For the waiting time is o'er.[1]

The lady declared that she knew the piece by heart; she found it soon after her husband's death, and placed it near his picture "because this was exactly how she felt," and she liked to read it. I asked whether this had helped her to cope, but found that it was faith as well as duty which made her steadily achieve grief work:

> RB: I had to cope, I had too much to do. . . . My faith helped me. I had to go to work. He died and I was left with two or three thousands. . . . oil to the wholesalers, and two or three more I owed. . . . I went right to work, and sold everything, and by Christmas, I didn't owe one person a cent. I went to Steers in Lewisport. He was our principal man, to give us the freight, and he said:"Mrs. B., I'm going to tell you the truth. When R. died, I said to my friend here: "that's one account that will never be paid." "And, I suppose, Mr. C., right now, you owe me three or four dollars."[2]

Even though she affirmed that "there's not much religion here now," as "youngsters pass along the church without even going in," I found some religious practices kept in Tilting but gone from my own North-European Catholic tradition. The family rosary was still said daily, weekday masses were well-attended, and of personal experience, I found that there

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[1] I thank my informant for kindly copying the poem for me.

[2] MUNFLA 87-159/C10636; see House, *But* 76 for another testimony on the reliance on faith to overcome grief in tragedy.

could be no joke, even among friends of my age, about missing Sunday mass for a whole-day picnic excursion without attending Saturday night mass held in Fogo, ten miles away.

Religion found easy accommodation alongside fatalism: "The influence of religion in everyday life was expressed by the philosophy that life was a matter of "resignation and trust in God, especially in times of disaster and hardships."[1] Religion, however, inspired greater fear of death and the afterlife than "before." Tradition was satisfied with the idea that whatever happened, the time and circumstance of death was predestined and predictable, at least at short-term. When death came, rest was granted as a matter of course to all without distinction. This peace of mind was disturbed by an increasing awareness of the Last Judgment, or the idea that each soul was sent either to heaven or hell according to its merit. Personal salvation became no less an object of concern when purgatory, the transitional (liminal) place where all except saints had some time to spend, made its way into the popular mind. Casey reports from Conche that,

> . . . according to most informants the purpose of religion is to achieve life in heaven, life after death, eternal salvation. . . . Even not strict observers maintained firm belief in the necessity of some religious practices. Without exception they received the Last Rites of the church at death.[2]

As for Renaissance humanists painted in meditation in front of a skull and the popularity of still-lives in that time, the thought of death in Newfoundland permeated life, and guided its course. Putting death at the "crux" of life, in fact, meant to control ("tame") it better. Vovelle takes this point as evidence for the complementary rather than contradictory nature of this attitude to the preceding one.[3] Death still required preparation, but of a spiritual nature above all. So, the typically puritan epitaph also made its way into Conche's cemetery:

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[1]Casey 97.

[2]Casey 92; concerning the inhabitants of Inis Beag, a pseudonym for an Irish village, John C. Messenger similarly observes: ". . . the worship of the islanders is obsessively oriented toward salvation in the next world with a corresponding preoccupation with sin in this world. . . ." in *Inis Beag: Isle of Ireland* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland, 1969) 86.

[3]Vovelle, *Mourir* 57.

Remember friends as you pass by
As you are now so once I was
As I am now so you shall be
Prepare for death and follow me.[1]

Strict compliance with the church's commandments ensured that death, even tragic, would not be unprepared for. The following prayer, Frank Galgay told me, is recited still in his family:

Goodnight God, I'm going to bed
Wake us over, prayers are said,
And if I die before I wake
I commend my soul to God to take.[2]

It may be no coincidence that the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph and St. Anne, who, in Catholic tradition, are particularly invoked for "a good death,"[3] are especially popular in Newfoundland.

7.4. "Happy death"

While death was to be prepared for throughout life, disposition at the moment of death determined one's lot.[4] Fifteenth-century iconography abounds with representations of the dying person's bed surrounded by devils and angels ready to dispute his soul. The battle was thought as good as won if one was properly prepared by the priest, God's intercessor on earth, which essentially meant receiving absolution in due time.[5] In Newfoundland, however, Catholics had been used not to leave it all to the last moment: an elderly person, who suddenly started to go to church more than usual, was "making his/her soul" or "making his/her bed softer:"[6]

FG: People usually over the age of 60 usually use the expression "I'm going to make my soul," and that, "I'm going to make my soul," that's a very common expression with older people, not this generation. For example, if my mother heard of a fiftyish or seventy, who is carousing, either drinking or womanizing or acting up, whatever it was, you'd

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[1] Casey 308; James Deetz, "Remember Me as You Pass By," *In Small Things Forgotten: the Archeology of Early American Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1977) 64-90.
[2] MUNFLA 87-159/C12034; see also Poole 6.
[3] Ariès 1: 175; Le Goff 243.
[4] Ariès 1: 109.
[5] Ariès 1: 84; to the terms "last rites," "viaticum" and "Extreme Unction," the Catholic Church in recent years has preferred that of "sacrament of the sick," in the hope of restoring its proper sense as sustaining those in need in full consciousness of their situation rather than in their last agony; see also MUNFLA 87-159/C12030.
[6] MUNFLA ms 70-27, p. 2.

> hear her comment, "he should be making his soul," in other words, preparing, which would involve an awful lot of praying, for instance, attending church a lot. In other words, you're getting older now and you must prepare yourself for death because it's coming.[1]

The oldest Catholic generation still hopes for a "happy death," which means death in the presence of a priest, hence receiving the "sacrament of the sick" and the Eucharist. Father P., testifies about the "last wish" of his Tilting parishioners in the fifties and sixties:

> FP: Another thing that I noticed here particularly, on the whole island, this particular thing and that was their attitude towards the last rites, the sacraments of the sick, we call it now; they would be very anxious until I arrived. Once they received the sacraments, all the fear, whatever anxiety, you could see, was drained away from them, you know. So much so that they were not asking to make a special trip here to Joe Batt's Arm, to Fogo or Island Harbour, but they would say, "if you come up in the next few weeks and I'm still here, you'll drop in to see me, won't you?" All their anxiety and fear of death was gone completely, almost looking forward to it. It was really, an education for me, you know. . . . At that time the isolation was such that if I left the island, very very often I was called back because of the fear of dying without the priest. But if I came back and gave them the sacraments, I could be away for months then as far as that particular person was concerned. They were OK then.
> IP: How did people cope with death, what was their greatest comfort?
> FP: The greatest comfort was that, whoever it was in the family, that they had died if they had gotten the priest to receive the sacraments. The greatest sadness for the people here, anywhere on the island [Fogo], was that they had died without receiving the sacraments. That was the greatest sore, not that they died so much.[2]

The fear of hell, likewise, motivated Protestants to receive Baptism:

> Church of England people and Methodist people could not think of anyone dying, not even an infant, without being administered the rite of infant Baptism.[3]

Catholics had their own way of keeping "the sacrament" at hand. "Sick call sets" come in a variety of shapes and sizes, from the small cupboard fixed to the bedroom wall to something resembling a pencase. The contents usually include a candle, matches, holy water, a folded white cloth and a crucifix.[4] Anxiety to receive all due rites sometimes prompted unofficial practice and belief in their efficacy. Father K. confessed doing things

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[1] MUNFLA 87-159/C12034.
[2] MUNFLA 87-159/C12043.
[3] Tizzard 74.
[4] My host had both types in her house; see also MUNFLA ms 78-303, p. 52.

which were in contradiction with the dogma under "popular pressure," such as anointing a corpse. While the sacrament is meant to strengthen those who are in need of physical, psychological, or emotional healing for greater acceptance of their precarious condition,[1] he recalled that, when he was a parish priest in Branch, a woman had died of a heart attack and collapsed while putting on her coat. On arriving on the scene, he was surprised that the corpse had not been moved, not even as much as to remove the arm from the coat sleeve. The reason, he found, was that "the body was not to be touched until the soul had left it, and this could only happen after he had anointed it."[2]

7.5. "There's always a prayer to be said for the poor souls of purgatory"[3]

Although the doctrine of purgatory was officially introduced in the twelfth century, it is five centuries later that it "hit" the popular mind.[4] Accordingly, most souls went to Purgatory for a variable time, which could be shortened by prayers for the dead. The doctrine of purgatory, in fact, only reiterated the traditional notion of society as a community uniting the dead and the living.[5] Gary Butler observes that the devil and ghosts of tradition remain recognized cognitive categories in L'Anse-à-Canards, but not fairies, and attributes their persistence to the church giving them persistent meaning and validation.[6] Contrary to the past, though, when communication with the dead solely occurred on their own initiative, the living now could return their help in alleviating their painful sojourn.

In Newfoundland Catholic tradition, some merely symbolic gestures accompanying the liturgical rite received propitiatory sense: the dying person was to hold a blessed candle as protection from the devil, who was making a final bid for his soul;[7] this candle, besides, would light its roadway to heaven.[8] One won an indulgence for holding a candle on

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[1] "Masses of healing" have recently been introduced under the new ruling of the liturgy: this encourages people, either ill or elderly, to receive the sacrament during these masses, and allows them to repeat it every third month, MUNFLA 87-159/C12030.
[2] From personal fieldnotes.
[3] From personal fieldnotes.
[4] Le Goff 14; Ariès 1: 154.
[5] K. Thomas 720.
[6] G. Butler, "Supernatural" 96-7.
[7] MUNFLA FSC 67-4, p. 4.
[8] MUNFLA ms 79-392.

breathing one's last and being buried in a habit.[1] The "IHS" initials sewn on its front "would protect the soul from the first flames of purgatory if it was to pass through there and reduce the suffering."[2] A standard address heard at wakes was:"with the help of God, he's in heaven," or "you're gone, I hope you're in heaven," both clearly suggesting that "good death" henceforward meant salvation.[3] So-called "TD" clay pipes used to be laid by the corpse during the wake; besides keeping the smell of death out and protecting the living from possible contagion, their inside meaning as "tame the devil" reminded the attendants to accompany each smoke with the conventional utterance: "God be merciful."[4] Whether or not such practices were the object of actual belief, they clearly enforced the ritual procedure up to the details. Neighbours returned to the house three evenings in a row to offer up a rosary for the repose of the soul of the deceased.[5]

While "indulgences" have largely disappeared officially, masses for the deceased, which have mostly gone out in other Catholic traditions, here remain the standard expression of sympathy to the family, and provide similar reassurance:

IP: Are they very concerned about purgatory and saying masses for the dead?

FO: Oh yes, they certainly say masses for the dead and on the anniversary they want a mass for whoever is dead. Oh yes, people are *very* good about that. Now, this morning, at 9 o'clock mass I signed 7 mass cards for a lady who died last night at St. Clare's hospital. She belonged to Mary Queen of Peace Parish and these are only friends now, not relatives, just friends of theirs, would come in and have a mass said for her.[6]

On visiting a widow in Tilting whose husband died in 1988, I was impressed by the number of "mass cards" and "enrollments" received on his death. Mass cards have a short formulation:

Rest in Peace
With the sympathy of ...
The Holy Sacrifice of the mass will be offered for the repose of the soul of
...

[1] MUNFLA ms 70-27, p. 5.
[2] MUNFLA ms 71-42, p. 41.
[3] MUNFLA ms 80-120; MUNFLA ms 80-127.
[4] MUNFLA ms 70-27; MUNFLA ms 73-13.
[5] MUNFLA ms 79-328, p. 11.
[6] MUNFLA 87-159/C12030; mass cards are bought from a priest for five dollars and bind him to say that mass. Father O. explains that as the demand for masses extends opportunities, the money is often sent to third world parish priests, who in turn bind themselves to say them.

"Enrollments," which were totally unknown to me, read as follows:

> This certifies that enrollment of J. G. has been recorded for 15 years. The following blessings are bestowed: one mass is offered each day for members, in addition a special mass is celebrated every 1st Saturday of the month and of all feasts of our Lord and our Blessed Mother. All members share a special remembrance in the holy masses, holy communions and rosaries of the Marian fathers and brothers, and in the continuous novena to Divine Mercy. Enrolled by Enright Memorial School (school of St. Joseph's, St. Mary's Bay).[1]

In Tilting and other Catholic communities, practically all women belong to the "Altar Society;" they organize the cleaning of the church on a shared basis as well as fundraising activites in support of the parish. The members' fee is a quarter a month; to my ironical question as to what benefit this covered, the not so ironical reply was: "you get a mass when you die."[2] Masses for the dead strictly belong to Catholic tradition; instead of mass cards, wake visitors in Anglican tradition offer commercially-bought sympathy cards, which are likewise presented on an ad hoc plate placed in the funeral parlour reposing room where the deceased is being waked.

The proximity of the earliest graveyards to outport communities was a constant reminder of the dead. The "modern" cemetery in Tilting lies a few yards away from the road; this place, which was elected for its relatively "dry" soil, I realized, maintained daily "interaction" with the community dead. I was once sharing a ride with two widows whose husbands are buried in this cemetery, and they were carrying on a lively conversation. On passing the cemetery, all passengers signed themselves, including the driver who was about my age, while the widows together interrupted their talk to quickly utter: "may the souls of the faithful departed to the mercy of God rest in peace."[3]

The liturgical feast of "All Souls" (2 Nov.) was introduced to channel all belief relating to the supernatural world visiting the earth of the living around the same date of the "pagan" calendar:

IP: Is there anything done on All Souls' Day?

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[1] This particular enrollment was offered by the school in which the widow's son was teaching, and was bought for fifteen dollars collectively contributed by the staff, MUNFLA 87-159/C12041.

[2] From personal fieldnotes.

[3] From personal fieldnotes.

RB: Not like it used to be. In my time, the church would be open all day and you'd make, it's something I don't hear now, it's indulgence. You don't hear much about indulgences now, do you? [No] Well, we heard everything; you'd get indulgences for so many prayers and so many visits, and we had five visits, I think you'd make on All Souls' Day, you go to the church and you go in and say your prayers, whatever you had to say, and come out, go in again because you were gaining the Plenary Indulgence for the souls in Purgatory, offer them up for the souls; you had to come out over the steps and back again. And, there used to be three masses on All Souls' Day in my time; one here and you'd go up to Joe Batt's Arm and then Fogo.

IP: Would you attend all three?

RB: Oh no, t'was for the people belonged to the place; and then you'd visit the cemetery. There was supposed to be an indulgence for that, go to the grave, say your prayers.[1]

Certain sayings, if not "beliefs," made sure that the occasion did not go unnoticed. Like the flames of purgatory and hell, the soul was conceived of in physical terms. One should walk on the side of the road because the souls were out.[2] No water could be thrown outdoors, especially after dark, because the souls might be visiting homes that night, and "you might throw water over a soul, and that water would be thrown back at you."[3] A lit candle would be put in a pan and placed on a kitchen table, while the evening would be spent praying for the souls of dead relatives and close friends.[4] Le Roy Ladurie found similar beliefs in Mountaillou concerning the family dead visiting their former home regularly, and of the church being their abode at night.[5] A student collector remembers his grandfather saying that on that day, the souls of those buried in the community graveyard flocked to the church to pray around midnight, and that, while they were there, the door just couldn't be opened.[6] Whereas these various "beliefs" are considered "just nonsense" today and laughed at, prayer, however, remains:

> I was born in 1950 on All Souls' Day. . . . My mother said it was the worst day of the year to be born and that actually the poor souls have brought me. She always made sure that I went to Mass on my birthday to pray for those poor souls.[7]

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[1] MUNFLA 87-159/C12035.

[2] MUNFLA ms 70-25, p. 71.

[3] MUNFLA ms 71-42, p. 69; the same interdiction applied to Good Friday in Catholic tradition, and appears to have been the most widespread taboo to be kept on that day; see, for instance, MUNFLA FSC 71-4/24.

[4] MUNFLA ms 82-376.

[5] Le Roy Ladurie 592-611; MUNFLA ms 78-304, p.11.

[6] MUNFLA FSC 69-11/76.

[7] MUNFLA ms 79-328, p. 15.

Vatican Council II stressed the communal significance of the celebration of the Eucharist, which sacrifice is offered both for *all* living and dead, and emphasized the love and mercy of God. The lasting prevalence of masses offered for individual deceased along with various expressive behaviours observed in the course of my five-year experience as a member of different Catholic parishes in St. John's suggests relative traditionalism in local Catholic worship.

The increasing influence of the Church in the late Middle Ages gradually resulted in an eschatological reinterpretation of this world and the next; to turmoil followed by rest were substituted the idea of a struggle between God and the devil. This conceptualization was observed in Conche,

> Their concept of the world and the afterlife was in terms of God and the devil, good and evil, and white and black.[1]

but goes back a long way. Bennett affirms that belief in ghosts, even following the Reformation, not only survived in all religious groups, but received due recognition through dogmatic, if differing, definitions. For the Catholic Church ghosts served as evidence for purgatory, and Protestants redefined them in even less reassuring terms: they were not human souls but demons masquerading as such and sent by Satan to deceive.[2] To this legacy would be owed all the Gothic horrors of the nineteenth century and our inbred fear of ghosts. Medals, which had to be worn especially when going out, assured casual protection against encounters of "evil spirits" or "lost souls," and prayer along with some religious symbol placed where the thing had appeared laid it to rest.[3] Dr. Jones used to say this prayer after mass:

> Blessed Michael, the Archangel, defend us in the day of battle
> Be our safeguard against the wickedness and snares of the devil
> May God rebuke him, we humbly pray,
> and do that, Prince of the heavenly host,
> Send Satan down to hell, and with him all the other wicked spirits who wander through the world seeking to ruin the souls? [interference]. . . .[4]

Ghostly disturbance was once taken for granted in Tilting, but in confidence of sure remedy:

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[1] Casey 97.
[2] Bennett, "Ghost" 7.
[3] Casey 266.
[4] MUNFLA 87-159/C12036.

> RB: My mother lived by B., where D.B. lives. She had a brother that lived upon the hill, raised a big family and . . . night after night after they'd gone to bed, they'd hear this desperate racket, just as if someone was beating down the house, and that went on and on, and he used to be frightened. He had brothers and sisters and he used to tell them all, and they got together. They didn't have much money to have a mass. They got together, and each of them gave two dollars or something and my mother was one. Then she had to go to the priest and ask to have the mass. Anyway, she went, and she was dubious about telling him, you know. She said: "Well, Father, I really don't know who I'm having this mass for," and she told the story. He answered: "How would you like it if you lived in the house with him?" That house out there, that parish house was always haunted. That was the answer he made to her.[1]

The Catholic Church thus gained control over ghosts by submitting them to its superior power over evil. Thus "tamed," ghosts, however obnoxious, were "pitiful creatures in need of prayer;" at the same time, their plight resulting from unrepented sin also put the living under control:

> Peter Smith from Freshwater was a soldier in France in WWI. During an artillery barrage he had his head blown off and was buried in France. About four years later his wife, Ellen, was in bed one night when she heard something coming over the stairs. She opened the bedroom door and saw her husband standing at the head of the stairs without a head. Somehow he knew it was her husband. Then it vanished. This happened four nights in a row. Finally, Ellen went to the priest to see what it meant. The priest asked her if she were saying any prayers for her husband. She said that lately she wasn't saying them regularly. So the priest advised her to say a few masses for his soul; she did and the ghost was never seen again.[2]

One report suggests that supernatural stories were often told by the priest to "put the fear of the Lord in people," or by parents to put their children in awe of the priest.[3] So, as medieval ghosts essentially upheld the Church's moral teaching, their descendants continued to enforce standard social norms. Their appearances, in all cases, were motivated by some definite purpose: they came back to denounce specific injustices and unsuspected evil-doers, or rectify some social arrangement. Following the Reformation, while "papist ghosts" might still ask masses for their soul, others merely craved proper burial, or served "supernatural detection" with an expertise extending from professional crime to domestic drama, such as broken promises and child neglect. Their sphere of

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[1] MUNFLA 87-159/C12036.
[2] MUNFLA ms 66-004c, p. 16.
[3] MUNFLA ms 79-752, p. 39.

action, consequently, was largely in terms of protection and revenge.[1] Kenneth Peacock observes "a series of ballads dealing with the exposure of a murderer on board ship by supernatural means" in his extensive collection.[2] In the five song types he published, the ghost stands as partner of a central love relationship and takes vengeance for the infidelity, desertion and murder of the other partner.[3] Apart from two particularly "gothic" ghosts massacring their widows on account of their remarriage, these ghosts are females and their vengeance befalls their tormenters at sea. In addition to these five broadsides on the "ghost-avenger" model, mostly listed in Peacock's Index under "love ghosts," are five ballads, all of which stage male "ghost-protectors."[4] Of all versions collected on this side of the Atlantic, the most complete texts of the following song came from Nova Scotia and Newfoundland:

The Ship's Carpenter

1. In Dorseter city, in Dorseter square,
   There lived a fair damsel I vow and declare,
   A young man came courting her for to be his dear,
   And he by his trade being a ship's carpenter.

2. It was early one morning oh long before day,
   He came to his Polly those words he did say:
   "Come arise pretty Polly-o and come along with me,
   Before we get married our friends for to see."

3. He led her through bushes and valleys so deep
   Till at length pretty Polly began for to weep,
   Saying, "Billy, oh Billy-o, you're leading me astray,
   Your purpose my innocent life to betray."

4. "It's true, it's true, those words you do say,
   For all this long night Ive been digging your grave,
   There's a grave lying open and a spade standing by,
   Oh it's into the grave that your body shall lie."

5. "Come pardon, come pardon, come pardon my life,
   And 'll never for to be thy wife,
   Though sail the world 'round for to set you free,
   If you will but pardon my baby and me."

6. "No pardon, no pardon, there's no time to stand!"

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[1] K. Thomas 711-18; Bennett 4.

[2] Peacock, *Songs* 2: 397.

[3] "Alonzo the Brave and Fair Imogene," "New York Trader," "The Sea Ghost," "The Ship's Carpenter," "Jimmy and Nancy;" all in Peacock 2: 380-410.

[4] "Fair Marjorie's Ghost" (Ch 74), "Jimmy Whelan," "Lady Margaret" (Ch 78), "The Suffolk Miracle" (Ch 272) and "The Unquiet Grave" (Ch 77); all are in Peacock, *Songs* 2: 380-410.

For instantly taking a knife in his hand,
He stuck her, he stabbed her till the blood from her flowed,
And into the grave her fair body he throwed.

7. Oh he covered her over so neat and secure,
Not thinking this murder would be found he was sure,
Went on board of his ship for to sail the world 'round,
Not thinking this murder would ever be found.

8. Now we had a brave steward of courage so bold,
One night happened late to go in the ship's hold,
When a beautiful damsel to him did appear,
And she in her arms held an infant so dear.

9. Being merry with liquor for to go embrace
The transport of joy he beheld in her face
'Twas then in an instant she vanished away--
He then told our captain without more delay.

10. Our captain he summoned the ship's noble crew
Saying, "Now my brave boys I'm afraid one of you
Have murdered some damsel 'fore we came away,
Her trouble goes 'gainst us now 'ere on the sea.

11. "Well now if he's here the truth he'll deny,
When found out shall hang on our yard-arm so high,
But if he confesses his life we won't take,
But land him all on the first island we meet."

12. Oh then up speaks a sailore saying, "Deed it's not me."
And up spoke another, the same he did say,
When up jups young Billy-o saying, "'Deed it's not me!"
And this they all said through the ship's company.

13. As Billy was returning from the captain with speed,
He met his dear Polly which made his heart bleed;
She ripped him, she stripped him, she tore him in three,
Because he had murdered her baby and she.

14. "Now your trouble's all over," this ghost she did say,
"For since I have taken your murder away,
May the heavens protect you that you all may agree,
And bring you safe home to your own country."[1]

Asking Mr. Pius Power, Sn. about ghosts, their motivation and power after he had sung me "The Cruel Mother" among a few other classical ballads, his answer now strikes me as covering the figure's double role as "protector" and "avenger:"

IP: Have you heard stories of people who are dead and come back sometimes?

[1] Peacock, *Songs* 2: 405.

PP: Oh yes, yes, that kind of stuff. [pause] People *did* come back. That's correct, that's right, people *do* come back.
IP: Why do they come back?
PP: Eh, trouble. That's true, that's *true*.
IP: They have trouble?
PP: *They have trouble*.
IP: What sort of trouble is that?
PP: Something like, eh Anita [his daughter-in-law] died tomorrow or Pius [his son] died and there was someone ill-used and bad to Kate [their daughter], he'd get a privilege to come back, like someone would blame her in the wrong, something like that. Because I know that's true. That's a true story because my wife's father, her father died, you know, and she [pause] was an old Irish woman and Irish people are pretty hot-tempered, you understand? Now, people tell lies on those children, now every time that she got the news on the children, she'd be beating them, she gave them a right big beating. But she went out one night to heave out water. When she was out to heave out water, she thought it was John, but 't was not the John she thought to, her husband was named John. "My God, John," she said, "I was just about to slap the water in your face." "That's alright, old girl," he said, "but I'm not the John you thinks I am." He told her who he was but he didn't quite know either. He said, "Don't you beat these children no more?" He said, "they're telling lies on them children." "Oh, she said, if I thought that, I'd give them a fright." "No, *I'll* give them a bigger one tonight, I'll give them a bigger..." They thought that night at the house that, the crowd used to tell the story, they thought the house cracked down. She claimed that was the story. 'T is *true*, it's a *true* story.[1]

Ghost stories "fitted" in with, and sometimes "suited" religion, Anglican,

CE: All I know, we believed in ghosts. We felt they were near us. We were scared stiff, you know. 'T was an interesting age, it was, because everybody believed. We all belonged to one church, and the next world felt just as near to me as this one. . . .[2]

as well as Catholic,

> These supernatural stories, whether they tell of ghosts who return from the dead, or of devils, or even give the folk explanation for the fairies as "fallen angels," also have religious and moral overtones. For adults, on the other hand, the bases for community-wide control are found in religion and the church.[3]

The various points raised in this chapter about the complex relationship of "tradition" and "religion" concerning behaviour as well as belief further enlighten conceptions relating to death in traditional Newfoundland society. Essentially, there has appeared continuity

[1]MUNFLA 87-006/C9695.
[2]MUNFLA 87-159/C12032.
[3]Casey 290.

between the two: the impression, on the one hand, is of comparatively traditional worship maintained by the laity as much as clerical authorities, and on the other, of a definite religious orientation in popular belief. This hybridization of both streams, while maintaining their distinction, resulted in reinforcing the function and efficacy of funeral behaviour, regardless of denominations and the extent of their respective rites and beliefs. Neither has there been found any relevant denominational pattern as to the popularity of disaster songs, which possibly provided a ritual and soothing supplement or compensation for lone death--meaning exile from the community of the living as of the dead. To the traditional homage of song, religion also brought its sanction and its comforting assurance that "they are with God when no longer with us." Through answering human needs and appeasing human fears in the face of death, the afterlife and the dead, religion not only sanctioned but reinforced tradition. Among a people whose life was constantly endangered by natural--uncontrollable verging on "supernatural"--forces, such as the elements and disease, there was a strong motivation surely to look to superhuman control and the secure shore of eternal rest. Such is also native Cyril Poole's explanation for the deep imprint of religion and supernatural belief on his shore:

> To the Newfoundlander the stilling of the waters of Galilee is the most surprising and most satisfying of miracles.
>
> Why are there more ghosts per harbour and cove in Newfoundland than anywhere else in North America? Is it unnatural that a people as bound and confined by the laws of nature as they were confined on the close of navigation should envisage a place for beings subject to none of these limitations? . . . In any case we delight--even when our nerves tingle--in the sight of ghosts and spirits breaking all of the laws that so confine us and so often take on the countenance of enemies. . . . Do ghosts take upon themselves our impotence as the scapegoat took our sins in to the desert?[1]

[1] Poole 100-1.

Chapter 8

Fear and Fun: Memorates and Legends, Wake Pranks, Monologues, Comic Songs, Jokes and Anecdotes

So far in this study, there has been little question of "fear" of the dead. Ariès hardly mentions it until he comes to discuss "one's own death." Specific studies pertaining to pre-medieval times and his passing references to the issue, however, point out a quasi instinctive distrust of the dead. The earliest gravestones and various offerings put on tombs suggest homage as well as "bribe" for peace, which, like all funerary expressive behaviour, suggests man's ambivalent feeling towards death. The point receives support from one of Ariès's disciples seeing more "inhibition" than "absence" of fear underneath the "traditional" attitude. While the early Middle Ages did not hesitate to keep the dead in their midst and daily surroundings, from roughly the late Middle Ages on, fear of the dead and horror of decomposition became such as to ban the dead to a place of their own, remote and marked off from the community of the living.

Ariès's panoramic schema of attitudes towards death, once again, proves right in light of more specific studies. Gillian Bennett finds an interdependency of the concepts of "ghost" and "witch" in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and declares them dependent also on "a fascination with death and the horrors of the dead body."[1] Ariès sees a direct correlation between this fear of death and a profound love of life, inherent to traditional societies but lost since to modern existential philosophy.[2] This chapter proposes to explore this puzzling paradox. In local tradition, stories of malevolent or disquieting ghosts appear to be the clearest expression of fear, while wake pranks and monologues turn the primary concerns with salvation and "utmost respect" for the body into derision; religious authorities, saints, priests and ministers provide the subjects of jokes and anecdotes.

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[1] Bennett "Ghost" 5.
[2] Ariès, *Homme* 1: 131.

One native account is that of Sparkes:

> One of the outstanding characteristics of the people in those days was their irrepressible humour and it found much upon which to feed. In recent years, sociologists and writers have gone among them and as a result of their studies have presented us with a picture of a dour, grimfaced people living in a dark atmosphere of religious gloom, repressed by the church and oppressed by the merchants. Arrant nonsense! The outport people were deeply religious, enjoyed their church life and loved God more than they feared Him. They met reverses and endured poor voyages with more stoicism than complaint, having learnt from four centuries of experience that life is a mixture of good and bad. The dark sky was watched as much for sign of clearing as it was for impending danger. They had learned to laugh at life and at themselves, knowing full well that if there was, indeed, a time for weeping, there was more time for laughter.[1]

The writer further illustrates his point:

> . . . a young man whose father had died some months earlier was coming down the hill from the cemetery one day with a shovel on his shoulder. He was accosted by a passer-by with a question, "What have you been doing, John, digging a grave for somebody?" John replied, "No, boy, I was just up in the cemetery givin' the old skipper his second trenching." (When newly planted potatoes have pushed up their first leaves, they are earthed up with caplin. This is called trenching. Later on, partly to keep down the weeds and partly to prevent sunburn of the young tubers, a second trenching with earth only is given. The young man had been doing what is more euphemistically called "fixing up" his father's grave.)[2]

Previous encounters with ghosts in these pages suggested that there was little or no fear of them when recognized as former community members. While they manifested their presence to their former acquaintances, they hardly interfered with the course of life. Following this peaceful coexistence with the living, ghosts were promoted to a superior moral status, which made them God's instruments. As such, they effectively restored imbalances and injustices, a task which they also performed out of lasting concern for their own. Not all of these "spirits," however, had reached that state of grace, but visited the living out of personal need of purification. As compared with their "pagan," harmless and mostly neutral predecessors, the new brew of ghosts awoke justified fear.

[1] Sparkes 140.
[2] Sparkes 151.

8.1. "His spirit was what hagged me!"

Witchcraft belief has been noted to flourish in a milieu of good-evil conceptualizations, and to provide an outlet for all kinds of hostility emanating from groups characterized by close interaction and restricted movement. A psychoanalytical study of "the Old Hag" phenomenon in Newfoundland suggests that fear of witches and ghosts could partly have served to displace this hostility.[1] A first approach to witchcraft in Newfoundland society, besides, finds the "witch" concept a useful explanation for unaccountable misfortune, a function which "ghost" apparently shared.[2] Some reports concerning "the Old Hag" experience and belief in the province illustrate the interpenetration of "witch" and "ghost" or "spirit" (even of a live person), and the consequent evil connotation of the latter two.

A man reported how, when fishing on the Labrador, his friend had threatened to hag a girl for refusing his advances. In the bunk house that very night, the fellow took off his clothes, kneeled down by his bed, said the Lord's prayer backwards, jumped under the covers with a knife, stuck it in the sideboard three or four times, and bawled out: "Hag, good Hag!" Although the girl was sleeping in her own quarters, she could see him standing over her with the knife, was stopped still with fright, and only brought back to her sense by her father calling her name backwards. The informant, the man's friend who was sharing the man's bunkhouse, and witnessed his procedure, explained:

> His spirit, his spirit was what hagged her. She said after, if she'd known he was really going to hag her she'd have a bottle ready, and finished him off before he'd have hagged her. [What do you mean?] See--if you swing at a spirit with a bottle, the spirit who is haggin' you will die. So he never hagged her no more because he knowed she had a bottle ready.[3]

The following case shows the witch-hag borrowing the traits of the victim's innocent wife, (in accordance with the Protestant doctrine), but no less causing the man's dismay:

> Uncle Ron told me about a strange visitation he had one night from his wife, who was supposed to be out to neighbours. He claims he awoke from his sleep and saw aunt Annie standing over him laughing. He was unable to stop her laughing or even move because of a strong pressure

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[1] Firestone, "The 'Old Hag' Sleep Paralysis in Newfoundland," *Journal of Psychoanalytic Anthropology* 8.1 (1985) : 58.
[2] Martin 36-37.
[3] Hufford, *Terror* 6.

> which pushed against his chest. Aunt Annie remembered the episode for when she came home that night Uncle Ron was in a terrible panic.[1]

Other reports still describe the witch-hag in a way which reveals the interpenetration of the concepts of witch and ghost, not only as "allied beliefs" but "intrinsic parts of a single belief system:"[2]

> I came up late from the stage [storeroom for fishing gear]. We had beach stones up the path then and I went in and lay down like this [reclining in a chair] and before long I heard steps comin' up the path on those rocks. The outside door opened, then the inner door and I wondered who was comin' in, bein' so late. Then I saw a woman all in white come across the kitchen. She came around the stove and came over to me. Then she put her arms out and pushed my shoulders down. And that's all I know about it. She 'agged me.[3]

8.2. "Whether it was a spirit or something ..."

While the "ghost-witch-devil" composite was disquieting conceptually, the traditional home wake offered specific remedies to the fear caused by the actual presence of the corpse. A wake provided a context for storytelling, which, in normal circumstances, would be restricted to the long winter evenings, when there was no fish to catch or clean, and men gathered to "talk" in the merchant's shop, someone's fish store or kitchen. The most explicit account of the dynamics and performance context of storytelling at wakes is reported from Conche. The "talk" originated from how the deceased looked to praise of his/her life to, as in other talk sessions, reach its climax with "stories of the supernatural" and "ghosts."[4] Unexplained phenomena, among them omens and lights, corresponded to a distinct cognitive category; they received recognition and belief above "devils" and "fairies," which merely provided the subjects of the women's stories told to children with some moralistic purpose. Ghosts, phantom lights and ships, besides, were only raised in a restricted context and were mostly told as personal experience,[5] which suggests that "problem-solving discussion of belief" was an inherent function of storytelling at wakes."[6]

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[1] MUNFLA ms 72-025, p. 23-4.

[2] Bennett, "Ghost" 3.

[3] Robert C. Ness, "The Old Hag Phenomenon as Sleep Paralysis: A Biocultural Interpretation," *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 2 (1978): 18.

[4] The inverted commas are Casey's.

[5] Small, "Patterns in Personal Experience Narratives: Storytelling at Cod Harbour: A Newfoundland Fishing Community," MA thesis, MUN, 1972, 134.

[6] Bennett, "Women's" 86; her suggestion relies on the generally accepted relevance of memorates as primary sources for belief, Lauri Honko, "Memorates and the Study of Folk Belief," *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 1.1 (1964): 13.

The following example, for instance, contains an implicit question as to the possible relationship of the narrator's mysterious experience to the ghost known to haunt the place:

> This fall there was a big storm around the later part of September and the Labrador fleet was coming down from Labrador and there was three or four boats went up in Trinity Bay and some more went up in Conception Bay. There was one come up went ashore in Big Brook (along the Old Perlican beach) and there was another one the next morning after the storm was quietened down a little bit, not much. She in here with no spars into her nor no canvas. She drove in for the wind and she anchored up here in the harbour. We got the news that she lost her canvas down off Bonavista and of course everybody in them days went out looking for the racks [wrecks?] and everything else. Of course I got up and took me gun and put me cap on (mussle loader then) and I put her on me back. This is true as the Gospel. The moonlight is so light as 'tis now, perfect night, the stars was shining bright. I don't know what time 't was cause I didn't want anyone knowing I was gone cause they'd be uneasy about me, and I wanted to be first down there, so I went off. I went down and 't was always said the story now from a way back because people met 'em in the daylight comin' out from berry pickin' at sunset and all the rest. But that wouldn't in my mind, never come in me mind and when I got into Cook's Cove I walked over by the pond that's there and when I got to the little pond there was about fifty birds there and they stood about five feet tall. Perhaps there might have been 200 for what I knew and they stood up so light as that (pointing out the height with his hands). I could see 'em so plain as I can see you there now and they had their heads up like the geese, big long necks and so white as the driven snow. Well, I took the gun off me back, and when I put her to my face there was no more there than there is now. You couldn't see a living thing at all. (The disappearance of the geese did not surprise him at first and it wasn't until he was on his way home again that he realized what had happened, "whether it was a spirit or something," he said of it.)[1]

The following personal experience happened to the collector's father on deciding to visit an island where his relatives had stayed long before, and this was after sunset. The implicit discourse manifests careful rationalization of the event similar to that observed previously in connection with ghost lights and ships:

> I had often heard the term "the Grady Ghost" and like all such placed no store by it. After sunset on a Saturday, I went by the narrow path to Watering Cove just in time to help Byrd tie up and land his fish. . . . Nobody at all would ever dream of crossing that island after dark and least of all alone because of the little cemetery which was just on the rise about half way across and right on the path. This little cemetery was fenced by a low paling fence painted and well cared for. The fact of a cemetery being there did not even give me a thought, you see. There is still a cemetery behind the house where I was born and as a tot I played and slept on the gravestones and knew from asking my grandmother about them, who was

[1] MUNFLA ms 72-025, p. 20.

> buried beneath each one, and felt as if all who slept beneath a tombstone were friends of mine. . . . [Byrd gave him 2 fish, gutted them and said to him, "now, don't tarry on the way."] As I passed the little cemetery I felt a sharp blow on the back of my right hand which was farther from the cemetery. My hand was numbed as if struck and I no longer had a fish in the hand. It did not fall on the ground, there was no sound nor sign of anything and my beautiful white fish was nowhere to be seen. The other one was alright. I went on to the house a little faster. Others said, "you must have dropped it, so forget it." I got a flashlight and went back to the spot, two of the others with me. There was no sign of anything, any one, nor no sign of the fish having fallen on the ground. My hand was still a little numb as if someone had cut me sharply with a cane. We returned to the house empty-handed and on the way would stop every once in a while to listen for a possible sound of something moving around. When we would stop I would put the flashlight off and during one of these blackouts I happened to lift the hand that was struck and for the first time in the entire escapade got a start. There was a spot on my hand which seemed to glow in the dark. When I showed my father and the others there was a moment of looking at each other and all three seemed to say at once, "the Grady ghost"! For myself, I don't know. It's 38 years ago this summer since I lost my fish, but I can still show the white spot on my right hand and it glows in the dark.[1]

The percipient makes clear that he is nothing like gullible, impressed or even afraid, not even after the "attack." He indicates that he is vaguely aware of tradition but uninfluenced by it. His friends' finding no trace of the fish on the spot and the physical mark left on his hand from which it was stolen discard the possibility of hallucination. On the contrary, they support the delicate point of "the glow" on the hurt hand in the dark. Finally, when all sources of possible error have been eliminated, the hypothesis of "the Grady ghost" as explanation for the otherwise unaccountable disappearance of the fish is not even inferred by himself. Again, in perfect compliance with proper scientific investigation as well as "experience-centered approach to belief," whatever data under consideration does relate to "fact" (the experience) in this narrative is "rational analysis," but neither ignores nor disclaims "tradition" (the interpretation). Finally, these suspicious or malevolent dead arising out of fear and nourishing it are not without benefit to the living; as Butler suggests, they serve as evidence for the impossibility of controlling the nature and direction of the encounter with the dead, hence warn that contact with them is to be avoided.[2]

Buried treasure stories are popular throughout the Atlantic Region and speak for a felt interest in ghosts and other unexplained occurrences; Coldwell observes that the interest in

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[1] MUNFLA ms 66-009a, p. 11-5.
[2] G. Butler, "Supernatural" 99.

the "treasure guardian," i.e. the ghost of the person who was killed on the site of the treasure for the purpose of watching over it, is often greater than the interest in the treasure:[1]

> There was a place in Belleoram where it was reported that a Frenchman had buried some treasure, kind of one of the pirate stories, and that in leaving this particular scene they chopped off the head of one of their men so that his spirit would be there as a guard over that spot, and often on a very dark night they used to say that you'd see this apparition, this thing blacker than the blackness of the night against this particular spot which looked like a man and people. I don't know what it was but treated that with a great deal of respect.[2]

8.3. "My God, he's alive for sure!"[3]

The evolution of the ghost concept sketched above and spanning over ten centuries could hide the fact that the different prototypes may have existed simultaneously. Also in Newfoundland, ghosts not only come in all shapes and places, but enter different narrative frames and contexts, filling distinct if parallel functions. In Conche, for instance, those community members known as "the people for the ghosts" for having had personal experiences of them never told them as "ghost stories" or scaring jokes. They were discreet believers in what they saw or heard, but not the "ghost storytellers," who, their behaviour showed, held no such belief: "A native distinction applied between personal experiences of ghosts and "ghost stories" told for entertainment or any other conscious purpose, such as that of reinforcing standard religious, moral and social sanctions."[4]

Community spirit, child control, social, moral and religious sanctions have all come up as functions for ghosts, but what of entertainment in relation to death? Limiting his investigation to official sources, Ariès makes no mention of death humour and entertaining ghosts. The following account of them as an antidote for fear is my entire responsibility, guided by the psychological observation that laughter and fear revolve around the same serious concerns, a fact borne out by modern horror legends. If fear calls for fun, fun does not necessarily call for lack of fear:

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[1] Coldwell 158.

[2] MUNFLA ms 83-379, p. 32.

[3] As uttered by a frightened wake visitor and victim of a prank on finding the corpse "smoking" a lit pipe stuck on his entering the parlour; MUNFLA ms 82-376.

[4] Casey 53; Tom Dawe, "The Puritan Element of the Newfoundland Ghost Story," *Newfoundland Quarterly* 68: 3 (1970): 21.

> But now in Newfoundland we used to devour ghost stories when we were young going to school through the "Our Boys" magazine. The Irish Christian Brothers put it out in Ireland and they used to send over the copies over here and there was one particular article that we always looked forward to, "Katie O'Hara [?]," she was called, and every story that she told was a ghost story, banshees, things like that. We used to love them.[1]

"Ghost stories" told as entertainment were never far from belief, or at any rate, reflection. A detailed study of the repertoire and performance of a Newfoundland storyteller reveals that "whether or not anyone believed any or all of the stories, all were interested in hearing them and in watching Richard tell them."[2] The same "Richard" particularly enjoyed telling ghost stories to people who expressed doubt about them, and took this as a challenge to illustrate that there is more evidence to support the existence of the supernatural than there is against it.[3] His performance triggered a polyphonic process of legend-formation,[4] no less "problem-solving" in function than personal experience narratives:

> The reaction of the adults varied from person to person and story to story. At times, a person might comment that these stories or a particular story was foolishness and try to offer what they felt was a logical explanation. At one time, some degree of belief would be expressed and several adults reiterated Richard's stories with versions of similar occurrences that they had heard somewhere else. Whatever the degree of belief, Richard maintained the interest of everyone present right up until one o'clock in the morning. When doubts about a story were expressed, Richard was quick to counter with another story or further information to strengthen his case.[5]

The function of storytelling at wakes, Casey observed, was twofold: "passing the time," especially when "staying up," and transposing individual fear of death and the supernatural through a public or group fear. This communal negotiation of fear could explain the "belief" that anyone leaving the wake alone would be followed by the corpse, and also the various pranks with which the nightwatchers scared each other:

> If a people nodded off to sleep someone would "bang a boot off a wall" and the unfortunate would nearly die of fright. People would often do things to frighten the few women left in the parlour watching the corpse and the candles.[6]

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[1] MUNFLA 87-159/C1203O.
[2] William Clouston Butt, "Richard Wells: A Newfoundland Storyteller and Aspects of his Storytelling," MA thesis, MUN (St. John's: 1987) 110.
[3] Butt 124.
[4] Degh and Andrew Vazsonyi, "Legend and Belief," *Folklore Genres*, ed. Dan Ben-Amos, 1976.
[5] Butt 110.
[6] MUNFLA ms 71-42, p. 44.

Of the many and various liberties taken with the corpse, including those implying close "body contact," such as in waltzing with it or taking it on a jigging trip, none apparently entailed single company with it:[1]

> . . . there's a feller over there in Western Cove of Bar Haven, and now this feller died over in Southern Harbour and they brought him over, see, to bury him over there in Bruley and he was a wonderful fellow for getting, hauling bait, getting the caplin, herring and everything like that and they had him in the boat coming over, see, the old corpse, and every now and then, they'd shove him out [laugh], they slided him overboard, you know. And, they smack the line on the water, boy Jesus, they'd say he got one again [laughter]. He never missed and they'd rock the old corpse up on the dory again, you know [laugh], and then they'd row on so far and they'd soush him overboard. Yes, boy, look, he smacked one, yes, he got him again, look [laugh]. That's what they'd do, something a day like today, ya know, like the 18th May, you know, and that what they done all the time, now till they got one.[2]

In confirmation of Casey's proposition, the following case suggests that if "communal fear" could easily be transposed into "communal fun," staying alone with the corpse, even when this was coffined, hardly encouraged pranking:

> Boy, there's a lot, there's a lot of fellers drowned up there, up there around the Bay one time and shipwrecks, you know. And, one feller said, he was out on the road just like any of us here talking now out on the road, one feller said to the other, "who got nerve enough to go in there now and drive a nail in one of their coffins?" See, and one fellow now was brave, one of the fellers was brave boy among the bunch. He said, "I'll go in," he said, "and drive a nail in the coffin." Now he was wearing one of them raglans, raglan coat. So he went in the dark and found a nail and a hammer, drove the nail in the coffin, and when he drove the nail in, he nailed on his raglan, you know [laugh]. And, when he gets, comes up to go, he brought up, [laughter] he was gone so long they went in to get him and he, when the coat brought up, he fainted [laughter] and here he is, they went in anyway and he was brought up on the floor, the coat nailed on the coffin [laugh].[3]

An interesting and likely major clue to this strong ghost tradition in the light of comparative cultural data is their direct relation to the proper achievement of grief work:

> Fear of ghosts seems to promote the breaking of ties with the deceased. . . . Thus one possibility for explaining the high incidence of ghost fear is that it

[1] MUNFLA ms 73-13; MUNFLA ms 71-42.

[2] MUNFLA 70-29/C735.

[3] MUNFLA 70-29/C735, p. 23. This story, like the other well-known one locally of the corpse wrapped in sail, might be just an anecdote, as the annotation suggests: AT 1676B Clothing Caught in Graveyard, or Baughman N384.2 (a).

> is useful in motivating people to break ties with the deceased and to resume a normal adult life.[1]

This native account on the significance of the funeral ritual in curtailing the dead's return and havoc supports the scholarly view:

> It was probably because all the people were fervent believers in ghosts and thought that if the customs were not followed to a T, surely something dreadful would happen, if not to them, then surely to a member of their family.[2]

Local death rites indeed manifest a particular care for the mourners and their acknowlegement of separation from their dear one. This emphasis on separation comes out the more clearly in contradicting Van Gennep's general statement that such rites are "few in number and very simple" as compared with the "duration and complexity" of transition rites and the "most extensively elaborated" rites of integration of the deceased into the world of the dead.[3] In Newfoundland, a widespread custom was to "touch" the dead person: ". . . if a bereaved relative touched the dead person, he or she would forget the person more quickly, and so his grief would not linger so long as to be harmful."[4] The practice was encouraged by divination: it was believed that if the forehead of the deceased was soft on the coffining someone close to him/her would die within twelve months.[5] Not only did this "touching of the corpse" set the whole psychological mechanism ready for the next death, it was the most decisive rite of separation:

> It is common in Newfoundland wake tradition that those who come to view the corpse touch or kiss the body. This is said to be performed so that the living will never again "see the deceased" or be haunted by dreams about him. This is performed in the wake room before the funeral. The significance of such a rite is clear: the corpse itself has been physically moved from the profane to the sacred space. Now his spirit--the sacred being into which the deceased has been transformed by death--must be finally and fully relegated to the sacred domain. Future communion with the dead is to be at the volition of the living. Contact with the dead is controlled through the performance of this rite.[6]

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[1] Paul C. Rosenblatt, R. Patricia Walsh, and Douglas A. Jackson, *Grief and Mourning in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (n.p.: Human Relations Area Files, 1976) 61.
[2] MUNFLA ms 73-13, p. 5.
[3] Van Gennep, *Rites* 146.
[4] MUNFLA FSC 67-15/82.
[5] MUNFLA FSC 66-4/58.
[6] G. Butler, "Sacred" 31.

The following native account, which was given to me in the earliest stage of this research project bears out the significance of this gesture as a heartfelt farewell, besides making "vanish the vision of him lying there from your mind," i.e. preserve the living from dreams and haunts:[1]

> PP: Persons here they can't look at a dead person. If they do, they'll see that person before their eyes for another six months. It's their nerves but the way to get rid of that is what they call "taking leave of that person," just touch them, you just trace out with your fingers and its works. If they do that, they won't have any visions of that person, wipe it away from their memory. My father could never go into a wake, and if he had to see the dead person:"well, now, I'll be looking at that person for another six months." It was the last farewell sort of thing.[2]

Another custom was the obligation to give away the deceased's clothes to non-relatives, whereby affective separation was signified, without taking anything from the traditional interaction between the living and the dead:[3]

> People in the olden days had a custom of giving clothes of the deceased to someone who was to wear these clothes for three days in public and each time say a prayer for the repose of the soul of the person who had own these clothes. In one case, a man was given a good suit but a poor pair of shoes to wear. He went back to the widow and told her he had seen her husband who had been complaining of his poor feet. So she sent to St. John's for a good pair of shoes to give to this man to wear for her husband.[4]

Buried on top of the coffin would be the rope handles, wreaths and white ribbons, and sometimes other accessories in clear suggestion of earthly separation:

> If the deceased belonged to the "Society of United Fishermen" his apron and collar were put on him in the casket. The hymn of the Society was sung and, as men stood around the grave, a gaff, the symbol of the brotherhood, was passed from member to member until it got to a chosen man at the head of the grave. He usually was of high office and he had to break the gaff over his knee and throw it into the grave with the casket. . . . If the deceased was a woman-member of the Association of Church of England women, there was some similar ritual and hymn. Each woman of

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[1] MUNFLA ms 80-127, p. 87; MUNFLA ms 72-127, p. 5; Elizabeth Mullaley, "Deaths, Wakes and Burials at Big and Little Paradise, Placentia Bay" uncatalogued paper from Dr. Nemec's personal archive, MUN.

[2] MUNFLA 87-006/C9695.

[3] MUNFLA FSC 65-1/52.

[4] MUNFLA ms 79-328, p.14; the same belief held that if his clothes were not given away or if the person to whom they were given did not wear them, the deceased would be naked in the otherworld.

> the Association would throw a white satin bow in to the grave. These bows signified the sisterhood tied together, only broken by death.[1]

Even more suggestively, the staff of the Orange Lodge was broken in three pieces, and all members shouted "my brother has departed" three times.[2]

Finally, breaking with the harmless coexistence with the dead, graveyard taboos marked them as a distinct and potentially dangerous category:

> There were many customs concerning the cemetery which are still carried on today. You would always bless yourself (make the sign of the cross) upon passing the cemetery and say a prayer for the repose of the souls. You would never step upon a grave. You would not take anything from the graveyard such as wood. You wouldn't eat any berries that grew there, and you would never, if you could possibly avoid it, pass the graveyard at night. The following story was told to me by my informant to illustrate this point. Two men who were returning from Labrador landed in Conception Harbour and had to walk home past the graveyard. It was night and one man, Paddy, was very nervous. As he passed the graveyard he tried to reassure himself by saying that "a lot of good men lay there," to which his companion replied: "yes, and a lot of bad men too."[3]

8.4. "Oh, goodly Father Peter, I come to you at last..."[4]

Religion is one of the targets of monologues' satirical tongue. Interestingly, religious scrupulousness and concern with personal salvation, which once occupied such a place in daily life, are "seriously" put in question in two humorous recitations. "St. Peter at the Gate" deals with a couple presenting themselves for admission at the gate of Paradise after thirty years of married life.[5] Long, thin and bearded, the pious woman is confident in her reward for a life of unfailing devotion to the church; all her worry now goes to her husband, whose smoking and cursing, she confesses to St. Peter on his behalf, has had little thought of hymns or prayers. As a typical "shore skipper,"[6] who has her husband's

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[1] MUNFLA FSC 71-47.

[2] Ronald 23-4.

[3] MUNFLA ms 79-328, p. 14.

[4] From the monologue known as "The Lobster Salad," K. Goldstein, *Recitations and Monologues*, Folk Literature Series no. 5 (St. John's: Breakwater, [1983]) 15.

[5] For a reference to this monologue and the following one mentioned here, see Pauline Greenhill, "The Family Album: A Newfoundland Woman's Recitation," *Canadian Folklore canadien* 6.1-2 (1984): 43.

[6] This term in its local meaning is the negative counterpart of the "grass widow," which in Newfoundland defines women's expected role as devoted and submissive wives, in Davis, "Shore" 219.

life and business in hand, she cajoles the saint by all sorts of arguments into letting the poor devil in. Her long plea over, St. Peter indeed finds merit in *his* endurance:

> "Thirty years with that woman there,
> no wonder the man hasn't got any hair.
> Smoking is bad, cursing is no good,
> well, he smoked and he cursed,
> I should say he would.
> Thirty years with a tongue so sharp.
> Say, Angel Gabriel, give him a harp.
> Give him a harp with golden strings
> and pass in, good sir, where the angels sing.
> See that on the finest foods he feeds,
> for he's had about all the hell that he needs,
> Doesn't seem the right thing to do to roast him on earth
> and hereafter too."
> So they gave him a harp with golden strings
> and a glitter sword and a pair of wings.
> And he said as he entered the light of day,
> "well, this beats cucumbers anyway."
> And so the scripture has come to pass that the last shall be first
> and the first shall be last.[1]

Such a tormentor has a counterpart in song:

Maurice Kelly[2]

1. Maurice Kelly one night when about three parts loaded,
Was making for home after twelve in the night.
At the foot of the lane where for rest he remained
A figure appeared there clothed all in white.
"Good night, sir," said Kelly, but got back no answer;
The figure remained just as still as a post.
"You look like a boxer that's rusted for fighting."
But never a word got he from the ghost.

2 He hauled off his coat and he turned up his shirt-sleeves:
"Come on, now me bruiser," he spoke up quite clear,
When the figure in white drove his head through a shutter
With a left-handed smack to the butt of the ear.
"One for you!" cried out Kelly, half stunned with the tumble.
He then made a butt and his head struck a post,
His lower and top teeth tumbled out on the street
With the wonderful dart that he got from the ghost.

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[1] Wareham, "The Monologue in Newfoundland," *The Blasty Bough*, ed. Clyde Rose (St. John's: Breakwater, 1976) 208-11.

[2] Greenleaf, *Ballads* 160-1; see also Leach, *Folk* 298-99.

3. By this time old Kelly was feeling half sober;
The ghost left and right his two can-hooks did fly.
He fell down on his knees, with his face like soft cheese:
"Will ye call off the fight while I look for me eyes?"
When the figure moved off and the fight it was ended,
Old Kelly, half stunned, put his hat on his head.
He crawled to the door and did humbly implore
For his wife to assist him upstairs to his bed.

4. He then told his wife how he fought with a stranger,
So strong as a bull, yet a girl almost,
She then told her husband his wonderful danger:
She says, "Maurice, me man, you've been fighting a ghost!"
'Twas Kelly's wife dressed up in white to keep him from drinking;
She gave him a beating and left him for dead,
And he got such a fright he won't stir after night,
But right after supper goes--(*spoken*) Where do you guess?
straight off to bed.

The second monologue revolves around the popular joke motif of "heaven entered by trick," and still shows St. Peter never more compassionate than for "martyred" husbands. In "The Lobster Salad," a life-loving Newfoundlander relates his dream the night following a copious meal of lobster, beer and wine. He is standing by heaven's gate, but turned out on account of his recent gluttony. Other unhappy candidates include a Jew, trying to coax St. Peter into letting him go back to earth to fetch a coat, an old maid, and "a son of old Er-i-ann's Isle" arriving with a gracious smile but no pass. The clever Irishman has time to throw his hat inside the gate, and only let in to get it back, locks the saint out, and trades the key for a promise to set old Ireland free.[1]

Priests and ministers, revered in life, receive proportionate treatment in jokes:

> There was a Irishman one time and he had a horse for sale. So, anyway, the priest come along. He said, "anybody buy a horse?" "Yes," he said, "Pat, I do, I wants a horse." "Alright!" "Is he any good?" "Oh, able to haul the devil," he said, "the horse is." Right away, he sold the horse, not too long after, he met that fellow, that priest coming up the hill, the minister 'long with 'n. The horse couldn't haul the two of 'em. Up to, one of 'em had to get off. Anyway, met Pat, he said, "Pat, I thought you told me that this horse could haul the devil." "Yes, Father," I said, "I told you he could haul the devil. I didn't tell you to haul two."[2]

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[1] K. Goldstein, *Recitations* 15; on the same motif, see also MUNFLA ms 68-16, p. 8 (AT 1539) and MUNFLA Q 68-446, p. 6-7 (AT 330*); both references are extracted from Dr. Herbert Halpert and Dr. Widdowson's fieldnotes and annotations with kind permission.

[2] MUNFLA 72-51/C1175.

While the means of salvation are freely laughed at when depending on St. Peter and his followers, they remain perfectly respectful, if no less fantastic, towards the Blessed Virgin. Whether in fact or fiction, her portrayal remains untouched. A report from Branch speaks for her operational intercession in spiritual rescue operations:

> If the sacrament of the last rite was not received before death, the soul would have to spend usually 3 months in Purgatory, and after enough Hail Mary's had been said on his/her behalf, the Blessed Virgin would rescue him on one of the Saturdays that she released souls from there.[1]

A fellow, hard up for money, had sold himself to the devil for a few dollars, which he had been wise to give to priests and nuns to build churches and convents besides spending it on drink. On the given day, his charity saves him from his fatal deal:

> . . . "he said he's comin' today, and there's nothing I can do about it--the priest couldn't save him, nobody couldn't save 'n--cause I was after sellin' meself." . . . No good for 'n to say his prayers, that was no good to 'n, 'cause he was goin' to hell anyway. Well he said, when we were in the convent there was a little old woman come along. He up and told up and she took out a little bit of candle out of her pocket about a half an inch long, she lit it, and she said to 'n, will you wait for that to burn out before you takes 'n. Yes he said, that wouldn't take long, he said, he wait that long. He's waitin' yet. This was the Blessed Virgin.[2]

8.5. "Dead men don't want no rum"[3]

Earlier consideration of the local Märchen repertoire led to the definition of a "core group" of five tale-types focusing on the hero's relation to the dead.[4] Their plots evoke a similar environment to that of the other six types previously examined: danger looms large in the hero's "quest" of work for a living, but here also "those fellers in the stories, because they was all smart men, they always come out on top."[5] Their employment by "liviers," work on a "schooner" and enjoyment of "a time" given in celebration of a wedding, unfailingly reveal a Newfoundland locale. Thus, it is in the mundane setting of outport life, whether of work or leisure, that these tales articulate their own answer to the pervasive concern with the risks of interaction with the dead.

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[1] MUNFLA ms 78-304, p. 6.
[2] MUNFLA ms 72-51, p. 11 (AT 1187).
[3] MUNFLA 64-13/C59-60 (AT 1350).
[4] The reader is referred to section 7.9 for the analysis of the first group as for all annotations to the types examined above.
[5] MUNFLA 71-50/C968-9, p. 11 (AT 1536A)/(AT 326*).

In contrast with what the first tale group suggests concerning "giants" and any other adversaries, the types of the core group disclaim any reason for fear of the dead. Rather, they explicitly and sometimes very ironically suggest that there is more to be feared from the living! In three of these tales, ghosts act as "supernatural helpers" while in the other two "jokes and anecdotes" one of the "dead protagonists" turns out to be a living person only simulating death for his own end, and the other shows no intention to harm despite her bad disposition in life. Consequently, what characterizes the hero in his confrontration with the dead, whether real or not, is his lucid ignorance of fear.

For instance, when looking for a house to live with his brothers, he will not miss the offer of "a beautiful great building" when its owner, a young gentleman, informs him about its condition: "Well now, Jack, he said, you can have that buildin' if you thinks you can live in en, no man can live in that fer spirits, he said, and everything you could mention is in there, he said."[1] Once he and his "unheroic" brothers are comfortably settled, and playing cards, the latter search the cellar for rum and are soon faced with an "ugly ole feller," the mere sight of whom discourages their attempt. Later at night, the three brothers witness two "big fellers" chasing "a little feller," but only Jack, unafraid, rushes to the help of the underdog, and rids him of his pursuers. Not answering who he is, the little feller leaves through the window like a ball of fire, and Jack, well-versed in the local tradition, concludes: "he's no man, he won't stop to speak to anybody."[2] Whatever, when the owner comes to check on his guests' safety, Jack declares he and his brothers have been disturbed by nothing but "rats knockin'." The next night, when Jack goes down to get some rum, he receives the little feller's confidence:

> . . . Well now Jack, he said, tis you I was fightin' fer, if you'd been like Bill, he said, you'd a been killed, he said, I'm dat young gentleman's father, he said, and them two men killed me, he said, and tell en where my bones is at and get en to bury them decent. . . .[3]

Along with this message which Jack is to transmit to the spirit's son, who never visited the house for its spooky repute, the spirit wants to see Jack married to his granddaughter, and grants him a deal of his silver.

Two other types also deal with burial. The hero, the only survivor of a wreck, proves his charity towards both the living and the dead in rescuing a woman from pirates and

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[1] MUNFLA 64-17/C133, p. 24 (AT 326A*).
[2] MUNFLA 64-17/C133, p. 24 (AT 326A*).
[3] MUNFLA 64-17/C133, p. 27 (AT 326A*).

burying her husband and son, a deed for which the grateful spirits pay back his kindness: ". . . Now that was the spirits of the two men that he just buried the night before, now they was going to help Jack out now. . . ."[1] The morality of Märchen is that of the egalitarian and self-supporting community. Those failing to follow its values, such as of sharing, lose their accumulated possessions, a message which runs in "jocular" as well as "ordinary tales." The rich are shown to make their fortune on the poor, who, witty as much as the others are stupid, get even with them by exploiting their credulousness:

> . . . Well now they had to bury the old woman now. Well now them times, see, they buried them, if it was a rich man they had to put so much money in along with them, see, for to bury them 'cause they claimed if they didn't, well they, they'd get up again. . . .[2]

In local Märchen as in legends of the good supernatural, it is only the innocent dead who come back; the others, even when murdered by the hand of those whom they tormented, are dead and gone. Jack, starved by his employer and the latter's mother, kills her in his absence and successively offers to "bury her richer" after digging her up--with the money-- and putting up her corpse in places to frighten her son. The money thus acquired serves to restore a just balance: ". . . I've made a poor man of your brother and I'm going to make a rich man of you. I'm going to leave you, you can have all the money. I'm going to leave you and get some money for meself. . . ."[3]

Jack is on the road again, and the tale takes a new start borrowing much of its latter half from the previous type. He comes to a haunted and therefore deserted place, sees an "old man" coming through a door while eating his supper, and answers his question after Jack has volunteered help:

> . . . I'll talk to you now, he said, that's the three men killed me. He said, that's the three men killed me, now they come in here tonight, they would have killed you, they would have killed you, that's what they come for. And now, he said, Jack, I got a big chest of money in this house and there's nobody knows where it's to. He said, there's nobody can find it, he said, 'cause you're the only man could stop here. He said everyone have been here. Well, they've all leaved. . . .[4]

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[1] MUNFLA 65-12/C214, p. 3 (AT 506B).
[2] MUNFLA 71-50/C968-9 (AT 1536A)/(AT 326*).
[3] MUNFLA 71-50/C968-9 (AT 1536A)/(AT 326*).
[4] MUNFLA 71-50/C968-9 (AT 1536A)/(AT 326*).

The last tale of the core group is listed in the Aarne-Thompson Index under "jokes and anecdotes" dealing with "married couples." This comic and suspenseful tale exploits the motif of the deceitful wife deserting her husband's wake to join her lover in the clearest evidence in the core group that living wives are far worse than anyone dead! The narrative is told as a personal experience, and the detailed circumstances provide a parody of traditional social support in death. While working in a company on the West Coast, the teller lets himself be persuaded by "a guy belonging to out the bay" to join him on an invitation to a wedding on an island. Hardly recovered from his abundant drink at the party, he wakes up late the next morning to find his friend gone back without him, and resolves to catch up with him to get the boat back together. On his way, though, he stops at a house to ask for a drink of water. A woman shows him in, and asks him to stay for the night and wake her just deceased husband while she goes to get "her first cousin" for help: ". . . I tought it pretty hard to leave her. Her husband dead and no one around, not in three miles of anybody. I said, I suppose I said I'll stay."[1]

The knot of the narrative develops from the naive visitor left in the lone company of a "corpse," to ridicule confusion between life and death, reality and imagination, and reaffirm their however neat borders:

> . . . when she went through the door I tought I heard the key turn in the knob, lock. I said, now das imagination. She never locked me in. So I sat down and where I sat was by the stove and I could see the old guy in the bed from where I sat through the room door. I stayed dere about half hour and I began to get uneasy --dead man and meself and the wife gone. So I got up and went to the door and sure enough it was locked--I was locked in--she was gone. No I said to meself I might be blamed for murder. So I sat down again and I watched the old guy in the bed and dere was a candle lightin' on a chair by his side and the candle was gettin' pretty well burned down now. Said to meself well das goin' topple over in a minute when it gets down too much. I was watchin' the candle and bime by I looked at the old guy and I tought I see him movin'. I began to get the creeps. I tought I see the arms movin' under the sheet. I said das imagination. So I studied bime by sure enough he was movin'. Bime by he turned his head and he looked out. He said, who are you? I never said nothing. I didn't like to speak to a dead man. Bime by he said who are you? I never answered him. I looked at the window--I was gettin' ready to bounce through the window. . . .[2]

The tale progresses in a sharper mockery of the waker's irrational evaluation of the events unfolding under his eyes for fear, especially of his assumption that a corpse

[1]MUNFLA 64-13/C59, p. 6 (AT 1350).
[2]MUNFLA 64-13/C59, p. 7 (AT 1350).

somehow still behaves like a living person. Getting no answer, the "waking corpse" tells him that he knows who he is as well as the circumstances of his presence, and invites him to the bottle of rum in the kitchen cupboard. The other accepts the offer, thinking a drink will help him in the case, yet hesitates to pass the bottle to a "dead man" asking for a sip!

> . . . He said, look here, he said, brother, he said, you're a stranger, he said, you can take a dirty drink he said when you like. He said bring it in to me, he said, I'd drink, I takes a scatter drink too, said now what about it? Oh, I said no, I said, dead men don't want no rum. He said I can handle that. I'm not dead. I said dead men don't want no rum. He, see look here he said come on bring in dat bottle I get a welt out of it too. Anyhow I give it a second tought. I took the bottle by the neck and I went over so handy to him and he reached for it--I was afraid to go too handy to him you know--wasn't handy enough. He said come on, he said, pass it handier. He reached out and I reached. Bime by he got ahold to it, grabbed it out of my hand and he had a dirty drink out of it. Now he said you put it on your head and have another one. Anyhow I stuck it on me head and I had another one. So I brought it back and I put it in da cupboard. I said to myself well he drank it alright but he's a dead man. Dere's no gettin' out of dat he was dead. Still and all he took the drink.[1]

For all this, the waker is still not convinced that "the dead man" is alive, not even when the husband exposes his purpose in simulating death, and asks to have the heelstick put under his sheet to greet his wife and her lover on their return. Apart from the comic effect, the other's stupid confusion gives occasion to further explication of the clear differences opposing life and death:

> . . . Bime by he said to me he said you're a stranger. Look here, I said uncle, I don't know who you are, I said, I don't want to be talkin' to a dead man. I said anything you've got to tell, I said, tell to somebody else. . . . I'm not a dead man. He said she's not goin' fer no cousin--she's goin' fer her boyfriend, he said and I'm not a dead man and, he said, dis is the only way, he said, I got to catch her. . . . I said you can have the heelstick, but I said, I'm holdin' on to dis. Now I said you make battle with the stick I said and you gets that iron in the skull. I said if you're not dead you will be. No, he said, I'm not goin' have nothing to do with you he said. I wants this heelstick he said fer her boyfriend and he said you can stop he said and wait till de comes and he said when de comes he said there's goin' be a bit of a time here. He said I'm not goin' be dead any longer. He said, I'm only acting to be dead. . . . Well you never see a man's face like death before--well he was really dead as far as colour and everything else was.[2]

The trick works as expected; the tale, however, continues! Released from his wake watch, the abused visitor rushes to the harbour, but there recognizes a boat bottom up and

[1] MUNFLA 64-13/C59, p. 9-10 (AT 1350).
[2] MUNFLA 64-13/C59, p. 11-2 (AT 1350).

his friend drowned when still drunk from the wedding. As helpful as before, he comforts the widow and encourages her to bury the past--in accordance with traditional wisdom:

> Anyhow I said to her why worry--I said, he's only a man anyhow. His time must be come. I said he's gone. I said you're only a young woman and I'm only a young man. I said what about you and I matin' it up and gettin' married. She said it's rather late fer ya she said to say them kind of words. I said why? Well she said when dey brought him ashore he said, she said when de brought me husband ashore she said the man that took his measurement to make his coffin--she said I got engaged to him. She said you're a little late. Well she said the only thing she said I'll do fer ya, you'll be my best man to me wedding. Me and the guy who took me husband's measurements are goin' be married next week. You'll be the best man. Thanked her fer it. So I went to the wedding. She wasn't mourning long fer her husband. So she got married to him--she never had any children by the first wife [husband]--I believe it was 14 dozen she had by the last husband. I'm not sure now whether I'm tellin' a lie or the truth--but it wasn't 14 dozen it was 9 dozen. Thank you very much.[1]

As well as fear of ghosts and corpses, the Märchen mocks fear of graveyards:

> This feller had apples to share and they went in the graveyard to share the apples, you see, and, a feller passin' along, two fellers passing along. They stopped to the gate; they thought 't was the Lord and the devil sharing the dead in the graveyard. He'd say, "two for you and one for me, one for you and one for me." And those two fellers was, stood up at the gates, and on their way through the gate they dropped two apples, you see, dropped two apples, and when it comes to they got them all shared, they said, "and two in the gate." "Oh," he said, "they wants we too and they took off, they thought they was goin' after them." [laugh][2]

So, Märchen give reassurance concerning the good dispositions of the dead towards the living. Whenever they appear in these tales, it is to beg a service--that of burying their remains--which they gratefully and generously return in some appropriate way and circumstance. Only the brave, though, packing up fear, win their confidence as go-between or executioner of their will. Fear, on the contrary, shuts up the possibility of communication with the dead. This reassuring and "humanistic" portrayal of the dead is contrasted in this corpus with a less favourable picture of the living and other otherworld creatures. Giants, witches and the devil epitomize egotism, indifference and stupidity; these "supernatural adversaries" resemble rich employers abusing their workers and, on the comic edge, faithless women more than the dead, who, in these tales, are murdered or abandoned victims. Feared, besides, they should not be, because, as "little men" or "ugly

[1]MUNFLA 64-13/C60, p. 3 (AT 1350).
[2]MUNFLA 71-50/C971 (AT 1791).

ole fellers," they are no match either for the living or evil powers, "the big fellers," who, curiously, seek to prevent their communication with the living. Dead and living thus continue to need each other and solidarity benefits all--just as in community life.

This chapter reveals the dialectic function or necessity of both fear and fun in matters of death. The death ritual warrants the successful removal of the deceased from the living community for their mutual benefit:[1] "Il y a comme une réciprocité des devoirs: aider les morts à gagner le repos, c'est rapprocher, pour les vivants, la fin du deuil."[2] This overarching concern, which across cultures is known to be supported by ghost fear, finds particular emphasis locally, where ghosts despite doctrinal divergences on their origin and nature, received unvarying attention, belief, interest and purpose across the ethnic and religious groups concerned. This dialectic mechanism operates through specific generic forms: fear and serious rational analysis in memorates and legends on the one hand; parody and entertainment in wake pranks, Märchen, comic songs, jokes and anecdotes. From this another balance emerges: what is feared in actual reality and experience--Judgment, ghosts, and corpses--is derided in entertainment and fiction. This bilateral consideration of "the other side of reality" yields some tongue-in-cheek statements, such as: those who get to heaven are not those you would think, devotion to the Church does not go towards replacing devotion to family and home, the dead are dead, powerless, pitiful or grateful for your thoughtfulness, but the living will deceive you in pursuit of their own interest, money should go to the poor, not to corpses. Thus, traditional humor and satire are in proportion with the relevance of religion and the supernatural to a people whose personal and community life long entirely depended on moral and social sanctions--but also loved life. Essentially perhaps, the humour pervading these diverse expressive forms playfully examines the conceptual categories of life and death for the more serious and securing purpose of reaffirming their borders.[3] These reflections, taken together, subscribe to the suggestion that communal fear and fun ideally shared in the folk communicative process that helps negotiate death.

Certainly, the tales' "humanistic" portrayal of the dead at the expense of the living, finds a counterpart in the classical ballads, where even the "ghost-avengers" ripping their wrongdoers apart (Ch 286) or teasing them playfully (Ch 20) show no other harm or

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[1] Pocius, "The Place of Burial: Spatial Focus of Contact of the Living with the Dead in Eastern Areas of the Avalon Peninsula of Newfoundland," MA thesis, MUN, 1976, 438.
[2] Le Roy Ladurie 599.
[3] This hypothesis is inspired from Lieber's study of riddles with regard to worldview.

weakness than the "human" satisfaction of due revenge. Neither the material concern with burial nor the fancy of receiving material aid from the dead finds a place in the ballad corpus; in contrast with their prose counterparts, the ballads locally treat death with seriousness rather than humour, and look at its deeper rather than superficial aspects: as an object neither of fear nor fun, but as the tragic effect of human evil, error or fate, and more deeply even, as emotional and psychological crisis.

Thy Death

In the dawn of the romantic age up until the first decades of our own, death became the drama of separation from a loved one. Mourning and grieving took emphatic expression to signify distress at death's disruption of personal affection; "thy death" thus was synonym to "my grief."[1] No longer taken for granted as part and parcel of life, death became scandalous and aggressive. The iconographical representation of its wild and greedy embrace had clear overtones of it "raping" the living.[2] The eros-thanatos theme dominated the sensibilility of the age. The horror of death was masked by the evocation of passion, youth, physical beauty, and eternity. It was "le temps des belles morts," the age in which death inspired the most dramatized funeral apparatus in western history. Though remaining simple and solemn in the less cultivated milieux, death in the bourgeoisie became pompous and exalted:

> Emotion shook them, they cried, prayed, gesticulated. They did not refuse to go through the activities dictated by custom; on the contrary. But while performing them they stripped them of their banal and customary character.[3]

The love-death tandem worked marvels as psychological support. Religious feeling directed toward the hereafter made death the very realization of love.[4] While the romantic literature gives ample illustration of the eros-thanatos theme, Ariès traces it up to less known sources: the published correspondence and diaries of a French aristocratic family in the early nineteenth century. Eugénie de La Ferronays, whose family history was a record of illnesses and deaths, wrote during her husband's illness:

> J'ai envie de mourir parce que j'ai envie de vous voir, mon Dieu!... Mourir est une récompense, puisque c'est le ciel. Pourvu qu'au dernier moment je n'aie pas peur. Mon Dieu! envoyez-moi des épreuves, mais pas celle-là. L'idée favorite de toute ma vie, la mort qui m'a toujours fait sourire. Oh, non, vous ne ferez pas qu'à ce dernier instant, cette idée constante d'aller à vous m'abandonne... Rien n'a jamais pu rendre pour

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[1] Karen Halttunen, "Mourning the Dead: A Study in Sentimental Ritual," *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1982) 126.

[2] Ariès, *Western* 56.

[3] Ariès, *Western* 59; for a detailed study relating to this phenomenon, see Halttunen.

[4] Ariès, *Homme* 2:125.

> moi le mot de mort lugubre. Je le vois toujours là, clair, brilliant. *Rien ne peut le séparer pour moi de ces deux mots charmants: amour et espoir.*[1]

Belief in reunion after death, escape into the past through memory, and communication beyond the grave provided responses to the problematic acceptance of death in an age of passionate family feelings.[2] By the same *tour de force*, death became the warrant of eternity but also of immediate reunion with predeceased relatives. Such a death was better than life, for it was in everything similar to life--minus the ordeal of separation. Belief in such a heaven inspired the "heaven our home" theme of the nineteenth century American consolation literature.[3]

Starting in the baroque age and up into the nineteenth century, the cemetery for the first time acquired a status of its own, and became institutionalized.[4] Once a mere place of disposal in which burials quickly succeeded each other on the same spot, its relocation outside the cities along with a wider surface spurred a new cult of the dead. In its more rural environment, the new cemetery looked very much like a park, its spacious alleys well kept and bordered with well-spaced out monuments almost competing in artistic achievement. As such, the cemetery became a place of regular visit, meditation, and worship of one's own dead, "des musées de l'amour familial."[5] As a parallel to the rhetorical treatment of death in romantic literature, the rich symbolism of its monuments--winged angels, holding hands, doves, roses, and statues of dead relatives extending arms (amid the broken columns and severed branches suggesting a premature leaving of life)--expressed hope in eternal reunion.

Memento mori, i.e. objects acting as a symbolic reminder of death, go back a long way in time, yet their function in the last century acquired a slightly different meaning.[6] Rather than inviting meditation on death itself, they became personal reminders of loved ones, a change which has been noted in New England gravestones, on which the death's head as motif was first replaced by a cherub's, and later by the commemorative urn-and-willow.[7] Likewise, medallions containing hairlocks and portraits of dear ones in vogue

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[1] Ariès, *Homme* 2:133.
[2] Ariès, *Homme* 2:181.
[3] Ariès, *Homme* 2:159-62, referring to A. Douglas, "Heaven Our Home: Consolation Literature in the Northern US, 1830-1880," *Puritan Way of Death*, ed. D. E. Stannard (New York: Oxford UP, 1977).
[4] Ariès, *Homme* 2:184-266.
[5] Ariès, *Images* 266.
[6] Ariès, *Homme* 2:169-71.
[7] Deetz 64-90.

with the bourgeoisie became pledges of lasting devotion. One hairlock might belong to someone living, but two contained together symbolized love beyond death. Embroidered samples, which young girls learned to make at school according to patterned illustrations and verses, enter every home, each canvas clearly indicating the name and the date of death of each remembered family dead.

Along with devout commemoration of departed ones, belief in their lingering presence attenuates the irrevocable character of separation. Belief in communication with the dead depends on the notion of separability of body and soul. This spread from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century and to the benefit of the soul, recognized as the only immortal part of the human being. In France and other Catholic countries, the catechism paved the way to the notion of "les désincarnés," the disembodied souls.[1] These are neither material nor totally spiritual, their traits being recognizable if different from the body left to the earth. Illustrators of death-scenes filled the room of the dying person with representations of dead relatives come from the otherworld to guide him to his new abode. While the Catholic Church resisted this invasion from beyond the grave, the clergy remained very discreet on the subject except for encouraging prayers for the souls in purgatory, which also became the most widespread and popular Catholic devotion.[2]

If this intercession assuaged the pain of rupture from loved ones, the absence of this channel of contact in Protestant countries would explain their greater favour for spiritism and communication with the dead.[3] Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* marks a significant transition in this respect. Breaking away from the medieval role of the revenant as a herald of misfortune or trouble, Catherine Earnshaw's spirit is the first compassionate one to respond to the call of a distressed love partner, at least in high literature:

> Now, I perceived he was not looking at the wall, for when I regarded him alone, it seemed, exactly that he gazed at something within two yards distance. And, whatever it was, it communicated, apparently, both pleasure and pain, in exquisite extremes; at least, the anguished, yet raptured expression of his countenance suggested that idea.[4]

This novel, written by a young girl fed on eighteenth century gothic literature and on popular legendary narratives, in Ariès's analysis, combines the traditional idea of rest, and

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[1] Ariès, *Homme* 2:164-69.
[2] Ariès, *Homme* 2:174.
[3] Ariès, *Homme* 2:171-72.
[4] Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, ed. D. Daiches (1847; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965) 361.

that of the transitional life of the newly buried corpse, with the romantic fascination with death, the exaltation of its physical beauty, the dissolving work of nature, and the reunion of all lovers in an afterlife not necessarily Christian: one in which lives on all earthly affection.[1]

This new turning point in the western history of death, however, shows continuity with the past, and uncovers yet another facet of Newfoundland tradition. Belief and song yield most of the insights into "thy death" locally, as their expressions focus on the resolution of the deepest mourning. Thus the two following chapters, the one dealing with "heartbreak," the other with "bliss," hang together.

[1] Ariès, *Homme* 2: 155.

Chapter 9

Heartbreak: Fetches and Lyrical Songs

Romanticism has mostly been considered the "artificial" product of an aesthetic bourgeois fashion thriving within the confined universe of social privilege and idle fantasy. Ariès, on the contrary, understands the phenomenon as a "real" fact of daily life rooted in a profound transformation of man's conception of himself within society. While traditional societies were governed by rules of social interaction and solidarity binding one and all, the eighteenth century introduces a "revolution du sentiment" which focalizes affectivity on the family circle.[1] This greater affective investment on "loved ones" henceforward makes them inseparable and irreplacable.

9.1. "I just saw him come up and with his oilclothes on"

Revenants do not escape this dramatization of family relationships. The anonymous warning spirits of medieval and Post-Reformation times become recognized as close relatives. While the "ghosts" of the age mostly belong to the family rather than the social sphere, their number, contrary to logical expectation, does not dwindle. If it is not far from the ancient familiarity of ghosts to their identification as family members, Ariès has another explanation: the recognition of the autonomous existence of the soul, first introduced by the doctrine of purgatory, would be responsible for the almost banal phenomenon of "disembodied souls" pouring into the age. He writes:

> . . . il n'y a guère de famille, au début du XXème siècle, qui ne possède dans leur folklore quelque histoire semblable: un rêve terrible à une

[1] Ariès develops this thesis in *Enfant*, and traces this "triumph of affectivity" to the transformation of wills in the middle of the eighteenth century. Greater intimacy and trust in family relations would explain their evolution from an elaborate literary genre to a mere legal document. For three centuries, wills had included religious and moral considerations (requests for burial, alms, prayers, and personal recommendations) besides material dispositions. The gradual suppression of all but such considerations, he contends, resulted from the confidence that personal wishes entrusted privately would be respected; *Homme* 2:178-80.

> certaine heure de la nuit et l'on apprend ensuite qu'au même moment un être cher est mort, ou a failli mourir, etc.[1]

Also in Newfoundland, "fetches" differ from the spirits of community deceased lingering around their former locations and legendary ghosts frightening the living for no apparent reason. The fetch, generally, is a close family member--mostly husband, son, or sibling--the recognizable traits of which leave little to suspect a supernatural occurrence. In fact, it is only revealed as such on the evidence of the impossibility of that person's presence on the scene at the moment of perception, or at the news of his/her death at that particular time:

> Aunt Annie told me a similar story which happened about ten years ago. She said she saw Uncle Ron coming in the lane for dinner and thus went inside to serve it. However, when Uncle Ron didn't come in she asked another person out the lane where he was and the person stated that he hadn't been off the beach all morning. . . . In all these cases, involving visitations, if nothing happened within seven years, they were thought to be long livers.[2]

Quite naturally, these narratives show a varying degree of traditional treatment; in legend-like accounts the supernatural element is carefully contextualized and emphatically verified:

> March 28 was a grim anniversary. On this day 16 years before, the S.S. Greenland had sailed into St. John's harbour with her flag at half mast, "a floating chamber of horrors," with 25 frozen corpses on deck and twenty three men missing. They had died at just about the same place where the Newfoundland was now trapped. Everyone had heard, too, that in the home of one of the victims at the time of the storm a ten-year old lad was on his way to bed when his big brother, who was at the ice, stopped him on the stairs and pleaded, "Harry, give me a lend of your cap." The apparition vanished a moment later, but the family was certain some accident had happened at the ice-field, and that their son was dead.[3]

> Bridget Murphy was working about the kitchen finishing up the jobs that she couldn't get done during the day. It was a busy time of the year, what with the fish and the hay and the gardens and a day was never long enough. Bridget could have sworn that the door did not open or she would have heard the creak of the hinges that they hadn't got around to oiling. But when she turned he (Bill Murphy, her son) was standing there covered with seaweed and the salt water dripping off his oil clothes and making a pool on the floor. His face she couldn't see, for it was hidden

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[1] Ariès, *Homme* 2: 165.

[2] MUNFLA ms 72-025, p. 24; for a telling, but far more complex narrative examplifying minute rationalization of such a phenomenon, see for instance MUNFLA ms 79-729, p. 9-11.

[3] Brown 49-50.

> by the sou'wester, but she didn't need to see it. In her heart and soul she knew it was Bill come to the end of his long journey. She buried her face in her hands and with a moan fell senseless to the floor. She was taken to bed, lay three whole days knowing nobody, not a sound passed her lips but a low moan and the name of the boy who was drowned. When she came to her senses, the priest broke the hard news as gently as he could and she didn't take it as hard as he thought she would. "I know, father," she said quietly, "I saw Bill in the kitchen the night I fell and I knew then that he was gone. They thought it was all part of her illness, and try as she would she couldn't persuade them of the truth of what she had seen till they found a piece of seaweed on the kitchen floor. A strange weed it was and nothing like any that was ever seen around these parts. They sent it away to a place that knows about such things to have it examined, and they learned it was a seaweed commonly found around the coast of South America where the sailing vessel on which Bill was shipped had gone down.[1]

These apparitions, first of all, make "traditional" sense. Like omens, such experiences attenuate the shock of death: "she didn't take it as hard as he thought she would." They support the view that one is not abruptly wrenched from life but that death comes as a natural mutation process allowing the survivors time to adjust. The Breton expression by which "he was in good health when he got sick and was sick when he died"[2] suggests similar rationalization of death. In "visualizing" those exposed to danger as already removed from life, fetches, as personalized omens of death, function as liminal markers. The phenomenon, akin to telepathy, which earlier appeared to be unusually developed in the local consciousness, likewise facilitates the resolution of the bereavement crisis through anticipatory grief.

Fetches also make affective sense. These flashlike visions of the person dying or "marked for death" are interpreted as an adieu to his dear ones, and allow them to solve the intolerable paradox, in the traditional view, of lone and distant death. Identified fetches suggest acute anxiety for those exposed to particular risk. The persons seen as fetches are often in a state which causes concern for their well-being, whether through disease, absence at sea or war, which fact justifies a seemingly greater proportion of female percipients. Such apparitions seem to relate to the constant stress endured by the fisherman's wife:

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[1] MUNFLA FSC 66-006D, p. 6.

[2] Pierre-Jakez Hélias, *The Horse of Pride: Life in a Breton Village*, trans. June Guicharnaud (New Haven: Yale UP, 1978) 106.

> The major drawback to being a fisherman's wife is worry. You never get used to it, especially when "it comes up blow." When the weather is rough, I sit up all night in the kitchen and just hope he's all right.[1]

> I worry about him when he's fishing. I read the barometer, listen to the 5:00 marine forecast, and listen for him on the C.B. or marine band radio. When you get to worry too much anything can set you off. You yell at the kids and keep going from window to window to watch the sea.[2]

In safety, her worry projects the "phantom of death" in front of her eyes,

> I wouldn't want to be a man here, the fishing sure takes a lot out of them. Sometimes I feel so sorry for him, he comes in from a trip looking like death warmed-over.[3]

in tragedy, she is haunted by the "phantom of life":

> She still thinks that he's coming in; she just can't believe that he's dead; she sits by the window and waits for him to come home again.[4]

Early research on the depression and emotional problems encountered by wives of offshore workers in Scotland attributed these to stress induced by their husbands being periodically absent from family life, a condition known as "the intermittent spouse syndrome."[5] Asking Cat Harbour women about what they thought about their husbands risking their lives "on the ice," and how well they might do, Faris was struck by their marked reticence to reply at all, until one woman explained: "you don't dare say anything, cause if it goes bad, they'll say you witched it."[6] Such avoidance of the whole subject of hazards still prevailed among Ocean Ranger widows confiding that insecurity was a major factor in their worry:

> Men preferred not to talk very much about life offshore when they came back to their families and friends onshore. Several mothers and wives of the mothers felt that one of the reasons for this was that their sons and husbands did not want to worry them about accidents and unsafe working conditions.[7]

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[1] Davis, "Woman," 142.
[2] Davis, "Woman" 142.
[3] Davis, "Occupational" 136.
[4] Davis, "Woman" 142 and 144.
[5] House, *But* 47.
[6] Faris, *Cat* 73.
[7] House, *But* 49.

A posteriori, many of these widows recalled that something unusual had happened shortly before the sinking of the rig, which suggests affective rationalization of the tragedy. Disaster not only gave warning but allowed expression of the "dying"'s affection for his own, thus making his/her death easier to accept:

> Probably it's only foolish, but it seemed like Clyde had everything ready--the garage all cleaned up, there wasn't a thing left to be done. It seems funny that he would do all of that that one time. Other people have said similar things, that their husbands did similar things almost like they were getting ready for something.
>
> Well, I remember that we talked about things that we never ever talked about, as if he were telling me something. We had just gotten our car. He came home the sixth, and we had a new car. I think it was the eighth of January we got it. And it seems like he got that for me. He didn't even get a chance to hardly drive it.[1]

Other testimonies evoke more fetch-like phenomena, but with communication between the living and the dying effected through technological instead of sensory media. The mother of a victim remembered that her son had phoned her "to say good-bye" before leaving for the rig, which he had never done before; the wife of another was woken by a smoke detector starting to beep "at exactly four o'clock that morning."[2]

Tragic song often demonstrates that to the sailor's wife and the lumberman's mother, parting is mourning already, their worry for danger often confounding with forefeeling of disaster:

> The morning that Harry was going away his mother to him did say:
> "Don't go away dear Harry, it's home you'd better stay,
> Don't leave your dear old father, your mother for to mourn,
> For something seems to tell me that you'll never more return."[3]
>
> "How hard is my fortune, dear Willie, dear Willie,"
> Three times she exclaimed, "Shall I ever see you more?"
> Three times she exclaimed, "Shall I ever more behold you?
> I'm afraid your tender body will lay rolling in the sea."[4]

The plot structure, in all these cases, is simple enough: parting--mourning, foreboding of disaster--verification in fact. The women's constant "spiritual empathy" with their absent

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[1]House, *But* 58.
[2]House, *But* 56-7.
[3]Peacock, *Songs* 3: 763, st. 3; see also MUNFLA 78-236, p. 173, st. 2.
[4]Peacock, *Songs* 2: 486, st. 2; see also MUNFLA 78-236/C3553A, p. 191, st. 3 and *Songs* 3: 729, st. 4.

son, fiancé or husband is sharply put in this particular song stanza, but also generally expressed in the juxtaposition of love and death in the regional repertoire: [1]

> "Oh who would love a sailor, or wish to be his bride
> When all his life he do depend on a dark or stormy tide?
> But I will never change my mind although my Willie be
> Just guarded by one single plank from death and eternity."[2]

9.2. Songs of Women's Waiting: Fidelity in Life and Death

"Lyrical" is a problematic designation as far as Anglo-American folk song is concerned. Except for some rare laments to which the term applies in its literary sense, song, from the singers' own testimonies, is first and foremost story ("storyotype"). So, in a folkloristic sense, "lyrical" applies to those songs in which the narration is conveyed with some unusual or explicit emotion. This particular use of the term, admittedly, is probably deficient for any classificatory purpose, but provides a working categorization when investigating the meaning of death in such songs. The following remarks further demonstrate that collectors' and scholars' song "categories," like also Ariès's paradigms, are but "markers" on the fluid spectrum of human ideas and their expressive forms.

So far, the analysis of the broadside repertoire sung locally has suggested that these songs evoked a young couple's achievement of material and moral independence from parental authority. The lovers' final reunion, whether in life or death, bore out the symbolic significance of these plots. Whatever their outcome, these songs held up these hero(in)es' exemplary determination and courage invested in the cause of community "re-generation." Other "more lyrical" songs take over this teaching on the bare facts of community survival, and examine the problematic achievement of a young couple's social maturity at a further stage. Here, no longer family opposition, signifying the young lovers' social status as "dependents," but fidelity in temporary separation challenges their commitment to marriage. Here also, the symbolic evocation of ritual passage to adulthood is concretized by a topical concern: separation owing to the man's prolonged absence either at sea or war. The central protagonists in these songs have pledged their word of love and fidelity by the exchange of rings or vows, and only await the man's return to be married; thus they stand in a no less hazardous "liminal" stage pending their definitive "integration" in the social whole.

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[1] Davis, "Woman" 141.
[2] Peacock, *Songs* 3: 646, st. 3.

These plots are all of imported origin, the lack of any locally-composed counterpart possibly signifying the former's adequate treatment and responsiveness to the concern. Their setting, to Newfoundlanders, is "local" enough: typically, the lovers step on stage only to "shake hands and kiss each other good-by" as the man is going to sea. This expression of love is sometimes accompanied by vows of fidelity; other times the sailor is gone already and the maid is introduced alone. Whatever, the narrative focus is on the woman and her moral ability (or lack of it) to keep the couple's promise of marriage. Parting leaves maidens "broken-hearted," and hardly less so than when they recognize their lover's body washed ashore--for a long time an all too familiar event on the outport scene. The commonplace also receives various emphatic expressions, which all speak for the hardship of her indefinite waiting in steadfast hope of her lover's safe return. Three different plot strands develop from this critical situation, their structure revealing some coherent sense: like any initiate to adulthood proofed in the liminal stage of the ritual process, the woman enduring her lone and taxing waiting is put to the test--that of fidelity:

1	2	3
safe return	**bereavement**	**desertion**
waiting for return	waiting for return	waiting for return
fidelity (test)	fidelity (vows)	infidelity (broken vows)
recognition (ring)	recognition of body (ring)	recognition (at wedding)
marriage	reunion in death	mortal grief

A synthetic consideration of the three different plots emerging from the common situation of the maid's waiting gives an insight into the moral standards by which her performance is valued. Her staunch fidelity is rewarded by reunion in life or death (1 and 2) whereas her giving up hope to see her lover back, even with reason, compromises her chances of any union, whether in life or death.

9.2.1. "Seven years passed away but no news from the sea"[1]

Seven years I loved a sailor[2]

1. A fair maid walking in a flowery garden
   A handsome sailor she chanced to see.
   He looked at her as if he knew her,
   Saying, "Pretty girl, will you marry me?"

2. "To marry you, sir, a man of honor,
   A man of honor you seem to be,
   To marry you, sir, a pretty maiden,
   A young man's servant I'll never be."

3. "I don't want you for to be my servant,
   I'll marry you, make you my bride,
   And I'll have servants to wait upon you
   While you and I in a carriage ride."

4. "I have a true lover of my own, sir,
   And seven years he has crossed the sea,
   And seven years I will wait upon him
   Till he returns for to marry me."

5. "Pretty girl, don't you be so foolish
   To wait so long for any young man,
   He may be dead or he may be married,
   Or he may be sick in some foreign land."

6. "If he's sick I will wish him better,
   And if he's married I'll wish him joy,
   And if he's dead I will wish him heaven,
   What more can I wish for my sailor boy?"

7. When he found that she was so constant,
   When he saw that she was so true,
   He put his hand down in his pocket,
   Pulled out a ring they had broke in two.[3]

8. Saying, "Seven years I have loved a lady,
   Seven years I have crossed the sea,
   And seven more she will wait no longer,
   I am returned for to marry thee."

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[1] MUNFLA ms 76-236, p. 198; songs belonging to this category are, for instance, Peacock, *Songs* 2: 513-4; 515-7; 528-33; 584-7; 555-7; MUNFLA 66-23/C234.

[2] Peacock, *Songs* 2: 584-5.

[3] For a comparative approach to the meaning of the ring symbol in English and German songs on this theme, see Agnes Hostettler, "Symbolic Tokens in a Ballad of the Returned Lover," *Western Folklore* 32 (1973): 33-8.

This well-known plot illustrating the first hypothesis, contrary to what might appear, will not displease feminists. Rather than sadistic cruelty on the man's part, his "disguise," as old as Ulysses, only means to extol her unwavering constancy--in the face of riches, her lover's own infidelity and even death. Not only does she reject the idea of an affair but a marriage proposal from a "man of honor," even when her lover's (pretended) death would allow her to commit herself anew. Her exemplary conduct is variously emphasized in other texts: by the suitor passing himself off for her lover's "loyal comrade" pretending to have attended to his death; her "falling quite senseless like a girl that was dead"[1] at the news; her answer, dagger in hand, that "for her dark-eyed sailor a maid she will live and die;"[2] or, when hearing of his destitution, her declaring that "he's welcome to her also in his poverty."[3] Such a headstrong woman wins or secures her happiness in married life. As suggested by her readiness to take her life to keep her vows, this endurance of symbolic death imposed on the initiate in the ritual process promotes her to adult status in marriage:

> In the little cottage down by the sea,
> They're in wedlock bound and you'll well agree.
> Young girls be true while your love's at sea,
> For a stormy morning,
> For a cloudy morning brings forth a pleasant day.[4]

9.2.2. "As Susan strayed the briny beach..."[5]

Strawberry Tower[6]

1. In Strawberry Tower this damsel did dwell
   She was courted by a sailor and he loved her well;
   He promised he would marry her when he did return,
   But a watery misfortune all on him did fall.

2. As he was a-sailing to his great surprise,
   When a most and terrible storm did arise;
   Where the winds they did beat and the billows did roar,
   Which drove those poor seamen all on the lee shore.

3. As she was a-walking down by the seaside,
   She saw her own true love all on the beach lie;
   And when she come by and put her to a stand,

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[1] Peacock, *Songs* 2: 556, st. 9.
[2] Peacock, *Songs* 2: 514, st. 5.
[3] MUNFLA ms 78-236, p. 198, st. 7.
[4] Peacock, *Songs* 2: 514, st. 9.
[5] Peacock, *Songs* 3: 646; songs belonging to this category are, for instance, 2: 434-5; 439-40; 486-7; 3: 720-1; 722-5; 1007-8; MUNFLA ms 78-236, p. 191.
[6] Peacock, *Songs* 3: 722.

For she knew 'twas her true love by the ring on his hand.

4. She kissed him, she hugged him, she called him her dear,
She kissed him, and she hugged him ten thousand timeo'er,
She says, "I am contented to lay by your side,"
In a few moments after this damsel she died.

5. In Robin Hood churchyard this couple was carried,
In Robin Hood churchyard this couple was buried.
Come all you true lovers that do pass here by,
Go see how contented this couple do lie.
Come all you true lovers since my joys they're all fled,
My grave is instead of a new marriage bed.

The second plot has the maiden make the tragic discovery of her lover's dead body by his ring, the symbol of their commitment. Here, it is the irrefutable evidence (no longer the hypothesis or pretence) of his death which puts her fidelity to the test. Either her vows of austerity, longing for death or mortal grief give her answer. The traditional aversion to "a watery grave" still gives the measure of such love:

I wish I were a-sleeping too
In the arms of my true love in the ocean blue;
My soul to my God and my body in the sea,
And the white waves rolling over me.[1]

Although the maiden dies of grief, she wins a moral victory; reunion with her lover is her reward, and her extreme devotion is proposed as an example to her kind:

Come all ye fair maids take a warning
Don't ye never object a cold grave
Be like Nancy fond hearted true louvyer
Who died for Thomas a sailor so brave.[2]

9.2.3. "How can you lay your head on another man's pillow?"[3]

The Nobleman's Wedding[4]

1. I was invited to a nobleman's wedding
To a loving fair one that proved unkind
Soon she begun for to think of her fellow
The former true lovyer she left behind.

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[1] Peacock, *Songs* 2: 439, st. 5.
[2] MUNFLA ms 78-236, p. 191, st. 9.
[3] MUNFLA ms 78-054, Book I, p. 4, st. 3; songs belonging to this category are, for instance, Peacock, *Songs* 2: 380-2; 441-2; 3: 682-6; 691-7; 673-4; Lehr 159-60; MUNFLA ms 78-236/C3548B, p. 112
[4] MUNFLA ms 78-236, p. 79.

2. Supper it being ended and over
And the company sat 'round to sing a song
And the first that was asked was the former true lovyer
And he said for the bride that he would sing one.

3. "How can you lie your head on another man's arm,
You that have been mine so late?
And it grieves me now for to wear a green willow
Sighing and lamenting for your sake."

4. Oh the bride she sitting at the head of the table
Hearing these words that she knew right well
No longer to bear it she was not able
T'was down by the feet of the bridegroom she fell.

5. "Oh there's one request of you I will ask love
There is one request pray grant it to me
This very night for to lie with my momma
And the rest of my time I will lie long with thee."

6. This request it was freely granted
Sobbing and sighing as she went to bed
He rose early day the next morning
He went and he found that his young bride was dead.

7. Oh we (at)tended the funeral in a deep suit of mourning
Sobbing and sighing as he walked along
Two or three days after he ended his own life
And agrieved his parents and everyone.

8. Oh a green willow tree is a very handsome flower
All in the spring time of the year
Where there's many a true lovyer spends many a long hour
Talking of love that was never there.

As the triangular argumentation of these "songs of women's waiting" suggests, the worst impediment to a couple's union is not the man's death but the woman's faithlessness. This irremediably brings about the failure of her own future with the one or any other partner. "Recognition" here is of her lasting love for her former lover and irresolute attachment to her would-be husband. Her strange request "to spend a last night with her mother," in the ballad idiom, signifies her awareness of imminent death--but also defeat. This death has an entirely different valuation from the one preceding; instead of signifying the consummation of love beyond fatality, such a death, like that of any ballad criminal, is "the wages of sin."[1] Whereas the faithful heroine is "promoted" to marriage

[1]Laws, *American* 15.

and the faithful widow "married" beyond the grave, this one, failing the test of adult maturity, turns to her mother in evocation of "narcissistic regression."

I recorded the following song from a woman in her thirties in Tilting after hearing her singing it unaccompanied in two local concerts. Being left the choice of what she would sing in a private interview at her home, she chose it again. Asked about the reason for her choice, she answered that she had been caught by the melody, and that it was one of her favourite songs. Laughingly, she also commented that "she could feel what this woman was going through, at least while she sang it"; her slightly embarrassed laugh could be due to her telling me just before of her husband's frequent and long absences from home while working on a trailer or "being at the ice":

In Connemara by the Lake[1]

1. I still recall the day in July
When you said to me your last goodbye
And that same night you sailed away
To distant lands across the sea.

chorus: In Connemara by the lake
Two young hearts had to break
In county Galway by the sea
Where I loved you and you loved me.

2. For five long years I've had to wait
And now you come at last too late
For I was told that you were dead
And yesterday at noon I was wed.

French-Newfoundlanders have preserved their own stamp on the sad subject of unhoped for return. The song's dramatic tone, in true ballad vein, likewise voices the domestic tragedy of mistaken deathnews received from afar. In common with the preceding British or Anglo-Irish texts, the plot has the recognition effected through the man's singing a song. The revelation of the fatal mistake responsible for the couple's demise speaks for the woman's good faith, but takes nothing from the man's loss of his home and family:

[1] MUNFLA ms 87-159/C10635.

Un Brave Militaire en Revenant de Guerre[1]

1. C'était un jeune militaire (bis)
Après avoir servi sept ans
Regrette encore son régiment.

2. Dans une auberge il a rentré
Bouteille de vin il a demandé
Madame l'hôtesse lui z'a donnée. (bis)

3. Tout en buvant de ce bon vin (bis)
Une chanson il a chanté
Madame l'hôtesse s'mise à pleurer.

4. Qu'avez-vous donc Madame l'hôtesse? (bis)
C'est-y la chanson que j'ai chantée
Que fait vos beaux yeux bleus pleurer?

5. Oh oui, oh oui, répondit-elle (bis)
C'est la chanson de mon mari
Et je crois bien que vous êtes lui.

6. Qu'avez-vous fait, méchante femme?
Je t'avais laissée avec une enfant
Et te voilà quatre maintenant.

7. J'avais reçu des faustres lettres (bis)
Que tu étais mort et enterré
Et moi j'm suis remariée. (bis)

8. Où est-il donc ton second homme? (bis)
Il est à labourer les champs
Pour gagner le pain aux enfants.

9. Où est-il donc mon petit Pierre? (bis)
Il est là-bas dans le vallon
En train de garder les blancs moutons.

10. Tiens voici les clés de l'armoire
Prends-y de l'or et de l'argent
Et vas rejoindre ton régiment. (bis)

[1] Taken down from Emile Benoît's singing at his home in Black Duck Brook on 14 March 87; see also *Songs Sung by French Newfoundlanders: A Catalogue of the Holdings of the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive*, compiled by Gerald Thomas (St. John's: Department of Folklore and Department of French and Spanish, MUN, 1978) 13 and Lehr 22.

The local repertoire still also counts other treatments of this theme.[1] In keeping with the Anglican rite of marriage, heroines, whether faithless or supposing themselves widows, are duly denounced and die a violent death at the hand of their wronged partner:

Those Wedding Bells Shall Not Ring Out[2]

1. A sexton stood one Sabbath eve within a belfry grand,
A-waiting signal from the church with a bell rope in his hand;
While in the church there then had stood a young and happy pair,
Pleading their vows for evermore each other's love to share.

2. The holy man then spoke those words: "Before you join for life,
Has any person any claim between you man and wife?"
When down the aisle there came a man with a quick eager step,
A-pointing to the trembling those words he calmly said:

3. "Those wedding bells shall not ring out, I swear it all my life,
For we were wed long years ago and she is still my wife,
She shall not break her vows to me, she's mine through all her life,
She's mine 'til death do set us free, those bells shall not ring out."

4. A flash, a foe, a glittering blade, a flash, a lurch, a dart,
And like a lightening struck the blade which pierced her tender heart,
"Oh God" they cried "you killed the bride and turned that bleeding knife,"
Which pierced his own heart as he stood may she be not his wife.

5. Two forms lay cold within the church, the husband and the wife,
Where once he claimed her for his bride in wedlock side by side;
"She shall not break her vows to me, she's mine through all her life,
She's mine 'til death do set us free, those bells shall not ring out.

Knowing from Renwick and Kodish that songs of "love relationships" are less concerned with love adventure than rites of passage, one will not be surprised to find some songs having the sea and war as background, such as above, deal with love and fidelity.

This overview of songs focusing on the suspense of a lover's or husband's return arouses crucial questions with regard to worldview. The confrontation of text and context indeed yields an arresting paradox. If memoirs and community studies are mostly silent on the delicate subject of marital fidelity, Faris, as a single purely ethnographic source, uncovers "an ethic of sexual opportunism" in Cat Harbour which is hard to reconcile with the intransigent morality of song.[3] He found premarital sexual relations universal and

[1] In the gothic style, see "Brave Alonzo and Fair Imogen," in Peacock, *Songs* 2: 380-2.
[2] MUNFLA ms 78-236/C3548B, p. 112.
[3] Percy Janes's "semi-autobiographical" novel set in a Newfoundland milltown in the mid-century reflects this pragmatic tolerance: *House of Hate* (Toronto: McClelland, 1970).

accepted, with over seventy-one percent of all marriages being the result of pregnancies, the efforts of the clergy notwithstanding. The anthropologist's figures and charts receive support from "Cat harbour folk constantly 'seeing' physical resemblances between men and offspring of women other than their wives," and the native category of "fork kin," which mostly designates illegitimate kinship ties.[1]

In traditional outport society, bachelorhood was discouraged by the necessities of fishing, spinsters were unknown and divorce unheard of.[2] In the same community, Faris found an economic rather than a romantic atttitude to marriage, more formalized exchange and quarrels than affective expression among couples, which, he suggests, might be one possible effect of these unions by necessity.[3] The discrepancy between the tacit tolerance of promiscuity in the ethnographic reality and the extreme expectations proposed in song, at any rate, illustrates the delicate sense of "folklore as a mirror of culture." However, is the behaviour and success of "Brave Jack," the local hero of Märchen, any less wishful or "idealistic" than those of fictive song heroines? The case shows the necessity for differentiating cultural ethos from reality and the advantage of considering both. Rather than conclude on the invalidity of folklore to reflect culture, one could posit its illumination of salient cultural concerns, such as fidelity in prolonged absence or survival in precarious circumstances, i.e. its support in coping with the most problematic aspects of the group's life.

9.3. From Narrative to Lyrical song: from Community to Family Ethos?

Ariès underlines the indebtedness of romantic to medieval death, yet distinguishes the new significance of the old expression of mourning:

> . . . in the nineteenth century . . . mourning was unfurled with an uncustomary degree of ostentation. It even claimed to have no obligations to social conventions and to be the most spontaneous and insurmountable expression of a very grave wound: people cried, fainted, languished, and fasted, as the companions of Roland or Launcelot had once done. It was a sort of return to the excessive and spontaneous demonstrations--or apparently spontaneous demonstrations--of the Early Middle Ages, after seven centuries of sobriety. . . . This exaggeration of mourning is indeed

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[1] Faris, *Cat* 71-87.
[2] See, for instance, Szwed, "Paul."
[3] Faris, *Cat* 87 and 79.

> significant. It means that survivors accepted the death of another person with greater difficulty than in the past.[1]

By analogy, certain differences between narrative and lyrical songs with regard to the treatment of their often common themes somehow parallel Ariès's juxtaposition of traditional and romantic death. Laws points out that while "the Child ballads seethe with feeling, they mask emotions under an exterior of reserve," whereas native balladry, though "sincerely compassionate for victims, is undeniably sentimental."[2] Abrahams suggests that "there is a great deal of death in the American Child ballads, but, by comparison with later songs on the theme, very little dying," death in the first case being "seen as the fitting climax to wrongdoings or to attempts at courtship," but in the other "providing the occasion for the song."[3]

Earlier consideration of narrative song plots revealed their gravity center to be on the lovers' attempts at and difficulties (including their own mistakes) in effecting reunion in marriage; other broadsides, especially the more lyrical ones, as well as the majority of sentimental songs revolved around "the pain of lovers' partings, the suspense of reunion, and most prominently, the agony of the separation of loved-ones through death."[4] This rough distinction between these layers of song tradition could be put in Axel Olrik's terms used in a derived sense: as far as death is concerned, one could say that the earlier songs, generally speaking, manifest "Vorgewicht" and later sentimental songs "Achtergewicht." In the first case, the lovers' union in wedlock or death is but swiftly evoked in the end of the actual drama:

> Come all you loyal lovers to view a solemn sight,
> There's twelve young sailors dressed in blue and twelve young maids in white;
> Just like some early blossom cut down in time of bloom,
> Fond hearts have caused each other to be buried in one tomb.[5]

> On the day of Willie's funeral it was a mournful sight
> To see twelve young sailors dressed in blue and twelve fair maids in white
> Young Susan broke her tender heart and died that very same night,
> Now the two are married in one grave, a sweet ending to their life.[6]

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[1] Ariès, *Western* 66-8.
[2] Laws, *Native* 32.
[3] Abrahams and Foss 120-1.
[4] Abrahams and Foss 121.
[5] Peacock, *Songs* 3: 647, st. 9.
[6] Peacock, *Songs* 3: 647: this stanza is a variant of the one quoted just above.

Songs appearing in "the age of sentiment," on the other hand, characteristically focus on grief and mourning. Where death was the measure of love, it becomes that of grief:

Grief is a Knot[1]

1. Grief is a knot which is hard to untie,
Love is a thing that money can't buy,
Sorrow and trouble is the breaking of my heart.
And I tell you, my comrades, it's hard for to part.

2. I haven't no father, no mother, no home,
No brother, no sister, I'm all all alone;
I had one brother and a sailor was he,
And today he lays slumbering into the deep sea.

3. Oh the worst of my trouble is yet for to come,
The one I love dearly, where can he be gone?
This long week has passed, love, and he is not come,
I wonder oh where can my Willie be gone?

4. He's gone from me now leaving me all alone,
No one to love me, no friends or no home,
No brother, no sister for to comfort me,
I wish I was in heaven with mother today.

5. When he returned unto me he did say:
"I think we'll get married before I go 'way;
Don't you think it won't suit you as you're all alone,
No one for to love you, no friends or no home?"

6. Then I consented to be his young bride
With his head on my bosom as he sat by my side,
Saying, "Mary, I am sorry for the words that I said,
I never intended that we should be wed."

7. "What are you saying or what do you mean,
Are you going to leave me in sorrow and shame,
Are you going to leave me as I am alone,
No one for to love me, no friends or no home?"

8. "Yes Mary darling, we are going to part,
For I now love another, she is my sweetheart,
You know that I loved you in the days that's gone by,
But now I love another, so Mary, goodbye."

9. To her bed she was taken and this she did say:
"Go send for that young man, I'm going to die,
Go send for that young man and bring him in here,
Go bring him before me, that's all I do ask."

[1] Peacock, *Songs* 3: 673-4.

10. This young man was sent for and quickly he came,
He knocked at the door and she answered, "Come in,
You deceitful, hard-hearted, young Willie," said she,
"Can't you see where I'm suffering and dying for thee?"

11. "Are you dying in love, are you dying in pain,
Can I do anything for you?" the young man exclaimed.
"No nothing, no nothing, false Willie," said she,
"It's all for your sake I am dying today."

12. He bent for to kiss her but turning her head,
"Don't you dare for to kiss me," the dying girl said,
"Too often you kissed me, too often," said she,
"It's all to you Willie I'm suffering today."

13. "Oh Mary, dearest Mary, what do you want of me?"
"Will you take the baby when I pass away?
For you know it is yours, love, and you can't deny,
Don't you be so deceitful as you was to me."

14. "Yes, Mary darling, I know it is mine,
Yes, I'll take the baby when you pass away."
"Oh I know it will be frowned on when I pass away,
God answer my prayers and take him with me."

15. Oh the day of Mary's funeral was a sad and mournful sight,
With her babe on her bosom in long robes of white;
Where she died that evening and the babe died that night,
And they both lay a-slumbering in silence so bright.

This is a fairly long text for what it narrates, but its emphatic pathos rightly illustrates what Ariès qualifies as *hypertrophie du deuil*. The deathbed scene of a young woman, complete with her dead infant, is typical enough of nineteenth century iconography.[1] The plot combines tragic death and infidelity, the "romance" and the "morality" patterns supporting much of the Anglo-American folk song repertoire,[2] apparently to the effect of underscoring the plight of the innocent victim: the heroine has her brother's loss at sea and her desertion by her lover to suffer for, having (as is four times repeated) no family to turn to for comfort. Her burden is such as to make her long for death, now synonymous with relief from her unbearable pain, as it is more dramatically put elsewhere:

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[1] The song's scene in fact is closely reminiscent of Jarvis Hanks' painting entitled "Death Scene" representing a young mother and her stillborn twins lying on the very birthbed, all three painted with open but absent eyes, and surrounded by the husband hiding his face in his hands, the maid and an elder child. An epitome of the age's sensibility, the painting is reproduced and discussed in Ariès, *Images* 253 and 264.

[2] Abrahams, "Patterns" 488-92.

Oh dig me a grave long, narrow, and deep,
Covered all over with lilies so sweet,
That I may lie in it and take my sleep,
Away from false maidens forever.[1]

Now she kissed his cold lips in her sorrow
And the tears told the depth of her grief
And before the sun sets on tomorrow
It will bring to young Nancy relief.[2]

Lyrical song bears other marks of pathos in relation to mourning, such as lovers parting "never to meet again,"[3] everlasting memory of loved one, unrecoverable joy in life, etc.:

I'm very lonely now, Mary, for the poor make no new friends,
But oh they love the better still the few our father sends;
and you were all I had, Mary, my blessing and my pride,
There's nothing else to care for now since my poor Mary died.

I'm bidding you a long farewell, my Mary kind and true,
But I'll not forget you, darling, in that land I'm going to;
For they say there's bread and work for all, and the sun shines always there,
But I'll never forget my Mary were it fifty times as fair.[4]

Such ostentatious expression of the victim's grief has powerful moralizing potential. If not her deceitful lover, "God in his mercy" hears her plea for death, granting even that of her unborn child in answer to her motherly concern. Heaven fully sanctions Victorian morality and mourning, and to the victims of evil or fate it now grants relief as it once granted rest:

"So I'll go down in some lonely valley and there I will lay down,
And pray to the Almighty God to have mercy on my soul."
Where she kissed her baby's pale cold lips and laid it by her side,
She cast her eyes to heaven, the son and mother died.[5]

Oh now I am leaved as a poor distressed widow,
Scarce twelve months married as you may plainly see,
Me to beg for my bread among cold hard-hearted strangers.
Kind heavens look down on my infant and me![6]

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[1] Peacock, *Songs* 2: 442, st. 7.
[2] MUNFLA ms 78-236, p. 191, st. 8.
[3] Peacock, *Songs* 3: 721, st. 9.
[4] Peacock, *Songs* 2: 463, st. 4-5.
[5] Peacock, *Songs* 2: 448, st. 4.
[6] Peacock, *Songs* 2: 486-7.

The same moralizing with regard to responsibility to family--no longer community--life, shows in criminals and outlaws telling the story of their moral degradation as a "counter-exemplum" for their time:

> My father in his winding sheet, my mother she does appear,
> The girl I love sitting by her side a-wiping off her tears,
> For broken-hearted they all died but now too late I find,
> For God had seen my cruelty for the girl I left behind.[1]

The "missionary zeal" of Protestant evangelism over Newfoundland, which Peacok sees reflected in song, does not even spare innocent lovers:

> This poor girl she died heart-broken,
> And the sailor fell from his work at sea,
> And for their sins they will have to answer
> Before their Maker on the Judgment Day.[2]

As well as their expressive form, the concerns voiced by lyrical songs reflect the new concentration of affection on family. Parents in broadsides mostly appeared to the effect of murdering their daughter's lover and sequestrating her without scruple. In later pieces, these inveterate and undefeatable villains amazingly turn to weakened and pitiful creatures pining away in the absence of their "only" soldier boy or "lovely" daughter:

> 'Twas early the next morning as brilliant rose the sun,
> A man brought home the body of poor young Harry Dunn,
> And when his mother saw him she fell down on the ground,
> For it was the boy she loved so dear, her soul was heavenward bound.
>
> As for his dear old father, he lingered for a while,
> But ever since hereafter was never known to smile,
> In less than six weeks after they buried the poor old man,
> And now you can see the deathly curse on the woods of Michigan.[3]
>
> He put her into the sleigh again and with her he drove home
> Until they reached her father's cot; oh how these parents mourned!
> They mourned for the loss of their only child, young Charlie wept over his doom,
> And alas, he died with a broken heart and they slumbered in one tomb.[4]

The clash between the old allegiance to community (or nation) and family affection is made nowhere more explicit than by this martyr of the revolution of sentiment:

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[1] Peacock, *Songs* 2: 450, st. 6.
[2] Peacock, *Songs* 3: 721, st. 14.
[3] Peacock, *Songs* 3: 764, st. 8-9.
[4] Peacock, *Songs* 3: 736, st. 11.

The Deserter[1]

1. You tender-hearted parents wherever that you may be,
I hope you'll pay attention and listen unto me;
It's of an aged couple who had one only son,
He was shot as a deserter when the battle it was won.

2. He was both tall and handsome, his complexion it was fair,
His eyes were of the deepest blue and dark brown was his hair,
And as he gazed upon the crowd he gave one heavy sigh,
"If it was not for my father I would not care to die."

3. About a three weeks after as I stood in the field
A letter came into my hand and deep black was the seal;
I quickly tore it open, those words did meet my eye:
"Come home, come home, dear Willie, once more before I die."

4. Oh who could slight a dying wish from such a mother dear?
Before the dawning of the day my mother I stood near;
She pressed me to her sobbing heart, those words she said with joy,
"You're welcome home dear Willie, my own, my soldier-boy."

5. I scarce had time to press her lips when a heavy foot drew near,
I turned myself around and an officer appeared.
He said, "You cowardly rascal who from the field did run,
You will be shot as a deserter when the battle it is won."

6. I pointed to the bed-side, "Be careful what you say,
My mother she is dying and on her death-bed lay;
I don't care if you shoot me I from her will not go
Until she do recover or to her grave do go."

7. He sent his men around me and took me right away
Before I could defend myself or have one word to say;
They sent me to the guard-house where many had gone before,
And my poor dying mother I never saw no more.

8. The officer that brought me here he swore away my life,
He thinks he will gain Mary, she's going to be my wife;
He thinks he will gain Mary, that girl whom I adore,
But to her true-love soldier she proved faithfuller than before.

9. About a two days after an officer appeared,
"Come shoot this cowardly rascal, no more of this I'll hear."
He fired and shot young Willie, a bullet pierced his heart,
And from his true-love Mary on earth they had to part.

10. The officer a-courting unto Mary he did go,
Which proved his sad misfortune and earthly overthrow;
She said, "You shot my Willie and death shall be your bride."
She fired and shot the officer, he fell dead at her side.

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[1] Peacock, *Songs* 3: 994-5.

Mostly uncelebrated because deprived still of any social status in traditional society, infants make a first appearance in the nineteenth century iconography of death. So also in song with such popular pieces as "The Orphans"[1] or "The Babes in the wood."[2]

In expressing the love and anxiety felt for loss--actual or potential--of a dearest person in life--a lover or parent--fetch belief and lyrical song the most obviously translate the "romantic" perception of death. At closer inspection, their concern also appears to be consistently articulated around a very central situation of the "pragmatic" context of local life, work, love and death: a man's absence and his wife, fiancée or mother waiting for his uncertain return. In this material, indeed, gender is mostly consistent with dramatic role, the men's absence being commanded by work or duty and the women's waiting by their own responsibilities ashore. Fetch belief, both in its most traditional and most personal narrative expressions, provides a key to some of the possible symbolic meanings of imported lyrical song. The stressful waiting to be endured by many a Newfoundland spouse, fiancée or mother, and triggering "impressions" anticipating the worst, indeed, gives a cue to a coherent patterning articulating a good portion of these songs. If their advocation of fidelity in love from courting to mourning sounds closer to ideal than reality, the examples of their most deserving heroines, vanquished not even by disaster, might help building up women's tried "nerves."

[1] MUNFLA ms 83-151, p. 35; the song, collected by K. Goldstein, was copied from Mrs. Mae Flynn's handwritten songbook.
[2] MUNFLA ms 78-236, p. 14.

Chapter 10

Bliss:
"Witnesses" and Sentimental Songs

10.1. "I saw Mum last night"

Probably the clearest sign of family ethos is the "witness," a revenant type "manifesting" the lasting power of personal affection across the grave. Folklorists are indebted to Gillian Bennett for their introduction to this loving and best loved revenant. Her interviewing of elderly women in 1982 suburban Manchester on "matters broadly supernatural" indeed revealed their prevalent concern to be communication with the dead.[1] Her major finding from the analysis of these women's memorates, indeed, is this "private and familiar spirit," one which she qualifies as "a dead member of the family who appears in response to personal crises in the percipient's life," and is closely related to the well-established category of "fetches, wraiths and warning ghosts." These "witnesses" make the greater proportion of "personal spirits," which along with "domestic spirits" ("things in houses") she found to be the most believed in. From her informants' age and life experience she infers that belief in this type of revenant gains its impetus from the condition of bereavement:

> Through the memorates the Gatley women tell of this type of supernatural encounter, we are able to see tradition actively at work, interpreting and transforming experience, turning the strange states of mind and emotion common in grieving into objective encounters with the dead.[2]

Long unsuspected in folkloristic tradition, these "revenants" have not passed unnoticed in psychiatry and psychological anthropology, which have repertoried them as "presences" in mourning or "hallucinations of widowhood."[3] Research reveals that these experiences occur to a variety of persons having no history of serious psychopathology but put under

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[1] Bennett, "Heavenly" 87 and 89; the article specifically accounts for this field data gathered from a sample taken from Gatley, a middle-class suburb of Manchester.

[2] Bennett, "Heavenly" 89; Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) quotes several cases of hallucinations or illusions in bereaved people from classical sources, as indicated by Parkes, "First" 453.

[3] Hoyt 106 and Rees 37.

conditions of stress. They appear to be common in bereavement, particularly in the first year, and part of the normal mourning process. Certain bereaved persons have been observed to engage in "hallucinatory wishful psychosis" as a means of clinging to the lost one, but such "energies" may also occur at the time of "letting go" or "giving up the ghost." Whatever the case, hallucinations would result from changes in subsequent feelings and relationship to the one departed, and always be beneficial to the completion of grief work. This clinical report, for instance, concerns an American graduate student in his twenties in the year following his grandfather's decease:

> I was sitting in my car, terribly upset and wrought up about the breakup with my wife. We had just been arguing, and I was alone in the car while she went to get cigarettes. I began to tremor and shake, and felt a kind of 'energy' or sense in my body. It went on for I don't know how long, maybe a minute or two, and my whole body felt shaky and tingly. Suddenly I felt someone behind me, and turned around and, God, it was my grandfather. He was sitting there, perfectly real, and kind of smiled to me. My body felt relaxed, I wasn't shaking any more, and seeing him there was so strange that I wasn't even startled. We just looked at each other, maybe for half a minute, and then he just was gone. I cried for some time, but I felt after that I had made my peace with him. I still missed him, but things were somehow different. I *wasn't carrying him around inside of me*, he was finally really gone. I don't know how it could be, but I'm sure that he was really there. I don't know how, but his spirit was in me and then it left me.[1]

I found very little trace of such apparitions in archive records for Newfoundland,[2] and long wondered whether I would find them locally; fieldwork had the answer, both in Tilting and St. John's:

> JK: My father was not a superstitious man and I often heard him say that he didn't see any ghosts ever and he didn't hear many ghost stories that he gave credence to except one. John Brien lived not far from where we lived, that's long before my time but John Brien's sister, who lived in another house, was dying and John Brien, just at dusk, it was almost darkness, he decided to go in to see his sister and when he went in the hallway there, in the darkness, there was a woman coming downstairs, and he had to step aside in the hall to let her go by, and as he went by, he thought that was his mother, who had been dead for a number of years, but he thought that he was seeing things, so he went up to his dying sister to ask her how she was, and when he went into the room, the first thing she said to him was "John, my mother was just here with

[1] Hoyt 106; the setting of this "apparition" is similar to that in the modern legend of "the vanishing hitchhiker," which bears out Hufford's advocation to discriminate between the objective experience and its popular interpretation, or not dismiss the former on account of the latter; see Jan Harold Brunvand, *The Vanishing Hitchhiker: American Urban Legends and their Meaning* (New York: Norton, 1981).

[2] MUNFLA ms 65-005A; MUNFLA Q 68-68.

me and just left," and that could never be explained. So, that was the only ghost that he knew of, and he knew because of the integrity of the man telling it that something did happen, but you know, whether it was a ghost or not, I don't know.

IP: Did that story circulate in the community?

JK: Oh I'm sure at the time it did. Yes, at the time.

IP: When was that?

JK: I don't really know. It might have been prior to 1920 I'd say. It would have been a long way back.[1]

The "traditional" account likely "overdoes" the experience to some extent by having the apparition witnessed by another person and the best able to identify "the woman" as his own mother. Other sources, however, suggest that underneath this legendary garb "witnesses" locally continue to appear to their own in the critical stages of dying and mourning, and do so in a casual way. For this information I am endebted to "death professionals": Father K. and Father O., both quoted earlier, two nurses and one volunteer attached to the Palliative Care Unit of St. Clare's Mercy Hospital in St. John's.[2] Taken together, this data offers evidence converging with Bennett's analysis of the significance and meaning of these experiences:

FO: I was a young priest then, and there was a family lived next door to us and they had a son who was a priest, and he told me one time, we were talking together. He said, you know, he said, "John, I saw Mum last night." I said, "Go away," I said, "your Mum is dead ten years." He said, "I know," he said, "but I was going walking up by Mount St. Francis--that's the brothers in St. Bonaventure College, by the fire hall. He said, "I was walking up and underneath the street light," he said, "mother came along and said,"Leo, I'm fine." And, he said, "Are you, Mum?" She said, "Yes, I'm fine." I said, "You're not, you're not, teasing me or pulling my leg?" "No," he said, *"it was mother."* He was convinced of that. He *saw* her. Could she have appeared to him? I don't know.[3]

Father K.'s reaction to my question on his familiarity with such experiences among his St. John's parishioners was casual and unhesitant:

FK: I think it is very common, very common. Even in my own experience. I, on many occasions, I felt I have engaged in conversation with my father and experienced his presence. I think it's basically the closeness, affection maybe, even incompleteness in life itself. On many, many occasions, people have come to me and said they've seen a mother, or it

[1] MUNFLA 87-159/C12029.

[2] All information related from this visit and interview is taken from personal fieldnotes.

[3] MUNFLA 87-159/C12030; Ariès reports a similar case in which a son, who died in the Air Force, once answered his mother's thinking back on him saying "It is all right, Mum," in *Homme* 2: 286.

> could be in any situation. In fact, on many occasions, people even say they've *seen* a deceased.[1]

The Palliative Care Unit of St. Clare's Mercy Hospital in St. John's to this date remains the only extant one in the province. Admission to the Unit is on a doctor's testimony of terminal disease with death likely to occur within three months. Such patients thus are in full consciousness of their terminal condition, and join the Unit out of free choice. The care and attention they receive is supportive and pastoral as much as medical and largely provided by trained volunteer hands. Volunteers perform no "work" as such but mostly keep company to the patients and their family, who, as they suggest, need the greater moral support. My interviewees' evocations suggested a degree of personal knowledge and attachment to patients which perhaps largely explains their familiarity with their "dreams of angels or heaven" and "visions" of dead relatives.

It is also personal knowledge of her informants, Bennett declares, that enabled her to infer their worldview, one within which communication with departed ones was rationalized in terms of faith in "heavenly protection and family unity":[2]

> The sphere of operation of the medieval revenant was a world of religious and moral obligation, rites and observances: that of the present-day 'witness' is an orderly, caring, domestic sphere, reflecting an orderly, caring creation supervised by a personal God.[3]

As for these women, Christian faith underlies the local interpretation of these "presences." Granting the Catholic affiliation of St. Clare's Mercy hospital, the nurses only remembered two sworn atheists in ten years, both of which "died in faith." The following prayer was composed in the Unit; it is usually recited with patients at their request and at the moment of death:

> We turn to You, Lord Jesus, who promised to be with us when we gather in Your Name.
> We turn to You, who suffered and died for all people.
> We turn to You, who promised eternal life to all who believe in You.
> We turn to You, who are the way, the truth and the life.
>
> We claim Your presence here and we ask You to make this moment one, not of darkness--but of light and grace.
> Make this moment holy. Be with Your brother (sister) in his (her) hour of need; be his (her) refuge, strength and hope. Strengthen his (her) faith

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[1] Uncatalogued tape.
[2] Bennett, "Heavenly" 89.
[3] Bennett, *Traditions* 212.

> and trust in Your love and promises. Enfold him (her) in the circle of Your warm mercy and loving care. Lead him (her) and welcome him (her) into the fullness of life.
>
> May God the Father, who created you, who has watched over you, who loves you, give you strength and blessing.
>
> May Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, who suffered and died for you, be with you now as your companion and friend. May the Spirit of God fill your soul with goodness and holiness and peace.
>
> May God bless you and be with you in your suffering, your dying and your entry into eternal life. Amen.[1]

Bennett notes her informants' reluctance to qualify "apparitions" of dead relatives as ghostly or even "supernatural." One of the nurses told me "she *believed* the patients really see these people despite the common idea that these are hallucinations." The others agreed with her on the grounds of experience showing that the percipients died shortly afterwards, "even when at the time they did not seem to have been close to the end." Their testimonies also agree with Bennett's finding no sensationalism in these "revenants"--only love and care for their own. The Unit personnel find the patients mostly reassured rather than disquietened by such experiences, even when they report them as "my mother has come for me." Other patients have been seen "staring with a smile." In the "liminal" context of the Unit, the living and the dying live "close" to each other: a typical phenomenon experienced by this personnel is these patients' relatives suddenly calling the unit saying "I had to call" out of a feeling that something might have happened.

Still in line with the English data is Father K.'s testimony that he "never heard his parishioners report these experiences to him as 'hallucinations' but 'visions' or 'dreams' of particular individuals." "They have them everywhere, at home, in the car or in the country," and seem to perceive these individuals very definitely. Despite their impatience to hear his answer to what is often their first question, "what do you think will happen?," which betrays some knowledge of the "traditional" interpretation, peace and reassurance prevail over fear:

> IP: What is people's response to such an experience? Is there any fear?
> FK: In most cases, I think it's an experience of joy, because they feel that that individual is sharing eternal life, has reached God. I don't think I've ever experienced anybody who was afraid after seeing an apparition.

[1] As printed on a leaflet by the Pastoral Care Department, St. Clare's Mercy Hospital.

The Catholic dogma in particular provides "rationalization" as well as support:

> IP: What do you say to them?
> FK: We believe in the Communion of Saints. [pause] They are looking for interpretations, and that's very, very difficult too. It depends on the individual who has died, and perhaps you don't know the family or even the individual that's come to see you, but you'd got to help the best you can and to make it a supportive situation for them, assuring them that it's because of their closeness and because of their love that these individuals have manifested their presence to *them*, and that it should be a support to them that, ultimately that shows the ability of others to face death. I find that it's not the number of years that matters but the quality of these years, and I believe that's perhaps their message as well.

The general intercessions for the third Sunday of 1988 Easter Sunday Mass alluded to the attending troubles of grief, including such experiences. These intercessions appropriately followed the gospel reading on the Emmaus disciples experiencing Christ's resurrected presence among them:

> For the church, that she may proclaim the scriptures to help us understand resurrection and salvation in our personal histories. We pray to you, Lord.
> For all of us who are searching to fill absences in our lives. We pray to you, Lord.
> For the lonely, the abandoned and all those experiencing empty presences in their lives. We pray to you, Lord.[1]

Bennett's account of "witnesses" as resembling "fetches, wraiths and warning ghosts" also receives illustration from Father K.'s memory of one man who was given to women and drink but changed course after a vision of his dead wife!

Ariès's penetrating diagnosis of the western mind and heart did not miss the profusion of "disembodied souls" appearing with the romantic age. Like Bennett, he had noticed that interaction with these spirits differs sensibly from that occurring with the revenants of old. Whereas the latter appeared to the living in a corporeal nature, these "presences" far more suggest profound spiritual experiences. Medieval and Post-Reformation ghosts visited the living often in remonstration against their conduct, but also watched over their own. "Witnesses," which are only motivated by affectionate concern for their survivors, thus are no less traditional than legendary ghosts. Their function in the life of Bennett's informants, likewise, still appears to be twofold:

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[1] *Living with Christ*, vol. 53: 4 (March 31 to April 17), Sunday Edition, (Ottawa: Novalis, 1988) 138-9.

> These stories show how the dead are thought to return during a crisis to afford protection and advice, to promote health and peace of mind, and to aid the dying by easing their passage from this world; all obviously are traditional themes.
> In other stories, the narrator, in her depression and distress, prays for or to the dead person, calls for him or addresses direct pleas to him, and the dead do return to comfort and restore.[1]

In assisting the dying, this revenant draws on "one's own death" and its iconography of "angels" awaiting their soul's release to carry it to heaven; in relieving grief it shows its affiliation to "thy death." Ariès thus outlines the "romantic" shape of this protean creature:

> Autrefois, le retour d'une âme était signe de malheur ou de détresse, qu'il fallait empêcher en satisfaisant ses exigences, grâce à la magie, noire ou blanche. Maintenant c'est l'esprit du disparu qui revient vers celui qu'il a aimé et qui l'appelle.[2]

He finds in *Wuthering Heights* the first manifestation of the age's revenant:

> 'You were very wicked, Mr. Heathcliff!' I exclaimed; 'were you not ashamed to disturb the dead?'
> 'I disturbed nobody, Nelly,' he replied; 'and I gave some ease to myself. I shall be a great deal more comfortable now; and you'll have a better chance of keeping me underground, when I get there. Disturbed her? No! she has disturbed me, night and day, through eighteen years--incessantly--remorselessly--till yesternight--and yesternight, I was tranquil. I dreamt I was sleeping the last sleep, by that sleeper, with my heart stopped, and my cheek frozen against hers.'
> 'And if she had been dissolved into earth, or worse, what would you have dreamt of then?' I said.
> 'Of dissolving with her, and being more happy still!' he answered. 'Do you suppose I dread any change of that sort? I expected that it should not commence till I share it. Besides, unless I had received a distinct impression of her passionless features, that stange feeling would hardly have been removed. It began oddly. You know, I was wild after she died, and eternally, from dawn to dawn, praying to her to return to me--her spirit--I have a strong faith in ghosts; I have a conviction that they can, and do exist, among us!
> 'The day she was buried there came a fall of snow. In the evening I went to the churchyard. It blew bleak as winter--all round was solitary: I didn't fear that her fool of a husband would wander up the den so late--and no one else had business to bring them there.
> 'Being alone, and conscious two yards of loose earth was the sole barrier between us, I said to myself--
> "I'll have her in my arms again! If she be cold, I'll think it is this north wind that chills me; and if she be motionless, it is sleep."

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[1] Bennett, "Heavenly" 92.
[2] Ariès, *Homme* 2: 153.

> 'I got a spade from the toolhouse, and began to delve with all my might--it scraped the coffin; I fell to work with my hands; the wood commenced cracking about the screws, I was on the point of attaining my object, when it seemed that I heard a sigh from some one above, close at the edge of the grave, and bending down. "If I can only get this off," I muttered, "I wish they may shovel in the earth over us both!" and I wrenched more desperately still. There was another sigh, close at my ear. I appeared to feel the warm breath of it displacing the sleet-laden wind. I knew no living thing in flesh and blood was by--but certainly as you perceive the approach to some substantial body in the dark, though it cannot be discerned, so certainly I felt that Cathy was there, not under me, but on the earth.
> 'A sudden sense of relief flowed, from my heart, through every limb. I relinquished my labour of agony, and turned consoled at once, unspeakably consoled. Her presence was with me; it remained while I re-filled the grave, and led me home. You may laugh, if you will, but I was sure I should see her there. I was sure she was with me, and I could not help talking to her.
> 'Having reached the Heights, I rushed eagerly to the door. It was fastened; and, I remember, that accursed Earnshaw and my wife opposed my entrance. I remember stopping to kick the breath out of him, and then hurrying upstairs, to my room, and hers--I looked round impatiently--I felt her by me--I could *almost* see her, and yet I *could not!*[1]

How close does this revenant resemble that of native American ballad? It assists the dying soldier,

> "I knew my days were ended, for last night I had a dream,
> My mother she stood beside me--how sad it all do seem--
> She called me her dear boy, while tears rolled down her cheeks;
> Then she knelt and prayed beside me till at last I couldn't see.[2]

as well as its grieving mother:

> "Write to my mother when I am dead, write to her most tenderly,
> Write to her tenderly how I died and where my resting place be,
> Tell her my spirit will wait for her on the borders of land and sea
> Between heaven and earth until she'll come, for it won't be long,
> she'll say.[3]

Does he ever have to suffer disturbance from a beloved and satisfy her distraction for grief?

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[1] Brontë 319-21.
[2] Leach, *Folk* 126, st. 5.
[3] Peacock, *Songs* 3: 1005, st. 4.

Jimmy Whelan[1]

1. One evening as I walked alone by the river,
A viewing those sunbeams as the evening were fine;
And through onward I rambled I met a fair damsel,
She'd been weeping and wailing with many a sigh.

2. Now a weeping for one who is now lying lonely,
Weeping for one who no more will she sleeps;
For the dark pearling water do circle around 'er,
And swiftly and deeply do flow o'er his grave.

3. "Now Jimmy" she cried "Won't ya come to me arms,
Won't you come to me now from your cold, silent grave;
For you promised you'd meet me alone on this river,
But death's cruel anger concealed you from her.

4. It was slowly he rose from the depths of the water,
His form shone to her as bright as the sun;
With the red rose of crimson a shone in his bosom,
And on to this fair one to talk he began.

5. Saying "Why do you call me from this silent glory,
Now back to this earth where I once had to live?
And the last who I thought on was God and you darlin',
And then took me down to my cold, silent grave."

6. "Now there's one more embrace, love, and then I must leave you,
One more embrace, love, and then we must part;"
And cold was the arms that circled around her,
And cold be the bosum she pressed to her heart.

7. "Now Jimmy" she cried "Take me along with you,
And don't leave me here for to sigh and to weep;
You take me, come take me along with you Jimmy,
I'll wed with you down on your cold, silent grave."

8. "Now darlin'" he said "Your asking a favor,
That no mortal creature can grant it to thee;
For death is the dagger which keeps us asunder,
And wide is the gulf, love, between you and me."

9. "But while you are walking alone on this river,
My spirit he wanders through night and by day;
My spirit he'll wander and he'll keep you from danger,
Until you are down in your cold, silent grave."

10. Now she threw herself down on the ground, she weeps sadly,
Cold is the anger in silence she lay;
Saying "I lost you, I lost you, my own Jimmy Whelan,
A maid I will die by the side of your grave."

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[1] MUNFLA 78-236/C3549A, p. 196.

As many as ten local versions of this ballad have come to my knowledge, a number which itself draws attention to the song's potential significance to its audience.[1] The piece has been found in most places where songs have been collected in North America: from the Maritime Provinces to Ontario, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin and even the west coast.[2] Although it has not been traced in the old country, which is the case of many imported songs collected in Newfoundland, Laws and Peacock both suggest an Irish origin.[3] The ballad, repertoried by Laws as "Lost Jimmie Whalen" (C 8) also has a twin (C 7), the events of which have been traced to historical fact. The tragedy which the latter (and supposedly also the former) relate is that of "James Whalen" (or Phelan)[4], a shantyboy drowned on Ontario's Mississippi River about 1878. On this basis, Laws accounts for both songs, the one reporting the accident, the other its effect on his true love, as "ballads of lumberjacks."[5] Edith Fowke proposes a British origin on the basis of the plot's relation to "The Blantyre Explosion," in which a maiden informs the narrator of the mining tragedy in which her lover lost his life.[6] This interestingly reveals that the Newfoundland versions have retained the song focusing on the lover's revenant theme but not the one relating the disaster itself.

The song's mysterious origin apart, scholars have found reasons to call "Jimmy Whelan" an odd piece. Tristram Coffin admits to counting a few native ballads, including this one, showing no sign of "rationalization;"[7] Laws confirms that this song is one of the only three American ballads dealing with the supernatural;[8] but Peacock declares that "he can think of no native ballad like it."[9] My own reason for giving particular attention to the song is its resemblance to Emily Brontë's scenario as well as to that of Newfoundland's

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[1] Four versions in Peacock, *Songs* 2: 385-89; three collected by Lehr (but only one published) Lehr 107-8, MUNFLA ms 78-50/C3760, p. 62; two collected by Eric West, MUNFLA ms 78-236, p. 105-6 and 196 and one (unpublished) by Leach, MUNFLA ms 78-54, Book I, p. 100-1.

[2] *The Penguin Book of Canadian Folksongs*, ed. Edith Fowke (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973) 199.

[3] Laws, however, reports that the song is to said to have been composed by John Smith of Lanark Village, Ontario, where it is widely spread, in *Native* 150-51; Peacock, *Songs* 2: 389.

[4] "Whalen" for Laws, *Native* 150; "Phelan" for Edith Fowke, *Penguin* 199.

[5] Laws, *Native* 150-1, C 7 and C 8.

[6] *Penguin*, 199.

[7] Coffin, *The British* 16.

[8] Laws, *Native* 35; another of these notable exceptions, "The Ghostly Crew," also has revenants against the sea as background and did not miss a place in the local repertoire. The song was discussed earlier in 5.5 of this thesis.

[9] Peacock, *Songs* 2: 389.

most prominent classical ballad, "Sweet Williams' Ghost" (Ch 77). The confrontation of these testimonies, each vying in a different stratum of Anglo-American culture, suggests an interesting case-study of the mental affinities as well as particularities with regard to "the lover's revenant" theme in the literate and traditional conceptualizations. The schema below marks the points of convergence as well as divergence between the first two elements of this comparison:

"Wuthering Heights"	**"Jimmy Whelan"**[1]
"in the evening"	"evening"
at her grave (churchyard)	by the river (his "watery grave")
"I was wild after she died"	"weeping and wailing"
"I dreamt I was sleeping ... by that sleeper"	"won't ya come to me arms?"
"praying to her to return to me"	"you promised you would meet me"
"I'll have her in my arms again"	"Won't you come to my arms, love, from your cold silent grave?"
SPIRITUAL CONTACT	PHYSICAL CONTACT - DIALOGUE
"so certainly I felt that Cathy was there, not under me, but on the earth."	"Then slowly there arose from the depths of the water A vision of sorrow so bright as the sun,"
"I heard a sigh from one above"	
"I felt her by me"	
"I could almost see it and yet I could not"	
"I couldn't help talking to her"	"Why did you call me from the rounds of bright glory?
"Her presence was with me; it remained while I re-filled the grave and led me home."	"To embrace you once more in my cold loving arms, To guide and protect you from a cold silent grave"/ "my spirit he'll wander and he'll keep you from danger"
	"wide is the gulf (between death and life)"

[1] While the comparison is based on all ten versions of the song, the extracts listed below are taken from Peacock's A version (transcribed above) unless specified otherwise.

	"in thinking on you I encountered it (death) bravely"
"I wish they may shovel in the earth over us both!"	"take me ... for to lie by your side"/ "I'll wed with you down to your cold, silent grave"[1]
"If she be cold, I'll think it is this north wind that chills me; and if she be motionless, it is sleep."	"And cold were the arms he encircled around her, And warm was the breath that she pressed to his heart."
"consoled at once... unspeakably consoled"	"She threw herself down on her knees there before him a-sighing and sobbing her bosom did heave"
	"Then up in the blue heavens he seemed for to go" "I will cry till I die by the side of your grave"
[Heathcliff starves himself to join Catherine in death]	"She died there alone on the banks of the river ... to meet him in heaven"/ "Since I've lost you, my Jimmy, my own Jimmy Whelan, I will weep there and mourn by the side of you grave."/ "A maid I will die by the side of your grave."[2]

Along with a similar setting for the lovers' contact (evening, churchyard), the novel and the song share a common plot structure based on three components: the mourner's distraction with grief, his/her longing and begging for an embrace, the fullfillment of their wish. Both mourners obtain some positive response to their irrational request; however, rather than find their peace and satisfaction in this "supplementary" comfort, they gain only the insane desire to join him/her in death. In the world of literary fiction as in that of popular song, the bereaved lover chooses death above life, whereas such a "suicidal" act, even though performed in the name of Love, goes counter to Culture as well as Nature in their common battle for Survival. How far indeed does romantic eccentricity drift away from traditional wisdom and does fiction from reality! While funeral ritual, always,

[1] MUNFLA ms 78-236/C3549A, p. 196.

[2] The ten local versions indeed propose alternative outcomes in practically equal proportion: the girl's effective death on stage or determination to spend the rest of her days in morbid devotion to her lover.

everywhere and under whatever form, has aimed at ensuring the progressive rehabilitation of the bereaved to normal life, romantic love portrays its hero(ine)s willfully alienated from society and unconcerned by its priorities or precepts.

Heathcliff and Whelan's true love are both estranged from social norms ("normality") in seeking the only company of a dead one and visiting the sinister places of his/her abode at night ("in the evening"). Once more testifying to the ambivalent if not "subversive" nature of these plots on the eros-thanatos theme is their development from an initial "lack" leading to a "violation" and finally to the hero(ine)'s wishful death. The "lack" is total: life without the beloved is no longer worthwhile or possible. Heathcliff "violates" Catherine's tomb in the literal sense while Whelan's sweetheart's calls her lover back from "the rounds of bright glory" "back to this dark world," of which he no longer is or wishes to be.

The "wish fullfillment," contrary to the old traditional taboo concerning contact with supernatural beings, does not owe its realization to the "supernatural" protagonist, but to the mourners' own volition. In joining life to death, "warm breath and cold arms" in a belated embrace, the distracted mourners transgress natural as well as cultural borders in an illusory denial of "the wide gulf" that separates them, as the song revenant points out. Neither Catherine's "presence" nor Whelan's words indeed beckoned their survivors to join them in death; on the contrary, the latter's reluctant apparition and embrace are offered as comfort for life and preservation from death: "to guide and protect you from a cold silent grave." The following song text of the repertoire, no matter its fragmentation, makes this message from the otherworld nowhere more explicit:

A Rich Merchant's Daughter[1]

1. Was of a rich merchant's daughter
   Who married a squire's son
   In less than a year or later
   She met with another man.

2. Now when the squire came to hear
   He kicked an awful alarm
   He told her to get through the door
   But I'll do you no harm.

3. One night as she lay on her bed
   A-weeping and thinking too
   Where an angel appeared all dressed in white
   Stood before her in the room.

[1] MUNFLA ms 78-236/C3552B & 3553A, p. 178.

4. "My dear," she says "You done no crime
Why do you weep and cry
When you are in to this wide world
You have your life for to enjoy.

5. Now when you're into this wide world
Your life is short and sweet
So you enjoy that life of yours
Whatever way might be.

6. Don't wait until you're dead and gone
And placed beneath the sod
For your lifetime that is over then
Your enjoyment that is gone.

7. Now when you're in that lonely grave
Your bones will moulder away,
There'll never be no one think on you
Or come to visit your way.

8. There'll be someone else to take your place
Quite well then you should know
So you always enjoy yourself
No matter where where you go.

9. Now when you're in that lonesome grave,
Your lifetime is no more
For you'll never return to this wide world
To enjoy yourself no more. (spoken)

Both Heathcliff, who at first finds himself "unspeakably consoled" by Catherine's "presence," "on this very earth" and "leading him home," and Whelan's sweetheart, who has received his much desired kiss, only ask for more and waste their days in unsatiety:

> 'Now since I've seen her, I'm pacified--a little. It was a strange way of killing, not by inches, but by fractions of hair-breadths, to beguile me with the spectre of hope, through eighteen years!'[1]

This intense but fleeting moment of contact, time only of an "hallucination of bereavement," which in the psychological reality is known to induce a new positive and spiritual relationship with the deceased, in both fictive pieces is shown to have the worst effect. Whereas in the memorates of Bennett's informants, "the context of the visitation is invariably given as some sort of 'lack' in the narrator's life and consequence is invariably seen to be the 'liquidation' of that lack,"[2] the mourners, in the fiction of novel as in song,

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[1] Brontë 321.
[2] Bennett, *Traditions* 66.

are only the worse off! As traditional song sometimes teaches its lesson through the demonstration of conduct to be followed,

> Sleep on my poor infant, you know not of my wailing,
> I will cease from deep pining, I will dry up my tears,
> For God in His mercy He feeds those young ravens
> Whilst we widows we must mourn for our brave volunteers.[1]

but far more often through that to be avoided, this particular song showing the price of such a "violation" is not much of an oddity in the "crime does not pay" universe of song.

Its likeness to the song's setting, plot, dialogue, and development notwithstanding, it is hardly conceivable that the novel shares its moral. No doubt, this particular treatment of the romantic revenant theme reveals a point of contact or even intersection between high and folk literature. Emily Brontë's upbringing on the vast knowledge of regional lore of the unlettered Tabitha Ackroyd, one of her two servant/foster mothers largely explains this hybridization. On the other hand, songs praising fidelity in death give evidence that, like the Brontë novel, mortal grief in popular expression may signify passionate love in positive terms. The case thus illustrates Ariès's perception of the relationships of written and oral cultures in terms of "osmosis," Mikhaïl Bakhtine's speaking of "reciprocal influences" between them or Le Roy Ladurie's finding that "le folklore fait parfois d'étranges compagnons de lit."[2]

If not a common moral, novel and song share a certain worldview. Dead relatives visiting their own, as Bennett suggests, not only carry on the tradition of the good supernatural, they also manifest a worldview in which the power of love triumphs over death or testifies to the continuity of earthly ties across its gulf.[3] This is an all comforting conception, quite opposite, in fact, to the preceding one: Judgment and its threat of damnation hold no place here. Rather than the rupture of earthly life, this intimate communication across the grave affirms the "immortality" of the deepest relationships. Such consolation in the song as in the novel, in spite of Brontë's methodist background

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[1] Peacock, *Songs* 2: 433, st. 9; this indeed appears to be an exceptional example of such courage in widowhood in the repertoire, the revenant classical ballad subgenre apart.

[2] Ariès, "Culture orale et culture écrite," *Le christianisme populaire: les dossiers de l'histoire*, sous la direction of Bernard Plongeron et Robert Pannet (n.p.: Centurion, 1976) 227-40; Carlo Ginzburg, *Le fromage et les vers: L'univers d'un meunier du XVIè siècle*, trans. Monique Aymard (Paris: Flammarion, 1980) 14, referring to Mikhaïl Bakhtine, *L'oeuvre de François Rabelais et la culture populaire au Moyen-Age et sous la Renaissance* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970); Le Roy Ladurie 606.

[3] Bennett, *Traditions* 66.

and the religious undertones of her work, is secular rather than religious in the strictly orthodox sense,[1] and also locally found a responsive ear. The scholarly observation that such "romantic and sentimental ballads fail to reflect the proverbial stoicism of seafaring men's loved ones,"[2] little reflects this native's understanding of them, let alone his cynicism:

> How fitting it was with most of our friends gone, including the entire crew of the Hesperus, and with the departure of the rest imminent, that love should flourish not between the living, but between earth and heaven.[3]

Laws's comment, however, points out an interesting discrepancy between the tearful sentimentality of song and people's emotional restraint in actual bereavement.[4] One of my Newfoundland friends, in a paper describing her father's home wake in Colliers in 1985, writes:

> We, Dad's wife and children, had never observed him cry even at the death of his own father. Most of his friends had died within the past two years. Dad had brought Mass cards, attended the wakes, traded stories about the life and antics of the deceased and news in general, and attended the funeral all without a show of emotion.
> When I had seemingly cried for days after the death of three significant women in my life within four months, he had agreed with Mom that I should "stop carrying on. Crying does not help." Life must return to normal was their message. Indeed Mom's tears for Dad stopped when she heard of the death of a young man and his daughter by fire the night after Dad's death. "I cried until I heard about that poor fellow," she said, "it was so much worse there was no need to cry."[5]

Her report of her "homecoming" to her parents' house evokes similar control on her mother's and her own part:

> Mom was sitting at the table and had been crying but smiled and greeted me with her usual "Well, what are you doing here?" to which I answered, "I live here, remember?" The familiarity of the greeting allowed me to

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[1] This is Bill Ellis's suggestion concerning sentimental ballads in: "'I Wonder, Wonder, Mother': Death and the Angels in Native American Balladry," *Western Folklore* 38 (1979): 174.

[2] Laws, *American* 9.

[3] Poole 11.

[4] Pocius brought this fact to my knowledge as he was sharing his own fieldwork experience, and remarked on the similar popularity of "old Irish sentimental songs" in Keels as in Tilting, where I collected them. These songs are evoked in the following section of this chapter.

[5] MUNFLA ms 86-159, p. 11.

> treat this unexpected homecoming with an approximation of normalcy. I walked to the table, sat down, and said," So, what happened?"[1]

This wilful control of emotion, at least in public, came back to my mind on hearing this Tilting widow recounting her husband's death and her daughter's reaction on her arriving on the scene:

> RB: She and her father were just like that [twisting her fingers]. Leo [her brother] said, "what is she going to say?" She came in through the door, tore in, said,"that's a nice homecoming," she said, "as far as I'm concerned, dad went this morning." Everybody was here, and didn't know what to think. So the next morning we had the mass funeral, never a tear out of her. We came home that evening, we were here alone, and she said, "I'll go up to the church." She came back in floods of tears. It broke, whatever was wrong with her; she broke.[2]

Would the ventilation of emotion through the conventional channel of sentimental song not perpetuate--rather than obliterate--the old "traditional" acceptance of death, and thus preserve one from the dangers of excessive grief in reality?

10.2. Spiritism, Seraphim and Sentimental Song...

Whereas Laws observes that the supernatural seems to have left native American balladry for more "realistic" concerns such as the hardships of occupational life, Bill Ellis proposes that it is mostly "scholars who have deleted the supernatural from native balladry." They missed out "angels," "heavenly voices" and "miraculous events" in rejecting "their obvious literary style which is alien to that of the folk," or else on account of their "extreme sentimentality."[3] The result, Herbert Halpert points out, is that many popular sentimental ballads found in Newfoundland and all other English-language speaking areas still await scholarly analysis and classification.[4]

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[1] MUNFLA ms 86-159, p. 6.

[2] MUNFLA 87-159/C10637.

[3] Bill Ellis, "'I Wonder, Wonder, Mother': Death and the Angels in Native American Balladry," *Western Folklore* 38 (1979): 171-2; see also John C. Thrush and George S. Paulus, "The Concept of Death in Popular Music: A Social Psychological Perspective," *Popular Music & Society* 6 (1979): 219-28.

[4] Halpert, preface, *Newfoundland Songs and Ballads in Print, 1842-1974: A Title and First-Line Index*, by Paul Mercer (St. John's: MUNFAL, 1979) xii. The abbreviation (MUNFAL) refers to Memorial University of Newfoundland, and is used hereafter.

Father K. remembers the case of a mother who had lost a young child and had the feeling of its presence each time she looked at its photo album. This particular fact led to the recognition of more "witnesses" in a bunch of sentimental songs I collected in Tilting. These songs mention visions, dreams, pictures or photographs of a beloved person, either deceased or lost track of, and bring up the feeling of his/her "presence" to the narrrator. Much of the pathos of these songs hinges on the narrator's confusion of past and present, illusion and reality, the absence and "presence" of the loved one. The following piece is a case in point:

"If those lips could only speak"[1]

chorus: If those lips could only speak,
If those eyes could only see,
If those beatiful golden tresses were here in reality,
Could I take your hand as I did when you took my name,
For 't was only a beautiful picture in a beautiful frame.

1. He stood in a beautiful mansion
Surrounded by riches untold,
And he gazed at a beautiful picture
That hung in a frame of gold.
'T was a picture of a lady
So beautiful, young and fair;
To this beautiful lifelike vision
He murmured in sad despair.

2. He stood there and gazed on that picture
And slumbering forgetting pain,
For there in that mansion in fancy
She stood by his side again.
His lips softly murmured
The name of his once sweet bride,
And with his eyes fixed on that picutre
He woke from his dream and cried.

Following is a list of excerpts from other songs of the Tilting repertoire including the motif:

He's dreaming of the days of long ago
And in fancy he is roaming with his sweetheart.
("When the harvest days are over, Jessie dear"[2])

In all my dreams I seem to hear her sweet voice.
("Moonlight in Mayo"[3])

[1] MUNFLA 87-159/C1O633.
[2] MUNFLA 87-159/C10645.
[3] MUNFLA 87-159/C10653.

An old man gazed on a photograph
In a locket he wore for years.
("Two little girls in blue"[1])

Her photograph is all you have to gaze upon
("You will never miss your mother till she's gone"[2])

I think I see my sweetheart still
With eyes of softest brown.
("While leaves came drifting down"[3])

I see in every vision amber tresses tied in blue.
("Amber tresses tied in blue"[4])

Oft when I sleep a melody comes rushing on my brain,
and the sweet music of that night comes greeting me again.
I take her fair small hand in mine amid my blissful trance;
one more vision is worth a world, I lead her forth to dance.
("The Closed Cottage Dance"[5])

"Visions," "dreams," "photographs," etc. indeed pervade the sentimental diction of such "old songs." Fashion and nostalgia apart, photography, born in their century and evolving in our own towards the chronicling of private events of life, partly explains the recurrence of "pictures" and associated ideas in these songs of personal and family dramas.[6] Another reason could be the implicit suggestion of the "return" of these regretted ones to those unreconciled to their loss. Edgar Morin underlines the natural link between the concept of revenant or "double" and any "image" of a person, whether dead or alive:

> Etonnante, extraordinaire identité entre le spiritisme et les croyances les plus archaiques concernant le double! Visible jusque dans les moindres détails! Ici comme là le double se manifeste avant la mort. Ici comme là le miroir, l'effigie, et ce reflet moderne qu'est la photo, peuvent fixer la présence du double . . . .[7]

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[1] Leach, *Folk* 168.
[2] MUNFLA 87-159/C10652.
[3] MUNFLA 87-159/C10645.
[4] MUNFLA 87-159/C1O648.
[5] MUNFLA 87-159/C10630.
[6] Bjarne Kildegaard, "Unlimited Memory: Photography and the Differentiation of Familial Intimacy," *Man and Picture: Papers from the First International Symposium for Ethnological Picture Research in Lund 1984*, ed. Nils-Arvid Bringéus (Stockholm: Almkvist: 1986) 71.
[7] Morin 179.

Photographs as well as telephones, smoke detectors, and other technological media stepping into the slot of "revenants" and "fetches" confirm Ellis's view of "modernization" rather than "dilution" of the supernatural in later traditional song.

10.3. "In heaven we'll meet again"

The romantic and Victorian age, Ariès notes, held far more belief in heaven than in hell, even though theirs was a slightly "deviant" conception from the official one. From the very diary of Ste Therese of the Child Jesus to American consolation literature, he finds an above all secular and "domestic" heaven, one which, except for the cruelty of separation, is a blissful transposition of earthly family life.[1] This accords with Sparkes's memory of "heaven" for his own (Protestant) people at the turn of the century: "What their conception of heaven was is not clear. I doubt if they bothered much about its shape, size or position. A place of happy reunion and comfort is all they hoped for,"[2] as for contemporaneous songs,

Dear Old Daddie of Mine[3]

Shadows slowly falling among the whispering pines
For the light is burning in that cosy shack of mine,
I hastened on the pathway to see a face divine,
For waiting there to greet me is that dear old daddie of mine.

chorus: O daddie dear old daddie, you're be [indistinct] to me
Guiding my faltering footsteps wherever I may be,
When the roll is called up yonder the weeping parted time
I know we'll meet in heaven, o dear old daddie of mine

Great [memory lapse] before me the sun begins to shine
There to greet me welcome is that dear old daddie of mine
His hair has turned to silver, his soul is still divine
He guides me from temptation, thus that dear old daddie of mine.

and epitaphs:

Three orphans miss your tender care
But plead to God for thee
In Heaven we hope to meet again
And live eternally.

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[1] Ariès, *Homme* 2: 145-6 and 59.
[2] Sparkes 154.
[3] MUNFLA 87-159/C10648; "The Orphans" is another case in point, MUNFLA 83-151, p. 35.

Farewell my wife and children dear
While life did last I loved you dear
My love for you will still remain
And I hope in Heaven we'll meet again.[1]

This is the time where family plots become standard burial practice, in itself suggestive of ultimate reunion:

"Oh bury me where my mother's prayer
And my sister's tears shall mingle there,
By my father's grave my grave shall be,
Oh bury me not in the deep deep sea.[2]

"Heaven," in the name of affection, is national if not domestic:

And if there's ever going to be a life hereafter,
and someone assures me there's going be,
I will ask my God to let me make my heaven
In that fair land across the Irish sea.

In a [...] prison where an Irish soldier lay
By his side a priest was standing ere his soul should pass away,
And he faintly murmured "father" as he clasped him by the hand
Tell me this before I die, "shall my soul pass through Ireland?"[3]

Present day Newfoundland interior decoration offers various evidence of the affective significance of "home" and "family:"[4] photographs of children's achievements, from primary school graduation to marriage, kitchen plates and plaques celebrating "mother,"

The one who bears the sweetest name
And adds a luster to the same
Long life to her for there's no other
Can take the place of my dear mother.[5]
(illustrated with a rose)

and the innumerable gifts and souvenirs received from children and grandchildren, proudly displayed and presented to visitors, are enough testimonies "erected" to the "immortality" of family love. At the same time, the constant evocation of happy reunion in heaven and the treasured memory of the past evoked in sentimental song sublimate the dread of

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[1]Casey 306.
[2]Peacock, *Songs* 1: 151.
[3]MUNFLA 87-159/C10648.
[4]See Dale.
[5]From personal fieldnotes.

separation through death,[1] such as this epitaph, no longer admonishing the anonymous passer-by on the inevitability of death, confides:

> Dear husband I tremble to think I must die
> It is lonely and sad in the cold grave to lie.
> Could you but come with me
> I know that your hand would guide me.
> Through the gloom of Death's shadowy land,
> The deep endless I think as I feel
> The darkness and mystery o'er me steal.
> I fear its wild woes with my soul overwhelm
> Ere I reach the far shore of the Heavenly realm.[2]

Mourning samplers, which Ariès traced in New England, share this intimacy of language. Their text and illustration of willows, urns and domestic motifs, and display in the family house, speak for the treasured memory of the deceased, their emotion, however, never suggesting romantic hysteria. The fairly numerous and diverse Newfoundland pieces, traceable to American canvases and patterns,[3] likewise evoke serenity rather than excessive grief in compliance with these departed parents' request and that of the song revenant:[4]

> In Memory of my beloved Father Tho
> mas Ryan who died October 24th 1873
> Aged 76 years and also my dear Mo-
> ther Ellen Ryan who died January 4th
> 1880 Aged 67 years.
>
> [design of urn flanked by willows]
>
> Weep not dear children but for us pray
> While time to you are given
> Your tears will only wet our clay
> Your prayers will gain us heaven.
>
> Requiescant in Pace. Amen.[5]

To sum up, folk expressions of "thy death" in Newfoundland offer a telling illustration of the dynamic workings of tradition; supernatural belief as well as song in expression of

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[1] Ariès, *Homme* 2: 181.
[2] Casey 306.
[3] Ariès, *Images* 246-7; *Homme* 2: 160.
[4] I thank Mr. Walter Peddle for his kind introduction to the Newfoundland Museum sampler collections. For a survey and analysis of them, see McNaughton, "Embroidered Samplers at the Newfoundland Museum," MUNFLA ms 84-210.
[5] Newfoundland Museum, 985-57.1

the romantic attitude towards death manifest re-creative adjustment of earlier traditional conceptions and values. Thus fetches and "witnesses," while keeping affinities with the apparitions of old, more aptly assuage the romantic anxiety of separation in providing personal as well as communal comfort in bereavement. While the dead held a recognized place in traditional society and kept its ethos as agents of social order, the "spirits" of the romantic age appropriately serve the individual needs of their own, their disembodied nature only facilitating communication with them at a time when it was never more desired. While Newfoundland folk tradition remains largely concerned with the resolution of untimely and tragic death ("hard death"), to those suffering "heartbreak" for the loss of loved ones it offers proportionate comfort. As Bill Ellis analyses concerning sentimental songs and ballads, death, which had never been more difficult to accept, is "exorcized" by the suggestion, not only of rest or salvation, but of the blissful memory of the happy past, the expectation of its ultimate restoration and perfection, and the assurance for the present that beloved departed ones "are fine," and keep "divine" watch over their own:

> The social function of these stories, then, both in ballad and legend, is to minimize the impact of death on the survivors. By proving that the dead live on and that they can return to comfort or admonish the living, such plots also prove that the seeming break between this world and the next is an illusion. In other short, it is not the supernatural, but the fact of death that is rationalized out by American singers.[1]

A comparative look at contemporaneous high literature gives insight into the greater loyalty of folklore to traditional ethos underneath its romantic aspects. Underneath the tangent theme of the revenant's lover return to its grieving partner, popular tradition, either idealizing or caricaturing ("dramatizing") situations for a didactic purpose, reveals meanings autonomous from and even opposite to those of literature. Whereas the choice of death over life can signify true love in tradition as in literature, the popular revenant's admonition against any concession to death, even for love's sake, speaks for tradition rather than romanticism, community rather than ego, courage rather than despair--thus reaffirming its priority concern with survival. To the same purpose, the romantic song repertoire, by allowing the freeest expression of emotion, possibly supports traditional stoicism in the actual experience of bereavement.

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[1] Ellis 178.

Forbidden Death

Ariès's fourth attitude is typically that of the contemporary industrialized West. Characterization of "forbidden," "inverted" or "repressed death," as he variously calls it, consists largely in the negation ("inversion") of all that precedes. While "tamed death" was forefelt, recognized, accepted, and celebrated as a public event affecting the social whole, modern societies tend to avoid its very thought, hide its reality and ignore its effects. The funeral ceremony is simplified, ritual largely curtailed, and the body functionally disposed of. This "mort ensauvagée" ignores the dying person and those affected by his loss: no pause in normal activities, no community support, no mourning. As "hidden death" loses any public character, its trauma is hardly felt outside the family. Neither though is it strictly private as a matter left to the tender care of relatives. When death is imminent, as in the case of terminal disease or old age, the dying person is whisked away to hospital, often to a separate ward, connected to a life-support system, and put under sedatives until death follows. Within the hour the body is dispatched to a "funeral home," where it is put in the care of the undertaker, the latest professional of death, who until its final disposal, acts as first executor.

In an article entitled "the pornography of death," the English sociologist, Geoffrey Gorer, reveals the last taboo of modern society.[1] Paradoxically, as medical, scientific and technical progress has bounded ahead, man's familiar companion for over ten centuries has turned "savage."[2] The last resistance to the technological wonders of modern society, death has never been more dreaded and hateful. As illness and old age have become a synonym of failure, the most enviable way of leaving this world is to go quickly and unknowingly--no other, in fact, than the dreaded *mors repentina et improvisa* of medieval man.[3]

For the first time in this analysis with a time-span of fifteen centuries, Ariès draws a geographical map, showing the home territory of "inverted death" in Britain, spreading to the United States, and the north-west of Europe; traditional and romantic death, on the

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[1] This article, first published in *Encounter*, Oct. 1955, has been included in the appendix to his *Death*.
[2] Ariès, *Essais* 225.
[3] Ariès, *Homme* 1:18-20.

other hand, persists best in the southern parts. Ariès sees the foundation of "inverted death" in a certain "existential and quasi-popular attitude" to nature: at the start, a conception of nature as eliminating death, then a belief in technology capable of supplanting nature, suffering and death.[1] He cautions, though, that it would be wrong to oppose a Protestant Anglo-Saxon model of death to a Catholic traditional one: social class appears to be a more determining factor than religion, with recognizable traits of "tamed death" persisting in the lower classes.

In addition, he points out that the Anglo-Saxon cultural area is not homogeneous as regards attitudes to death, that there is considerable difference between the British and the North American way of death. Britain shows a radical denial of death including the suppression of mourning, a simplified funeral, cremation and dispersion of the ashes. While this represents the purest form of "inverted death," attitudes in Canada and the United States combine this with "thy death,"[2] a qualification which has escaped the attention of other commentators.[3] Ariès sees North American death as ambivalent: whereas death is hidden from the moment of its occurrence until the final disposal of the remains, the old ritual persists in between under a "varnish" of modernity.

While grief and mourning, exalted in the just preceding age, have become "forbidden" as social indecency, Ariès sees the modern attitude as deriving from the romantic one and even preserving some "traditional" ideas. Affection or the intolerable idea of earthly separation would be the profound reason for the conspiracy of silence or lying surrounding the dying. Beside the "dispossession of death," and the "interdiction of ritual mourning," he sees these "new rites" emerging in American society functioning as a compromise between the solemn homage paid to the deceased in the past and the pressures of contemporary taboos.[4] Death in present-day Newfoundland provides an illustration of this ambivalence.

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[1] Ariès, *Homme* 2:303-05.
[2] Ariès, *Homme* 2:305-11.
[3] Ariès is referring to Evelyn Waugh, *The Loved One* (London: Chapman, 1948) and Roger Caillois, *Quatre essais de sociologie contemporaine* (Paris: Perrin, 1951).
[4] Ariès, *Essais* 180.

Chapter 11

Social Denial and Family Love: The Funeral Home Context, Cemetery Customs, and the Death Press

11.1. From "home parlour" to "funeral parlour" or "funeral home"

In partial verification of the "Newfie joke" that "the world ends at 4.00 today, 4.30 in Newfoundland," the modern way of death, along with all the other "benefits" of Confederation, finally made its way into the province... Carnell's, at present one of the three funeral companies in St. John's, was the first integrated funeral home on the island when it appeared in 1966. Its undertaking services, however, go back to 1804, at which time the business operated as Carnell's Carriage Factory Ltd. With no access to ready timber in town, people called upon the factory, which was using carpenters and upholsterers, to make a coffin, no different then to the plain-cloth covered one made in the outports. When over the years Carnell's got a horse and waggon to carry their business, these were requested for transporting the coffin from the house to the church and from there to the cemetery. Besides making its own coffins, the company eventually imported a few polished ones, and set up a little showroom. Thus the first funeral home was born. Evoking his start in the business as a wheelwright apprentice forty-seven years ago, R.B. remembers that the modern institutionalization of death rites met popular reluctance at first, and it was practical necessity, circumstance more than choice, which finally led to its adoption:

> RB: . . . as the years went on we got into Confederation and people travelled more, and we, sort of, started copying from the mainland funeral homes. I remember the first funeral home we had which was Geoff Carnell's father's grandfather's house . . . that would have been in the early fifties, and that's where the idea of the funeral home caught on, but it took a long while for to catch on; people still wanted, at that time we were still burying eighty percent of the people from their homes, but as the years went on, gradually they went on to the funeral home and then, of course, these days, the homes were more suitable for having wakes; there were bigger homes, and the homes today, you know, you walk in now in a house today, you walk in and you're all over the place, sort of thing. One time, you had a parlour, you opened it up

> once a year for Christmas, or when the clergyman came, or when you had a wake or something like that. But the, I would say in the fifties, middle of the fifties, the horse went out and the carriage, and the motor carriage came in, but we had a job convincing people to use the motor hearse; they didn't want to rush poor father off, you see, and this was the idea, but as time went on, and then in 1966 we were ready to have a funeral home like this, and it went on from there. . . . Now we might have one wake in a home a year, that's about all, but still, the older people; their husband was buried from the house, they want to be buried from the house, but that happens only once or twice a year. If we had to conduct funerals from people's homes, you know, we'd never be able to do it, the workload would be just too much. You couldn't possibly do it.[1]

The shift from the private to the institutionalized parlour indeed appears to be a natural if gradual development from the traditional pattern of the house-wake. The facilities at Carnell Memorial Chapel are basically designed on a home-plan: visitors come in through a foyer, from where they have free access to any of the six reposing rooms, the common lounge area and adjoining kitchenette. The body, in the euphemistic idiom of "forbidden death," "rests" in a "reposing room" for usually three days. Relatives take turns to welcome visitors, who, after "viewing" the prepared body and usually leaving a mass or sympathy card, may proceed to the lounge for an informal chat, drink and snacks contributed by the family as well as themselves. Thus the "integration" of the material and the religious aspects surrounding death carries on the juxtaposition of the profane and the sacred, the kitchen and the parlour, as distinct but complementary and adjacent spaces of the private dead house.

Whereas scholars mostly account for the emergence of the funeral parlour in terms of a changing worldview and ethos, the local funeral people I had occasion to interview mostly invoke pragmatic reasons. The former forcefully emphasize "rupture" with the past; the latter analyze their market in terms of "tradition," and take their cue from it:

> GC: . . . the way we promote the building is that it's a homelike atmosphere and although it's commercial and has to be--'cause you get hundreds of people through on any given time--so you do have to design it to house these numbers. But in the rooms the furnishings are such that you would find them in your own home, and basically make it as comfortable as possible for the family while they're there; they spend a couple of days there. . . .[2]
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> . . . Carnell's tried to change the fleet from black to grey, but the people expressed concern, and the vehicles remain black.

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[1] MUNFLA 87-159/C12044.
[2] MUNFLA 87-159/C12031.

> "In the last few years, St. John's and Newfoundland have started to boom. Our population now is around 200,000 and going up, so we look forward to many more changes and mainland customs becoming more common here. I do hope, however, that the traditional values of Newfoundlanders will not change."[1]

The following discussion largely analyzes funeral "tradition" in present-day Newfoundland, however, in its folkloristic sense including both the old and the new, with a view to evaluate the change with regard to the structural significance of the funeral ritual.

11.2. "An undertaker is almost like your clergyman"

With the ritualization of death in the later Middle Ages, the clergy became the first death professionals; at this point, while the Christian celebration took over much of the customs of old, the dead person's "company" entrusted the conduct of the funeral celebration to the clergy. Ariès analyses the role of undertakers as the second wave of this process, with commercialization replacing clericalization of death. Their "integrated" services offer full charge of the logistics involved from the occurrence of death to the disposal of the remains. In addition to the facilities already mentioned, Carnell's funeral home includes a "preparation room" where the embalming is done, a casket display, a chapel, a crematorium and committal area. Granting the practicality of "integrated services," a business name such as "Carnell Memorial Chapel" goes far to suggest religious "competence":

> He [R.B.] pointed out that although there is the odd call where there is no request for a man of the cloth to be present at the service, the vast portion of funerals involve the clergy. Although now about half of the services originate from the chapel, this is almost a function of having adequate seating, which is often unavailable in a small church, rather than a drift away from church-originated services.[2]

IP: What about the chapel here? Are funeral services held here?
RB: Oh yes, quite a few of them.
IP: Why is that? Why would the family have a funeral service here rather in their own parish church?
RB: OK, there's a number of reasons. Sometimes a person can be a member of a church, but probably never attends a church. The only time they see a church is when they attend a wedding or a baptism or a funeral. Many times the family will come and just have the service in our chapel. Sometimes there's a family, you're only going to have ten

[1] Andy Zielinski, "Carnell's of Newfoundland," *Canadian Funeral News* (July-August 1981): 43-8; the quote is from the late Judge Geoffrey C. Carnell.
[2] Zielinski 45.

> to fifteen or twenty people to the funeral. They take the attitude "why go to a big great church? We'll have it in the smaller chapel here," and of course, with some religions they prefer to have the service in the church regardless.

G.C., the General Administrator of this sixth generation family business, remains "a funeral director" besides being a civil engineer and partner in a consulting firm. He explains that, should the business be sold out of the family, the name would definitely be kept, as to change it would be commercial suicide.[1] This indication given in support of the fact that "no business is more traditional than the funeral industry," in turn, suggests that people take more than a "practical" outlook on *their* undertaker. The clientele of funeral homes is family-bound, and this tradition apparently even oversteps religious affiliation, notwithstanding its relevance to their choice:

> RB: . . . there's a change, but still, religion plays a big part. For example, we're noted as a Protestant funeral home, and Caul's as a Catholic funeral home. So, usually, the Catholics go to Caul's, the Protestants come to us, but we enjoy excellent Catholic rate. We do a lot, I'd say, one third of our business. Also, a funeral home, I s'ppose, an undertaker is almost like your clergyman. If your Mum went there, your grandfather went there, then usually, you went there right down through. . . . We've been serving families for, well in my time, forty-seven years, and every death in their family always came here.[2]

11.3. "Naturally they like to have the person out of the house as soon as possible"

"Tradition" apart, the ordinary proceeding in the case of death in present-day Newfoundland shows unmistakable traces of "hidden death." Practical reasons, again, will account for the speedy removal of the body from the home, hospital or senior citizen home, all of which "have little or no room" to keep it. In all cases, the undertaker is expected to take charge of it as soon as the doctor's certificate has been signed, and apparently much to everybody's relief:

> IP: What is the ordinary proceeding when a death occurs today?
> RB: Usually the family, some members of the family, they make the decision as to what funeral home they're going to select, and then the

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[1] MUNFLA 87-159/C12031; Caul's testifies to this fact: the original family name was bought out with the business.

[2] MUNFLA 87-159/C12044; the high proportion of "religious" funerals, besides the fact that Newfoundlanders remain more attached to religion than mainlanders, might also relate to the fact that locally, contrary to the rest of Canada, all cemeteries are owned by the Churches.

call is made to us and if a person dies at home, in the day or night, we immediately go to the home, and after the doctor has signed the death certificate, we remove the person from the home to the funeral home right away because naturally the people would like to get the person out of the house as soon as possible.

IP: You feel that that is a great concern to them?

RB: Oh yes, very much so, oh yes.

IP: Why is that?

RB: I don't know really for sure. I think that, when a person dies, almost before they call their clergyman they call the funeral director. They think that's the first thing you should do. And, well, they have all kinds of, they think that if you have them in the house too long *rigor mortis* will set in, which is nonsense of course.

The family's abandonment of their deceased to a third person is no break with the past. One remembers that in traditional outport society the relatives were stigmatized as "mourners," and as such ritually excluded from any physical contact with the corpse. The tasks of laying out the body, making the coffin or digging the grave were graciously contributed by community members on the tacit understanding that "someone would do so for you one day." These tasks being the "bought" responsibility of "professionals" today, their "institutionalized" role largely functions in place of the ethos of solidarity and egalitarianism once binding the community. Yet, to see nothing but practical updating in this process is to overlook its ideological reasons and the pathological effects of the de-ritualization or de-socialization of death in modern societies. This funeral director is well aware of the significance of the psychological factor underlying the rapport with his clientele:

GC: It's a difficult business because all of it are minor details which are huge to the family because of the death. We find that the littlest things are the biggest things over the two-day period when the family are here. You get various people: some are fine, businesslike, others are destroyed, others are angry and therefore nothing will please them, but generally you're getting a family and Newfoundlanders have big families that draw the strength of others and you don't have too many problem cases where nothing we do is going to please the family.[1]

Contrary to the old custom, the closest relatives nowadays, also in the worst circumstances, bear the burden of decision-making concerning the prosaic aspects of all funeral arrangements:

IP: Do you find that there's much uncontrollable grief?

GC: In a tragic death there is. I think we have people come in sedated. I think that you find in a very sudden death, young people dying young,

[1] MUNFLA 87-159/C12031.

> you will find uncontrollable emotions and very very difficult for a funeral director even to sit down and make the arrangements with the family. Each question, you would create a flow of emotion.[1]

The funeral undertaking industry is developing an "artificial" infrastructure filling in the gaps left by the personal and social involvement in death:

> GC: There's a lot of funeral homes that are now into counselling, grief therapy and everything. I feel that it is inappropriate unless you have specific training in their field; however, the funeral home industry is pushing grief therapy--for their own reasons because it allows a follow up with the family, which is important. There's a brochure on it, tape, how to deal with the death of a child, produced by a casket manufacturer. The industry is beginnning to change because there are large multinational firms buying up smaller traditional funeral homes, keeping the older on the payroll, maintaining everything as it is, however it's controlled and marketed through the multinational cooperation. That hasn't reached Newfoundland yet, but it's on its shores. They are heavy in the preplanning. . . .
> IP: What's the rationale of "preplanning"?
> GC: You plan ahead with insurance, pension plans, wills; one of the most difficult arrangements at death is the funeral arrangements which are overlooked and that is the major rationale. Some people like to pay for it, the elderly that are low income earners, because they're retired, feel secure in having their funeral prepaid and prearranged, so there are different rationales depending on age groups.[2]
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> IP: Preplanning, how has that caught on in Newfoundland?
> RB: It's catching on, really catching on the last two or three years. You'll find that mostly older people who have probably sold their homes or went to a senior citizens' home or an apartment, they like to have all this done so that their families, children, won't have any decisions to make. A man and a wife who brought up two or three children, they've probably left and moved to the mainland or anywhere, you know, God knows they may be anywhere, and at the time of death there may not be anybody here to make all these decisions, so in many cases they have it all done. Almost everyday we're prearranging funerals. As a matter in fact, I had one this morning only before you came, and I have two more after lunch; it's almost every day. There's hardly a day passes when you don't have at least one. They come in, they'll sit down, we'll put it all on paper and then at the time of death their wishes are carried out. Eh, sometimes, the family will overrule some of their wishes, they can do that, I believe legally, I'm not sure, but it's hardly ever done, you know, but a lot of people, they like to have it all done, so when everything happens, you know...
> IP: Do you have young people, people my age preplanning for themselves?
> RB: Yes, sure, as a matter of fact, yes, and younger than that.
> IP: What's their rationale for that?

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[1] MUNFLA 87-159/C12031.
[2] MUNFLA 87-159/C12031.

RB: I don't really know, to tell you the truth. I think what happens if a person comes up and prearranges their funeral and pays for it at the time, well if they live ten years, or any amount of years, they still got it for that same price they paid. We open a trust account and that money is placed in a trust account, hopefully any interest we earn on that money will offset inflation, sometimes it does, sometimes it doesn't; most times it doesn't really.
IP: Do they pay in installments?
RB: No, they can but if they want to prepay their funeral and want to guarantee, that the price be guaranteed to them, we like for them to pay it right away.
IP: What's the average cost of a funeral?
RB: The average today? You're talking, apart from any pocket expenses, as far as we're concerned, the average cost is between 2,300 and 2,700 dollars. That's for a traditional funeral, if you have just cremation, that's much cheaper, it's half that.[1]

As in the case of the humble parents who had set their minds on burying their ice-frozen sons in steel caskets so that "they would never get wet again," financial sacrifices may be incurred beyond all rational and religious sense. Father O., on reporting this sad event, confided what "could not be said" to the families then:

FO: You know, what was the point of me, then, sitting down and telling them: "well, look, my dear, when the soul leaves the body, *it's no longer a human being*. You're waking the remains, as we say "his remains are waking. He's resting at such and such a funeral home." When he gets his soul back again at the last day, he's going to rise again as he was: a human being, but he's *a corpse*. But, you can't dare say those things, and for trying to explain to them, you know, that he's not concerned now about whether water is going to leak into his coffin, because he's gone home to God, and he's going to be reunited with his body on the day of the Resurrection. They *know all that*, but that's why I can't see the expense that they go through.[2]

Tragedy and grief apart, such "unnecessary" sacrifices seem to carry on the ancient concern with "the good wake," possibly compensating for "hard death":

IP: Have you come across people, who, because of their grief, go to the most irrational expense?
GC: There are some; the Memorial Planning Society say that there is a lot of ego involved. . . . There are people who say it's probably unnecessary, all that expense, and there's others that, you know, "it's dad's money, whatever, and we want to see him off the best way we can," and people

[1] MUNFLA 87-159/C12044.
[2] MUNFLA 87-159/C12030; The pervasive abhorrence of "a watery grave" might explain that Robert Butt cannot remember any request for a burial at sea "such as the ones you see in the movies," and only rare ones for scattering the ashes at sea, in Zielinski 47.

> do that. They just want everything to be perfect. I guess it's a thank you. It's the last opportunity to do anything for a loved one.[1]

Today, there are fifty-two funeral homes scattered over the province, some of which, like the one on Fogo Island, are only very recently introduced. Whereas in the olden times, only a "foreign" body, one not belonging to the community, was waked in the church, all deaths now are waked there or in the funeral home,[2] for "people won't have all that 'ructions' in the house" any more.[3] My first personal observation of "forbidden death" on Fogo Island was on being taken on my first tour of the place by a university friend native to the place. Whereas she proudly intended to show me her community church, she unhesitantly changed her mind and told me so on finding out that there was an open coffin inside, explaining that ever since she had first attended her grandmother's funeral, she could not stand the view of death.[4]

Unpracticed in Europe, embalming, in Newfoundland as in the rest of North-America, is standard practice, and motivated by the "viewing" of the body waking at the funeral home. "Viewing the body" in the old outports literally meant going to a wake, and this visit, like the whole funeral ritual, functioned to the benefit of the mourning family as much as the rest of the community. By paying one's respects to the deceased and to the family, one terminated one's relationship to him/her for the best and only improved that with his/her relatives. While this traumatic visual interaction with the dead person was a social necessity, the corollary custom of "touching" it was a homeopathic antidote for this trauma, since doing so, in this ghost-fearing society, prevented haunting by the dead person.

As one kept a favourite dress or suit to "look one's best" in one's coffin, and all visitors were expected to pay a compliment on the demeanour of the deceased, this very concern with the physical appearance of the body has become the trademark of an undertaker:

> IP: Why do you encourage viewing the body?
> GC: Because we're proud of the way we prepare the body and the way it's placed, and I guess it's the funeral director's signature.[5]

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[1] MUNFLA 87-159/C12031.
[2] MUNFLA 87-159/C12030.
[3] MUNFLA 87-159/C12044.
[4] From personal fieldnotes.
[5] MUNFLA 87-159/C12031.

"Viewing" the body thus remains a major aspect of the funeral home wake, and "touching" it is still practised, if out of affection rather than fear, wilful retention rather than separation:

> IP: Do people like to touch the corpse?
> FO: Yes, they do. Most people will do it who are either friends or relatives.
> IP: How do they do that?
> FO: They just put their hand on his forehead or his hands. They won't say anything, just put their hand on him. I suppose they're trying to transfer their affection to him or what it could be.[1]

Another element of the ostentatious "beautification" of death, first appearing in the last century, is the present luxury of "caskets" in Newfoundland and other industrialized parts of America, as compared with European standards. Even though R.B. declared that, "Probably because of the deep traditions here, hardwoods outsell steel 10 to 1, and while we do notice an increase in steels, we know that it is much lower than on the mainland or in the United States,"[2] the range and sophistication of caskets, such as I saw them at Carnell's, justifies the existence of a "casket display room" as a component of the integrated funeral parlour. Their size struck me as well, being almost twice as wide and slightly higher than the ones with which I was familiar. The interior appearance suggested little short of a downy bedding, and was slightly raised under the head for the purpose of "viewing" the remains. Speaking for their comparative sobriety, European terms for it (cercueils, doodkisten, Särge and coffins, at least) preserve their original sense as "container," the American "casket," on the other hand, suggesting preciousness in itself. This linguistic clue, which did not escape Ariès,[3] finds corroboration in the local lexicon, in which the "coffin" designates the rough wooden box in which the "casket" is shipped from the mainland, and put into to avoid immediate contact with the soil. Despite this outside influence, the tradition of colour for caskets in relation to "social status" remains: white cloth for infants and girls up to fifteen or so and blue for boys, but along with practically everything else from cream to dark. [4]

Generally speaking, the body is viewed in an open casket, and on making arrangements with the undertaker, the family will often bring a picture of the live person to work to for the embalming and dressing, the objective, according to Ariès, being no other than hiding the fact of death under the illusion of life.[5] From funeral undertakers'

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[1] MUNFLA 87-159/C12030.
[2] Zielinski 47.
[3] Ariès, *Homme* 2: 307.
[4] MUNFLA 87-159/C12044.
[5] Ariès, *Essais* 206.

testimonies, on the other hand, this most life-like memory of the dear person offered to all who knew him/her, is a helping factor in the acceptance of death:

IP: What about tragic death?

GC: A tragic death, you will generally find in a tragic death a closed casket because at that stage people are just refusing to believe that this has happened, and--this is my opinion--by closing the casket they are closing off the fact that this has really happened.

IP: In what details do people go when planning, such as, for instance, how the body should look?

GC: Some people are very particular; they will look at the hair and critique the hair: "please fix her hair as this is not the way our mum used to do it." We don't get too many complaints, but when we do that's what people say, too much make-up or, what we like to do is have the family for half an hour or an hour prior to opening the funeral home for visitation, so at that point they'll have an opportunity to fix dad's tie or put his medals on correctly. You get that, that's the loving touch of a family, and I guess they want everything to be perfect.

IP: Do you find that seeing a dear one in a casket helps get over grief or is it the contrary?

GC: I think it does. I think the waking period is the most important; it gives them a chance to sit and reflect and get things in perspective, and I think it does them a lot of good really. I think it's a very important part of the therapy for them. . . . We generally encourage an open casket so at that time they're coming in to see him or her for the last time, and that's important. I think that's part and parcel of the grief therapy. . . .

IP: What's most important to people? Is it the type of casket or the way the person looks?

RB: Well, I think it's both important to them, you know. Some people, they go big on caskets, I don't know why, and other people don't, but I think it's important to them the way the person looks because when you see your dead dad or mother in the hospital, and she's sick, or she's been sick and probably not, you know, their hair hasn't been done. When they see them after we remove them from hospital, or wherever they die and they're prepared, there's quite a difference on them and they appreciate it very much. It's important to them.

IP: Do they get back to you and tell them what they think?

RB: Oh yes, many times, sure, almost all the time.

IP: Have you had criticism too?

RB: Sometimes, yes, not very much though. Usually, some people will say, "Mr. B., mother doesn't look like herself." I think it's not that their mother doesn't look like herself, but they're not ready to accept the fact that their mother is dead, you see? I've heard people saying to me, "well, mother doesn't look like herself," but then the next day, "my, she's right back to herself now, she's just like herself." It's hard to accept the fact that their mother's there. Her mother didn't change from one day to the other but it's all up here I think.[1]

[1] MUNFLA 87-159/C12044.

11.4. "The only time we see each other is at a wake"

Funeral professionals testifying on the therapeutical relevance of the wake and its related aspects could be slanted by commercial interest; the particularly large attendance at wakes locally, however, gives evidence that their services, as far as the wake is concerned, are largely supported by popular demand. A funeral director explained in a published interview:

> "Newfoundlanders are religious and close-knit, with both family and inter-marriage roots connecting a great many of us. This means that funerals are well attended, and unlike some parts of Canada, we generally find more people at funerals than signatures in the memorial book that we keep during viewing hours. Usually, between 150 and 250 signatures are gathered, but funerals regularly draw twice that or more."[1]

Visitation remains a prominent feature in local custom:

> IP: Is there anything particular of Newfoundland in the whole procedure?
> RB: From my experience with mainland funeral homes, people just drop in, stay for five or ten minutes and go again, but here in Newfoundland, people, especially close members of the family and friends, they sometimes come and stay from seven until ten and they stay here all the time. That's not unusual, whereas most places on the mainland, they just drop in and sign the register, pay their respects to the family and up there in these places they usually have visiting hours like two to four, seven and nine, that's about it really.

While the wake altogether has been prepared by the undertakers and embalmers in the "public" space of the funeral home, each corpse is waked in its own "reposing room." At that stage, the family steps back on to act as host to the visitors, the funeral personnel only keeping handy in case. Thus, the social function of modern wakes is little different from that in the past:

> IP: What's the motivation of people visiting?
> GC: I think most people would visit the living, they are paying their last respects but they are paying their last respects to the family members. They are saying good-bye.[2]

Frank Galgay confirms:

> FG: . . . sometimes the funeral homes here, even in the twentieth century, some of the older people who go over to wakes now, a lot of people go over and they go and pay their respects, and there's chairs; they'll sit down there at six o'clock or 7 o'clock, and they'll stay until it closes,

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[1] Zielinski 45.
[2] MUNFLA 87-159/C12031.

especially the older people in their sixties and seventies. They are used to this, when they go to a wake, they go to a wake; they are there all night.

IP: Like a reception?

FG: Like a reception, chatting and talking and meeting friends, for example, that they hadn't seen before. It's even with families in Newfoundland, they never see each other, you know. I go to a wake and we say, "gosh, it's shocking, we should get together more," or "we should meet each other, the only time we see each other is at a wake."[1]

This last expression, in fact, was also given to me in explanation of the origin of the Tilting Expatriates Club. This informal association means to gather all community natives living in St. John's by an evening's celebration on Christmas, St. Patrick's Day and Colcannon. It was indeed from "meeting each other only at wakes" of their own that grew the concern of preserving their community culture by keeping regular contact.[2] The case of this "little community," like traditional ones, illustrates the primary function of funeral celebration as re-generation of life through social affirmation in the face of death.

The funeral people speak of twenty to five hundred visitors to a deceased over the usually two day wake held from ten in the morning through to ten at night. Their numbers, interestingly, increase in correlation with the old concept of "hard death," and show the old sacred rule of solidarity and support to take precedence over personal affiliation to the deceased:

RB: I find that if a person lives a long life when they die, depending on the number of relatives they have and friends--everybody is different: you'll get a nice crowd--but it seems that if a young child dies, or if someone gets killed in an automobile accident or drowned, you seem to get a much bigger crowd, especially if it's somebody in their teens. In many cases, they don't even know the person, but they just come.

IP: Do children come to wakes? young children?

RB: Oh yes, yes, they have them here, babies in arms and every age right up through. . . . Sometimes we have a person attending a school and they may have an accident or die suddenly for some reason; usually the school will come as a group and come on their own. They come as a classroom.[3]

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[1] MUNFLA 87-159/C12034.
[2] MUNFLA 87-159/C10657.
[3] MUNFLA 87-159/C12044.

11.5. Family Love in Finale

For Ariès, profound love for one's own would be at the root of the modern denial of death; the Newfoundland data provides particular evidence for this suggestion. Death being treated with professional and euphemistic decency, certain local customs, some carried out in the very context of the funeral home, show the expression of personal affection for the deceased unabashed by social pressures. Whereas the funeral ritual essentially promotes effective separation from the deceased, and modern ideology tends to rush the bereaved over this delicate process, local behaviour evokes personal "rites of retention" of the deceased--in accommodation with the "official" ones marking his/her separation from the living.

Mourning, which was once observed usually for about a year after the loss of a husband or wife, and signified by dark clothing apart from abstinence from all happy "socials," is completely "out" nowadays. Even the restriction of dress has been transferred to the "professionals." R. B. answered unhesistantly:

IP: Do people dress when they come to a wake here [in the funeral home]?
RB: Well, at one time there was nothing else but dark clothes: the men had dark black suits and the women had the dark dress, but that's not so today. They just dress casually.
IP: They wear no armbands?
RB: No, no, nothing like that.
IP: Do they wear dark clothes on the funeral day?
RB: No, no.
IP: Not even the relatives?
RB: Not really.
IP: What about the pallbearers?
RB: Usually, if the firm supplies them, we all have dark black suits that we use, and if friends of the family act as pallbearers, whatever they wear, whatever they'd normally wear in the street.[1]

Sharply contrasting with this "casual ignorance" of death, the overt and public "showing off" of the embalmed body over the wake period could be counted among those "new rites," as Ariès calls them. Along with the embalmers' plastic statement that the body can be restored to its "own self" notwithstanding disease, agony and death, and that it is an object of admiration and comfort, the mourners' "gifts" to this "life-like corpse" oppose the Christian teaching that this is merely the "remains" of a human being "emptied" of its personality, affection, likings, etc. Father O. expresses his wonder at such practices:

[1] MUNFLA 87-159/C12044.

FO: They usually dress--this is, I can't understand that either--they'll buy a pair of new shoes to put on the corpse, and a new suit of clothes sometimes, or, if he's got a really good suit, they'll put that on him, but they'll put new shoes on him, I've seen that, and then usually a rosary entwined around their fingers, and sometimes, when the coffin lid is up, they will have *pictures* of *all* the family.
IP: Pinned inside?
FO: Pinned inside, and that would go with him. [pause] That's amazing, I *saw* that.
IP: Is that common?
FO: Yes, at least it was common up in Renews to do that.
IP: Recently?
FO: Well, I'm only out of there a year and a half. In fact, I went back to a wake there not too long ago. It was a grandfather and he had his grandchildren above his head in colour photographs with him and that would stay with him. When they'd fold the coffin, they wouldn't take it away.[1]

These practices have also been observed in town:

IP: Do people place anything in the casket when at the wake?
RB: Oh yes, sometimes.
IP: What, for instance?
RB: Just about everything you'd mention: photographs, bibles, different books, little mementos they were given over the years by somebody, almost anything you name. It's not often it happens but in some cases. It used to be a big thing one time but not so much now.
IP: Even a pipe?
RB: Of yes, sure.
IP: A bottle even?
RB: Yes, yes. I don't encourage that but I know it's happened; when my back is turned it's put there. Yes, oh yes, everything, yes, everything.[2]

Watertight steel caskets paid for those who froze to their death and blankets wrapped over others who could never bear a chill suggest failure to make the proper adjustment to the death of loved ones. The more casual "offerings" made to the deceased, such as family pictures, rather signify the living's desire and belief that their dead remain "bound to their own" affectively and spiritually. Witness experiences, which appeared to be common locally, give their support to this affective or spiritual rather than supernatural belief. In this perspective, formal clothing and whatever object is "smuggled" across the borders of death above all express the living's lasting and loving attachment, honour and respect for their departed ones.

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[1] MUNFLA 87-159/C12030.
[2] MUNFLA 87-159/C12044.

Local cemetery customs further illuminate the significance of affective ties uniting the living and their dead.[1] In his successive studies devoted to material culture in relation to death, Gerald Pocius concludes that "the place of burial" and its attending customs function as "channels of contact" with the family dead. His survey of the evolution of burying customs reveals that while the church progressively institutionalized burial in a conscious attempt to control (i.e. reduce) contact with the dead,[2] and gravestones as well as epitaphs for long were imported, the decoration of graves to this day remains the only "popular" expression in this respect. Pocius analyzes this indeed popular custom as resisting the imposed removal of the dead from social life. He explains the persistence of this humble art as "the only viable channel through which the living can express their desire to maintain contact with the dead, thus lessening the social and psychological disruption at death."[3]

Grave plots, whether in town or country, are sharply and neatly delineated, covered with some "permanent" substance, such as white or black gravel distinct from that of the cemetery paths, broken glass, sea shells, astro turf or trimmed glass. Brightly-coloured plastic flowers, available even from outport groceterias, not only compensate for the rare and costly real ones, but also seem to be preferred for their suggestion of "permanent" remembrance. Under the creative and sometimes naive arrangement of these materials, one unmistakably reads warmth, fervour and faith.[4]

Repairing, tending and decorating graves is done in the summer, particularly Sunday afternoons, and the most intensively the weeks prior to the "flower service," (i.e. cemetery mass) which most denominations hold annually in each cemetery. This custom has been going on locally for longer than Father O. can remember. This outdoor mass is held in the evening so that all, including men fishing, can attend. In line with what precedes, Father O.'s comment reveals the strong if not prevailing affective sense of such masses for their "participants":

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[1] Cremation was only very recently introduced and still represents less than 2% of all deaths in the province; MUNFLA 87-159/C12031.

[2] Pocius, "Transformation" 25-34.

[3] Pocius, "Place," abstract.

[4] Pocius, "Cemetery Decoration in Newfoundland: Channels of Contact between the Living and the Dead," paper read at the joint meeting of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada and the Society of Architectural Historians, Victoria, British Columbia, April 3, 1981.

FO: We have three cemeteries and there's a mass in each cemetery and they're *crowded*. Now, a great many don't really participate in the mass because they're too far away. They're down in the corner. It's very hard to get them away from their *own grave* at the cemetery mass to come up around the altar, but there's such a crowd that it's impossible. The whole of Topsail Road is one complete traffic jam at night.

IP: Do you request them to come closer to the altar?

FO: Yes, and they still stay out on their own grave, I don't know why: they *do*. There wouldn't be that much room but at least they could stop talking and chatting to one another. It seems that at wakes, funerals and weddings people are more sociable or seem to be talking more. There's been lots of discussions about whether we should have them any more or not because really there're not that many people who are really taking part in the mass.[1]

Asked why she attended cemetery masses in her community, a woman in Calvert answered Pocius that "it's nice to keep in touch." On attending such a mass in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in town, he overheard two young girls ask their mother "where's poppy to?" having trouble finding their grandfather's grave. My own luck in attending that mass, five years apart, allows me to subscribe to his suggestion that "visits to the cemetery are not visits to a place but visits to relatives,"[2] as a particular case, however exceptional, testifies:

FO: I know one man, his wife is dead now two and a half years; he goes down to the graveyard everyday and sits by the grave for about half an hour--right here in town. His friends have said to him, "why don't you let go?" "No," he said, "but I feel good," he said, "after I go down." He *talks* to her--I wish I had someone who'd think so much of me! It means that he is always thinking about his wife, eh, and yet, isn't there a proverb, "out of sight, out of mind," and then, of course, you have the other one,"absence makes the heart grow fonder." [laughs][3]

A recent study of obituaries, "cards of thanks" and "In Memoriams" of the francophone European and Canadian papers yields structural light on the Newfoundland material.[4] Viewing this data from his theological as much as sociological training, Gabriel Ringlet uncovers a pattern of "rural" or "local" death in apposition to "urban" or "national" death. The dead, in regional or small town papers, neighbour on horoscopes, cinemas, and crosswords on the same page, much as they share in the life of traditional

[1] MUNFLA 87-159/C12030.

[2] Pocius, "Cemetery" 9.

[3] MUNFLA 87-159/C12030.

[4] Gabriel Ringlet, "Mourir dans le journal," *Les Vivants et leurs morts: art, croyances et rites funéraires dans l'Ardenne d'autrefois* (Bastogne, Belg.: Musée en Piconrue, Crédit Communal, 1989) 251-78.

societies. Their families are more numerous in publishing thanks for sympathy and keen on quoting every one of their relatives, close or far. This resilient social aspect of death also shows in the rarer mention in these papers of funerals celebrated "dans l'intimité." Such private funerals often accompany cremation, and correspond to a seemingly more "urban" and sometimes "middle class" tendency.

With reference to these observations, such announcements in *The Evening Telegram*, Newfoundland's major daily paper, clearly fit the "rural" or "local" pattern. "Cards of thanks" and "In Memoriams" respectively fill about a whole page or border on "personal memos," "real estate," etc. By comparison with their equivalents published for Brussels, both types of inserts are far more lengthy and emotional, however conventional their form. "Cards of thanks," in particular, scarcely vary apart from the persons quoted:

> DALTON
>
> We, the family of the late Annie Dalton, wish to express our appreciation and gratitude to all who helped alleviate our sorrow. Thanks to those who phoned, visited our family home or the funeral home, sent Mass Cards or sympathy cards, letters, flowers, gifts of food or made contributions to Annie's Memory Fund. Special thanks: to our pastoral team Father Bill and Sister Emma. To Father Terry and Father Glavine. To Dr. Lake and Dr. Ballam, Nurse Power and Nurse Kennedy. To the Presentation Sisters for visits and expressions of sympathy. To the Knights of Columbus and the Legion of Mary, to the R.C. School Board, C.B.C. and the Town Council, to the Altar Boys, to Mr. Dunphy and the staff of Dunphy's Funeral Home, to all our relatives and friends. The immediate family is deeply appreciative and proud of our nieces, nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews who by their great gifts, made the liturgy at the burial mass so prayerful; and to their spirit of togetherness in preparing for such great fellowship at the family home. It is impossible to thank each of you individually, but please be assured that your thoughtfulness, kindness and prayers will always be remembered.
> THE DALTON FAMILY[1]

[1] "Cards of Thanks," *The Evening Telegram* 4 Mar. 1989: 45.

Gratitude on behalf of "the family" is generously extended to everybody--relative, friend and "professional"--for their sympathy and support. As well as a warm thank you, these addresses sound like a public statement of family cohesion and re-affirmation following the loss of one of their members. Along with all those sharing in their loss, "the family" is meticulously repertoried up to its youngest and remotest members in a common satisfaction that everything and all contributed to the perfection of the funeral. Thus this "formula," by which the mourners acknowledge the cooperative "success" of the celebration, certifies that this was "a good death" by traditional standards.

More numerous even but hardly more variable in their expression are the paper's "In Memoriams" published on the anniversary of death.[1] In line with the francophone data, these deaths mostly go back to the last five years with rare exceptions going as far back as twenty. The lay-out and wording is similar to that of headstones, their most striking feature being the fairly long verse epitaph as emotional core. *The Evening Telegram* provides a free booklet with some two hundred different verse stanzas to choose from according to one's relation to the deceased. Most contributors select no less than three stanzas, to which some add a more personal address to the deceased:

In Memoriam

(photograph)

JACKSON

In loving memory
of a dear Husband
Father and Grandfather

William Jackson (Bill)

who passed away
February 25, 1982
Aged 62 years

A page in our book of memories is gently turned today,
Those we love don't go
away, they walk beside us
every day,

In Memoriam

HILLIER

In fond
and loving memory
of a dear
Father and Grandfather

Archibald Hillier

who passed away
February 28, 1984

FATHER:
Memories of the one we
loved,
Still cast their gentle glow,
To grace our days and light

[1] It is not infrequent to see two or three inserts relating to the same deceased, one upon the other, each with different verses but reproducing exactly the same photograph; cards of thanks also appear to be inserted by different members of "the family."

Unseen, unheard but always near,
Still loved, still missed, still very dear.

Remembrance is a golden chain,
Death tries to break, all in vain;
To have, to love, and then part,
Is the greatest sorrow of one's heart.

Just a thought of sweet remembrance,
Just a memory fond and true,
Just a token of affection,
And a heartache still for you.

Remembering you is easy,
We do it every day.
Missing you is a heartache, that never goes away.

Ever remembered and always missed by wife Charlotte and family.[1]

our paths,
Wherever we go.

We never lose the ones we love,
For even though they 're gone,
Within the hearts of those who care.
Their memory lingers one...

GRANDFATHER:
To us you were someone special,
You were loving, kind and true,
You will never be forgotten, Poppy,
For we thought the world of you.

Ever remembered and sadly missed by son Wayne and grandchildren Natasha and Jeffery.

Ringlet's analysis of the superlative and emotional discourse of these expressions uncovers that what "In Memoriams" actually "commemorate" is the moral needs of the bereaved. Underlying the public declaration "I don't forget him" and "don't forget him," the message would also be "please don't forget me."[2]

This overview of some salient synchronic aspects of death in Newfoundland yields probably the clearest insights into the resilience of the old values of "traditional" death up and against the forces of de-ritualization, de-socialisation and denial of death in modern life. While acknowledging the inevitable changes brought about in the wake of modernization on the continental model, undertakers locally have appropriately "sensed" their market and eased the transition from the private to the commercial context. Thus helped by their concern with preserving "local tradition," Newfoundlanders still know to ritually transform death into "good death:" a death regenerating social and family life.

[1] "Classified," *The Evening Telegram* 25 Feb. 1989: 37.
[2] Ringlet 278.

While the material burden of funeral has been unloaded from the community shoulders, its members are still called and depended on for moral and social support.

The essential concerns and meanings, indeed, have outlived their old form and context: the body is still honoured and "looking even better" (lifelike) than before, relatives are still allowed the status of "mourner" over the wake period to "view" the realities of their loss and progressively adjust to it through filling their social duty as host to their friends and acquaintances. As for the most deficient part of modern death, that following the disposal of the remains when the role of the undertakers is played out, Newfoundlanders have found "new rites" to compensate for this lack through "cards of thanks" also functioning as requests for help to dependents, and "In Memoriams" reminding them of one's unresolved bereavement. So, while all the restrictions of the ancient one-year mourning rule, even as to dress, have been lifted ("forbidden"), the "repressed" mourners continue to acknowledge their state via the channels of the printed word. As well as with their social circle, the bereaved resolutely maintain contact with their dead both through private and official channels, personal and social rites, such as the intimate "smuggling" of tokens of personal and lasting affection, the cemetery mass occasion, suggesting that in Newfoundland it might still be some time before the living leave the dead to the dead.

3.

The Classical Ballads' Poetic Context

Having identified the meanings expressed in the ballads' cultural environment, it remains to explore their self-contained meanings. The following analysis subscribes to Barre Toelken's proposition that "the *ballad text itself* is a poetic context with its own highly focused constellation of dramatic interaction, dialog, and plot," that "the ballad genre itself may be said to be a context for the functioning and dissemination of figurative language," and that "within the song itself, the metaphors are much more in keeping with the manifest story of the ballad than with any outside system."[1] The first chapter of this section presents a practically exhaustive survey of the classical ballad records for the province; the next proposes a talerole analysis of the texts relating to death grounded on this quantitative basis.

[1] Toelken, "Figurative" 133 and 135.

Chapter 12

The Sources

Newfoundland has yielded almost as rich a harvest of folksongs as Nova Scotia, which holds the record for folksongs collected in English Canada.[1] This is not surprising. The two provinces saw the earliest British and Irish settlements in the country as well as the first important folksong collectors. W. Roy Mackenzie began his collecting in Nova Scotia in 1908, and Elisabeth B. Greenleaf noted the first songs of her Newfoundland collection in 1920 and 1921.[2] Both regional repertoires, quite naturally, also include the highest numbers of classical ballads recorded in Canada. Following is a survey of the Newfoundland texts recorded until 1988 with a biographical sketch of their singers.

12.1. Primary Sources

This survey of the local ballad corpus relies on an exhaustive compilation of all available sources, published and unpublished. The published materials are primarily drawn from the four standard Newfoundland folksong collections, compiled by Elisabeth Greenleaf and Grace Mansfield, Maud Karpeles, Kenneth Peacock, and MacEdward Leach.[3] Altogether, their songs were gathered from 1920 to 1961. In addition to these major sources, a songbook compiled by Genevieve Lehr in 1985 supplied four ballad texts and two more were traced in minor publications.[4] So much for the published sources of the corpus. These represent the majority of the data and except for the four ballad texts

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[1] Edith Fowke, "Anglo-Canadian Folksong: A Survey," *Ethnomusicology* 16 (1972): 337; Colin Quigley and Laurel Doucette, "The Child Ballads in Canada," *Canadian Folk Music Journal* 9 (1981): 3-19.

[2] For a synthetic account of these collectors' contribution, see Martin Lovelace, "W. Roy Mackenzie as a Collector of Folksong," *Canadian Folk Music Journal* 5 (1977) : 5-11 and my "Elisabeth Greenleaf: An Appraisal," *Canadian Folk Music Journal* 13 (1985): 20-31.

[3] Their collections have been cited earlier.

[4] Genevieve Lehr, *Come and I Will Sing You: A Newfoundland Songbook* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1985); P.J. Kinsella, *Some Superstitions and Traditions of Newfoundland* (St. John's: Union, 1919) and Omar Blondahl, *Newfoundlanders Sing! A Collection of Favourite Newfoundland Folk Songs* (St. John's: Bonnell, 1964).

published by Lehr, also the earlier portion.[1] The unpublished materials consist of manuscript and tape collections deposited in MUNFLA. Colin Quigley surveyed the ballad texts contained in these materials up to 1972;[2] my own revising and updating of this survey has brought forth a number of additional sources, including some collected by myself, and some minor corrections.

12.1.1. Published Sources

Academic collecting and editing of Newfoundland song was pioneered by Elisabeth B. Greenleaf, assisted by her musical expert and field companion, Grace Y. Mansfield. Their collection, *Ballads and Sea Songs of Newfoundland,* was first published in 1933 and reprinted in facsimile in 1968. A Vassar College graduate, Greenleaf had first come to Newfoundland as a volunteer teacher of the Grenfell Mission Summer School in Sally's Cove, on the West Coast in 1920. There, on the very first night of her arrival in the community, she made the impressive discovery of "a real folksong, one handed down by oral tradition," an event she vividly recorded in her private correspondence.[3] She followed on this enthralling experience by transcribing the words and music of the songs she found around. This became a major activity in addition to her teaching and was greatly facilitated by her involvement in the community. Back at Vassar after the summer, she was encouraged to pursue her collecting in the province. Sponsored by Vassar, she returned to Newfoundland in 1929, accompanied by Mansfield, a trained musicologist. Greenleaf was herself musically competent, but her dedication to the project made her seek expert musical assistance. When she first collected by herself in 1920, she took down musical notations. Even in 1929, she was still collecting the songs by herself, taking the words down and carrying the tunes in her mind. After the day, she would sing them back to Mansfield, who transcribed the music, sang them and made the necessary alterations on the basis of Greenleaf's memory of the tunes.

Greenleaf's *Introduction* to her collection offers enlightening comments on Newfoundland outport life, the living culture of the songs--from fishing techniques to

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[1] Except for the few unpublished versions gathered by Greenleaf, Karpeles, Peacock and Leach, the earliest unpublished ballad records date back to 1966; they are deposited in Memorial University Folklore and Language Archive, hereafter referred to as MUNFLA, and catalogued as MUNFLA ms 66-24.

[2] Colin Quigley, "The Child Ballads as Found in Newfoundland: A Survey," *Culture & Tradition* 5 (1980): 16-31

[3] Greenleaf xix; MUNFLA ms 82-189, p. 30 (7/7/1920, Sally's Cove, Bonne Bay).

language use and eating habits. But, it is her correspondence and interviews which are revealing of her attitude towards her collected material and her editing practices. These unpublished papers tell us of her "fight" with H.N. MacCracken and G.L. Kittredge, her Vassar editors, to whom she presented her determination to have the songs published as she heard them, and printed with words and music together on the same page. On the other hand, she explains in an interview that she and Mansfield had agreed on musical norms below which they would not retain a song.[1] A singer, to gain their attention, would have to be able to "hold the pitch" well enough. Such indications, along with her own disinterested dedication to the task, suggest that she would not easily tamper with the texts or the music--but also that she left much behind!

In her correspondence, we read that it was the music that first attracted her to the songs. The same commitment to preserve them in their integrity was responsible for one of the first scholarly folksong collections to print the music on the same page as the text. In this, she made a significant contribution to American folklore scholarship, which up to then was mostly text-oriented and relegated the music to appendices. Her genuine interest and sympathy for the people she collected from naturally directed her to what Leach has called "the right approach." The academic value of her collection was not recognized until its re-issue in 1968. Leach explains why:

> In its range and variety and in its Introduction and notes the Greenleaf book is equal or superior to that of Sharp. But Sharp was a well-known musicologist widely known in England, and one whose authority and competence was generally accepted in America. . . . Elisabeth Greenleaf and Grace Mansfield, on the other hand, were looked on as amateurs. Although these collectors may have been amateurs, yet they had an insight for the right approach. The songs were collected in context, that is the natural social situation.[2]

The collection is almost entirely from the northern part of the Island--the northeast region around Twillingate--and the West Coast of the Great Northern Peninsula. Its 185 songs include nineteen classical ballad texts.

In the fall of 1929, Maud Karpeles first arrived in Newfoundland. At the time, she did not know of Greenleaf and Mansfield's "Vassar College Folklore Expedition," which had preceded her only by two months. Cecil Sharp and herself had projected a collecting trip to Newfoundland, attracted by the province's remoteness on the edge of the North-

[1] MUNFLA 78-57/C6198, coll. Carole Carpenter.
[2] Leach, foreword, Greenleaf, *Ballads* iii.

American continent as well as by its earliest connection with the mother-country. There they expected to find a rich and living ballad tradition similar to if not better than that of the Appalachian region, from which they had collected enthusiastically before: "I believed Newfoundland to be virgin, if not barren soil."[1] Sharp died before this purpose could be fulfilled, and Karpeles' filial piety towards her mentor in realizing his wish must have deepened her disillusion. She writes in her diary:

> Feel it is going to be very hard to get on to the songs. It is all so much a case of 'have been'. . . . [13 Sept. 29]
> The old people do not remember songs and only new songs from the young ones. I did not take down a single song. [20 Sept. 29]
> ... a long list of people reputed to know old songs but all a delusion. They have either never sung, or forgotten them, and always the great singers are the people who have died and gone away. [8 Oct. 29]
> ... altho' I'm sorry the time is over there is also an immense feeling of relief. [24 Oct. 29][2]

Karpeles made two expeditions. In September and October 1929, she explored Conception Bay and Bonavista Bay on the East Coast and made short visits to Trinity Bay and Notre Dame Bay; in July and August 1930, she concentrated on the South Coast and got a few songs from St. Mary's Bay and Trepassey Bay.[3] Her collection, *Folk Songs of Newfoundland*, was not published until 1971. Its eighty-nine songs include twenty-three classical ballads. Prior to this, in 1934, she published thirty songs in a songbook with piano accompaniments by Vaughan Williams. The comparison of both publications reveals that the 1971 edition is more faithful to the sources.[4] Karpeles' different editing must be owing to the different purposes of both editions, the former being directed to a more general public.

Karpeles' approach to the songs was, of her own admission, oriented towards the traditional songs, which she sought at the expense of the local compositions. These she discarded owing to their, in her opinion, inferior musical quality:

> The proportion of authentic folk songs is small compared with the general repertory. In addition to the composed songs of an earlier generation, songs are constantly being made up about contemporary events such as exploits at sea, shipwrecks, etc. These are often set to a well-known

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[1] Karpeles (1971) 13.
[2] MUNFLA ms 78-003 Field Diary #1 (20/7 to 29/10/1929).
[3] Karpeles (1971) 17.
[4] Karpeles, *Folk Songs from Newfoundland*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1934). Quigley did not take this earlier publication into account as they rely on the same sources as the 1971 major publication.

> 'Come-all-ye' type of tune. They usually have but little aesthetic value and since my interest lay in songs that represent an older tradition I did not note any of them.[1]

While it is true that Newfoundlanders were and still are singing traditional songs which have died out elsewhere, it was unrealistic to expect that these would be the only ones around. The outports dotted around the coast were isolated but not the island itself. Newfoundland was isolated by the sea but not from the radio nor from external influence. People not only preserved "old songs" which continued to make aesthetic, social and psychological sense to them, but also generated songs inspired from contemporary events, such as local sea disasters. Newfoundlanders, in fact, have a tradition of verbal creativity, expressed in songs and poems, whether tragic, satirical or humorous. Herbert Halpert underlines this creativity as a significant trait of the local repertoire:

> The lively folksong tradition in Newfoundland has preserved a large body of traditional songs along with an equally great number of theatre and popular songs. But more than that, Newfoundlanders have had an extraordinarily vigorous tradition of composing new song texts on topics that interest them which are sung to traditional tunes.[2]

Kenneth Peacock produced the largest ballad and song collection from Newfoundland published so far. From 1951 to 1961, he recorded seven hundred songs in six separate fieldtrips covering most of the island. The published result, *Songs of the Newfoundland Outports*, appeared in 1965. The collection includes about half the material he collected, of which there are nineteen classical ballads. These are indicated by their standard Child number and title, and classified under thematic categories along with other traditional and locally-composed songs.

Paul Mercer comments that while Peacock's collection is to be admired for its extent and variety, it is regrettable that he edited his published texts, and some suspect also his tunes.[3] Peacock also collated versions in many cases. My distrust of his published versions came from comparing some with their actual recordings. For example, in the case of "Sweet William's Ghost" (Ch 77) version A, he uses eight versions to create the text that he published and as such, it is of little use in scientific analysis. For the researcher, examining this text is analogous to taking apart a jigsaw puzzle. Beside this, many of his

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[1] Karpeles (1971) 18.
[2] Michael Taft, *A Regional Discography of Newfoundland and Labrador 1904-1972* (St. John's: MUNFAL, 1975) iv.
[3] Mercer 16.

versions, as in Karpeles' 1934 publication, are a mixture of one singer's music with another singer's text. The very volume of the material to be published probably explains his condensing of closely similar versions. Even so, instead of collating texts, he could have preserved the texts' integrity by using the same procedure as Karpeles would in her 1971 edition: selecting one or two reference versions presented as actually sung, followed by a separate account of the variants occurring in secondary versions. Was the collector more concerned with the songs themselves and aesthetic quality than with their particular reality and significance to the singers? We know of the disappointment of one of his informants never to have seen a "book" of her songs.[1]

MacEdward Leach first collected songs in Newfoundland in 1950 and 1951, largely from the Avalon Peninsula.[2] In 1960, he collected songs on the lower Labrador Coast. The results of this later collection were published in 1965 as *Folk Ballads and Songs of the Lower Labrador Coast*. The Introduction provides interesting comments, not only on the socio-cultural environment in which the songs were collected, but also on the songs themselves. Of all scholarly collections for Newfoundland, Leach's Introduction pays the most attention to the individual performance contexts, and his academic expertise in the domain of folk song results in ethnographic and analytical insight making his collection the most "academic" of the four. His comments range from the singers' repertoire and performance to their status in the community. He opposes Newfoundland to the "highly creative" folk culture of Scotland in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries:

> The folk culture of Newfoundland is not creative; it is important only as a repository; but these folk, even as custodians of the tradition bequeathed them by their English, Irish, and Scottish forbears, have not been very careful. Much of their lore they have let slip away; much they have imperfectly preserved; much they have not understood and as a result have garbled.[3]

It is interesting that Halpert and Leach, each with a wide collecting experience in Newfoundland, arrive at contradictory assessments of its culture. Such divergence of opinion reflects the need for closer analysis of the repertoire. To this the study of classical ballads can fruitfully contribute; their ancient and imported tradition is well suited to a consideration of the retentive and creative aspects of the local folk culture.

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[1] This appears in an essay reporting an interview of Mrs. Clara Stevens by Ms. Norma House, one of her relatives, MUNFLA 72-173, p. 18.

[2] This collection is unpublished and therefore discussed in a following section of this chapter.

[3] Leach, *Folk* 12.

The latest published song collection, *Come and I Will Sing You: A Newfoundland Songbook*, was published by Genevieve Lehr in 1985, twenty years after the academic collections of Peacock and Leach.[1] The songs were collected by Genevieve Lehr and Anita Best from 1975 to 1983. The collection is intended as a songbook, and so missing verses or lines have been filled in with words from other recorded versions. The collection claims a fairly representative value, but with an avowed emphasis on the native and yet unpublished songs.[2] Of the 120 published songs, three are ballad types. This low number, compared with the eight to twenty-three ballad types in the preceding collections, apparently confirms that the genre is fast disappearing from the contemporary repertoire and submerged by local compositions. More, however, needs to be said. Lehr's original recordings include seven versions belonging to six ballad types. Only four of these versions are published although the three others had never been recorded from the singer before; one of these is a version of "Sweet William's Ghost" (Ch 77), the most prominent ballad type in the province.[3] Lehr's giving priority to local compositions and the high number of versions of the ballad published previously probably explain her neglect of this ballad text.

Ballads among folklorists are like monarchs. Once living in untouchable splendour, they were rudely dethroned and brutalised as a result of too much envied and seemingly unjustified privilege. Once featured at the top of collections' indexes, the classical ballads in Lehr's folksong collection are reduced to egalitarian status--or less. They are merely referred to by their local title but with no mention of either their standard Child title or type number, their "letters patent of nobility." New compositions may be more popular with collectors today than the rarer old ballads. If so, Lehr's collection may still not represent the actual repertoire any better than Karpeles, who favoured traditional ballads and broadsides.

Mercer and Quigley have written concise but lucid accounts on the tenor of these four collections and their collectors' approaches.[4] Their information, however, relies mostly on the published collections and hardly draws on the collectors' sources, fieldnotes and

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[1] Lehr's original tape collection, comprising much of the source material for the book, is deposited in MUNFLA and catalogued as MUNFLA 78-50.

[2] Lehr ix.

[3] These three ballad versions were recorded from Mr. Moses Harris, Lethbridge, Bonavista Bay on March 8, 1976; MUNFLA 78-50/C3144.

[4] Mercer, *Newfoundland* 1-56 and Quigley 16-7.

diaries. While the collectors' introductions to their publications are informative on their collecting method and their response to what they found in the field, a deeper investigation of their primary sources still needs to be made in order to assess the objective value of the published results. Many of these primary materials have been acquired by MUNFLA, but have not generally been researched in any depth.[1] There are various reasons for this neglect. Karpeles' notations are in shorthand, and no-one yet has been found to decipher them.[2] Leach's Newfoundland collection is unpublished and although the texts and music of the songs have been transcribed, this sizeable data including the handwritten notes, not yet fully catalogued, remains in a confusing state.[3] A copy of Peacock's tape collection has been recently acquired from the Canadian Museum of Civilization but is unaccompanied by any of his papers.[4]

To complete this overview of published sources, a few minor and less academic publications still need to be mentioned. Mercer's *Index* lists an unsuspected source for the ballad "The Unquiet Grave" (Ch 78).[5] This source has, to my knowledge, the earliest record of a classical ballad in the province. This pamphlet is filled with advertisements for several St. John's trades, which fact suggests that, like the earliest songbooks published in the province, it was probably distributed free to get notice for its many advertisements.[6]

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[1] This is with the exception of my article devoted to Greenleaf quoted already. Some of Greenleaf's manuscripts, deposited by Robert D. Madison, and including personal correspondence, transcriptions and fieldnotes are catalogued as MUNFLA ms 82-189; taped interviews of Greenleaf by Carole Carpenter are catalogued as MUNFLA tapes 78-57/C3962, C3965, C6198 and C3966.

[2] Karpeles' manuscripts, including her diaries and notations of the songs, are catalogued as MUNFLA ms 78-003.

[3] Leach's Newfoundland Collection, including his fieldnotes, transcripts and recordings, are catalogued as MUNFLA ms 78-54.

[4] Peacock's original tape collection is kept at the Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies, Canadian Museum of Civilization, Ottawa; the set of copies recently acquired by MUNFLA is catalogued as MUNFLA 87-157.

[5] P.J. Kinsella, *Some Superstitions and Traditions of Newfoundland* (St. John's: Union,1919) listed in Mercer, Newfoundland Songs and Ballads 76 and 190. The only information I was able to find about the author comes from two obituaries clipped from a local newspaper, *Daily News*, St. John's, 29 Sept. 1924, p. 3, kept in the Provincial Reference Library, St. John's. The pamphlet seems to be his only publication, a photocopied copy of which is held by the Centre for Newfoundland Studies of Memorial University of Newfoundland. One song text, "Just Forty Years Ago" appears under his name in John White's songs manuscript, MUNFLA 85-343 pp. 14 and 779-80.

[6] Leach mentions the free distribution of these popular songsters in his foreword to the reedition of Greenleaf and Mansfield's collection, v. He refers to James Murphy, *Songs and Ballads of Newfoundland, Ancient and Modern* (St. John's: [James Murphy], 1902); Gerald S. Doyle, *Old Time Songs and Poetry of Newfoundland* (St. John's: Gerald S. Doyle, 1927)

Although the title of Kinsella's essay announces a survey of beliefs and superstitions without any further specification of their nature, most of this material, in fact, relates to death; it consists of narratives of the supernatural, some verifying the truth of omens and premonitions, others dealing with hauntings, revenants and the like. A major value of the work for folklorists is that the beliefs are reported in their particular occurrences rather than listed generically. It is among these various belief narratives that Kinsella included a version of "The Unquiet Grave" (Ch 78). His keen interest--not just for the phenomema themselves but for their meaning--led him to include a "locally-composed rhyme" in illustration of the apparition of a revenant as an omen of death, unsuspecting that this was a version of an internationally known traditional ballad.

Kinsella's version of "The Unquiet Grave" (Ch 78) is most peculiar; it appears to be unknown outside the province, and also exceptional in the local repertoire, except for a single other occurrence. Herbert Halpert already pointed out how thoroughly the ballad had been integrated into a supernatural legend.[1] A curiosity to anyone familiar with the ballad, Kinsella's text deserves quoting :

> There is a belief in many of our outports that if two people are engaged to be married and one of them dies, the tie still subsists, and can only be broken with difficulty. The dead one may claim the living, and if the living partner marries within one year after the death of the other, he or she will die before another moon shall wane.
> An actual case (or what is supposed to be an actual case) occurred in ___, on the West Coast, a few years ago. A couple were to be married, and even the date of the ceremony had been set when the young man suddenly became ill and died.
>
> About eight months after the death of her lover, the girl became the wife of another worthy young fellow of the place, and all looked well for a bright and happy future. When retiring on the wedding night however, the young bride was nearly frightened to death by seeing the dead lover appear in her room, and this fear was very much increased by the demand of the spirit to "kiss her" once again before her future life was given to her husband. A rhyme made about the subject explains it thus:--
>
> Cold blow the winds of night, sweetheart,
> Cold are the drops of rain,
> The very first love that e'er I had
> Has found a love again.

---

and John Burke, *Burke's Popular Songs* (St. John's: John Burke, n.d.) and later publications by these authors. See also Mercer, *A Bio-Bibliography of Newfoundland Songs in Printed Sources*, MA thesis, MUN, 1978 and the Preface to his Index.

[1] Halpert, preface, Mercer, *Newfoundland* 10.

What is it that you want of me
And will not let me sleep ?
Has not cruel death between us come
And grave and winding sheet ?

What is it that I've done to thee
Or my dear husband here
That you should trouble thus our peace
And break our wedding cheer ?

And to this the ghost of the young man very obligingly makes reply:--

What is it that I want of thee ?
What thou has often gave--
A kiss from off thy lily-white lips
And that is all I crave.

Cold are my lips in death, sweetheart,
But my love and heart are strong
If you do touch my clay-cold lips
Your time will not be long.

Which is rather an uninviting way of securing a caress from the young lady, but the tale goes that the damsel seeks release from her dead lover, and does return him the bethrothal kiss. The peculiar note in this story however is, that the young wife dies about a year after marriage, and the rhyming lament says:--

And now both lie in yonder grave
And thus I end my song,
For as they both belonged in life
To each in death belong.[1]

It was a surprise to find a version of "The Unquiet Grave" (Ch 78) in a pamphlet devoted to popular beliefs; it is another to observe the overall absence of classical ballads in the earliest Newfoundland song booklets. While practically no ballad or traditional song can be found in these popular publications, they make up a significant portion of the material included in the academic collections. As both types of publications span the same period, from the 1920s to the 1960s, one must conclude from this disparity of contents that they reflect different facets of the actual repertoire, selected according to the collectors' own bias or purpose. The academic collections were directed towards a diverse readership from the scholar to the enthusiast singer; the songsters, on the other hand, were intended

[1] Kinsella 25-27.

for the Newfoundland public, who were already familiar with the songs and wished to learn them.[1]

The extent and systematic gathering of Peacock's collection gives credence to his assessment of the tenor of the regional repertoire. From his own assessment, he collected this vast material in the ratio of five traditional songs to one native.[2] He thus suggests that previous non-academic sources such as Gerald S. Doyle's choice of songs are far from accurate as a representation of the regional repertoire: "He [Gerald S. Doyle] devoted his attention to the one in five native songs which he published in three small booklets in 1927 (no tunes), 1940 and 1955."[3] Doyle and other folksong enthusiasts consciously overlooked the traditional songs of the repertoire in favour of the native ones on the assumption that the latter were more authentically "Newfoundland."[4] The single record of a classical ballad in these booklets was published by Omar Blondahl, a locally popular singer from Mainland Canada.[5] It is interesting that this single ballad record is again a version of "The Unquiet Grave" (Ch 78). Blondahl, no more than his predecessor, identifies the fragment as such and prints it under a local title, "The Auld Song From Cow Head." Except for the melody printed above the text, this is Blondahl's text and annotation:

> How cauld those winds do blow, dear Lord,
> What heavy drops of rain !
> I never had but one true love,
> And she from me was ta'en.
> --Traditional
>
> A word of explanation would surely seem to be in order, here; and would that I could give it ! Either most of this song has been lost over the years, or it is the shortest song in Newfoundland! But hum the melody, then add the unhappy words: the ballad is absolutely enchanting! Spelling of the word "cold" in the first line (cauld) suggests Scotland.[6]

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[1] The several editions of these thin booklets attest their popularity. An exhaustive survey of these publications can be found in Mercer, *Newfoundland*.

[2] Peacock, *Songs* xx.

[3] Peacock, *Songs* xxi.

[4] For a synthetic account of the major published Newfoundland folksong collections, and an assessment of Doyle's contribution in particular, see Neil V. Rosenberg, "Folksong in Newfoundland: A Research History," *Ballades et chansons folkloriques: actes de la 18ème session de la Commission pour l'étude de la poésie de tradition orale de la S.I.E.F. sous la direction de Conrad Laforte* (Laval: Célat, U Laval, 1989) 45-52.

[5] Taft xvii.

[6] Blondahl 111. His reference to "spelling" suggests a written source, which is uncited.

Though he comes close to the truth in printing "traditional" below the fragment and loosely calls it a "ballad," Blondahl ignores the fact that the text belongs to a "classical" ballad. This scholarly designation was probably irrelevant to him and his purpose; in any case, the inclusion of this mere stanza in a songbook suggests the song's particular appeal. The popularity of "The Unquiet Grave" (Ch 78) is probably what these two solitary ballad records tell us above all, and this is directly relevant to the present study.

The task of compiling ballad sources has taught me to be wary of relying on published collections. On the whole, what the experience reveals is the interference of both the collectors' subjectivity and the publishers' economic requirements with the analytical study of songs, which can even question the designation of published collections as "primary sources." At its best, source publishing is always fragmentary, hence it easily distorts the actual profile of the original data. Any published collection, therefore, is but a selection within a sample of the actual tradition, or repertoire in this case. But rather than discourage the analyst, primary sources remind him of the relative value of a published song collection next to the reality of the living tradition itself. From my investigation, Greenleaf and Leach have appeared to be the most accurate sources for analysis of the ballads. I, therefore, give precedence to their versions in my citations of the texts.

12.1.2. Unpublished Sources

For his survey of the classical ballads recorded in the province, Quigley charted MUNFLA sources catalogued up to 1972.[1] Besides the ballads listed in MUNFLA's Song Title Index, he traced twelve unpublished ballad versions in Karpeles's manuscripts and eight in Leach's unpublished Newfoundland Collection. My own research into MUNFLA materials has yielded some additional sources, most of which originate from the extensive song collecting projects carried out by Kenneth Goldstein, Wilfred Wareham and associates. Their systematic collecting was made during twenty-one separate fieldtrips across the province from 1978 to the present. These collections as well as earlier ones of comparable scope made by Herbert Halpert and John Widdowson were directed towards an extensive gathering of song materials. Added to these more recent ballad records are those which I collected personally in view of the present research.

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[1] A detailed account of Quigley's archival sources follows this section.

In November 1986, as a result of Anita Best's kindness, I was introduced to Mr. Pius Power, Sr., Southeast Bight, Placentia Bay. Mr. Power is in his sixties and, like everyone in the community, he is of Irish descent. Anita, his daughter-in-law, had informed me that, although he is essentially known as a storyteller, his singing repertoire included a few Child ballads. During my interviews, I searched his memory for the most popular local types which he might know; he sang me five, and these appeared to be all those he knew or remembered: "Lamkin" (Ch 93), "Sweet William's Ghost" (Ch 77), "The Cruel Mother" (Ch 20), "Willy O' Winsbury" (Ch 100) and a fragment of "Lady Barnard and Little Musgrave" (Ch 81).[1]

During June 1987, a research grant from the Memorial University of Newfoundland Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) enabled me to do intensive fieldwork on the ballads towards my thesis project. I resided in Tilting, Fogo Island, and gathered some 150 different songs among various other materials, especially in connection with deathlore.[2] The majority of the songs I collected are nineteenth century sentimental songs and modern country and western ones. Mr. Gordon Willis, from the town of Fogo, sang me a dozen songs, among which is a version of "Sweet William's Ghost" (Ch 77). This is the only classical ballad I collected during that month.

Pam Morgan, the well-known local singer and musician, kindly gave me an interview on December 6, 1987. Her vast experience of Newfoundland songs acquired from her touring of the island with the folk-rock band "Figgy Duff" taught me some hard facts about the response of contemporary outport audiences to the "old songs" given their length and lack of musical accompaniment.[3] It is tempting to take this modern sociological phenomenon for granted as an explanation for the decline of ballad singing. One should remind oneself that Roy Mackenzie, who, as the first systematic folksong collector in his native Nova Scotia back in 1908, already bemoaned "the mournful truth that the oral propagation of ballads has in our day and generation almost ceased."[4] Pam Morgan sang me four ballads: "Sweet William's Ghost" (Ch 77), "The Two Sisters" (Ch 10), and

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[1]This collection is deposited in MUNFLA and catalogued as MUNFLA 87-006/C9690-C9699.
[2]This collection is deposited in MUNFLA and catalogued as MUNFLA 87-159/C10629-C10659 and C7638-C7640.
[3]The tapes of this interview are catalogued as MUNFLA 87-159/C7639 and C7640; Morgan's comments concerning this point were quoted in 6.4.
[4]Fowke 335, quoting Roy Mackenzie, *The Quest of the Ballad* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1919) 227

"Willie O' Winsbury" (Ch 100) which she learned from Mr. Moses Harris, and "Lamkin" (Ch 93) which she learned from Peacock's published texts.

12.2. Secondary Sources

In 1979, Paul Mercer published *Newfoundland Songs and Ballads in Print 1842-1974: A Title and First-Line Index*. This work, as the title suggests, is a catalogue of all known published song texts from the earliest colonial days to the time of publication. The catalogue charted the territory for Quigley's survey of the classical ballads recorded in the province, this time also including unpublished sources indexed in MUNFLA up to 1972. For the purpose of the present study, I have updated this survey on the basis of MUNFLA resources indexed up to 1988. Following in this section is a detailed account of the evalution of the ballad tradition between these dates.

12.2.1. Sources Surveyed up to 1972

Quigley's survey of the Child Ballad in Newfoundland pioneered an exhaustive inventory of the types and versions recorded in the province from 1920 to 1972. The first date corresponds to Elisabeth Greenleaf's earliest folksong collecting in the province, and the latter, to the latest updating of MUNFLA Song Title Index at the time of the survey. Quigley traced forty-four types and approximately two hundred versions in all. The greater part of this corpus was drawn from the four published folksong collections. In addition to these, he gathered twenty-eight texts from student and faculty fieldwork projects, twelve versions belonging to eight ballad types in Leach's Newfoundland collection, eleven versions in Maud Karpeles's papers, and two fragments collected by Peacock.[1] Quigley missed eleven versions deposited in MUNFLA and appears to have counted three mistakenly.[2]

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[1] All these unpublished sources are MUNFLA materials; their MUNFLA accession numbers are listed in Quigley's survey.

[2] Three versions of Ch 78, two versions of Ch 20, and one version each of Ch 77, 84, 100, 112, 213, 274 were missed; two versions of Ch 84 and one version of Ch 4 were counted mistakenly. I am indebted to Dr. Laurel Doucette, who retrieved these additional versions from MUNFLA in the course of her personal research. Seven of these were recorded before 1972: they are catalogued as MUNFLA 71-50/C967 (Ch 112); MUNFLA 68-16/C490 (Ch 274); MUNFLA 70-8/C687 and C776, 2 versions by the same singer of (Ch100); MUNFLA 69-36/C583 (Ch 213); MUNFLA ms 71-42 p. 30-1 (Ch 84) and MUNFLA ms 71-5 p. 37 (Ch 20). These versions are reported under "corr." (corrections) in Table I. Three other versions were recorded after 1972: they are catalogued as MUNFLA ms 72-153/C1020 (Ch

12.2.2. Additional Sources

I hereunder consider those versions recorded after 1972, the date up to which Quigley surveyed the corpus. Forty-two ballad versions have been recorded from twenty-five singers since 1972.[1] Of these, four had already been recorded from the same singers before 1972 and five others were since re-recorded from the same singer.[2] These re-recordings apart, thirty-two versions have been obtained from twenty previously unrecorded singers. Four versions are published in Lehr's songbook; all others were drawn from MUNFLA collections and my personal fieldwork.

Of the forty-two versions, seventeen were found in Kenneth Goldstein and Wilfred Wareham's folksong collections[3]; ten versions were recorded by myself[4]; seven versions were collected by Genevieve Lehr and Anita Best[5]; seven were drawn from MUNFLA student collections[6], and one version was collected by local folksong collector and musician Eric West.[7] No new ballad type has surfaced among these additional versions and all belong to the most popular types listed in Quigley's survey.

12.2.3. Sources Surveyed up to 1988

The updated survey includes both the corrections and additional records traced in MUNFLA up to 1988. The distinction made between the material recorded before and after

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274); MUNFLA ms 73-107/C1816 and MUNFLA 79-318/C4700 (Ch 278). These versions are reported among the "add." (additions) in Table I.

[1] These versions are reported under "add." (additions) in Table I.

[2] These versions are reported between brackets in Table I.

[3] MUNFLA 78-239/C3587 (Ch 93); MUNFLA 81-339/C7846 (Ch 20); MUNFLA 82-248/C5865 (Ch 100); MUNFLA 83-151/C6224 and ms p.30-1, two versions by the same singer of (Ch 84); MUNFLA 83-376/C6638, 2 versions by the same singer of (Ch 54), C6643 (Ch 286) and C6647 (Ch 53, 54); MUNFLA 83-378/C6659 (Ch 77) and C6653 (Ch 100); MUNFLA 84-399/C7208 (Ch 78) and C7213 (Ch 54); MUNFLA 85-245/C7824 (Ch 77) and MUNFLA 87-117/uncatalogued tape (collector's tape #7) (Ch 81,93).

[4] MUNFLA 87-006/C9695 (Ch 93, 77, 20, 100) and C9699 (Ch 81); MUNFLA 87-159/C10643 (Ch 77) and C7639 (Ch 77, 10, 93) and C7640 (Ch 100).

[5] Published are two versions of Ch 53 pp. 118-20 and one version of Ch 93 pp. 61-2, and of Ch 100 pp. 109-10; the unpublished versions are catalogued as MUNFLA 78-50/C3144 (Ch 77), C3763 (Ch 81, 278).

[6] MUNFLA 74-222/C1934 (Ch 2), C1935 (Ch 84) and C1936 (Ch 286); MUNFLA 76-3/C2446 (Ch 77); MUNFLA 72-153/C1020 (Ch 274); MUNFLA 73-107/C1816 (Ch 278) and MUNFLA 79-318/C4700 (Ch 278).

[7] MUNFLA 78-236/C3554 (Ch 77).

1972 is meant to give an indication of the vitality of ballad singing in the last sixteen years. In the table below (Table I), additional versions recorded before 1972 are numbered under "corrections" (corr.); those recorded after 1972 are numbered under "additions."

Reported Versions Listed in order of Child Type Numbers
Table I[1]

Ch #		1972	corr.	add.	1988
Ch 2	[1]	3		{1}	3
4		5	-1		4
7		2			2
10	[1]	2		1	3
14	[1]	6			6
17		4		1	5
20		12	+2 (+2)	2	16
26		3			3
45		1			1
46		3			3
49		3			3
53		8	(+1)	4	12
54		2		3+[1]	5
73		4			4
74		5			5
77	[3]	21	+1	6+[2]+{1}	28
78		6	+3	[1]+{1}	10
81	[1]	6		2+[1]	8
83	1				1
84	[1]	10	+1-2	1+[1]+{1}	10
85		2			2
93		10		4+[1]+?[2]	14
100	[2]	12	+1+[1]	3+[1]	16
105		2			2
110	3				3
112	[1]	4	1		5
155		1			1

[1] [] indicates a number of versions re-recorded from the same singers; {} indicates a version that had already been recorded from the same singer before 1972; () refers to a number of versions mentioned by Karpeles but untraceable either in her published collection or in her available papers and recordings. None of the versions between brackets are counted in the total number of versions given under 1972 and the 1988 columns.

[2] Dr. Rosenberg kindly informs me of a Labrador version published in M.J.C. Hodgart, *The Ballads* (New York: Norton, 1962) 97-102; Hodgart accounts for it as a composite version edited by A.L. Lloyd, *Contemporary Verse and Prose* (July 1936). This fact coming to my knowledge in the week preceding the submission of this manuscript, I cannot access this source so as to identify the versions concerned here, only suggest that Lloyd's thirty-four stanza composite version shows no directly observable linguistic affinity with any of the versions compiled above. So, here and hereafter the "?" accompanies the total number of identified versions.

(continued)

Ch #		1972	corr.	add.	1988
167,250		3			3
173		1			1
200		10			10
209		1			1
213		4	+1+[1]		5
214		1			1
221		5			5
243		1			1
248		2			2
272		1			1
274		2	+1	1	4
275		1			1
278		3		3	6
286		6		2	8
287		1			1
293	[1]	1			1
295		1			1

Ch 2 Five reported singings by three different singers. The version found in MUNFLA 66-24/C273, Peacock's B version and the one additional version, MUNFLA 74-222/C1934, are all sung by Mrs. Clara Stevens.

Ch 4 Greenleaf notes above the C version that this is the text as she remembers it recited in New York City in 1918 by Mrs. Cleverdon, a native of Halifax. It appears that Quigley counted this version in the Newfoundland corpus. The two additional versions were found on display at the exhibition pertaining to Child's personal papers held during the conference on "Mr. Child and his Ballads," held in Harvard on the occasion of the centennial of the American Folklore Society on 24-25 Oct. 1988. One, recorded by Kenneth Goldstein, is sung by Mr. Dorman Ralph (undeposited tape/collector's tape #8 St. John's, 20 Aug. 81); the other, recorded by Kenneth Goldstein and Aidan O' Hara, is sung by Mr Patrick "Paddy" Judge (undeposited tape/collectors' tape #9 Placentia Bay, 30 July 78).

Ch 10 Four reported singings in all, of which two, Peacock's single version and that found in MUNFLA 66-24/C262 are sung by Mrs. Charlotte Decker. I recorded one additional version from Pamela Morgan, MUNFLA 87-159/C7659.

Ch 14 Seven reported singings in all but Peacock's B version and Karpeles's A version are both sung by Mr. and Mrs. Ken Monks.

Ch 17 Five reported singings in all; the additional version, MUNFLA ms 84-111 pp. 36-37/C11235, is sung by Mr. Thomas Pickett.

Ch 20 Sixteen reported singings, all by different singers. Quigley missed two versions, MUNFLA ms 65-011A, p. 3 and MUNFLA ms 71-5, p 37. Of the two additional ones, one is recorded from Mr. Dorman Ralph, MUNFLA ms 81-339/C7846, and the other, from Mr. Pius Power, Sr., MUNFLA ms 87-006/C9695. While Karpeles mentions ten variants in her 1934 edition, only seven are published in the 1970 edition and I found one unpublished in her papers. Her "Index to Newfoundland songs" lists nine, of which only four have tunes.

Ch 53 Twelve reported singings, all by different singers.Karpeles mentions four other variants but her 1971 edition only has three. I have indicated the missing version between (). Of the four additional versions, one is sung by Mrs. Matilda "Tillie" Anderson, MUNFLA ms 83-376/C6647, one is from Anita Best, MUNFLA 83-378/C6653, and two, one sung by Mrs. Kate Wilson and the other by Mr. Moses Harris, are published in Lehr, p. 118-20.

Ch 54 Six reported singings by five different singers. Of the four additional versions, two are sung by Mr. Samuel Marsden, MUNFLA 83-376/C6638; one is sung by from Mrs. Matilda "Tillie" Anderson, MUNFLA 83-376/C6647, and one is by Mr. Matthew Mardsen and Mrs. Ada Simms, MUNFLA 84-399/C7213.

Ch 77 Thirty-four reported singings, of which twenty-eight are recorded from different singers. Although Quigley listed twenty-two versions, he totalled twenty-one. Of those he surveyed, three are sung by Mr. Mike Kent, two of which are in Leach's Newfoundland collection and the third one is Peacock's A version. Two are by Mrs. Patrick and Mrs. Mathew Brennan; one is Karpeles's H version and the other is one of Karpeles's unpublished versions, 78-003 #4653. Of the eight additional ones, one is sung by Mr.

Moses Harris, MUNFLA 78-50/C3144, one by Mr. Joe O' Brien, MUNFLA 78-236/C3554, two by Mr. William "Bill" White, MUNFLA 83-378/C6659 and MUNFLA 85-087, p.24, one by Pamela Morgan, MUNFLA 87-159/C7639, one by Mr. Pius Power, Sr., MUNFLA 87-006/C9695, one by Mr. Mike Kent, MUNFLA 76-3/C2446, two are from Mr.Gordon Willis, MUNFLA 85-245/C7824 and MUNFLA 87-159/C10643.

Ch 78 Eleven reported singings from nine different singers. Quigley missed three versions; one is in Blondahl 1964, p. 111 "The Auld Song from Cow Head," the second is the version found in Kinsella 1919, p.26. Both these records are anonymous. The third is a version by Mrs.Wallace Kinslow, from which Peacock collated his A version, on the basis on Mr. James "Jim" Keeping's text. Of the two additional versions, one is also sung by Mr. James "Jim" Keeping, MUNFLA 84-399/C7208, the other is found in Mr. John White's song manuscripts, MUNFLA ms 85-343, p. 973.

Ch 81 Ten reported singings from seven different singers. The version in MUNFLA 66-24/C286 and Peacock's A version are both sung by Mrs. Annie Walters. Of the three additional recordings, two are by Mr. Pius Power, Sr., MUNFLA 87-006/C9699 and MUNFLA 87-117/uncatalogued tape (collector's tape #7). The third one is by Mr. Moses Harris, MUNFLA 78-50/C3763.

Ch 84 Thirteen reported singings from ten different singers. Quigley's total of ten versions recorded from different singers in 1980 appears to have included two mistakenly. He may have counted Peacock's collated version preceding the six individual ones and overlooked that Peacock's B and E versions were both sung by Mrs. Clara Stevens. He missed one version, sung by Mr. Dan Costello, MUNFLA 71-42/C2077. Of the three additional versions, one is recorded from Mrs. Clara Stevens, MUNFLA 74-222/C1935, and two are by Mrs. May Flynn, MUNFLA ms 83-151, p. 30-1 and C6224.

Ch 93 Seventeen reported singings from fourteen different singers. There are five additional versions: one by Mr. Alfred Pollard, MUNFLA 78-239/C3587

(missing from MUNFLA), two by Mr. Pius Power, Sr., MUNFLA 87-006/C9695 and MUNFLA 87-117/uncatalogued tape (collector's tape #7), one by Pamela Morgan, MUNFLA 87-159/C7639 and one, sung by Mr. Moses Harris is published by Lehr, p. 61. The reader is referred to the just preceding footnote concerning Hodgart's quoting of "a composite version from Labrador" edited by A.L. Lloyd.

Ch 100 Nineteen reported singings from fifteen different singers. Quigley missed two versions by Mr. Maxwell Masters, MUNFLA 70-8/C687 and C776. Karpeles's unpublished version, 78-003 #4739 and her C version are sung by Mrs.Bridget Hall. Of the four additional versions, one, like Leach's A version, is by Mr.Stuart Letto, MUNFLA 82-248/C5865, one is by Anita Best, MUNFLA 83-378/C6653, one is by Mr. Pius Power, Sr., MUNFLA 87-006/C9699 and one, sung by Mrs.Elsie Best, is published by Lehr, p. 109-10.

Ch 112 Five reported singings from four different singers. Peacock's B version and a later one, MUNFLA 66-24/C263, are sung by Mrs. Charlotte Decker. Quigley missed one version by Mr. Charles Hutchings, MUNFLA 71-50/C963.

Ch 213 Six reported singings from five different singers. Quigley omitted one of the versions he listed and missed another, also sung by Mr. John Myrick, 69-36/C583.

Ch 274 Four reported singings, all by different singers. Quigley missed one version sung by Mr. Bill Murphy, MUNFLA 68-16/C490. The one additional version is by Mr. John Bruce, MUNFLA 72-153/C1020.

Ch 278 Six reported singings, all by different singers. The three additional versions are: one by Mr. James Benoit, MUNFLA 73-107/C1816, one by Mr. Moses Harris, MUNFLA 78-50/C3763, and one by Mrs. Margaret Giovannini, MUNFLA 79-318/C4700.

Ch 286 Eight reported singings, all by different singers. The two additional versions are, one by Mrs. Clara Stevens, MUNFLA 74-222/C1936, and one by Mr. Jack Eamon, MUNFLA 83-376/C6643.

Reported Versions by Different Singers listed in order of frequency Table II

Ch #	1972	1988
77	21	28
20, 100	14	16
93	10	14 ?
53	8	12
84, 200	10	10
78	6	10
81, 286	6	8
4,14	4	6
278	3	6
54	2	5
74, 112, 221	5	5
17	4	5
213	4	5
73	4	4
274	2	4
2, 10, 26, 46, 49, 110, 167, 250	3	3
7, 85, 105, 248, 293	2	2
45, 83, 155, 173, 209, 214	1	1
243, 272, 275, 287, 295	1	1

Sixteen years spanning the two surveys may be too short a time to expect any significant variation in the figures. A microscopic examination of variation within the tradition should not blind us from its global persistence in the province over two centuries. My survey follows the pattern of Quigley's, and additional versions are in the same proportion, so one can see there is little movement on the frequency scale (Table II). This stability confirms the depth and accuracy of ballad collecting in the province. The juxtaposition of the two surveys shows that sixteen types have been recorded since 1972. Of these, fourteen ballad types were definitely in a "dynamic" living state, i.e. in circulation after 1972, as they have since been recorded from other singers (Ch 4, 10, 17, 20, 53, 54, 77, 81, 84, 93, 100, 274, 278, 286). The two other types (Ch 2, 78) had been recorded by the same singers before 1972. From the forty-four types once recorded locally, the sixteen types encountered after 1972 represent over one-third of the entire ballad repertoire.

This fraction gives us an evaluation of the dwindling classical ballad tradition in Newfoundland to counter the cliché that it is "dead or dying."

In the last sixteen years, forty-six versions belonging to sixteen ballad types have been recorded from twenty-seven singers. Of this corpus, thirty-five versions have been obtained from twenty previously unrecorded singers. These figures attest that, if the classical ballads represent but a minor portion of the whole contemporary singing repertoire of the island, the tradition is still being transmitted in some appreciable proportion. This observation, interestingly, echoes the case for Scotland:

> On every level, from commercial to amateur, ballads form a small but significant proportion of the material performed, which is really quite amazing, since the ballad tradition was supposed to have died in the eighteenth century.[1]

Thirteen of the sixteen types encountered more recently cluster at the top of the frequency scale (Ch 77, 20, 100, 93, 53, 84, 78, 81, 286, 4, 278, 54, 17). This correlation between frequency and durability speaks for the representative accuracy of ballad collecting in the province. Folksong collecting has been quite continuous between 1920 and the present, due in recent years particularly to the efforts of Kenneth Goldstein, Wilfred Wareham and associates, who have carried out methodical and systematic collecting in areas covering most of the province. Since 1972, only the years 1975 and 1982 have failed to yield any classical ballad to MUNFLA. As well, the diverse itineraries of the previous collectors suggest that the ballads have been traced throughout the province rather than in any particular areas. These academic efforts reveal a balanced dissemination of the ballad tradition over the province. The twenty-seven singers recorded since 1972 come in fairly equal proportions (varying from 1 to 6) from St. John's, the Southern Shore (Cape Broyle), Placentia Bay (Ferndale, Southeast Bight, Tack's Beach, Placentia, Fox Harbour, Patrick's Cove), Bonavista Bay (Lethbridge, Cull's Harbour, Centreville), the Great Northern Peninsula (Bellburns, St. Paul's, White Bay), the West Coast (Stephenville, Port-aux-Basques), the South Middle Coast (Burgeo, Ramea, Burnt Islands), the Burin Peninsula (St. Lawrence), Hermitage Bay (Francois) and Fogo Island (town of Fogo). Taken together, these facts support the accuracy of the documentation of the local ballad singing tradition, which favours analysis and supports its credibility. This

[1] Sheila Douglas, "The Ballad on the Scottish Folkscene," *The Ballad Today*, Proc. of the 13th International Folk Ballad Conference, Held at the Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language, University of Sheffield, England, 18-23 July 1982, ed. Georgina Boyes (Doncaster: January, 1985) 42.

data, therefore, appears appropriate to the further investigation of patterns relating to the profile of ballad singers.

Along with the music and texts of the songs, the published Newfoundland folk song collections indicate the singers' names and the place and date of their recording. To this, Karpeles's 1971 publication occasionally indicates the singers' age. Although the best part of the entire ballad corpus comes from published collections, this meagre information does not recommend consideration of these sources in a statistical investigation of the personality type of the Newfoundland ballad singer. Better information was found in the unpublished materials recorded more recently. Age, religion and sometimes also their ancestry and occupation were drawn from the biographical data sheets accompanying collections deposited in MUNFLA.

Biographical Data of Ballad Singers recorded since 1972
Table III[1]

18 MEN	Age	Religion	Repertoire
Dorman Ralph	58	CE	Ch 4, 20
Pius Power, Sr	71	RC	20, 77, 81, 93, 100
Moses Harris	60	SA	93, 53, 77, 81, 278
Samuel Marsden	66	CE	54
Matthew Marsden	72	CE	54
Joe O' Brien	88	CE	77
William White	71	RC	77
Mike Kent	68	RC	77
Gordon Willis	74	CE	77
James Keeping	73	[Prot.]	78
Clarence Bennett	42	CE	93
Alfred Pollard	?	UC	93
Stuart Letto	54	CE	100
James Benoit	?	[RC]	278
Jack Eamon	72	CE	286
John Bruce	?	[RC]	274
Patrick Judge	?	[Prot.]	4
Thomas Pickett	74	CE	17

[1]The given age is that at the time of recording. The abbreviations are as follows: CE (Church of England), Prot. (Protestant), RC (Roman Catholic), UC (United Church of Canada) and SA (Salvation Army) Parentheses indicate suppositions advanced on the basis of *1951: Population Statistics of Newfoundland and Labrador Communities by Religious Denominations* (N.p.: n.p.: 1951). The generic designation as "Prot." indicates lack of any more detailed information. I thank Dr. George Casey for information concerning Alfred Pollard's religious affiliation.

9 WOMEN	Age	Religion	Repertoire
Clara Stevens	51	CE	2, 74, 84, 286, 293
Pam Morgan	30	UC	10, 77, 93
Matilda Anderson	86	CE	53, 54
Anita Best	35	none	53, 100
Kate Wilson	70	RC	53
Ada Sims	45	CE	54
Mary Flynn	55	RC	84
Elsie Best	63	Meth	100
Margaret Giovannini	?	[RC]	278

Gender Distribution in Relation to Frequency
Table IV[1]

Child #	total # versions	Men Singers	Women Singers
77	28	16	14
	(1anon., 1 mixed and 1 fem. duet)		
20	16	7	9
100	16	8	8
93	14	7	7
53	12	8	4
84	10	6	4
200	10	5	5
78	9 (2 anon.)	3	4
81	8	6	2
286	8	7	1
4	6	4	2
14	6 (1 mixed duet)	2	5
278	6	5	1

The most evidently, the versions recorded since 1972 reveal a double ratio of men to women singers (Table III). A male predominance among ballad singers has indeed been noted in Newfoundland as in the other Canadian provinces; but this, as Doucette and Quigley indicate, cannot be taken at face value:

> Ballad singing appears to be more or less evenly distributed between the sexes, with men rather than women having a slight edge, possibly because men have been more accessible as informants in some collecting situations.[2]

[1] Considered here are only those types for which over 5 versions have been recorded from different singers. This restriction was made for the sake of their more representative value.

[2] Quigley and Doucette 12.

Studies of repertoire and performance relating to Newfoundland and Maine reveal that singer status and gender role expectation precede actual competence, and in these traditions public performance is restricted to men singers, with the effect that the female domestic singing tradition is far less apparent.[1] On the other hand, collectors-- and perhaps the more so in the days preceding the modern academic interest and emphasis on performance and audience participartion--have mostly recorded singers in the private surroundings of their house, which in Newfoundland will likely be the kitchen, and this merely in the presence of household members, if any. Besides, when gleaning through the published collections, one cannot readily affirm that women singers appear in any lesser proportion than men. In his study of lumbercamp singing in Maine--in which a few Newfoundlanders took part--Edward Ives proposes that "Child ballads," if mostly absent from the male and public repertoire, are more often found in the (female) domestic tradition, along with older imported songs.[2]

The best documented study to date of a native woman's repertoire, however, includes but a single "Child ballad"--not one of her favourite songs either--and for the rest, not the overwhelmingly old fashioned or conservative songs which one might be led to expect in a domestic tradition. The study, rather, reveals that her repertoire dwells on a particular problematic--the conflict of young people who need to establish themselves in the world.[3] Kodish adds that if the songs that women sang to themselves tend to be "more old fashioned" it is because they tended to learn their songs earlier than men, contrary to men who tend to acquire a repertoire in their adult years.[4] That men's and women's repertoires would be characterized not only by different dimensions but values was previously suggested by David Buchan, who addressed this issue concerning the prevalence of women as recorded ballad singers in the mid eighteenth century along with the prevalence of romantic and supernatural ballad types in their repertoire, and in partial disregard of the region's wealth of indigenous historical and semi-historical types.[5]

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[1] See Pocius, "'First'"; Rosenberg, "It Was a Kind of Hobby: A Manuscript Song Book and its Place in Tradition," *Folklore Studies in Honour of Herbert Halpert: A Festschrift*, ed. K. Goldstein and N. Rosenberg (St. John's: MUN, 1980) 315-34.

[2] Edward Ives, "Lumbercamp Singing and the Two Traditions," *Canadian Folk Music Journal* (1977): 17-23.

[3] Kodish, "'Never'" 58.

[4] Kodish, "'Never'," 43.

[5] Buchan, *Ballad* 76.

Whether or not classical ballads in Newfoundland are actually sung by men to any larger extent than women, figures show little differentation between both genders' repertoire (Table IV). What they suggest is a male and female balanced repertoire when judged on the basis of frequency as well as breadth. The top types in the frequency scale naturally offer the most accurate indication for this evaluation (see Table IV). Of these thirteen types, two only (Ch 286, 278) show a striking majority of male singers. A tentative explanation could be that "The Golden Vanity" (Ch 286), sets the ballad situation in a specifically male occupational environment (aboard ships), while "A Farmer's Curst Wife" (Ch 278) is typically a man's song poking fun at a shrew. Ballads, it appears, are mostly found scattered in male as well as female general repertoires, and limited even to a single item. Of the twenty-seven singers, only four, including two men and two women, count as many as three ballad types (see Table III). This average agrees with Doucette and Quigley's data for the regional classical ballad repertoires across Canada:

> Many of the ballad singers had substantial repertoires of traditional song, of which the Child ballads formed only a small segment. . . . Two or three would appear to be the average number of Child ballads in a typical repertoire.[1]

As well as repertoire size, religious affiliations feature in a fair balance. That all singers except for one declare to have a religion is no surprise for Newfoundland. Of these, there are eighteen Protestants and eight Roman Catholics. A majority of Anglicans in the Protestant group is also understandable considering the representation of the different denominations across Newfoundland as a whole. Pam Morgan gives support to a mostly English/Anglican background for the genre. The musicologist and folksinger has extensive experience of ballad singing, which she has acquired from touring the province with "Figgy Duff" and acquainting herself with local singers and their repertoires:

> Some communities in Newfoundland are totally taken over by Pentecostals and Jehovah's Witnesses, and they don't want singing or dancing or anything. It's a shame too because they've got a stranglehold on a lot of communities. Ballads, a lot of times, come from Protestants; this is why Jehovah's Witnesses and Pentecostals can't get in any Catholic community because, I guess, the religion is so strong, but they usually penetrate communities that are Protestant to begin with, like the Church of England, for instance, are the ones where a lot of the English folksongs come from, the Child ballads and things like that. So, yes, I think the evangelical religions did a lot of damage to ballads in particular, because they mostly

[1] Doucette and Quigley 12.

> get into places where people are of English descent and that's where you find the ballads.[1]

This view, however, contradicts Edith Fowke's and Kenneth Peacock's accounts, who both suggest an Irish Catholic affiliation for the ballads, in Newfoundland as elsewhere in Canada, and for the ballads as for the other songs:

> The most notable characteristic of the Anglo-Canadian songs is their predominantly Irish quality. This is evident not only in Newfoundland but also in the Maritimes and Ontario. Here the songs come almost entirely from the Irish Catholics rather than the Ulstermen who played such a prominent part in Ontario's history. The straight-laced English and Scottish Protestants who set their imprint on our pioneer communities put aside their old ballads as fit only for the ungodly, but fortunately the Catholics had no such distrust of secular songs. Similarly, in Newfoundland, Kenneth Peacock noted: "The Irish songs from the old world were more numerous than the English, and Irish influence upon the local song has been most pronounced. Everywhere I travelled, the best and oldest songs were usually to be found in Roman Catholic comunities which seek to preserve the orthodoxies and customs of the past.[2]

What Pam Morgan reveals about the singing style of Mr. Moses Harris, whom she knew as a personal friend and from whom she learned some ballads, illustrates the impact of religion on the local singing tradition:

> Moses was a strange kind of guy, he was sort of outcast by the community. He didn't have any use for the church after his parents died and they wouldn't bury them because he didn't have enough money. The church wouldn't bury his mother, I think, or something like that because he couldn't afford it. So he went to the Salvation Army and they buried her and when he did go to the church, he didn't go very much, but when he did.go, he went to the Salvation Army. Moses was an oddball and an outcast but he had very strong religious beliefs, and very spiritual things, but they were his own. We used to talk about that for hours on end all the time but there's a lot of things he would not share with people. He had something of the Salvation Army in the way he sang: "Lord Bateman was a noble lord" [she imitates his singing in a deep dragging voice], like the way they sing hymns.[3]

Mr. Harris's personal accommodation of his musical and religious affinities might, as suggested here, be anything but representative. The following account from a folk song collector in the mainly Protestant area of the Avalon Peninsula might be closer to the norm,

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[1] MUNFLA 87-159/C7639.

[2] Fowke 343. Her quotation of Peacock is drawn from Peacock, "Nine Songs from Newfoundland," *Journal of American Folklore* 67 (1954): 123.

[3] MUNFLA 87-159/C7639.

while also supporting Morgan's comment on the modern audiences' rejection of the "old songs":

> The old songs are now only sung infrequently, if at all, and most people in the area have forgotten them. This erosion of memory is sometimes quite deliberate, because the "old songs" conflict with the priorities and values of evangelical protestantism. They are associated with a secular outlook, and with the bunkhouse, card playing, dancing and swearing.
>
> I found it difficult to collect the "old songs," partly because they are no longer needed to be sung in the work situations, either in the woods or at the fishery, and partly because they are consciously rejected by both singers and audiences.[1]

For both men and women singers, the average age at the time of recording tends to be fifty and above. It needs to be mentioned that the only two singers in their thirties are revivalist singers, whose interest in the ballads came out of an educated aesthetic choice. When indicated, occupation is as follows. The male singers include five fishermen, three lumbermen and a lighthouse keeper. Three of the fishermen also share other activities, such as cook on a fishing boat, labourer and lumberman. Occupation is even less documented in the case of the women; two have declared themselves housewives and one has worked on the fish flakes. The same two exceptions hold BA degrees from Memorial University of Newfoundland, and both have made appearances as folk singers on the St. John's scene. Ancestry, when given, is merely referred to as England in the majority of cases, Wales in two instances, and Ireland and France/Wales in one.

The painstaking elaboration of this chapter is motivated by the wish to ground the following interpretive analysis of the Newfoundland classical ballad repertoire as firmly as possible. This data basis reflects a ballad repertoire collected early, but also accurately and systematically, which qualifies it for the speculative pursuit of worldview. While this sample must be read with discrimination, taking the collectors' academic context as well as their individual attitudes into account, the clear prominence of the otherwise rare "Sweet William's Ghost" (Ch 77), even well above the popular ones on the American continent, yields a strong hypothesis for the coherence of texts and cultural context: that of "revenant" as a meaningful cultural category expressed in ballad form, or its relevance to the islanders' life, environment, and tradition at large.

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[1] Cox, "Some Aspects of the Folk" 77.

Chapter 13

Death according to Taleroles

This chapter proposes a talerole analysis of the Newfoundland classical ballads relating to death as a means to decrypt the worldview inherent to its texts. This investigation is carried across the various ballad subgenres, and as such yields a holistic schema illuminating the function and meaning of the ballad revenant locally.

13.1. The Ballads Relating to Death

In a first evaluation of the Newfoundland classical ballad repertoire, Colin Quigley noted a particular concern with death:

> We can see a complex of ballads, utilizing a number of similar motifs, which address one central issue, the separation of lovers by death. We have also been told that these ballad types are unusual in North America generally and yet we find them in great density in Newfoundland and Labrador.[1]

In the subsequent publication of his data, he further observed the prominence of the revenant motif and its occurrence in unfulfilled love stories. He proposed that the revenant is the most common supernatural element and dramas of frustrated love, the most distinct story-type in this corpus. Beside the revenant, he drew attention to the presence of dream motifs, and pointed out how these particular emphases indeed suggested a definite concern, to be further explored in the light of the local culture:

> From this survey, it is at least clear that the tragic and romantic ballads, stories of love won, lost, stolen, and revenged, are the most popular of the Child corpus. They focus on situations of moral import. . . . While a closer look at the texts might reveal cultural patterns in their implicit values, we can see even at this level an unusually strong emphasis on the central love relationship, particularly the difficulties and moral issues of separation. Such a concern may well reflect the life of a fishing people among whom death at sea and extended absence from the home were problems to be met with everyday. We have also found a concern for the

[1] MUNFLA ms 80-124, p. 28.

relationship of everyday life to the otherworld, a concern which is not uncommon among fisher-folk elsewhere.[1]

Quigley's survey and its recent updating yield an objective appreciation of the significance of death as a theme in the local classical repertoire. The earlier survey identified forty-four ballad types recorded in the province. Twenty-five of these explicitly relate to death (Ch 4, 7, 10, 14, 20, 49, 73, 74, 77, 78, 81, 83, 84, 85, 93, 155, 173, 209, 213, 214, 243, 248, 272, 286, 295). The second survey shows that this proportion remains equally high in the latest recordings. Eight of the fourteen types collected within the last sixteen years belong to the group (Ch 10, 20, 77, 78, 81, 84, 93, 286). Of these, two (Ch 77, 20) are at the top of the frequency scale (Table II) and five others (Ch 93, 84, 78, 81, 286) figure among the top ten. Two also (Ch 10, 78) have versions which tell a different narrative from the standard one, and appear to be unique to Newfoundland.[2] As well as revealing the intensity and accuracy of ballad collecting in the province up to these days, these figures indeed reflect a sensible prominence of the theme in the local repertoire up into the present.

13.2. The Narrative Structure

This ballad corpus, thus regionally and thematically defined, gathers romantic and tragic, supernatural, and semi-historical ballads. The following analysis of its meanings relating to death, however, ignores these conventional categories in the hope of uncovering possible native ones. This has been sought from the structural unity underlying these various narratives, or their lowest common denominator. This has appeared to be a narrative structure, which consists of the perpetration of an *offence* and its *revelation.*

Throughout the corpus, this offence or villainy consists of the violation of some norm.[3] In its clearest manifestation, it is a crime: homicide (Ch 4, 7, 10, 10*, 14, 81, 93, 155, 209, 214, 286) or infanticide (Ch 20, 173). But, as often, it is a moral fault: lack of commitment in love (Ch 73, 74, 83, 84, 213, 295), infidelity (81, 243), temper (Ch 49) and abuse of parental authority (Ch 272). And, of a more covert nature still, it is a critical circumstance: bereavement (77, 78, 78*, 85, 248).

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[1] Quigley 21.

[2] I will be referring to these Newfoundland oikotypes as Ch 10* and Ch 78*.

[3] Harry B. Caldwell similarly suggests that "the violation of moral values lies at the heart of ballad tragedy." In "The Multiple Effects of the Tragic Event in the Child Ballads," *New York Folklore Quarterly* 25 (1970): 15.

The perpetration of the offence generates the drama. This may only be "a word in jest," but its consequences are always decisive. Most of these narratives turn to tragedy, and the remaining few present narrow escapes, which shows that, in making themselves responsible for these offences, wittingly or not, the protagonists wager their life and happiness. Thus, the weighty outcome of these narratives points to the initial wrong as the cause of their demise or, at any rate, frailty. Through this emphasis on the unsuspected implications of the hero(in)es' actions ("Achtergewicht")[1], there appears to be a moral conveyed: crime will come out, so will error, and their price is death; courage in adversity, on the other hand, warrants life and happiness. The remainder of this analysis aims at demonstrating how the narrative structure underlying this message is borne by the interaction of the characters acting in three recurrent taleroles.

While the ballad protagonists of this corpus rarely emerge from their trials happily married or even alive, the offence that causes their demise, or threatens to do so, is always exposed. In most cases, the offence is explicitly denounced by one of the characters in reinforcement of the self-evident dénouement, whether tragic or not. This underlying structure, which corresponds to the Proppian functions of "violation" (∂) and "exposure of the villain" (Ex.), has suggested a basic talerole pattern consisting of an "offender," an "offended" and a "denouncer."[2] The "offender" is the character responsible for the offence, the "offended" is the one affected, and the "denouncer" is the agent, character or other, who reveals the death-dealing nature of the offence.

13.3. The Distribution of Taleroles

In commenting on Propp's talerole analysis of the Russian Märchen, David Buchan underlines that the correspondence between the spheres of action of the taleroles and the characters can be of any of the following three types. First, one can have a sphere of action which exactly corresponds to the character; second, a character can be involved in

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[1] This is Axel Olrik's concept with reference to the fact that the centre of gravity in folk narrative always lies in its "stern," in "Epic Laws of Folk Narrative," *The Study of Folklore*, ed. Alan Dundes (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice, 1965) 136.

[2] Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, trans. Laurence Scott, 2nd rev. ed. Louis A. Wagner (Austin: U of Texas P, 1968.) The symbol and abbreviation are those used by Propp to designate these functions. The taleroles chosen to account for this particular corpus, though distinct from those determined by Buchan in account of the various subgeneric ballad groups, concord with the three-talerole pattern, which he sees as story-norm for the genre; "Tale" 145.

several spheres of action; and third, a single sphere of action can be distributed among several characters.[1] While this ballad corpus illustrates all three of these patterns, it consistently shows the same character functioning in at least two taleroles: as either "offender" or "offended" and "denouncer." In concrete terms, all the protagonists, whether failing morally--in committing crimes and faults--or psychologically--in wasting their own life in grief for a loved one--eventually either spontaneously bemoan their behaviour or are faced with their wrong.

The distribution of the characters filling these taleroles further suggests the ballads' particular highlighting of the revelation of the offence and its insidious gravity. This emphasis shows in the greater diversity of agents functioning in the role of "denouncer." Whereas the two other taleroles are, quite realistically, exclusively filled by human and living characters, all the revenants function as "denouncer," thus revealing crimes and wrongs even beyond death. Whatever their particular relationship to those they visit, they make the truth of a situation beyond the power of human justice and reason. The guilty can also have their conscience stirred by a dream of the deceased (Ch 74, 214), sometimes alternating with a revenant, which means that it is its function rather than nature that matters. To reinforce the denunciation, this corpus also resorts to material agents animated with the ballads' moral sense. This accounts for the à propos of the church bells ringing "hard-hearted Barbara Allen" (Ch 84), the golden chains saying "there lies the body of Geordie" (Ch 209), the victim's blood that cannot be stopped (Ch 49), and the murderess's knife that can't be washed (Ch 20). Such emphases on the role altogether uncover a certain point of view on the events, which qualifies the last portion of G.H. Gerould's standard definition of the genre according to which "A ballad is a folk-song that tells a story with stress on the crucial situation, tells it by letting the action unfold itself in event and speech, and tells it objectively with little comment or intrusion of personal bias."[2]

13.4. Synopsis

The following synopsis of each type of the corpus outlines the concrete actions of the characters and agents interacting in each of the taleroles:

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[1] Buchan, "Propp's" 162.
[2] Gordon Hall Gerould, *The Ballad of Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1932) 11.

"Lady Isabel and the Elf-Knight" (Ch 4)

A suitor ("offender") attracts a young maiden ("offended") along with her parents' gold to a river in order to drown her and keep her dowry, and there reveals his actual intention. The would-be victim outwits her aggressor, and turning the tables on him, speaks out her mind to him ("denouncer") while pushing him in instead.

"Earl Brand" (Ch 7)

A lover ("offended"), cruelly assaulted by his true love's father and brothers ("offender"), strikes the father to death despite her plea to spare him. When free to achieve their union, she ("denouncer") bemoans her gain of a husband at the cost of her father's life. He is mortally wounded; she dies of grief and both are buried together.

"The Twa Sisters" (Ch 10, 10*)

A girl ("offender") jealous of her sister's ("offended") success in love drowns her (Ch 10) or attempts to do so (Ch 10*). Either the victim's ghost ("denouncer") reveals the crime (Ch 10) or she is rescued in time and happily married (Ch 10*) to her rescuer (implicit "denouncer").

"Babylon" (Ch 14)

A robber ("offender") does not expect to meet his three sisters on his adventures. He kills two of them ("offended") and takes his life when the third ("denouncer") reveals their kinship.

"The Cruel Mother" (Ch 20)

A mother ("offender") secretly murders and buries her newborn twins ("offended"). Two little boys ("denouncer") very unexpectedly face her with her past treatment to them. They spell out her damnation to her.

"The Two Brothers" (Ch 49)

A boy ("offender") kills his younger brother ("offended") unwittingly while bullying him into playing with him. The victim dies serene but instructs ("denouncer") the other to conceal the pathetic circumstances of his death from their parents. The boy's responsibility is sometimes intensified by the victim's blood, only flowing more abundantly when he tries to stop it.

"Lord Thomas and Fair Annet" (Ch 73)

A pusillanimous lover ("offender") lets himself be persuaded to marry for love rather than money. The jilted true love ("offended") disparages his bride, who responds to the humiliation by stabbing her. Dying, she ("denouncer") points out to him the fruits of his choice. In despair, he stabs his bride, and takes his life. The lovers are buried together.

"Fair Margaret and Sweet William" (Ch 74)

An impulsive lover ("offender"), vexed by his true love's light-hearted remark on his low station, rushes into marriage to someone else. His wedding breaks his true love's heart ("offended"), and either her ghost, a dream, or her brother ("denouncer") reveals her mortal grief for him. He dies of grief.

"Sweet William's Ghost" (Ch 77)

A maiden, tormented ("offended") by the prolonged absence of her lover, is visited by his revenant, who brings her the news of his death. Her desire to retain him, despite his repelling and unrecognizable features, prompts her to follow him back to his grave, and there she even wishes to join him in preference to life. The revenant ("denouncer") firmly opposes her wish and calls her back to reason.

"The Unquiet Grave" (Ch 78, 78*)

A maiden, disconsolate ("offended") for the death of her lover, engages in immoderate grief until her lover ("denouncer"), speaking from the grave, reproves her tears by pointing out the disturbance they cause him.

"Lady Barnard and Little Musgrave" (Ch 81)

A married woman ("offender") takes the opportunity of her husband's absence to engage in a love affair; when caught in her deceit, she defies her husband's mercy and patience. Twice humiliated ("offended"), his magnanimity turns into murderous vengeance ("denouncer"). He is executed for his vengeance.

"Child Maurice" (Ch 83)

A woman has kept secret ("offender") the existence of her supposedly illegitimate son from her husband ("offended"), and her rejoicing at receiving a letter from him awakes her husband's suspicion of infidelity. He challenges the

young man in a duel, and only finds the truth about his identity after killing him. To her grief, he declares ("denouncer") that, had he known the truth, her son would still be alive.

"Bonny Barbara Allen" (Ch 84)

A girl ("offender"), vexed by her lover's toasts to his female company, makes him pay for his courtesy by such resentment that he ("offended") dies. Moved by remorse, the church bells ringing "her responsibility," and sometimes also by her parents' and friends' reproval, she realizes and confesses ("denouncer") her love for him, and succumbs to her mistake. They are buried together. Plants grow and entwine on their grave.

"Lady Alice" (Ch 85)

A girl, meeting a funeral procession, learns from the pallbearers that they are carrying her lover to the ground. Distraught by the news, ("offended") she infringes the normal funeral procedure by requesting them to open the coffin, change his shroud for fine silk, and let her kiss his lips. Or, she finds him dead on his own father's threshold, and dressing him for burial, also kisses him. Following this, she announces her own death. She succumbs to her grief, and plants grow from the lovers' separate graves.

"Lamkin" (Ch 93)

A criminal and his accomplice ("offenders") murder a defenceless woman ("offended") for an unspecified reason. The lady's daughter, witnessing the scene, reports ("denouncer") the crime to her father, and the murderers are executed.

"Mary Hamilton" (Ch 173)

A woman ("offender"), sent to the gallows for some unspecified crime, confesses ("denouncer") her remorse and hope in divine mercy.[1]

[1]The single version of the ballad type in the local repertoire merely reports the heroine's lament, without specifying the nature of the crime that she bitterly regrets.

"Geordie" (Ch 209)

An unscrupulous king ("offender") refuses to hear a girl's plea ("denouncer") for her lover ("offended"), sentenced to the gallows for stealing some of the king's deer. The unjustified severity of the sentence is intensified by the gold chains "speaking" for his innocence.

"Sir James the Ross" (Ch 213)

A pusillanimous maiden ("offender") stalls her response to her lover's marriage proposal, and even doubting his own affection for her, tests him ("offended") by pretending to be engaged to another. Seeing his dismay, she confesses ("denouncer") her pretence by swearing that she would rather be dead than marry the other; her declaration is overheard, and causes the death of both.

"The Braes of Yarrow" (Ch 214)

A squire's son ("offender") murders his sister's humble lover ("offended") to prevent their marriage. The crime is revealed to her in a dream ("denouncer"). She dies of grief.

"James Harris (the Daemon Lover)" (Ch 243)

A rich captain ("offender") persuades a young ship carpenter's wife ("offended") to elope with him. The woman realizing ("denouncer") her mistake as soon as embarked on his ship, takes her life. Her husband dies of grief on receiving the news of her death.

"The Grey Cock, or, Saw you my Father ?" (Ch 248)[1]

A girl, tormented ("offended") by the prolonged absence of a lover, is visited by his revenant. She leads him to her bed, and although "he feels as cold as clay," only holds on to him. In reply to her wish never to part from him, he spells out his macabre abode to her, and gives her to understand ("denouncer") that only in the hereafter can they be reunited again.

[1] The two local versions of the type feature a revenant, turning its original plot as "dawn song" into a close parallel to Ch 77. Concerning the type's origin and ambivalence, see Hugh Shields, "The Grey Cock: Dawn Song or Revenant Ballad?" *Ballad Studies*, ed. E. Lyle (Cambridge: Brewer, 1976) 67-92.

"The Suffolk Miracle" (Ch 272)

A father ("offender"), opposed to his daughter's choice of a lover below her own station, confines her ("offended") in order to prevent their union. The lover dies of grief for her seclusion, but his revenant ("denouncer") brings her back to her father, thus avenging them both.

"The Golden Vanity" (Ch 286)

A captain ("offender") ignores the cries for help of his drowning cabin boy ("offended"), thus hoping to spare the reward promised for his bravery. The victim's revenant ("denouncer") confronts the criminal and gives him his due.

"The Brown Girl" (Ch 295)

A maiden ("offender") scorns her sailor lover ("offended") to respond to the attention of a squire's son. When she realizes her mistake, and begs for forgiveness, the jilted lover returns ("denouncer") her contempt, and she dies of grief.

I have divided the corpus according to the ballad hero(in)es' filling of the three taleroles: its plots present them either as responsible for the offence or subject to it. Thus these ballad types fit into two groups corresponding to the hero(in)es acting as "offender" or "offended." The first group shows them as "offenders" versus their love partner, siblings or children; the second, as "offended" by a third character or circumstance.

13.5. Ballad Hero(in)es as "Offenders"

Ten types out of the twenty-five making up the corpus present the central protagonists in the role of "offender" (Ch 20, 49, 73, 74, 81, 83, 84, 173, 213, 295). In the majority of cases, the hero(in)es are part of an amatory pair, and one of the partners offends the other. The "offenders'" moral flaws cause the separation of the lovers through the death of one, but mostly both of them, and sometimes other characters, such as their rivals (Ch 73, 213), illicit lover (Ch 81) and son (Ch 81). The few other "offenders" are mothers (Ch 20, 173) secretly taking the life of their newborns, and a quick-tempered boy (Ch 49), unwittingly hitting his younger brother to death. Strikingly, the characters filling the role of "denouncer" are essentially the same as those filling the two other roles. Most of the "denouncers" are the "offended," living (Ch 81, 83, 295), dying (Ch 49, 73) or dead and

back to the living for that very purpose (Ch 20, 74)! Fewer are the remorseful "offenders" spontaneously confessing their guilt (Ch 84, 173, 213), thus denouncing themselves.

Ch #	OFFENDER	OFFENDED	DENOUNCER	
20	S	2Sch	2SchRev	(The Cruel Mother)
49	H	HB	HB	(The Two Brothers)
73	H	S	S	(Lord Thomas and Fair A.)
74	H	S	SRev	(Fair Marg. and Sweet Will.)
81	S	H	H	(Lady Barnard and Little M.)
83	S	Ssn	H	(Child Maurice)
84	S	H	S	(Bonny Barbara Allen)
173	S	[Sch][1]	S	(Mary Hamilton)
213	S	H	S	(Sir James the Ross)
295	S	H	H	(The Brown Girl)

The abbreviations are:
H : hero
S : heroine
HB : H's brother
Sch, Ssn, SRev, SchRev : S's children, S'son, S'revenant, S'children's revenants
[] : not explicit in the local version of the type

13.6. Ballad Hero(in)es as "Offended"

The other major group into which the corpus can be divided gathers those types in which the hero(in)es act in the role of "offended," as victims and no longer perpetrators of the offence. As such, the protagonists of this group, apparently, lose all responsibility in their demise. One subgroup includes the types in which the offence is committed against the hero(in)es by a third character; another groups the types in which the offence inflicted upon the hero(in)es proceeds from a circumstance independent of any human will.

[1] The brackets indicate that infanticide, which is the motive of the heroine's condemnation in other Anglo-American versions of the ballad, is not explicit in this single version from Newfoundland.

13.6.1. By a Third Character

In a group similar in size to the first, the offence perpetrated by a third character against the hero(in)es generally consists of voluntary homicide. This takes the form of assault (Ch 4, 7, 14, 93, 214), abuse of a child's trust (Ch 155), drowning (Ch 10, 10*), refusal of assistance in danger (Ch 286) and corrupted justice (Ch 209). Otherwise, it is the sequestration of a maiden by her father to prevent an undesirable marriage (Ch 272) and the seduction of a young married woman (Ch 243). The victims of these aggressions are, for the most, also engaged in a love relationship, and while the offence, physically, is directed against only one of them, the grieving partner often loses his/her own life in despair (Ch 7, 272, 214, 243). The victims are generally in a position of inferiority towards their "offenders." Their inferiority is in terms either of social standing (Ch 7, 209, 214, 272, 286), gender (Ch 4, 243) or age (Ch 10*, 155).

Male heroes are victimized by social superiors exerting oppression on them (Ch 209, 214, 286) while women are mostly subjected to the authority of their father (Ch 7, 214, 272), occasionally seconded by their son(s), when it comes to marriage. At best, the lover comes out of this unmatched fight victorious but mortally wounded (Ch 7). Other women run up against opportunist lovers (Ch 4, 243), who are also foreigners, "a Newfoundland sea-captain" (from the perspective of "the English carpenter's wife") (Ch 243), "an outlandish knight" (Ch 4). In one case is the aggressor a supernatural being, "an elf-knight" (Ch 4)! The one maiden who can rejoice in having both a true lover and a caring father inspires the criminal jealousy of her sister on account of the favour received from the one (Ch 10) or the other (Ch 10*). The other female "offender" is also a foreigner, "a jew's wife," kidnapping and murdering her neighbour's son (Ch 155) for no specified reason. Two types in this group, however, show their heroines successful in escaping their criminals, the one owing to her calm and wit (Ch 4), the other to chance or else a suitor's intuition (Ch 10*). Her luck, at any rate, is double as she marries her rescuer.

Ch #	OFFENDER	OFFENDED	DENOUNCER	
4	V	S	S	(Lady Isabel and the Elf-K.)
7	SF+7SB	H	S	(Earl Brand)
10	SS=S-R	S	Sspirit	(The Two Sisters)
10*	SS=S-R	S	H	(" ")
14	V=SB	S	S	(Babylon)
93	V	S	Sd	(Lamkin)
155	V	H	Hspirit[1]	(Sir Hugh)
209	V	H	S	(Geordie)
214	SF+SB	H	Sdream	(The Braes of Yarrow)
243	V=H-R	S	S	(James Harris)
272	SF	S	HRev	(The Suffolk Miracle)
286	V	H	HRev	(The Sweet Trinity)

The abbreviations are:
H : hero
S : heroine
V : villain
H-R, S-R: H's rival, S's rival
HRev, SRev, Hspirit, Sspirit: H's revenant , S's revenant, H's spirit, S's spirit
SF, SB, Sd : S's father, S's brother, S's daughter
Sdream: S dreaming

13.6.2. By Circumstance

While in the types presented so far the offence is a crime or fault committed by an "offender," the second subgroup no longer has any "offenders" as such. The hero(in)es are no longer offended by human imperfection or hostility but by unavoidable forces of circumstances: sudden bereavement. And, rather than on the causes of the lover's premature death ("offence"), the plot focuses on the woman's shock reaction. The narratives stage a single but poignant scene showing the afflicted ("offended") woman

[1] While the single collected version of the type in Newfoundland is incomplete due to the singer's avowed loss of memory, the text mentions "an echo in the wind," which suggests the victim's "spirit" rather than "revenant" disclosing his murder to his mother.

visited by her lover's revenant.[1] To its sweetheart, either ignoring or failing to realize her loss, the revenant brings the evidence of its death, and explicitly "denounces" the danger of her reaction of denial or despair. The outcome of these plots suggests the positive effect of the revenant's intervention through the sweetheart's acknowledgment of its admonition and final acceptance of their earthly separation. Two types, however, step out of line by either adding or lacking some components of that structure, and as such present counterparts to the norm. By a careful reversal of the standard plot, Ch 78* almost suggests a parody. The heroine, rather than being desperate for her fiancé's loss, is able to marry only eight months following his death. His revenant visits her on the eve of her wedding, and instead of encouraging her to live on without it, declares its jealous love for her, which arouses no joy on her part! By this undue intervention, it actually "denounces" her infidelity to its memory, and finally claims her back. Its visit thus destroys her life and future instead of protecting it. Such is the fate also of the heroine of Ch 85; despite signs of fragmentation in both local versions, the plot shows her running into her lover's funeral, still ignoring the fact of his death! In her shock, she insists on being allowed to take a kiss from his lips. There being no "revenant" to dissuade her, she pursues her own mind--and madness--and doing so, loses her own life.

Ch#	OFFENDED	DENOUNCER	
77	S	HRev	(Sweet William's Ghost)
78	S/H	H/SRev	(The Unquiet Grave)
78*	S	HRev	(" ")
85	S	--	(Lady Alice)
248	S	HRev	(The Grey Cock)

The abbreviations are:
H: hero
S: heroine
HRev, SRev : H's Revenant, S's Revenant

[1] In all but four versions of Ch 78, G78B, MUNFLA ms 85-343, p. 24 (possibly copied from a non-local source), B78 and P78A, where the pronouns "he/she" are used inconsistently, the mourner is the female partner.

13.7. Ballads and Taleroles

The talerole schemas proposed above have been the object of successsive changes in the course of this analysis. To their earlier versions, which accounted for the characters' functions in the closest accuracy, has finally been preferred the more abstract present form. As given, the schemas only account for the dramatic core of each type plot, or the ballads' own narrative point of view on the dramas. Through this revising process, I have gained a critical insight into the method applied and marvelled at some unsuspected qualities of the genre. The problems encountered, indeed, have revealed the ballads' resistance to any simplistic reduction or rigid meaning. In a genre which is conventionally seen as the next-of-kin of Märchen owing to its fictional and stereotypical characterization and plot, neither of these has proved amenable to easy "schematization."[1] Thus, no absolute value is claimed for any of the concepts grounding this analysis--the formulation of the narrative structure in terms of *offence* and *revelation* or the taleroles themselves--only the merit of clarifying some underlying patterns.

The reality, indeed, is more complex than it appears from these talerole schemas. While the core of their drama mostly focuses on one of the lovers offending his/her partner, these plots, at the least, suggest that the hero(in)es take turns in the role of "offender," the dramatized offence (accounted for in the schema) being committed in retaliation for some minor vexation on the part of the partner presented as "offended" (Ch 73, 74, 78*, 83, 84, 93, 295). This mechanism of reciprocal wrong, frequent but not exclusive among ballad lovers, indeed operates the workings of tragedy in the genre:

> When an act of tragic significance is committed, the effects are multiple. . . . The individual scenes (incidents, events) in the chain that make up the composite tragic event of each ballad are worked out in a cause and effect relationship.[2]

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[1] My previous accounts of this ballad corpus in this fashion have been the object of two papers presented at the annual meetings of the Conference on European Ballad Research, and are published as: "'If you Kiss my clay-cold lips...': An Examination of Revenant Ballads in Newfoundland," *Tod und Jenseits im Europäischen Volkslied, 16. Internationale Balladenkonferenz, Kolympari, Kreta, 19-22 August 1986*, ed. Walter Puchner (Ioannina: University of Jannina Faculty of Philosophy, 1986) 263-79; "'Are you blind, Lord Thomas, or can't you very well see?': An Interpretation of Death in the Newfoundland Classical Ballads," Laforte, *Ballades* 291-300.

[2] Caldwell, "Multiple" 19 and 21-22.

13.8. Ballad Psychology

Despite the tightly dramatic style characteristic of the genre, and the sharp focus in this corpus on the offence-revelation sequence, these types all give some indication of the circumstances in which the transgressions and blunders are committed. These contexts altogether reveal some meaningful patterns. In the delicate task of interpreting these latent meanings, there is the danger of reading them into the texts rather than back from them. One gains confidence, however, in deriving such propositions from observing the coherent articulation of such patterns throughout the corpus.

13.8.1. Ballads versus Life

The circumstances in which the hero(in)es offend their partner, sibling, or child all appear to be situations of emotional frustration or lack. Whether lord or lady, fair or foul, engaged, married, or widowed, the profile of these "offenders" reflects either loneliness, rejection, or immaturity. The majority of them are lonely creatures. These are women left to themselves when unmarried and pregnant (Ch 20, 173), or as a result of their partner's desertion (Ch 73), absence (Ch 81) or death (Ch 78*). Their loneliness exposes them to male violence (Ch 93), the temptation of adultery (Ch 81, 243), the despair of infanticide (Ch 20, 173) or a hasty marriage (Ch 78*). Men are lonely as a result of rejection for lack of social standing, judged as equivalent to a lack of material means (Ch 74, 295). To a lesser extent, both genders are emotionally immature when it comes to choosing a match. Dependence on parents (Ch 73, 74) prevents them from acknowledging their feelings and committing themselves in marriage (Ch 213).

As well as the contexts of the central protagonists' failures, one gets a hint of their motivations. Pride and personal vengeance come first (Ch 49, 73, 74, 81, 84, 93, 295): Lamkin, who could not get satisfaction, whatever the nature of his claims, slaughters a woman and her child in her husband's absence (Ch 93); Lord Donald finds no other response to his wife's mocking humiliation than an angry and fatal blow (Ch 81); Barbara Allen is stiffened and blinded by her wounded pride (Ch 84). The same hurt pride motivates men: a sailor, temporarily neglected by his true love for a squire, pays her back with sarcasm when she is dying of love for him (Ch 295); Sweet William's humiliation by his better-off sweetheart rushes him into a grand but loveless marriage (Ch 74).

The preservation of social image (Ch 20) motivates infanticide. By murdering her newborns, the heroine of Ch 20 seeks to keep her honour and possibly her eligibility for marriage. The achievement of marriage motivates Babylon's violence. Estranged from his community by his marginal way of life, his only hope to win himself a wife is by force (Ch 14). Many dramas arise from the characters' dissatisfaction with their lot. The acquisition or preservation of wealth or of social prestige are powerful concerns; ingrained by parents as goals to be pursued, they separate lovers of their own accord (Ch 73, 74, 295). But, when socially and materially secure, women fall for romance and adventure to escape the routine of their easy life (Ch 81, 272). Lady Barnard, as a popular counterpart of Anna Karenina, is subdued by her discovery of passion lacking in the lonely comfort of her castle and the cold dignity of her rank (Ch 81). As well, squires' and merchants' daughters can only be won by their fathers' subordinates (Ch 214, 272).

13.8.2 Ballads versus Death

No matter even the contexts and motivations of the "offences," no speculation is needed to appreciate their results: in human conflicts and dramas, death is the only winner. When inflicted deliberately, it brings the protagonists neither satisfaction nor luck, not even to their revenge (Ch 20, 81, 84, 93, 295). As these "offenders" show remorse for their deeds, and the rest get the gallows, the stake, or else eternal damnation, they do not gain anything from killing. When caused unintentionally, it is to their extreme loss (Ch 49, 73, 74, 78*, 81). The boy bullying his younger brother for declining his invitation to play with him, is overwhelmed by his own temper (Ch 49), and vainly tries to stem his victim's blood. The lovers sacrificing their feelings to marry for riches are far from suspecting that their choice will cause their partner's mortal despair (Ch 74) or murder by their own bride (Ch 73). Babylon kills his sisters unknowingly (Ch 14) and, horrified by his deed, takes his own life; a husband kills a suspected rival in a fair duel to discover his victim to be his stepson (Ch 83). Such unvoluntary, though not quite accidental deaths, are multiple: starting with the protagonists' dearest ones, true loves and relatives, and extending to secondary victims: innocent brides, fair rivals (Ch 73, 74, 213), deceived husbands (Ch 81), and ending with themselves. Only after these deaths have manifested the full extent of the hero(in)es' responsibility do grief and remorse take care of their own death (Ch 14, 20, 73, 74, 78*, 81, 83, 84, 93, 173, 213). Death, in fact, occurs mostly when it is not sought, which suggests the unpredictable and uncontrollable effects of one's actions.

13.8.3. Ballads versus Mourning

What of those hero(in)es "offended" by a third character or circumstance, yet rescued and rehabilitated to life? What do the ballads teach through these exceptionally lucky escapes: trust to chance and revenants in the last resort? On the basis of his talerole analysis of the fourteen ballad types featuring a revenant in Child, David Buchan distinguishes a core group of five, in which the revenant makes a consistent appearance. From their common structure,

> a central relationship has been severed by the death of one member; this person (or people, if children are involved) returns as revenant to rectify an emotional imbalance in the life of the other caused in greater or lesser part by the dislocation of the death.

he proposes their cultural functioning:

> The ballads of this subgeneric group explore the psychological states generated by death and the severance of a relationship, and for the dangers of these states provide remedies which will help the individual towards adjustment and the restoration of balance.[1]

The types directly concerned by my questions (Ch 77, 78) belong to this core group, and their Newfoundland versions suggest some meaningful variation in this respect. Although variation between the British and local versions is minor in comparison with the recurrence of plots and motifs, there is a felt emphasis in Newfoundland on the point the subgenre wants to make.

To start with, the twenty-eight versions of "Sweet William's Ghost" (Ch 77) recorded in the province attest the particular appeal of this ballad locally, unmatched in either the British or American repertoires. The main idea of the plot, as Child indicates, is the dead lover's return to his true love to ask back his unfulfilled troth plight. The girl does not suspect that her visitor is a dead man, and objects that she will keep his love token until he marries her with a ring. When he makes it clear that it is but his revenant speaking to her, she finally returns his troth. She accompanies him back to the churchyard where his bones are buried and wishes only to join him in the grave. He invariably answers that there is no room for her there. On hearing the cock crow, he must go back to the dead. The

[1] Buchan, "Tale" 146 and 150. The author has confirmed and developed this proposition in "Affinities" 333-39.

disconsolate girl is left alone, and she lets herself die of grief. In explanation of the revenant's request for his love token--the only motivation for his visit--Child writes:

> Sir Walter Scott informs us, in the Advertisement to The Pirate, that the lady whose affections had been engaged by Goff, the historical prototype of Cleveland, "went up to London to see him before his death, and that, arriving too late, she had the courage to request a sight of his body; and then touching the hand of the corpse, she formally resumed the troth-plight which she had bestowed." "Without going through this ceremony," Scott goes on to say, "she could not, according to the superstition of the country, have escaped a visit from the ghost of her departed lover, in the event of her bestowing upon any living suitor the faith which she had plighted to the dead."[1]

This belief is found in Newfoundland to this day, and expressed in the wake custom of touching or kissing the deceased. The practice retains its protective function in assuring the living that by doing this, they prevent the spirit of the dead person from haunting them or occurring in their dreams. This ritual separation evokes the dissolution of the vows of love and fidelity in marriage, as the formula "until death us do part" signifies. The gesture as well as the phrase acknowledges the dichotomy between this world and the "otherworld," notwithstanding the love bonds of the living and the dead. What the request of the revenant lover suggests is a courageous acceptance of its death as a physical separation but also as a necessary dissolution of any former affection. Through affirming this rupture between the living and the dead, however beloved, this gesture of "adieu" in the literal sense, beyond any superstition, means to keep the bereaved from excessive grief which would only bury their own life in memory of the past. The ballad-story thus illustrates the gospel's psychological recommendation to "let the dead bury the dead."

The British versions of the ballad make their point by presenting a counter-example of the attitude the ballad judges appropriate. The girl's immoderate grief leads her to walk in a dead man's company, showing a regressive preference for an illusory continuing relationship with her dead lover above her own life and what it still holds for her, including the chance of another love, as the Scottish belief suggests. As a result, her failure to cope with the hardships of her life only precipitates her own death.

The numerous Newfoundland versions convey the identical idea but present it in positive and more encouraging terms. The argument is built on an expressive antithesis

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[1] Child 2: 227; with a reference to a note in the Kinloch MSS, VII, 277, indicating that Scott told Kinloch that he had received this story from an old woman in Shetland.

between life and death, the lover's once attractive and lively features on the one hand, and the apparition of his cold and decomposed corpse on the other. The suggestion is particularly effective owing to the girl's ignorance of his death. She rejoices at his visit and asks him whether he has brought her a ring, diamonds or pearls--the very tokens of love vows and fidelity--but his cold winding sheet is his only present to her. She inquires about his rosy cheeks in reply to which he shows her his rotten arms. As to her question of the female company he keeps in the world beyond the grave, he tells her that the worms, his companions, have eaten them away. The imagery serves as an exposition of death in its most realistic aspects. Yet, knowing his condition, she "takes her underskirts above her knee" to travel in this "dead man's company" and "over the hills with him" back to the grave which, as the cock crow signals, he must soon reintegrate. But, no more deterred by her elopement with this man than by his decomposed appearance, she makes three requests for room where she might lie at his side. With such an emphasis on the girl's immoderate attachment to her dead lover, the Newfoundland texts highlight her excess.

The hero(ine), here "offended" psychologically, is actually hovering on the border between life and death with a morbid wish of transgressing it. Yet, the comparison between British and local texts makes clear that it is owing to her courageous acceptance of earthly separation, signified by her returning of his troth, that she eventually keeps safe from this transgression ("offence"). It is in this crucial point of the narrative that the Newfoundland versions depart from the British texts in opting without exception for the successful resolution of the girl's emotional crisis. As a sign of her courageous acceptance of the reality of her lover's death, the girl here bravely performs the ritual adieu, strengthened by her faith in Providence. The grief ("lack") suffered by the young widow at the outset of the narrative thus, rather than dissolved ("liquidated") as she first fantasized, is overcome ("sublimated") through her acceptance of her lot.[1]

The same tendency for bereavement crises to end for the better in Newfoundland shows in the local versions of "The Unquiet Grave" (Ch 78) and "The Grey Cock" (Ch 248). The first type, interestingly, also ranks high in the local frequency scale;[2] the second, which in British versions mostly tells of a secret meeting between lovers, borrows the revenant along with the happy denouement from the local "Sweet William's Ghost."

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[1] The first two terms make reference to these two key functions in Propp's analysis; the third is understood in its specific psychological sense.

[2] Besides the ballad's popularity in Newfoundland, it is interesting to observe that the first North-America version of the type was traced in Newfoundland.

Rather than coincidence, the resemblance of all three types suggests the influence of the local favourite on the other two types. In the standard plot of "The Unquiet Grave," a disconsolate hero(in)e pronounces immoderate vows of austerity on the grave of her lover. She will weep on his grave "for a twelvemonth and a day," and literally weeps him out of it. His ghost reproves her pointless and upsetting sorrow, illustrating the belief that the tears of the living wet the shrouds of the dead and thus disturb their rest. All she wants is a kiss from him but the dead lover turns down her unnatural request. The motif refers to the superstition that kissing a supernatural being, ghost, fairy, or other, is fatal to the living. The return of the troth, like the kiss of adieu given on the death-bed in local tradition, indeed protects the girl from a detrimental attachment to her dead lover. The motif also appears in "The Grey Cock" (Ch 248), which locally substitutes a dead lover for a living one, and thus appears more concerned with enforcing the same lesson than romancing a lovers' secret meeting.

Last but not the least revenant in this repertoire is the one appearing in the two collected versions of the peculiar oikotype of "The Unquiet Grave" (Ch 78*). In this alternative plot, the girl's fiancé dies shortly before their planned wedding. She soon finds another love, and marries him only eight months after the other's death. Here, she runs into trouble as a result of her excessively short mourning for her dead lover, and the ballad takes over from there, showing the consequences of her violation ("offence") of the traditional mourning period prescribed for a close relative.[1] It is the revenant, and not the girl, who laments for the loss of its only love; its grief, or jealousy at any rate, makes it beg a last kiss from her lips before he loses her to her bridegroom. Yet, as it reveals the purpose of its visit, it warns her that this kiss will be fatal to her.[2] Here then is an imaginative combination of the two motifs encountered earlier: the revenant's return to beg a kiss from its true love, though in contradiction with its refusing her that kiss in Ch 78 and Ch 248, makes coherent sense in the light of Ch 77 and Scott's account. The begging of the kiss here is equivalent to that of the troth-plight; as the girl, in her haste to marry another, neglects to return this, she receives a visit from her first fiancé, who, in vengeance for her failing in her obligation towards him, cuts short her love commitment to another.[3] So, underlying the apparent contradiction suggested by this reversal of plot

[1] In the light of this duration for mourning, the girl's weeping "for a twelvemonth and a day," which is a constant element in all other versions of the ballad, suggests excessive grief in a literal sense.

[2] This threat is realized in two local versions of Ch 85 in which the girl takes the initiative of kissing her lover's corpse, and thereafter announces her death.

and beliefs, this counter-example of the behaviour to adopt towards a dead lover only reinforces the point made by the standard plots.

Why, one wonders, does the girl grant him this kiss, knowing it will be fatal to her? At the literal level, the girl apparently abuses her first lover's memory, and the ballad shows her punished for her neglect of the social norm. In this role, she is an "offender," failing like her peers through moral irresponsibility. But, granting the ballad a feeling for psychology, this seemingly "malevolent revenant" and his "unfaithful partner" might metaphorically evoke the transitional ambiguity of mourning.[1] The revenant might suggest the reawakening of her love, lost but recently, and its request for a last kiss the temporary persistence of her affection after her lover's death. She thus succumbs to her unhealed wound, reopened on the eve of her wedding. Her granting this kiss apparently signifies that their old ties, loosened by death and life's ongoing course, remain stronger than the new ties she is about to make. Such an attitude would prove her premature commitment to another love in spite even of her own consciousness and will. If so, the cultural statements validate each other: the one, warning that one should not grieve for the dead excessively, the other, that in order to secure one's own peace of mind, one should allow sufficient time for the resolution of grief.

13.9. Ballad Morality

The narrative contents of these ballads are never trivial: their plots evoke concerns common to human experience, principally the achievement of love in marriage and the resolution of grief in bereavement. The ballads show the proper time and disposition necessary for the successful achievement of these rites of passage. To do so, they mostly focus on some problematic situations which often end badly. Typically, a wedding turns

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[3] Shields mentions two folk narratives developing this plot, and which, as he suggests, predate the romantic revival: "A long eighteenth-century narrative, *Nancy of Yarmouth*, describes "the return of a dead sailor to claim in death the girl who was pledged to him and who is ready to keep her pledge." Another narrative text--not surviving in oral tradition--was *Bateman's tragedy*, written at least as early as the beginning of the seventeenth-century and telling the story of a woman who broke faith with her lover, caused his suicide, was 'born away' by his ghost 'and never heard of after.' In "The Dead Lover's Return in Modern English Ballad Tradition," *Jahrbuch für Volksliedforschung* 17 (1972): 98-99.

[1] Two folklore studies underline this attitude, the second one with particular reference to Ch 78: Arora 223-46 and Lindahl 165-85.

into the funeral and burial of the same couple, as a manifestation of the impact of a seemingly minor offence. Harry Caldwell thus explains this inherent quality of the genre: "The ballads suggest that men live in a social context. When one individual commits an act of tragic consequence, the social organization cannot help but suffer. Ballad tragedy is social tragedy."[1] Besides this, the disparity between the cause and its effect might prompt ballad audiences to reflect on how these dramas could have been avoided or resolved for the better. Various singers have commented on the instructive value of ballads as compared with other songs.[2] MacEdward Leach reports such an impact from communities on the Lower Labrador Coast:

> . . . he [the singer] always lets the story-songs speak for themselves. The audience never participates beyond comment on the songs; there is no applause or extravagant praise. Rather there are quiet remarks here and there, "That is sure a good song," or "A song like that, it's got more truth than a preacher's sermon."
>
> The songs on the Labrador Coast are almost all ballads; they outnumber the "ditties," the humorous and sentimental songs, by twenty to one. I asked about this and got such answers as: "They are better because they are not just da, da, da, but give you something to think about." "These are good because they are about people." "I like these because they teach you something."[3]

An interesting pattern emerges from a comparison of the two major type groups of this corpus when one considers the source of the offence: whenever this has a human cause, and particularly when it is committed by the central protagonists, it induces the death of one and generally several characters. The resolution of these dramas in death demonstrates the subversive nature of human flaws similar in effect to the manifest evil of crime. On the other hand, when the offence is caused by a third character, the victimized hero(in)es stand a chance to escape their wrongdoers or torment them as revenants. Thirdly, when the offence comes as a fatality, it is generally resolved for the best: the love of one's dear ones inspires the courage necessary to overcome grief, and escape the temptation of despair.

The Newfoundland classical ballads relating to death focus on the circumstances likely to endanger one's personal life. This study of a corpus of diverse contents rather than one

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[1] Caldwell 21.

[2] Among the most substantial accounts, Burton, *Some* and Abrahams, *A Singer and Her Songs: Almeda Riddle's Book of Ballads* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1970).

[3] Leach, *Folk* 9 and 11.

restricted to a particular subgenre gives insight into the comparative relevance of these various dramas. While this corpus includes seven of the ten most popular types in the province, its focus is on the heroines' emotional need in bereavement as well as on their moral failures.[1] Interestingly, the marked prominence of the revenant type Ch 77, and to a lesser extent of Ch 78, is balanced by the diverse illustration of the hero(in)es' misbehaviours. The messages of these most popular ballad types complement each other: some provide grief counselling in front of inevitable deaths, the others warn against shortcuts to death.

Roger Abrahams and George Foss overview the content of the American classical ballads and other narrative songs in terms of "love and death," and conclude that "the Anglo-American tradition is suffused with stories of futility, destruction and death. Life is pictured in fatalistic terms."[2] Another account of the genre proposes that "separation and loss is the ultimate tragic event which cannot be alleviated," that "there is no afterlife for ballad characters," and "so the ballad stresses the physical corruption of death."[3] This analysis of the Newfoundland corpus suggests another possible interpretation of the ballads' portrayal of life and mortality. Death mostly occurs to demonstrate the unsuspected effects of human actions. The tragic denouements of these ballads draw attention to how little control we have over our own lives; hence, the need to minimize the damage by keeping actions in check. So, rather than the working of a blind fate leaving man powerless and irresponsible, ballad dramas coherently suggest that if such deaths occur by our own fault, they can be avoided by better judgement.

In facing us with the pathetic consequences of some inadequate responses to life's trials, maybe owing only to human nature, the ballads warn against self-defeating behaviours. By this forceful demonstration, they teach a lesson for life, relying for effectiveness on the principle of error-analysis applied to everyday tragedies. This accords with Christine Cartwright's suggestion that

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[1] These types no more than the others of this corpus, though, show a distinct prevalence of women singers.

[2] Abrahams and George Foss, "The Content of the Songs: Love and Death," *Anglo-American Folksong Style* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice, 1968) 131.

[3] Patricia Ingham, "The World of the Ballad," *Review of English Studies* N.S. 8 (1957): 29-30.

> The ballads perhaps hold love up to death as to a mirror, reflecting in detailed reversal the cultural norms for the accomplishment of permanent romantic unions.[1]

As far as the types of this corpus are concerned, their dramatization of death proposes that catastrophe can be surmounted, encourages moral and responsible behaviour, assures punishment for one's invincible enemies and hope for their victims. In proposing how death can be avoided and transcended, the genre reveals its concern with life, and offers ways to preserve it, which Buchan appropriately calls "strategies for survival."[2] That it is the achievement of love in *life* that really matters in this particular corpus is suggested by the greater emphasis on the lovers' either weak or rigid character as causing their partner's death, rather than on the entwining plants growing from the lovers' graves, notwithstanding the popular appeal of the motif in English tradition.[3]

Buchan observes that "relationships lie at the heart of the meaning of ballads, constituting the central element in the ballad-story and its cultural declarations."[4] This analysis certainly bears out that ballads are not concerned with action and their dramatic effects for their own sake. In dramatizing these problematic relationships, the types of this corpus show ballad hero(in)es subject to their emotions: faint-heartedness, obstinacy, temper, fierce rigidity, passionate determination, extreme despair. The corpus thus portrays humanity's inherent contradictions. These powerful emotions bear evidence that ballad characters are made of flesh and blood, even blood and nerve. They need be called neither criminals nor psychotics but just ordinary individuals responding to their frustration with immoderate and desperate behaviours: inhibition or excessive resentment, unduly short or prolonged mourning, missed or hasty marriages, infanticide committed under social pressure, infidelity as emotional compensation for the disillusions of married life, etc. These hero(in)es in the role of "offenders" verify Dan Ben-Amos' suggestion that "such ballads are not the tragedy of the innocent but rather of the criminals,"[5] or that the wicked are above all unhappy people.

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[1] Cartwright, "Barbara Allen: Love and Death in an Anglo-American Narrative Folksong," Edwards and Manley, *Narrative* 245.
[2] Buchan, "Affinities" 337.
[3] Long counts nine types in Child having the motif, in "Young" 184. In this corpus, only Ch 84 displays it systematically beside one version of Ch 85 and Ch 74.
[4] Buchan, "Propp's" 168.
[5] Ben-Amos, "Situation" 169.

In conclusion, this talerole analysis uncovers a coherent structure of thought articulated throughout the death-related types of the Newfoundland classical repertoire. This meaningful patterning of ideas expressed via the many and diverse plots of this corpus gives evidence of a moral discourse, which appears to be the essential motivation for the narrative contents and their dramatic treatment. The declarations made via these dramas, however sensational, are concerned with real life, its dilemmas and trials. These ballad types focus not only on situations of moral import but on the contexts and motivations, conscious or not, of the protagonists' choices. So, while these ballads take a firm stand underneath their impersonal reporting, their sobering lessons manifest no simplistic evaluation of such actions.

Responsible behaviour, both with regard to others and oneself, sums up the message put across the corpus, and is aptly expounded by the "denouncers." As spokesmen of this message, the revenants all function in this prominent role. These commonly denounce some untruth or imbalance, and adapt their behaviour to the living according to the treatment received from them in life: avenging themselves on their intent offenders while admonishing their very own offended by their loss. The exceptional "lover-avenger" hybrid of Ch 78*, in fact, illustrates that these two apparently remote subfunctions of revenants also combine. To the effect of proposing that, in a world as harsh and unpredictable as the ballads', justice will be done in the end, and serenity restored, no matter the hardships endured, the revenant figure looms largely as a warrant of order, its calm demeanour and restrained pronouncements speaking for wise balance contrasting with the either lacking or excessive behaviours characterizing all other protagonists.

Conclusions

This investigation of death as an expression of worldview in Newfoundland has examined salient diachronic and synchronic aspects of its culture, and paid particular attention to the relevant classical ballads. This intra-cultural examination, besides, has been guided by insights borrowed from psychology, sociology and cultural history with regard to personal, social and cultural responses to death. The result is a set of three distinct analyses "identifying" meanings at the levels of these ballads' pragmatic, symbolic and poetic contexts. Put together, this data projects a constellation of meanings expressed both within and around the ballads, and allows an assessment of the cultural character of their worldview with respect to death.

In accordance with the initial hypothesis of this thesis, this analysis of cultural attitudes about death claims to have found unity underneath diversity, or, as Renwick suggests concerning a heterogeneous body of English folk poetry, "the coherence of a unified system of meanings."[1] The present study, indeed, yields an "interpretation" of these ballads' message as corresponding both with their people's environment and their expressive culture at large. More even than a fitting part of this culture, the ballad corpus, within its own poetic context, articulates a sharp expression of this cultural message. While this translates attitudes and meanings pervading Anglo-American classical balladry and even Western cultural tradition at large, its expression via the Newfoundland ballad corpus and its revenant types in particular, attests emphasis and popularity suggesting uncommon and lasting significance locally. Even though their message makes universal sociological and psychological sense, the maritime as well as "traditional" character of Newfoundland society quite reasonably accounts for the revenant types' local prominence and success. As a poetic and eminently dramatic expression of Newfoundlanders' voluntary and positive atttitude to life, whatever its hardships, these ballads' message has likely sustained their people's courage in life, and especially in bereavement.

To assess the cultural meaning and function of the local ballad corpus, I propose to start back from the core analysis of this study and "reconstruct" Newfoundland's death tradition and worldview around it.

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[1] Renwick, *English* 14.

1. The Classical Ballads' Poetic Context

The sources of the Newfoundland classical ballad repertoire prove it a commendable basis for the objectives of this study. The sustained efforts of folksong collecting in the province along with the manifest re-creative talent of its singers yield a data basis allying quantity to quality; the result is a fairly exceptional repertoire in Anglo-American classical balladry. To this fortunate state of affairs could be owed the coherence of its discourse on death, but it is to talerole analysis that goes the merit of "cracking the code"[1] of its meanings. Indeed, the mere survey of this corpus with regard to its distribution of types and versions already reveals its salient concern: lovers separated by death or the emotional crisis of bereavement at its worst. Whereas the particular prominence and dramatic treatment of this issue in the repertoire could have led to the assumption that it expresses a defeatist, fatalistic and morbid attitude to life and love, consideration of the texts' deeper structures disclaims such a superficial appreciation of their intrinsic meanings.

Throughout the twenty-five death-related ballad types, all narrating the tragic death of their central protagonists in various circumstances, the interaction of taleroles reveals two pervading plot structures. Rather than passive and powerless victims of fatality, the actions of the hero(in)es show them either as "offenders" towards their partner or "offended" by him/her, a third character or circumstance. The "offenders," in fact, "re-act" to a usually undramatized offence; and the victims ("offended") of circumstance, the bereaved, likewise, seek their own death in consequence of their grief. As those responsible for death are true lovers as well as monstrous villains, possessive parents and jealous rivals, this ballad corpus, indeed, envisions death as a result of certain human behaviours as much as of fatality.

While these impulsive young adults ignore their moral responsibility for tragedy in their ordinary life, their dying partners or the latters' revenants "denounce" their error, to them or third persons, but in any case to the audience. This repertoire teaches about the safe way into marriage and out of bereavement by the examples of those who compromise their union and shorten their days owing to immoderate behaviour in love and grief, infidelity and excessive mourning. So, these ballads' concern is with moral and social norms, their ample treatment of death aiming at the preservation--not the devaluation--of

[1] Renwick's expression, *English* 19.

life. Dramatized to the extreme, their lesson is meant for effectiveness, and if it allows for no compromise to these norms, it never lacks comfort ... or imagination. No error goes undenounced, no evil goes unpunished, no victim is unavenged, and but few lovers die a lonely death! Neither does this teaching lack pragmatic sense or psychological depth. The lovers crossed in life are united in death; her newborn twins "haunt" the infanticide, her perfect and years-old crime notwithstanding; the revenant lover rejects his sweetheart's mad request for a kiss and room in his grave only to give her what she cannot ask and even hope for at that stage of her grieving: the courage to survive him.

The ballads' notoriously violent, premature and uncelebrated deaths, in the light of Ariès's study, appear to be characteristic neither of the Anglo-American nor of the Newfoundland repertoire but of the conception of "bad death" in traditional societies. The ballad revenant, likewise, resembles the earliest of its kind in Western culture: neither a living corpse nor a disimbodied spirit, neither part of the world of the living nor yet committed to that of the dead. The figure's ambivalence in balladry shows in its traits, both familiar and unfamiliar, and distant behaviour towards its former sweetheart. Unlike any human lover, the revenant refuses her human demands for affection and togetherness, and addresses her sparingly and formally. The "traditional" revenant is no more a dead being restored to life and recovering all its privileges; neither is it, like Batman, all human with a plus. In the ballads, its condition binds it to particular contingencies, which notwithstanding its episodic appearances in the world of the living, clearly mark its lot: "the cock crow" summons it back to its resting place, where "hell hounds" keep it in watch. The living have nothing to envy it for.

While such meanings and revenants are found in Anglo-American classical balladry at large, this regional repertoire truly makes them its own. In Newfoundland, the revenant ballads record prominent popularity and indeed interest under "Sweet William's Ghost"'s (Ch 77) "comfortable" lead. Better even, its grieving heroine, unfailingly here, makes a sudden recovery from distraction to reason, exhorted by her dead lover's invitation to prayer for him and faith in their final reunion. Her rare courage, indeed, receives local recognition as all twenty-eight collected versions of "Sweet William's Ghost" go by *her* name as "Lady Margaret." This type's popularity, besides, is attested by its impact on its own generic environment. "The Grey Cock" (Ch 248), which does not "need" a revenant lover, here borrows one with the effect of repeating the favourite story-type. Here also, its closest counterpart, "The Unquiet Grave" (Ch 78), though rare elsewhere, has found as many as ten versions and even a unique twin (Ch 78*), which "seasons" the plot only to

enhance its standard meaning. This oikotype's most impressive treatment of the delicate issue of remarriage following bereavement yields a sharper insight yet into the revenant's message and essential concern of this repertoire: the demands as well as boundaries of fidelity or the "vital" adjustment, however hard, of individual feelings to social norms. This message,though, is nowhere more explicit than in the locally prominent type:

I brought to you no apparel, he said,
I've brought to you no ring,
All I brought to you is my cold winding-sheet
That my poor body lies in.

There's one requestion I'll ask of thee,
I hope you will grant to me,
That is my faith and a troth, he said,
Lady Margaret, I'll leave in pledge with thee.
(I leaved in pledge with thee.)

Your faith and a troth, I'll not bring to you,
Or any such a thing,
Until you'll take me to yonder church
And wed me with a ring.

O God forbid, Lady Margaret, he said,
That ever that should be
(That such a thing should be)
That the dead should rise and marry the quick
And vanish away from thee.[1]

2. The Classical Ballad Corpus versus its Symbolic Context

As well as a chosen classical ballad corpus, Newfoundland tradition offers a sizeable body of primary and secondary sources, also in relation to death. This symbolic environment manifests "folk ideas" illustrating all four "western attitudes towards death." The fact tends to prove that Newfoundland is not much of an "island" in the mental sense, and disprove the common assumptions of its "isolation," "backwardness" and "uniqueness." It took Ariès fifteen years of research to extract this model just for Christian Western cultures; although Newfoundland death traditions appear no less complex and paradoxical for voicing "comfort" as well as "fear," "heartbreak" as well as "bliss," "social denial" as well as "family unity" in death, their account on the basis of the Western model, likewise, speaks for their coherence as a whole.[2] A local "version" of this model, the Newfoundland record also reveals an evolving worldview illustrating that Ariès's four

[1] Karpeles, *Folk*, "Lady Margaret" (Ch 77) B, 52-3; *5-8*.
[2] Ariès, *Essais* 12.

attitudes are but landmarks or turning points on a single continuous line and their conceptualization as distinct entities more helpful than real. Ariès's study apart, those of Carlo Ginzburg, Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie and Mikhaïl Bakhtine converge to show that that Culture, though inwardly coherent, is never homogeneous.

Indeed, the cognitive conceptualization of death as either "good" or "bad" pervades Newfoundland's synchronic as well as diachronic expressions despite mutable, sometimes "inverted" but, at any rate, compatible meanings. In the worldview characteristic of "traditional" societies, "good death" entailed anticipation of its occurrence, resignation to its fact and celebration for a life fulfilled. "Bad death," on the contrary, was synonymous with tragedy, i.e. untimely, violent or sudden death. This opposition, when reinterpreted in Christian terms, produced popular conceptions of "heaven" and "hell": a death carefully prepared for spiritually versus one stained with unrepented sin. The romantic age as well projected its own hopes and fears in making "good" the "heroic" death of the soldier, the "innocent" death of the child, the "sacrificial" death of lovers, etc. The intolerable separation from loved ones, besides, was sublimated (made "good") in their treasured memory and the prospect of final reunion. These three mental patterns still largely condition the perception and treatment of death in contemporary Newfoundland society: underneath these variable meanings, "good death" continues to be duly celebrated and thought of in good time; tragic death continues to be the "hardest" to bear.

If, for pragmatic reasons, the various genres have been discussed mostly under a single "attitude," their analysis hopefully has shown their participation in more than one. Let us take ghost ballads and songs as an example. If the spirits of broadsides and later songs closely resemble those of classical ballads as functioning either as avenger or protector, the latter have not remained immune to mental change. Revealingly, the most popular among them shows the clearest signs of evolution. The fatal visits of ghost-avengers to the wrongdoers manifest human justice more than Christian forgiveness to their wrongdoers, and the ghost-protectors watch over their own with earthly concern for their benefit; Lady Margaret's visitor, however, is no lay teacher but a Christian intercessor, successful in strengthening her faith, and thus securing her exceptional survival:

> She took a cross all from her bosom,
> And she smoted him on the breast
> Saying, "Here's a token for you Sweet William,
> God grant you a happy rest."

I am thankful to you Lady Margaret," he said,
I am thankful to you,
If the dead are allowed to pray for the living
Then I am bound to pray for you.

"Good night, good night Lady Margaret," he said.
"Good night, good night," said she,
"I hope the very next time we do meet
In heaven we both shall be."[1]

This ending evoking faith in the communion of saints, heavenly reunion ... and its effective comfort in grief is found in all unfragmented versions of the type; its formulation, exemplified above, removes all doubts that this Christian "motif" is insignificant to the story-type and its meaning. Even though this local variant is found alongside more "folkloric" evocations of "Hell-hounds" lying about the corpse's side, and of "three little devils waiting for his soul to take," this juxtaposition yields no ground to Lowry C. Wimberly advancing that "How truly primitive they [the classical ballads] remain, despite fifteen hundred years of Christianity and Christian civilization, is an impressive and somewhat disconcerting discovery."[2]

Likewise, disaster songs, which have been accounted for in terms of community ethos, adapt their "traditional" outlook ("tamed death") to ritual drawing on Christian faith ("one's own death") while resorting to "romantic" diction ("thy death"). Broadsides as well as classical ballads voice "traditional" stoicism, but occasionally bear traces of "romantic fantasy," such as the choice of death for the cause of love above that of survival. Thus, besides verifying that different worldviews co-exist within a single milieu, such insights bear out the evolving process of culture, of its worldviews as well as of its symbolic expressions. Further folkloristic studies would fruitfully explore the dynamic structure of worldview within individual genres.

Granting the dynamic structure of Newfoundland culture and even genres, some specifically illustrate "good," others "bad death": ritual, whether in the home or funeral parlour context, lays down the pattern of the former; song, whether as classical ballad, broadside or sentimental piece, consistently focuses on the latter. Again though, rather than on such a static subdivision in these terms, death traditions rely on a coherent and dynamic structure. On the basis of the definitions of "good" and "bad death," thus codified in generic terms, the unifying principle underlying the cultural complex or common

[1]Peacock, *Songs* 2: 391; *13-5*.
[2]Wimberly, *Folklore* ix.

denominator of its individual forms appears to be that death, however "bad," can be exorcized--and the bereaved survive.

From the earliest times, local tradition showed a definite concern with the proper celebration of death rites in their social and secular as much as spiritual aspects. The behaviours accompanying the death of a community member were carefully prescribed and adhered to by the group as a whole in order to insure the deceased's as well as their own future. The occurrence of death indeed meant a physical as much as a moral aggression upon the living, and the deeper so upon the bereaved family. "Recovery" in all senses motivated the strict observation of a course of action laid down in customary and later ritualized terms as a channel for the healing process. Thus it was the living's own benefit to see the deceased properly "separated" from them and "integrated" into its new state. The three days over which death mobilized the group for intensive social interaction and cooperation relieved the mourners from all ordinary care so that they might fully acknowledge their loss and let out their grief, the emptying of which would eventually rehabilitate them to normal life. The ritual process itself, from the moment of death to the burial, concretely suggested their progressive "letting go" of the deceased.

Local custom integrated its Christian ritualization on a symbiotic rather than exclusive or even antagonistic basis, thus gaining even greater "effectiveness." If "people had been prepared for disaster beforehand,"[1] faith, in a certain popular view, was largely resonant with fate. If one was wrenched from life before one's time, this happened in accordance with "God's will," alongside the old conception of the mysterious effect of "unknown" powers. Faith in God, the warrant of "Good," however, was far more comforting than arbitrary or malevolent fate, and its welcome support showed up in its most external forms, such as in the reassurance felt at the presence of the clergy at death and the administration of the sacraments. In the age-old battle against the unpredictable elements and other "evil," "He who rules the waves" and everything below offered himself as man's powerful and sure ally. While His ways were mysterious, those assuring His constant guidance and protection were well "known" and sanctioned by moral and social rule as well as by the Churches. Whatever the odds of earthly life, faith and its attending practices and beliefs provided the only certainty of victory over death and evil. Granting the psycho-somatical benefits of religious and superstitious practices as well as the long absence of any alternative to them, such as of medical and scientific knowledge, any stretching of this

[1]The suggestion is Davis's; it is quoted and discussed in the introduction of chapter 9.

argument to the effect of obliterating the hypothesis of genuine faith would err on the side of "academic disbelief."[1] In any case, the step from the secular "good" to the Christian "happy death" was not a wide one.

The "good wake" hardly lost ground to religion or modernity. In line with Ariès's analysis of contemporary American society the modern way of death in Newfoundland keeps strong ties with "thy death." This "semi-open" attitude towards death shows the province following in the steps of American rather British society, but closer still to its own past. The local funeral industry admits to resisting some of the commercial pressures of the mainland under the "traditional" demands of its own market. Locally, the "wake" remains the gravity centre of the ritual. This solemn event motivates the careful "beautification" of the deceased. However, if this public display of the coffined person helps the realities of death "sink in" towards the acknowledgment of death ("separation"), the mourners' affection discreetly "slips in" the private meaning that "we are staying together." Other synchronic traditions, such as witness belief, cemetery customs and the death press, reveal that the old traditional idea that the dead linger among the living until their final "rest" has evolved towards the wish that dear ones never die, in accordance with the "romantic" wish for communication with them. Thus "good death" in Newfoundland, from the earliest to the most recent worldviews, remains within the sphere of dignity, respect, family cohesion and social celebration. The resilience of these values over time and change suggests their lasting significance to Newfoundlanders.

The local singing repertoire, in its riches and diversity, on the other hand, epitomizes "hard death," while combining "traditional" and "romantic" death. Narrative, lyrical and sentimental songs all acknowledge the classical ballads' heritage. Like them, they are more often concerned with the living than the dying, their hero(in)es' despair, murder or accidental loss inviting their audience's critical consideration for useful reference. If the imported tradition, in line with its ascendance, mostly demonstrates objectionable conduct, the songs of local composition hold up the courage of victims, rescuers and families to communal appraisal. Song, so often reconciling love and death, forever seeks to resolve the inherent paradox of earthly life and man's deepest emotions. No death sung of is fortuitious or absurd: when following from human misconduct, it validates the norms which have been violated; when it strikes innocent victims, it is declared to be fated.

[1] The concept and its meaning in this context refers to David Hufford's denunciation of this long prevailing academic prejudice with regard to religion and popular belief in particular.

Death, in either case, is rationalized in a meaningful and supportive sense for the community.

Beyond the different strategies of their discourse, imported and local songs take their cue from the ballads' positive and constructive outlook on life, and like them recuperate death to some positive end. Broadside ballads, however "sensational" their plots, as Kodish suggests, symbolically elaborate matters of community. Death, which crosses the young adults' life and love on their way to realization in marriage, gives the measure of the external obstacles and moral trials standing on this way. These hero(in)es need no less determination and courage to oppose frivolity, villainy or hard luck than their classical counterparts. If death is the only prize for their valour, they die for a cause greater than their own life: the community future which they assure as prospective husbands and wives. Victimized in life, they are redeemed in death, and their failed union is restored in a shared grave, "for both of them belonged in life and deep in death belong."[1]

Also in local songs, the cultural values of community solidarity by which the victims are either rescued or mourned for, their courage honoured, their bodies recovered and their families comforted, sign the victory of community and its determination to survive. While tragedy, in actuality, is destructive and purposeless, its cultural expression in disaster songs sublimates ("tames") its chaotic reality in a wishful affirmation of death's defeat, the restoration of order, and the continuation of social life. The abounding local compositions offer the clearest tangent between folklore and culture: of all tragic deaths to be sung of, these songs indefatigably focus on "a watery grave." Their popularity in this maritime milieu makes it hard to conceive of a demoralizing effect or merely entertaining appeal. Culture, which has altogether been defined as strategy against death,[2] could hardly opt for defeat, and entertainment would find another subject with which to distract fisherfolk from their hard routine than storms at sea, and loss of life at that! A more plausible hypothesis is that songs as well as personal experience narratives of disaster directly relate to such hazards for the sake of greater expertise and confidence in the face of the uncontrollable. This "rationalization" of tragedy through expert and meticulous analysis of nature's ways as well as of human errors, here as in ballads and broadsides, if anything, augments the chances of survival.

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[1] The last line of one of the two versions of the oikotype of "The Unquiet Grave," in MUNFLA ms 68-40/C469.

[2] The reference is to the quotation by Edgar Morin in 8.1.

The clearest illustration of the cathartic process whereby "hard death" is made "good" is found in local disaster songs, and shows through the resolution of such a death along the structure and context of ritual. These plots narrate the elements' unsuspected assault on the vessel, the men's brave fight, the living's mostly vain efforts to rescue them and the victims' peaceful rest with God on the eternal shore. The public performance of such songs, besides, actualizes communal celebration of these breadwinners' sacrifice for their own. Whether in song or narrative, phantom ships, lights and ghostly sailors commonly testify that the dead contribute to the common cause of survival as by these phenomena they signal danger to their comrades and help them through it. In this maybe fatalistic but in no way defeatist worldview, the awe and powerlessness that tragic death naturally inspires are similarly converted into greater confidence and security.

If disaster songs teach men how to do the job while constantly at risk, lyrical songs teach women how to wait for them at home, and cope with uncertainty. Come tragedy one day, courage and loyalty are the lessons for the absent as for those waiting for them: courage to die and courage to survive, loyalty to comrades and fidelity to husband or fiancé. If men are helped by their dead comrades while confronting the "unknown" at sea, women can rely on equivalent apparitions in their daily surroundings to contain ("tame") their worry. Sea phantoms warn against changing weather and impending danger; omens and fetches, when preparing women for tragic death, similarly assure them of spiritual communion with their own. As disaster songs carry on the teachings of the classical ballads, but use local settings, hero(in)es, and"watery graves," the heroines waiting ashore in lyrical songs are traceable to Lady Margaret.

While the exemplary fidelity of the local classical ballad "heroine" in her prolonged waiting has parallels in the lyrical repertoire, her courage in bereavement has no equal in either ballad or song. Other classical ballads presenting the dramatic apparition of the revenant lover to his unsuspecting sweetheart either give him the last word, which no more than implies the girl's resignation to his admonition for courage in her loss (Ch 78, 248), or end with her death from grief (Ch 272). Song heroines who prove faithful in the absence of their lover either are happily married to him on his return ("Seven Years I loved a Sailor") or succumb to the discovery of his body washed ashore ("Strawberry Tower," "As Susan Strayed the Briny Beach") or to his revenant taking leave from them ("Jimmy Whelan"). What is the coherent sense, if any, of these obviously related yet varying plots and outcomes: heroines mourning and dying from grief, heroines ignoring their lover's death and visited by their revenant, heroines knowing of his death and begging him to

return to them; revenants once visiting their sweetheart to have their troth back, once coming to them reluctantly in answer to their plea, once rejecting their kiss and once granting it ?

The apparent success of the theme of bereavement in love, at the least, confirms local concern with mourning, grief and its resolution, which fact supports the meaningful rather than random prominence of revenant classical ballads locally. These variations on a theme across classical, broadside and native American ballads present a number of constants: a common situation (mourning), a common focus (the bereaved), a common cause (violence or accident) and a common wish (the retention of the dead). Their heroines seek the "presence" of their lover, and when visited by his revenant or spirit, refuse to "let it go," out of lasting affection but also wishful denial of his death.

In terms of ritual, these mourners commonly hinder the initial step of "separation," which conditions its process. While Van Gennep declares that in funeral rites, those rites which incorporate the deceased into the world of the dead are more elaborate, and are assigned greater importance than those of separation,[1] the latter locally have received particular attention. Attending the wake or "viewing the deceased" and touching it on that occasion meant protection against obsessive memory, dream or "vision," i.e. mechanisms of retention in grief pathology. This gesture of "adieu," whether as a kiss or pressure of the hand, is inherently ambivalent: while originally it seems to have been motivated rather by fear of the dead, and signified "separation," at present, along with sentimental songs, witness belief and cemetery decoration and masses, it states "affection" stronger than death.

In his study of revenant ballads and songs derived from the traditional theme of the dead lover's return, Hugh Shields asks the question how far these songs, such as "Jimmy Whelan," manifest "popular survivals from the ancient past, and how far they are simply re-statements of something which has become a Romantic cliché."[2] This amounts to knowing whether the "revenant" in its role is "genuine" or "fake," an element of traditional belief or a romantic fashion. This discrimation is the harder to make as the fabricated products of romantic folk poetry on this traditional theme passed into oral tradition, as they were meant to do, and likely influenced the old ballads themselves. Such a process of

[1] Van Gennep, *Rites* 146.
[2] Shields, "Dead" 98.

vulgarization and renewal, it appears, even operated in popular culture before the romantic poets.

Shields suggests that borrowing and reworking of the revenant theme either sought to exploit its gothic potentialities or to express emotions appropriate to mortality and separation. The numerous songs which, like "Jimmy Whelan," derive from Ch 77, he finds, have but "feebly motivated" revenants, and express "in their relations with the living lover nothing more than a vague benignity." He further proposes that "The concern of the dead lover for the welfare of the living has little place in old British ballads; it is probably to be considered as an expression of modern sentimentality--unless it could be attributed in these texts to an especially Irish mode of thought,"[1] and that "Male revenants are, on the whole, passive. They may convey a simple message of resignation or despair."[2] He sums up:

> No doubt it is easier to point out literary influence on modern folk song than to demonstrate the survival in it of popular beliefs . . . . But the mechanical use of a traditional theme, vulgarly reiterated, parodied, offered in explanation of texts that do not need it, does not encourage the view that the theme is a serious embodiment of belief in ancient things. And we are entitled to doubt its validity when it occurs in unusual contexts among the old ballads (the Grey Cock etc.), even though these as a genre did not exclude it . . . . But the dead lover's return to his mistress, at the same time as it acquires the character of an obvious literal fiction, remains a satisfying fulfilment of poetic truth."[3]

Shields thus takes it for granted that ballad tradition, whether in its "original" or revived stage, never made much profound psychological sense under its either "ancient" or "Irish mode of thinking." Granting the impact of the romantic craze on folk song, the significant Irish substratum of Newfoundland's population and, quite possibly, of its balladry, the present study confidently objects to this assumption that ballads and songs of dead lovers returning to their grieving sweethearts have little or no actual significance. Need it be the one or the other thing, paganism or Christianity, belief or poetry, function or aesthetics, the one expressed in old ballads, the other in their "by-products"? Rather, is there not a common yet evolving "idea" infusing these creative phenomena? The kiss which the girl begs from her dead lover and which he mostly refuses to give her, or grants reluctantly, is a central motif in these ballads and songs. This problematic embrace of the

[1] Shields, "Dead" 106.
[2] Shields, "Dead" 107.
[3] Shields, "Dead" 111.

living and the dead, which indeed goes a long way back in literature and mythology, most likely reflects the delicate negotiation of love and separation in bereavement. From this hypothesis, the related yet diverging versions in classical balladry, lyrical songs and also romantic literature propose their own resolutions and indeed worldviews on this psychological crisis. Could the worst paradox of human life--love and death--be accountable for in the one or the other category: traditional or romantic, literary or popular? After all, have not beliefs, rituals and songs shown their sharp awareness of the dangers of bereavement, and provided effective answers to the worst cases in perfect accordance with modern scientific grief therapy? Was Hufford not similarly struck by the accurate diagnosis of sleep paralysis and other unexplained phenomena in popular tradition?

Yet, as well as commonly venting out profound and paradoxical feelings in bereavement, the local texts of "Sweet William's Ghost" (Ch 77), "The Unquiet Grave" (Ch 78), "The Grey Cock" (Ch 248), "Jimmy Whelan" and the episode quoted from Emily Brontë's novel, all presenting a lover's "ghost," indeed voice different attitudes towards this crisis. According to the old custom of "taking leave" from the dead whereby the survivors acknowledged separation, the revenant lover in Ch 77 claims his troth plight back, and rejects the requested kiss in concrete suggestion of the breaking of their mutual and earthly engagement to each other. Thus he affirms the value of ritual ("tamed death") in moderation of uncontrolled ("wild") mourning. His teaching finds an equivalent and summary expression in the local idiom which says that "there is hope from the ocean, but not from the grave." Reasoned by her dead lover and helped by faith, Lady Margaret takes his admonition, and so demonstrates the effective way towards rehabilitation in bereavement--as well as the priority concern of "tamed death": survival.

Ch 78 and 248, both of which Shields suspects of romantic influences, give the revenant the last word, which suggests that, if the true love chooses life in the end, she does so more hesitantly. One step further from this on the spectrum, Whelan's sweetheart is determined to die or spend the rest of her days in vain and morbid worship as a result of her "spiritual experience." Thus she comes close to "thy death." Finally, literary romanticism, in the representation of Heathcliff, speaks out loud the romantic ideal of "love stronger than death" in defence of individual emotion above social norm. However, whereas novel, ballad and song commonly focus on the mourner and the depth of his love and grief, the dramatization of the revenant's intervention and pronouncement in favour of moderation distinguish the traditional texts. In contrast with "high culture" and "romantic

feeling," the song spirit of traditional ballad and song remains reluctant to abandon the old realistic concern with survival.

The preceding observations converge to show the classical ballads' harmonious fit with their symbolic environment. Their implicit call for courageous overcoming ("survival") of death, even tragic, along with the home wake, omens, local sea disaster songs, tales of magic and personal experience narratives voice a "traditional" moral and social ideal in the event of death as well as in life. Beliefs and ritual reveal, not replacement but rather, validation and reinforcement of these values in Christian terms. The song repertoire at large also testifies to the impact of "traditional" and Christian worldviews under "romantic" sensibility, and, notwithstanding the modern context of life and death, social, familial and individual behaviours still attest to the lasting significance of "good death," celebrated with "traditional" sociability, "Christian" expression, and "romantic" belief in personal and emotional contact beyond the grave. Likewise, whether garbed as fetch, photograph, "presence," or even technological medium (e.g. fire detector), the old ballad revenant continues to "speak" in Newfoundland. It remains to consider whether its message would be particularly relevant in this cultural setting.

3. The Classical Ballad Corpus versus its Pragmatic Context

The socio-psychological context of Newfoundland gives some insight into the lasting function of the "revenant," prominent in the classical ballad corpus but also pervading past and present expressive behaviour with relation to death. If the ballad and song repertoire gives emotional expression to Newfoundlanders' sensitivity to bereavement, other genres show that their winning or life-oriented worldview is built on reason and intuition as well as emotion. Omens, premonitions, ghost ships, fetches and other such phenomena constitute a phenomenology of death and tragedy, often deduced from *post mortem* rationalisation. This data thus converges with recent research on supernatural tradition, disclaiming the rationalistic argument that Newfoundlanders, however "steeped in" their cultural traditions, are either poor observers or naive interpreters of reality. Whatever even this may be concerning revenants and their ilk, the "poetic" expression of this prominent tradition locally makes "pragmatic" as well "symbolic," and specific as well as universal sense.

The local ballad corpus does not "mirror" its pragmatic context: records give no suggestion that such murders, suicides, infanticides, vengeful bloodsheds and deaths from

grief as abound in its texts ever knew any equivalent on the island. The province, in fact, is notable for the contrary. Neither do they reflect its particularly harsh toll to disease and infant mortality. While the regional repertoire is re-created within its generic tradition, this re-creation seems to be in emotional rather than statistic proportion. The two types presenting women dying in childbed in the Child canon (Ch 91 and 170) have not been traced locally; no death, on the other hand, seems to have been more sung of than the more exceptional--but eminently topical--one underlying the drama of Sweet William's newsless absence overseas and Lady Margaret's anxious waiting "at the window" ....

There is no need for much decoding of the type's symbolism, psychology or style to account for the appeal of this dramatic situation among a people whose very subsistence long totally depended on the ocean. If men's life was a long flirtation with death, women weathered the actual psychological trauma of this hazardous life while filling their responsibilities as homemaker and de facto "mother and father" to their usually large family. If disaster struck, it is women who had to cope and function properly. Would the focus on the young widow in the revenant ballads and the lone woman in other types not appropriately hold up the ideal of the accommodating role of the "stoic endurer"[1] to generations of women? Would these stories of love and death along with their concern with fidelity and survival not help them keep their families together as their husband or sons braved the most pitiless rivals and they themselves had to resist the advances of frivolity, hopelessness and despair? Would singing of the worst not help them cope best, "train them for widowhood," build them up into "fortresses of courage" against disaster, and partly explain the homage paid to widows as to "Lady Margaret" from the days of the bank fishery to those of the offshore oil industry?

Such hypotheses do not overstep the reservation of native scholar Patrick O' Flaherty, who concludes his critical survey of the literary production of and about the province by declaring that

> So little is known about the true history of Newfoundland, and indeed about the character and motivation of many of those who tried to influence or describe it, that any writer who summarily reduces the complexity of Newfoundland's past or present to a ready formula must be regarded with great suspicion. The literature we have examined mirrors, rather than resolves, that complexity.

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[1] Davis, "Occupational" 139.

From his assertion, nonetheless, that "Through it we see, at times only faintly, the epic story of a people's struggles against overwhelming natural forces and economic adversity,"[1] is there reason to think that the ballads, as folk literature, remained immune to these hardships? Consideration of their symbolic as well as poetic context wipes all doubt on the fact.

The success of Lady Margaret and her many daughters in song reveals not so much interest in "revenants" as in the brunt of tragedy on survivors--and mostly widows. Such sympathy is arresting given the patriarchal nature of Newfoundland society. With a knowledge of modern grief therapy, it cannot escape attention that revenant ballads and "songs of women's waiting," as I called them, present bereavement at its worst in combining the circumstances which aggravate the normal bereavement crisis: the unexpected and premature death of a fiancé or husband occurring away and interrupting an only recent affective commitment. Gender, age at bereavement, the length of married life, accidental death and its occurrence in an unfamiliar location, indeed, are the factors which medical statistics identify as having a negative effect on the resolution of grief.[2] Strikingly, the plots found in the revenant subgenre all illustrate some of these factors, but none as completely as the local transposition of "The Grey Cock" (Ch 248) into "The Lover's Ghost," thus also presenting a young maiden visited by her fiancé's revenant. The evocation of its "watery grave" completes the picture of "hard death" in this maritime culture:

> Where is your soft bed of down, my love,
> And where is your white holland sheet,
> And where is the fair maid that watches on you
> While you take are taking your long silent sleep.
>
> The sand is my soft bed of down, my love,
> The sea is my white holland sheet,
> And long hungry worms will feed off of me
> While I'm taking my long silent sleep.[3]

Wimberly's literal and "archeological" interpretation of death and burial beliefs in the Child canon leads him to suggest that the revenant's materiality as a "living corpse" reflects a primitive conception making yet no distinction between body and soul. Supposing this is this revenant's cultural origin, this takes no account of the obvious fact that this revenant is

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[1] O'Flaherty, *Rock* 186.
[2] See my account of this literature in 2.2.3.
[3] Karpeles, *Folk*, "The Lover's Ghost" (Ch 248) A, 100-01; *5-6*.

a lover visiting a true love. Were it only to convince her of his death, it seems that his *dead* body, if not the hard news received from anyone else, would suffice. A much closer and credible explanation--albeit at a deeper level--is that, in the last resort, only the dead--and no living--may be heard when pleading to "let go of them" for the life's sake of their own. Thus, there might be a lot of truth in Wimberly's suggestion that "There is, in a sense, nothing 'supernatural' about the ballad revenant."[1]

While Cyril Poole half-jokingly suggests that the unusual abundance of ghosts locally remedied the difficulty of any other communication across the island in pre-electrified times, fetch and "witness" experiences reveal that contact with the otherworld remains both frequent and casual. So, there is but partial explanation in the argument that the resilience of the local revenant tradition "survives" from the days of "obscurity" and their attending hardships. Comparative data, once again, sheds helpful light on the relationship of environment and culture: the old ballads have mostly been sought--and indeed found-- in "backward" and "isolated" areas, and their survival thus accounted for. While Thomas Burton "retired" to Beech mountain in North Carolina, and recorded some excellent pieces *and* their singers, reporting on one of them from this fieldwork he aptly commented that "she is a woman who for almost three quarters of a century has borne, besides the harsh demands of the mountains, the pain of human conflict."[2]

John Niles finding the lore of the Scottish Travellers no "mirror" but "an expression of their reality," "sauce for their life" but also "spiritual nourishment,"[3] and Belle Stewart expressing that it was "the communication of feeling" more than "the verbal matter of the ballads"[4] which mattered to her suffice to suggest that classical ballads and likely any other lore, whether supernatural or not, make profound, maybe essential sense, as providing moral support in the face of life crises. "Genres," found not only in but across cultures are constant reminders of the universal meaning pervading their mutable expressions and running underneath diverse worldviews, aesthetics, times and places. Such a wide and deep perspective, however, does not minimize the significance of individual "cultures" and "contexts" to folklore, but only extols the effect and impact of the "specific" on the "generic."

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[1] Wimberly, *Folklore* 233.
[2] Burton, "Anglo-American" 189.
[3] Niles 105-6.
[4] J. Porter, "Belle Stewart: Character and Repertoire," Boyes, *Ballad* 17.

Indeed, whereas neither poverty, isolation, disease nor the sea alone even has *the* answer for the popularity and relevance of revenant ballads in Newfoundland, these cultural facts altogether yield the hypothesis of these ballads' particular, thus greater significance in helping the local population cope with the human crisis of death. For, if separation is common to man, it is more problematic in maritime cultures; these are known to reinforce "traditional" values, such as by pushing personal relationships to the extreme--beyond death. Omens, ghost sailors, revenants and such "stultifying superstitions" are remarkably consistent with qualities known to maritime people: watchfulness, anticipation, solidarity and--not the least--courage; such lore might also be the more "necessary" to them.

This study of worldview in Newfoundland culture, I hope, yields some structures to build on. The insights gained into this group's attitudes to life as well as death and their concomitance bears out Ariès's and others' suggestion that "death is at the hub of human cultures." This investigation, likewise, confirms that worldview reveals "the structure of things." Within the limits of the thematic angle of this analysis, it nevertheless appears that the Newfoundland classical ballads were no odd or empty shells washed ashore. As they "settled" in Newfoundland, they made their way, kept *their* language, but picked up the local accent. Like those who brought them over, they may lie to their rest--but their revenants roam... and carry over their all too relevant message.

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