A BIOGRAPHY OF NEWFOUNDLAND-BORN AUTHOR RON POLLETT (1900-55)

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BY

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ABSTRACT

This biographical study of Newfoundland-born author Ron Pollett presents a detailed account of his life, and attempts in its final chapter to assess his literary contribution, particularly as an émigré author, to Newfoundland literature. To date, no extensive study either of Pollett's life or of his works has been undertaken. This thesis attempts to redress this oversight in the area of Newfoundland studies; and to provide, particularly through the use of information obtained from approximately 100 personal interviews and pieces of correspondence, previously undocumented and uncollected materials pertaining to Pollett's life and works.

Chapter One focuses on Pollett's early years, from 1900 to 1916, in New Harbour, Trinity Bay, a Newfoundland outport where he learned the traditional skills and values of a fisherman-farmer. These sixteen years are presented as a time of preparation for the tasks and ideals which he was to pursue during his young adulthood.

Chapter Two describes Pollett's experiences from 1917 to 1924 in various professions-- outport schoolteacher, record-keeper, and linotype operator-- as he migrated to a number of villages and towns within Newfoundland, then emigrated first to Montreal, and finally to New York. Personal and economic circumstances which prompted these changes of profession and residence are explored.

In Chapter Three Pollett's experiences in New York from 1925 to early 1945 are described. This chapter provides a glimpse into the professional and domestic life of one of the thousands of Newfoundlanders who settled in New York during the 1920s.

Chapter Four describes Pollett's life between 1945 and his death in 1955, and suggests the circumstances which led him, by 1946, to embark on a second career, as an author. Aspects of the writing he produced, based on his own and other Newfoundlanders' lives at home and abroad, are discussed in relatiou to his rapidly declining health and precarious finances.

Chapter Five focuses mainly upon Pollett's three major works: The Ocean at My Door and Other Newfoundland Outport Stories (1947); Peter the Grate: An Outport Character Study

(1952); and The Ocean at My Door (1956). This chapter addresses the following topics: the extent of Pollett's oeuvre; the kind of writing he produced; his writing, seen in the larger literary context; and finally, his achievement as a writer.

PREFACE

This biographical study of Newfoundland-born author Ron Pollett (1900-55) was undertaken in order to provide a detailed and accurate portrait of his life and works. Pollett was born in 1900 at New Harbour, an outport fishing community in Trinity Bay, Newfoundland, and this place became the setting for much of the writing he began to publish by 1946. His writing is characterized by frequent use of sharp contrasts: at the time he began to write seriously, he resided in Brooklyn, New York, and city life as compared to traditional outport life became for him a rich source of literary inspiration. Pollett was one of the very few of the thousands of Newfoundlanders who emigrated during the 1920s to write about his experiences away from home. This, in part, is what distinguishes him as a local author. My own initial interest in Pollett was sparked by this emphasis in his writing on the émigré experience. My preliminary search for printed materials pertaining to his life and work, however, revealed a dearth of resources. A broader scope for this thesis than simply a focus on his experiences as an émigré Newfoundlander was therefore demanded. The five chapters in this thesis trace his life and development during his youth, his seven years as a transient jobholder, his professional and domestic circumstances during his thirty years as a Newfoundlander in New York, during the last ten of of which he was a writer, and, finally, his achievements as an author. As such, this study is the first of its kind to provide an extensive survey of Ron Pollett's life and writings.

Research for this thesis has proceeded by making extensive use of the resources of oral history; by gleaning and verifying biographical details in Pollett's own writings; and by collecting and examining often far-flung printed sources pertinent to Pollett's life and works. Of the attempt to create an illuminating biography, Samuel Johnson once wrote, "More knowledge may be gained of a man's real character, by a short conversation with one of his servants, than from a formal and studied narrative, begun with his pedigree, and ended with his funeral."[1] In my attempt to realize this goal, approximately 100 interviews and pieces of correspondence have been undertaken with 89 informants, mainly during 1982-3. Informants were chosen on the basis of their knowledge of the subject of this study. Interviews were based on informal questionnaires

tailored to those periods and experiences in Ron Pollett's life familiar to each informant. These questionnaires were devised from biographical and cultural data gleaned from Pollett's own works, and from general historical sources available in print. In no case, however, was information obtained in an interview used in this thesis (beyond personal impressions of an informant--and these are stated as such) if not corroborated and sometimes enlarged upon by at least one printed document or by a number of other informants. Due caution was exercised in devising interview procedures and questions, for though oral history has been a most necessary aid to research on this topic, it is not a technique without its shortcomings for scholarly research and documentation.[2] A perspective on each period of Pollett's life was attempted only after all the data were collected and verified. This method, not common in literary study, has been unexpectedly fruitful in gaining an understanding of Pollett's life and times.

Gaps in this study can be attributed to three factors in particular. The first is failure of memory on the part of informants, the majority of whom are aged 70 or more, and who have been asked to describe events dating from the early twentieth century. The second is the scarcity of Pollett's personal papers, such as letters, journals, or drafts of sketches and stories, most of which were destroyed at the time of his death. The third is the dearth of formal studies describing in any extensive and scholarly manner the history of common life in Newfoundland during Ron Pollett's lifetime. Aspects of the rich, traditional oral forms of literature known to outport populations have indeed been written about by folklorists, but the influence of this traditional culture upon formal, written literature has not been studied in any depth. This gap is an impediment to a full understanding of Pollett as a Newfoundland author. Despite these shortcomings, it is hoped that this thesis, although each of its five chapters may be seen as preliminary and sketchy in parts, will provide the basis for a renewed interest in Pollett and his works. In the thirty years since his death his sketches have diminished in popularity, but many of his concerns, such as the quality of traditional outport life and the nature of émigré experience, remain timely. It is therefore hoped that this thesis will provide the impetus for further study of aspects of Pollett's oeuvre.

Two people--Dean Frederick A. Aldrich and Dr. Patrick O'Flaherty-- are acknowledged most gratefully for making this work possible. I wish to thank Dean Aldrich for his frequent, sympathetic responses toward my study, which involved, first of all, the implementation of a number of administrative changes on my behalf. He is responsible for an extension of my Memorial University of Newfoundland Graduate Fellowship (1981-84); and I wish to thank him as well for his very generous financial support given to me during the research phase of my study. Without his help, I would not have been able to begin, pursue, or conclude my studies at this university.

Equally sincere are my thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Patrick O'Flaherty, whose own research into Newfoundland literature and the life of Ron Pollett prompted this study. Most appreciated has been his invaluable, though often-tried, patience shown toward the slow progress of this study and toward my acquiring a suitable writing style. But his prompt, helpful responses to all of my needs, such as approving alterations in my academic curriculum, and arranging for certain financial expenditures and for work-space, also are very much appreciated.

All of my informants were most helpful to my research project: they and many others kindly extended their hospitality to me after realizing difficulties involved in my travelling to and from interviews. In particular I would like to thank Mrs. Caroline Pike, Ron Pollett's wife, and their son, Ronald J. Pollett, who could not have helped more with my project or have helped me more when I travelled to Brooklyn, New York.

I wish to extend thanks to the staff of the university's Folklore and Language Archive (MUNFLA) for providing me with tape recording equipment and cassette tapes during all of my fieldtrips. I would like to thank in particular Assistant Archivist Philip Hiscock for his help in enabling my research materials to be housed, preserved, and most importantly, made accessible for use at MUNFLA.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents, Ileana and William Schultz, for their unceasing encouragement of my studies and for their concern for me during this project. My husband Douglas Kinsella shared equally in their concerns, and I thank him for his helping me on each step of the way to bring this project to its completion.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I

NEW HARBOUR BOYHOOD, 1900 - 16

Ron Pollett's boyhood was an initiation into the demands and occasional pleasures of Newfoundland outport life at the turn of the twentieth century. He was born on June 25, 1900, at New Harbour, a fishing community located on the south side of Trinity Bay on the Avalon Peninsula of Newfoundland, where for generations his family had been resident fishermen-farmers. Activities during his early years were largely confined to learning the traditional skills of a fisherman-farmer, a role for which his own extended family provided a model. As a young boy, Pollett worked hard in the vegetable gardens, woods, and particularly in the fishery, sharing the normal familial labours required to keep the outport system of life going. There was also time for play and companionship, when Pollett enjoyed the spirit of competition which diversions of outdoor games and storytelling afforded. Between 1906 and 1914, he was educated at the village's Church of England school where his scholarly achievements and interests led him to search for other opportunities than those available to him at New Harbour.

1

A brief sketch of the history of New Harbour prior to 1900 may serve to introduce the village of Pollett's day. The name of the community likely denoted simply a new habitation for settlers, some distance from the long established centers of Trinity and Old Perlican in Trinity Bay.[1] By 1801, this new harbour had attracted a number of families such as the Georges, Hilliers, and Thornes, who established themselves in the area of Cat Cove on New Harbour's southern shore.[2] Local waters provided good cod fishing grounds, and this was the primary inducement for new settlers to come there, since cod was the main currency of outport trade. Local forests, rich in timber resources of pine and spruce, provided ample building materials for houses, boats, and fishing premises, and the plentitude of timber was an incentive for the Newhooks, a family of master shipbuilders, to establish a firm in New Harbour by 1806.[3] Local resources subsequently

attracted other families, among them the Higdons, Polletts, Williamses, and Woodmans, and the settlement soon extended along the northern shore of the harbour from Newhook's Point toward New Harbour Pond, where a river emptying into New Harbour Pond was an accessible source of fresh water. By 1845 the population numbered 209[4], comprising several dozen large families in clusters of dwelling houses facing waterfront properties and the harbour, beyond which were gently rolling, thickly forested hills.

Fluctuations in the cod fishery were of great concern to the settlers, for throughout the 1800s they depended on the sea more than on the land to obtain their livelihood. Failures in the cod fishery could cause widespread hardships, though some effort was made to grow vegetables and raise livestock, and the economy was also diversified through seasonal work at the spring seal fishery and occasional carpentry or manual labour for the local firm of master shipbuilders, the Newhooks. Prolonged failures occurred throughout the 1830s; and there were periodic failures in the cod fishery as well as in other parts of the rural economy, such as potato farming and the seal fishery, during each of the next several decades.[5] Consequently, debts to local merchant firms accumulated, so much so that merchants would refuse to risk further extensions of credit for winter provisions and fishing gear. Petitions for aid from the period indicate the frequent precarious fortunes of settlers– in one instance some families were noted to be "in a state of perfect destitution," while in another, the scarcity of food forced some families to eat their seed potatoes during winter months.[6] Although there was a degree of interdependence among extended families and neighbours, only an ample catch at the cod fishery could provide reasonable comfort.

The education and pastimes of several generations of people raised in the relatively isolated settlement of New Harbour throughout the nineteenth century necessarily were mainly of a traditional nature. Parents and neighbours passed on knowledge of skills and duties demanded by outport life. Fathers taught sons how to fish and how to procure the wood needed for use at the fishing rooms and in the home; mothers taught daughters how to assist in fish processing and how to card, spin, and knit wool for clothing, as well as other necessary tasks of daily household management. Extensive and diligent familial labour was the accepted norm of life; and in such

rigorous daily circumstances, the occasional holiday celebrations were marked by an almost total absence of labour. The Christmas season was the single, prolonged festive time of the calendar year, and was observed according to the traditions the settlers, who for the most part were of English ancestry and the Protestant faith, brought with them. Christmas celebrations included "times," janneying, and other holiday customs shared by all age groups and lasting for twelve days or more.[7] At other times of year, Sunday house visits during which dinners were shared among families and neighbours, and out-of-doors meetings among fishermen, provided more informal, regular social interaction among community members, all of which helped the residents to create a sufficiently hospitable community in which to maintain themselves and raise their children.

Schools were slow in developing. The first schoolteacher, Charles Elford, was appointed to New Harbour in 1830, although construction of a schoolhouse was not completed until the late 1840s.[8] Facilities and equipment doubtless were meagre for his needs, and attendance by local children was sparse and sporadic. By 1869 seven children were in school, but sixty-nine others were not; and a similar bleak ratio was characteristic of other periods during the century.[9] Evidence from the years 1830 to 1850 indicates that teachers', school inspectors', and occasional newspaper reporters' efforts to reverse this trend by reminding parents of New Harbour of their complacency toward formal education apparently were of little avail.[10] Constables appointed to New Harbour as early as the 1820s likely took no interest in the matter, since attendance at school was not deemed compulsory in Newfoundland until 1943.[11] Demands of time and labour upon all family members continued to preclude regular attendance and payment of school fees by young students.

Resident clergymen of the Church of England were appointed to serve a developing parish in New Harbour after the mid-1800s, and the degree of literacy achieved by the people was attained mainly through the teaching of scriptural texts.[12] Arthur G. Waghorne served at New Harbour from 1877 to 1893, and during his years of service the parishoners helped to construct a new church, the Church of St. Augustine. Building began in 1879, and an edifice was raised to

replace the rough structure at Cat Cove which had served as a church for the sporadic visits of itinerant clergymen since 1815. Apart from his formal duties, Waghorne shared with the community his varied avocations of studying nature, music, and literature. He sent samples of local flora to the British Museum; he and his wife taught piano music and singing; he lent books from his large library; and he wrote magazine articles about the folklife of New Harbour, two of which were published in the Journal of American Folklore.[13] Information for his publications was obtained from local residents, but the full influence of Waghorne's character and interests upon the community at large cannot be documented. The position of clergyman, like that of merchant or constable, was such that frequent informal contact with ordinary fishing families may not have been regular; and the small group of officials and merchants that formed the village élite may have seemed preoccupied with tasks and concerns that were relatively incompatible with the essential labours of daily outport life.

As a result of both groups' labours, nevertheless, by 1901 New Harbour was an established and productive community.[14] In 1901 eight merchants and traders did business there, the most prominent being Fred Woodman, a New Harbour resident. They served a thriving community whose population had more than doubled since 1845, now reaching a total of 551. Unlike smaller local communities, a schoolteacher and a clergyman now resided at New Harbour, and a school and a church were maintained for the community. Some developments elsewhere in Newfoundland also became important to the people of New Harbour as the new century dawned. More opportunities for economic growth had become available on the recent completion of a transnational railway and on the formation of the Anglo-Newfoundland Development Company, which by 1905 was developing a paper mill industry at Grand Falls in central Newfoundland. Many New Harbour men went to work permanently in Grand Falls, and eventually took their families with them. Others obtained seasonal work at the company's lumbercamps and as well at the lumber operations set up by the Reid-Newfoundland railway company. These activities affected New Harbour in the first decades of the twentieth century, although its way of life, as it had been upon its inception, was still very much centered upon the fishery.

II

It was in these conditions of established tradition and gradual change that Ron Pollett grew to young manhood. Christened Ronald Pollett on July 25,1900, he was the firstborn son and third child of James and Honorah (Reed) Pollett of New Harbour. The christening took place at the Church of St. Augustine, for his family was Anglican. In 1947 Pollett recalled being told of an incident which occurred during his baptismal service: his "wails topped the peals of the church organ," and his godfather said encouragingly to his father, "You've got a strong feller there, Jim. Nothing better than a boy who can holler. He'll be manning the for'rd oar in no time."[15] This was an appropriate remark, perhaps, about the life which the two men knew, one centered as it had been for generations upon the inshore, family-based cod fishery.

Pollett's father Jim was a fisherman-farmer who lived his entire life in New Harbour. Born in 1864, he was the youngest of seventeen children born to Sarah (Newhook) and her third husband John Pollett, who also was a fisherman-farmer. Jim's grandparents had been among New Harbour's earliest settlers: the Newhooks had settled there by 1806, and the Pollett family arrived soon after, although they had lived there seasonally for some twenty years previously.[16] The home in which Jim grew to manhood was one of the oldest in the village, and had provided a dwelling for the Pollett family for at least three generations. Ron Pollett would later imagine that in this home "the lean ghosts of many years of frugal living lay sandwiched among the layers of wallpaper....[and] buried in the stale odors [were] the tender words of family prayer [and] the iron curses of hard-shelled pioneers."[17] Eventually Jim inherited this house near New Harbour Pond, together with his father's lands, which consisted of acreage surrounding the house and two garden plots some distance away: one on New Harbour Point across the harbour, the other near Hopeall, a village slightly north of New Harbour. Both of Jim's parents had been illiterate, and Jim himself had learned to read print but could not write. As a young man, however, he had learned the skills of a fisherman-farmer and had prospects of establishing a family of his own in the New Harbour community. Well remembered in New Harbour as having been a "real 'fishkiller' " and a "wonderful hard worker," he was equally well known for his wit and humour, attributes which

perhaps made him an attractive suitor.[18]

In 1889 Jim married Honorah Reed, aged eighteen, who in New Harbour church records is listed as a servant from Spread Eagle, Trinity Bay.[19] Her father, Jacob Reed, also was a fisherman-farmer. He or his ancestors probably had migrated from the populous Old Perlican region to Spread Eagle, which was a tiny fishing village south of New Harbour near Chapel Arm. No roads connected Spread Eagle and New Harbour, and whatever regular courting between Jim and Norah took place prior to their marriage was made possible only by Jim's journeying by boat, or by foot for five or more miles through the woods, to see her. A tall, slim, and dark-haired woman, Norah was, according to those who remember her, a diligent and hard-working housekeeper.[20] Her first home upon her marriage was in her husband's ancestral house, where the couple resided with Sally Pollett, for as the youngest son Jim had assumed the traditional responsibility of caring for his mother after his father's death. Norah and Jim began to rear a family that grew to seven children by 1914.[21] Their first two daughters, Lucy, born June 11,1894, and Sara Jane, born July 17, 1897, were, like their firstborn son Ronald, delivered and raised in the Pollett ancestral home.

Some years prior to 1900 Jim Pollett had begun building a home of his own near the Pollett family homestead. The building entailed felling and hauling logs from the nearby forests to a recently opened local sawmill, manually hewing other wooden parts for the structure, and setting money aside for those materials which had to be purchased, such as nails and roofing materials. Ron Pollett commented on this venture many years later: "Building the house was a spare time job; and with so many mouths to feed, my father had little time to spare." He added, "A typical Newfoundland fisherman-farmer, [my father] was not the kind to 'waste' money buying anything he could make himself."[22] The new house, completed in about 1904, was a two-storied gabled home with a veranda. Built facing the harbour, it was eventually surrounded by dogberry, apple, and fir trees, a vegetable garden, and a meadow. In it Pollett's four younger brothers and sisters were born: James Henry (on May 15,1904); Clara (on July 4,1907); Mary Florence (on May 14, 1910); and Jonathan Leonard (on August 17,1914). Pollett's paternal grandmother Sally Pollett

also resided with the family in her son's new home.

Ron Pollett's family, like other families in New Harbour, was self-supporting. Hard work and frugality enabled it to be well provided for, by the standards of that time and place. His mother Norah was expected to help her husband in curing fish and tending to the family's three gardens; she also had to perform all of her domestic tasks, which included making clothing for the ten members of the Pollett household. In later years, Pollett recalled her creation of "Josephized" jackets and other garments from the various materials available or affordable.[23] His father Jim fished from his punt in the spring and summer, tended to his three gardens, and in the fall of the year settled his accounts with merchant Fred Woodman before going to work in the woods of central Newfoundland for the A.N.D. Company. The latter opportunity brought cash wages, whereas other modes of seasonal employment had facilitated only trade of goods between New Harbour fishermen and local merchants. Wages in the lumbercamps, however, were low, and it remained necessary for the entire Pollett family to contribute to the family's maintenance.[24]

Jim Pollett was well-known for his strict and demanding upbringing of his children. According to the accounts of W. Bramwell Pollett, Bertha Pollett, Ralph Higdon, and other New Harbour residents, Jim's expectations from his family were equal to the demands which he made upon himself-- he did not habitually drink or smoke, and though not a churchgoer was a disciplinarian who appears to have been steadfast in his beliefs in the virtues of good conduct and hard labour. Pollett's older sisters thus likely would have helped with the family work, such as tending to the family sheep and horse, and hauling water. Although Ron Pollett's own role in the family labours was during his earliest years somewhat peripheral and limited, in later years he was expected to help procure the family's wood supply, help with the garden work-- planting vegetables, weeding, gathering, and harrowing-- and assist with chores in the cod fishery, tasks which he learned from, and which were supervised by, his father.

The Pollett children's labours were determined according to their sex and age; and Pollett's younger brother Jim appears to have shared labour and also other activities with him. They shared in the tasks of filling the wood stoves with billets; and one pastime which Pollett later

recalled was a game of his own devising called "Who Can Keep their Hands on the Hot Funnel the Longest," which he played with Jim in the bedroom they shared. He described this as a game "which was easy to learn but hard to play."[25] Other competitive games he devised within the home, which, as he later stated, he sometimes used to torment his younger brother, merely provided more opportunities for manly sport and challenge. But he did not have a domineering disposition; indeed Pollett is best remembered by family and friends as a good-natured boy who "was always lots of fun."[26] As long as he performed his own chores and did not interfere with his parents' labours, Pollett and his brother seem to have enjoyed a certain amount of freedom to entertain themselves as they pleased.

Despite the strictness of his father, Pollett appears to have been satisfied with the life he knew, and in his earliest years he was relatively unaware of any sacrifices which his parents made for the family. Norah Pollett, a generous and intelligent woman according to those who knew her, apparently was heavily burdened by the many tasks demanded of her in her home, tasks which precluded her participation in social activities elsewhere. "There was always a big pot of something cooking on the stove," Mrs. Jesse Fogwill, former neighbour and a frequent visitor, recalls; and she also remembers the rarity of Norah's visiting neighbours or leaving her house for other social reasons.[27] Nor did she go to church. She welcomed visitors to the Pollett home, however, and they often called in the evenings for card games and chats, or were invited as guests for Sunday afternoon dinners. Mrs. W.J. Lundrigan, for example, whose mother was Norah's sister, recalls as a child many very enjoyable weekend visits to the Pollett home, for the family was amiable company. She remembers a pleasant atmosphere in which all family members helped with their daily share of the work.[28]

Only Sally Pollett, Ron Pollett's grandmother, born in 1820 and blind by the early 1900s, was incapable of helping with the family labours. It was her pleasure, however, to rock young Pollett in a cradle kept in the kitchen and sing hymns to him; and in later years he listened to her tell "many wonderful yarns about pioneer days on the Avalon Peninsula."[29] Her role in his upbringing Pollett appears to have thought significant: from her he learned of his own family's

and community's cultural heritage. He seems to have taken some pride in the labours and subsequent accomplishments of his New Harbour ancestors. It was this milieu which he explored during his childhood years, years when his father taught him those skills which would equip him for a life in the fishery, and when he learned as well to enjoy the delights of his outport home.

iii

Taught at an early age by his father at the family well to handle a bamboo trouting pole, Pollett later claimed that he, like other New Harbour boys, could wield one "almost from the time we could handle a teaspoon."[30] Male children in the outports of Pollett's day occupied themselves in a number of other ways also: learning from their fathers how to perform tasks which would contribute to the family's maintenance; exploring their communities; and participating in group pastimes mainly with friends their own age. Domestic tasks and responsibilities varied according to the seasonal nature in which they were performed, as did other activities. In retrospect, Pollett recalled his eagerness for the variety offered by the yearly cycle; not the slightest chance of monotony could be experienced, he thought, given the array of activities of each sharply changing season.[31]

During his earliest years, Pollett's assigned tasks involved simply gathering wood from the wood pile in the yard and carrying it into the house, making wood shavings for the wood stoves during winter and summer, and from May to October performing tasks like picking berries to serve with lunch at the Pollett garden site on New Harbour Point.[32] The simplest of tasks still were performed seriously: he took pains to please his father by producing neatly stacked piles of wood. He used his time at the garden site to explore the natural surroundings of the area, and as a result discovered an icy water spring which the family could use for refreshment, and gathered juniper berries which could be taken home and used for medical purposes. Though too young to help with the labour of digging potatoes and hauling hay, some of his time during the daily garden tasks was spent fashioning trouting poles from tree branches. With these he undertook to

provide trout and tomcods for the family breakfast.

Taught and encouraged by his father to learn and improve skills in the woods, gardens, and fishing grounds, Pollett apparently was eager to assume a traditional role in his family and also among his peers. Fishing, in particular, occupied a good deal of his time, both as a chore and as a form of recreation. As children, Pollett later explained, he and his companions "had eyes only for the fish hooks and our minds were wholly on cod."[33] He developed a preference for a certain type of worm to use as bait and laboured to obtain it. As he recalled, "Every spring I sifted tons of loam in our cabbage garden and upturned innumerable rocks seeking the special kind [of worm] I fancied. But the extra toil was well rewarded: the bait was so good I caught more and bigger trout than any other boys."[34] His success is confirmed to some extent by Jesse Fogwill, who as a child was a daily visitor at the Pollett home: she recalls Pollett "always coming through the kitchen door with a string of fish."[35]

Pollett's predilection for fishing substantially determined much of his childhood activity. From his window and the veranda of his home, he could see the fishing properties stretched from one end of the harbour to the other. He observed the men at their work at the splitting tables and on their cod flakes, and hours were spent venturing about this area. Pollett explored the landwash, the fishing properties, and particularly the cuddy of his father's boat. In time Pollett gradually widened his territory in search of local choice fresh water fishing grounds and salt water ones near the shore. He explored nearby ponds and rivers in New Harbour Barrens, an area east of his home which stretches eleven miles toward Conception Bay. His contemporary, W. Bramwell Pollett, says that the Barrens area was a familiar spot to young New Harbour boys: they fished at Sutton and Rocky Ponds in warm weather, and in winter, when they went there to gather wood for home use, they carried along a hook and piece of salt meat to try their luck fishing through the ice.[36] Along with other boys his own age, Pollett perfected his own fishing skills on the Barrens; and at New Harbour Bridge, a 100 foot long wooden structure near Pollett's home, the children fished for saltwater trout, eels, and 'salmon peel.'

In general, Pollett's childhood activities in the home, at chores, and at play were associated

with male companionship and masculine values, such as mastery of fishery-based skills and competitive sport. In warmer weather, New Harbour Bridge became a central meeting place for Pollett and boys his own age such as Llewellyn Thorne, Ern Woodman, Selby Newhook, and about half a dozen others.[37] On and near the bridge they devised competitive feats that each had to master to prove his manliness. Walking across the narrow handrail, on either side of which was the harbour and New Harbour Pond, and swimming the half mile across the pond were two of these rites. Pollett's peers recall his attempts to swim further than any other boy, but strength, endurance, and precision were goals shared by all of the boys of his group. Skating on New Harbour Pond and rabbit-hunting in New Harbour Barrens were activities which occupied them during winter months, and they practised skating swiftly and on thin ice, and competed with each other by trying to snare larger rabbits. Close observation and knowledge of the landscape were essential to these pastimes; mastery was attained by experience and practice. Pursuing pastimes devised to heighten physical challenges, Pollett's competitive and ambitious nature was developed.

With other boys his own age, Pollett enjoyed a freedom to develop skills and qualities, both physical and imaginative. The company of older men also was part of Pollett's early experience, for adults often met on New Harbour Bridge and told ghost stories and tall tales to young boys and to each other. In the absence of radio, these oral forms of entertainment provided more localized and intimate diversions. Pollett later said he listened to local stories about haunted culverts, headless riders, and ghost ships as though they were gospel.[38] The ghost tales, in particular, made his hair stand on end. Nonetheless he was an eager participant when he and his peers often retold ghost tales which they had learned from older men, dramatizing each of them with "groans, whistles and cries coming over the water."[39] These tales then became a source of creative amusement which masked and perhaps dissipated their fearfulness.

Despite the relief which may have been provided by such amusing retellings, these ghostly stories perhaps served to confine Pollett's territory to daylight adventures and to areas close to home, for beyond "in any direction there seemed no end to the spectral hurdles."[40] In the years of

his childhood, he never ventured further than New Harbour Barrens. An avid participant and listener, he appears to have been well satisfied with his pastimes and with the companionship of his peers. He learned an appreciation for the physical environs and people of New Harbour, and developed skills and qualities which would enable him to achieve a place among them. Influences upon him and his group from the world outside New Harbour were few. When Pollett described his "first amazing sight"-- the transnational train that passed at some distance beyond the nearby hills en route to the capital city of St. John's-- he suggested that its influence was limited. Only the novelty of the sound of its steam engines was attractive, and the boys imitated the chuffing sound while running races, rather than imitate the wheezing sound of a horse as they had always done.[41]

One regular exception to the ordinary pastimes and fairly rigid good conduct of Pollett and his peers was displayed annually on November 5, Bonfire Night.[42] The significance of this ritual for Pollett and other participants was no longer the same as it had been for the English ancestors: to commemorate the hanging of a Catholic conspirator, Guido Fawkes. Their concern only was to create a bigger and longer-lasting fire than in previous years. For weeks before this night, therefore, a communal undertaking of local boys was the gathering, sometimes pilfering, of empty wooden casks and other lumber to be set aflame in a clearing near the bridge. As they matured, Pollett and his peers took greater risks to obtain materials for more elaborate annual fires. Two of Pollett's contemporaries, Jim Thorne and Charles Hillier, recall that on at least one occasion henhouses and pighouses, including the animals within them, were taken and thrown into the fire.[43]

Pollett emphatically stated that Bonfire Night was "the one night [all] young outporters lived for."[44] He recalled that most of the population gathered annually near New Harbour Bridge to view the spectacular bonfire. The night's providing of entertainment for the community was of value to even the youngest boys: they became producers of community recreation as adults were of celebrations at other times of year. For the most part, Pollett's activities during his childhood were limited to those shared with the very young and the very old. Calendar holidays such as

Christmas brought boys into contact with the wider community and its rituals and traditions, usually as observers of parades and janneying. At Christmas, "times" exclusively for children were held by the two local lodges, and other annual planned activities also were provided for them. Pollett appears to have looked forward to these occasions as much as any other child; but in his writings, those activities devised by and for himself and his peers appear to him in retrospect as "a treasure of memories."[45] Developing an expertise in fishing, exploring New Harbour Barrens, participating in Bonfire Night antics, and his other activities with his peers appear to have made New Harbour in his eyes a place of wonder and a world to master.

iv

By 1907 Pollett had begun his years of formal education at the village's Church of England school. The schoolhouse, located across the harbour near the Church of St. Augustine, was open to children of all ages. Annual payment of school fees and purchase of texts were required from each child, as were daily contributions of wood junks for the school's stove. These expenses, as well as time spent for classes and study, prevented nearly half of New Harbour's school age population from attending regularly. Contemporaries of Pollett's, Hannah Brown and Charles Hillier, note from their own experience that work demanded from children in the home often took precedence over their education.[46] Pollett was not affected by this practice, however, for although his family was no more prosperous than most in New Harbour, his mother, herself illiterate, apparently insisted upon the need for educating the children.[47]

Pollett's first teacher, Colin Jones, taught at New Harbour from 1906 to 1909.[48] Like most male teachers in that day, his tasks and responsibilities included the teaching of students at all levels simultaneously, tending to administrative concerns, and setting an upright example for the children and for the community. Jones appears to have been a demanding and attentive teacher of the roughly seventy pupils in his care. In annual School Inspector's Reports, his devotion to his tasks was consistently praised by Superintendent William Blackall, who noted that Jones was responsible for raising attendance levels and improving the quality of teaching. Blackall stated

that "Mr. Jones, an energetic teacher, gives his whole time and attention to his work."[49] Owing to Jones's influence, maps and books were purchased for the school, and Newfoundland history, Bookkeeping, and Algebra were taught for the first time along with the basic subjects of reading, writing, and arithmetic. The teaching of these subjects may have encouraged curiosity about places distant from New Harbour and the acquiring of skills not ordinarily employed in daily life. How these concerns affected Pollett while a young student is not known, but Jones himself appears to have been a decided influence upon Pollett's developing character. Jones seems to have provided a new adult model for him, for acquaintances recall how Pollett deliberately learned to refine his "bayman's accent," and acquired the habit of wearing a necktie in public.[50]

Jones possibly motivated the community to build a new two-room school, which was in operation a year after he had departed from New Harbour. It replaced the dilapidated, poorly lit, and inadequately furnished small school in which Pollett had begun his education. It opened in January, 1910; and in April was converted into a high school to serve the entire New Harbour school district from Cavendish to Spread Eagle, Trinity Bay. Schooldays perhaps were made much more pleasant in this comfortable setting. In 1910 the new school was praised by Blackall after his annual visit as "splendidly spacious and bright" and built on "one of the prettiest school sites in the country."[51] This location provided a setting compatible with what Blackall believed to be a necessary adjunct to fundamental classroom courses, namely local nature studies. Blackall offered assistance to pupils and teachers, a number of student prizes, and detailed instruction for the undertaking of these studies; and he gave assurance that "That which is most needed is a pair of wide-awake eyes."[52] Although Pollett's adult writings suggest a wide and intimate knowledge of the New Harbour landscape and its wildlife, formal teaching of this subject may not have taken place during his school years. Blackall's ardent national campaign for the undertaking of local nature studies probably met with as little success in New Harbour as elsewhere; though for a time, Arbor Day, a school holiday in spring, was devoted to the planting of trees and caring for the schoolgrounds.

Generally, studies during Pollett's school years were devoted to the contents of the Royal

Readers, which were a set of seven school textbooks.[53] The initial Reader, the "Primer," was the book from which children learned the alphabet and simplest words. Readers one to three comprised mainly lessons in grammar and English literature. These subjects were learned by rote and through oral and written exercises, as were spelling, counting, and writing lessons. The higher the number of the Reader, the more difficult were the lessons. In literature, for example, the simplest stories such as "The Spider and the Fly" and "The Dog and the Shadow" were intended for beginning readers. These simple fables, in their brevity and didacticism, were suitable reading materials, for they were meant to build moral character in the young children by instilling virtues such as modesty and discretion.

The higher numbered Royal Readers, four to six, contained lengthy and more difficult literature and grammar lessons. British and world history also were included, as were other subjects such as cultural geography and elementary natural science, appearing under the headings common to all Readers, "Useful Knowledge" and "Great Inventions," and which probably were intended to serve to expand the students' horizons beyond the local and ordinary emphases of earlier Readers. [54] Whereas lessons pertaining to parts of the house and attributes of the seasons were contained in beginning Readers, by Reader six lessons related to the history and development of papermaking and printing were among those which students were required to learn. These subjects were taught in the second classroom of the two-room school, separated by a folding screen and reserved for higher grades; but practices of rote-learning and daily oral and written exercises were common in both classrooms.

Each preface to the Readers, from the Primer to Reader six, contained explanations such as these: "The whole book, like other books in the Series, has been constructed with a view to induce children to take a real interest in what they read, and to make them delight to exercise their power of reading;" and "The lessons aim not only at teaching the art of reading, but at training the pupils to a love of reading." [55] Pollett in his early school years did develop a love for reading, and eventually acquired a small book collection. One book, Squib and his Friends, an adventure novel about a young English boy's experience in the Swiss Alps, was given to Pollett as

a prize for his distinguished achievement in 1912 in the subject of Geography. Other books in his collection included one called Business and Law, and a volume of treasure stories given to him for selling a large number of subscriptions to a magazine, The People.[56] These books, like the subjects of his school studies, may have broadened his knowledge of the world outside New Harbour and created an awareness of differences in life elsewhere. The adventure novels of Norman Duncan and the Horatio Alger stories, which were available in his school's small lending library, also may have played some role in shaping Pollett's ideals about a richer variety of experiences than he could know in New Harbour. And the contents of the Royal Readers, each volume of which students had to master before proceeding to the next number, also appear to have influenced Pollett's sentiments and imagination. Pollett later recalled his morning walk to school carrying his book satchel filled (figuratively) with companions, the characters in the poems of Wordsworth, Shelley, and Tennyson. As he crossed New Harbour Bridge, he remembered thinking about Lucy, of "Lucy Gray" by Wordsworth, who was lost in a snowstorm as she made her way across a wooden bridge in her own town. He wondered if her fate would have been different if she lived in New Harbour and had crossed New Harbour Bridge.[57] In this instance, Pollett in his imagination succeeded in incorporating into his own place the figures and setting of quite another world. Indeed in his daily conversation, as his cousin Marion Gosse recalls, Pollett would dwell on the ordinary aspects of daily life that other local people would not notice.[58]

The ability to learn by observation and to exercise his imagination may have quickened his grasp of more formal subjects in which he was trained. During the years 1912 to 1914 in particular, he excelled in Geography, English, Algebra, and History.[59] He passed all his other subjects. Owing partly to the discipline and rigorous demands from two of his teachers, Samuel Brett, who taught at New Harbour from 1911 to 1913, and Walter Scammell, who taught from 1914 to 1916, Pollett appears to have been an exceptional student for his day. These two men guided Pollett through his studies for his three Council of Higher Education (C.H.E.) Examinations-- Primary in 1912, Preliminary in 1913, and Intermediate in 1914-- in all of which he excelled.[60] A second influence which may account for Pollett's achievement was a competitive atmosphere in the class-

room. A number of Pollett's contemporaries, Llewellyn Thorne, who was his closest friend, Herbert Cranford, and Selby Newhook, also distinguished themselves in their studies. They may have provided some incentive for Pollett to achieve recognition in his yearly course of studies.

In the spring and summer of his school years, however, Pollett's love for formal learning, like that of most boys, appeared to decline; he became impatient for the end of June to come in order to spend his time fishing for trout off New Harbour Bridge and in the Barrens, and for cod in his father's punt. The time when he could "switch from sharpening pencils to polishing fishhooks" was eagerly awaited.[61] As his acquaintances recall, each spring morning Pollett fished on the bridge in the hours before classes began, and left his trouting pole on the bridge in order to save time upon resuming his fishing at the end of the school day.[62] Spring and early summer school days, which interfered with regular outings with his father, were viewed almost as dismally as Sundays, when, according to local custom, no work or fishing could be undertaken. On Sundays from the bridge, as Pollett later recalled, one could only observe and measure the enormous length of fish in New Harbour Pond, which were sure to be gone by Monday.[63]

Yet at some point during his later school years, Pollett discovered that his love for fishing was confined to an entertaining pastime; never again did he foster a desire to become a fisherman like his father. "He didn't like the work," one informant says simply.[64] He loved to fish, but balked at the labour involved in the cleaning and curing processes which took long hours of exertion to accomplish. Nevertheless, "Jim Pollett made Ron work" on his boat and flakes.[65] As well, Pollett's labours in the woods and in the gardens had increased by the time he had reached about age twelve. He was now expected to cut the wood for his family and haul it home with the use of his work dog Downey and his catamaran, and to contribute to the garden work as a participating adult. There is evidence that he felt burdened and frustrated by this drudgery: Pollett said that whereas he once had looked forward eagerly to his days at the family garden across the harbour, by this time, when "back-breaking," extensive manual labour was demanded from him, he would have preferred to run the other way (perhaps back home, toward the bridge).[66] Apparently his concerns and interests were moving gradually away from the constraints imposed by family life in

New Harbour.

Pollett differed from both of his parents also in that from an early age he did occasionally go to church; and one annual ritual to which he appears to have looked forward was presenting the minister, James Johnston White, with his first trout catch of the season. From White he received a pat on the head and a dime, which he deposited in the collection plate on the next Sunday.[67] He appears to have regularly attended Sunday school classes, too, which were directed by the local merchant's wife, Mrs. Fred Woodman. In 1912 Pollett was given a book prize by Mrs. Woodman for his distinguished achievement in the high school subject of Geography, although no prizes usually were given at the Primary level or for this subject. Perhaps Pollett's achievement in Sunday school classes may account for this exception, for the giving of "reward books" in recognition of students' merit and diligence was a standard practice at Sunday schools in England.[68] Some forty years later, Pollett would recall the rarity of receiving presents in any form as a boy: even at Christmas, he wrote, "Santa Claus travels ever so light" to the outports.[69] Indeed, this incident of his receiving a "reward book" was imaginatively recreated in his short story "The 'Dicky-Bird' Dish" in 1949.[70] Its rather didactic theme is splendid reward gained through the good works of a young boy who possesses promising scholastic abilities. The notion that achievements pursued in the church-related school could foster possibly the only tangible rewards that an outport boy could expect, was one that Pollett as an adolescent was perhaps gradually made aware of.

For by 1914, if not before, the spheres of domestic responsibilities and academic achievement appear to have become very separate in Pollett's mind. Arduous manual labour associated with his tasks may have interfered with his academic work. As he recalled, "the stoves were always hungry, the gardens forever glutted with weeds."[71] Owing to his recognized achievements in his studies, Pollett had probably become aware of the limitations imposed by New Harbour life on his developing aspirations and future accomplishments. His achievements in part may have led him to develop interests in acquiring skills of more diverse natures than the traditional ones employed in New Harbour daily life. In the next two years, he was to search for possible outlets

in which to exercise his abilities.

v

Between 1914 and 1916, Pollett prepared himself at New Harbour to become a schoolteacher. His choice of profession was a fairly predictable one. As Patrick O'Flaherty has suggested, schoolteaching was one of the few "escape routes" available to an outporter who wanted no part of the traditional occupation of fishing.[72] Pollett, however, was not eligible to obtain a teaching certificate until he reached the age of sixteen.[73] After his completion of the Intermediate grade in June, 1914, and a summer of fishing with his father, he apparently arranged with his schoolteacher, Walter Scammell, to receive private instruction in more advanced academic courses. Pollett had intentions to write examinations for which he would receive a Junior Associate certificate, in courses which the New Harbour high school was not certified to teach. Attendance at certified high schools elsewhere would have led to expenses which his family either could not afford or was not willing to meet.

Instead, Scammell instructed Pollett during the regular school day and in return Pollett assisted him by teaching children in much earlier grades. Clarence Cranford, who had been one of these pupils, recalls a rather disdainful attitude felt toward Pollett, an ordinary fisherman's son acting as schoolteacher, and who spoke with a "twang." "We used to throw wads of paper at him," he remembers, when Pollett's back was turned as he wrote on the blackboard.[74] Although schoolteaching was a respectable position, all of New Harbour's teachers had come from outside the community, and perhaps never were challenged in quite this way. By assuming this position, Pollett had overstepped the social barriers between traditional fishermen and local notables-- merchant, clergyman, teacher, and a handful of others-- which historically had developed in the village; nevertheless, doing so enabled him to prepare himself for his new profession.

These two years of student teaching apparently were considered to be adequate training for a teacher in the outports.[75] Training as such, in fact, was not required until 1920; and Pollett had perhaps sought out this opportunity independently to gain classroom experience which might

eventually help him in his chosen career. An able student and avid reader, Pollett probably had a close relationship with Scammell, who as a teacher was himself consistently given excellent ratings by Superintendent Blackall for his teaching in all subjects and for maintaining discipline and order in the classroom.[76] Apart from his interest in Pollett, Scammell also may have encouraged other slightly older boys (who also were Pollett's closest friends) to enter the teaching profession: by 1916 Llewellyn Thorne and Herbert Cranford had become outport teachers, and Selby Newhook also trained (more formally, at Bishop Feild College in St. John's) for the profession.[77] This seems remarkable in that it was unusual at New Harbour for a student to get as far as the Intermediate grade, and still more so to attempt further academic achievement.

During Pollett's two years of student teaching, a number of his peers volunteered for service overseas in the Great War. Newfoundland, as a British colony, entered the war on August 4, 1914, but men from the outports were more slowly recruited than residents of the capital of St. John's. The Cadet, a military newspaper of the day, cites some reasons for this discrepancy: outport families were greatly dependent on their sons, and no provisions could be made for the families' support while their sons were overseas; furthermore, recruiting agents rarely went beyond the principal towns, and no recruiting campaigns or clubs like those in St. John's were established in the outports.[78] Frederick Rowe notes, however, that an intensive recruiting program was undertaken island-wide in 1915.[79] Friends of Pollett's such as Herbert Cranford, and some other New Harbour young men who like Pollett were not of legal age to enlist, may have joined the forces as a result of this program. Certainly when they joined in or before 1915 they were made aware of events which had occurred in the war from daily newspapers available at New Harbour; news also was posted daily at the village's telegraph office. Pollett tried to enlist perhaps in 1915, but he was rejected for service owing to an abnormal condition of the feet. He had been born with a congenital deformity common in the Pollett lineage: two knob-like growths near his insteps which, although they in no way impeded his mobility, caused his feet to turn inwards.[80] His ambition to become a soldier was thus thwarted, and he returned to school and resumed his tasks.

In 1916 Pollett became the school's Supervising Officer during the examination period held

for the district at New Harbour. This was a responsible position, and its duties entailed attending on examinees, collecting the examinations, and arranging for their dispatch to the Registrar at St. John's.[81] His teacher, Scammell, had probably proposed his name to the school board, its members comprising the minister T.W. Upward, merchant Fred Woodman, and a number of other prominent community residents. Their approval suggests that Pollett was seen as a competent and respected young man by his elders. As Pollett was to turn sixteen years of age that June, Scammell possibly also had recommended Pollett to the Board of Examiners at St. John's, from whom he obtained his teaching certification by January of 1917.[82] However, in part because Scammell was to join the armed forces in the fall of 1916, Pollett's two years of teacher-training and private instruction ended.

A number of events during the late spring and summer of 1916 also affected Pollett and his ambitions. In May his mother died; she was a victim of a measles epidemic which had spread throughout Trinity Bay and the island. A notion which perhaps added to Pollett's grief was his knowledge that he had brought the measles into the house, having caught them at school.[83] This experience probably accounts for his failure to write his Junior Associate examination in June, as he had intended. In addition, his grandmother died in July of that year at the age of ninety-six. Although she had been bedridden for many years, he apparently had continued to think of her as an important member of his household. Both deaths, furthermore, appear to have affected his father Jim tremendously, for he was the only wage earner, and now was solely responsible for his family of seven, which included a young son Len, aged two. Jim Pollett's rigorous demands upon his family, given the circumstances, could only have increased at this time. More than ever before, perhaps, he impressed upon Pollett the need to start earning his own living.

In the summer and fall of 1916 Pollett assisted his father in all of his chores, and obtained seasonal work building snowfences for the local railway. A branch line from the transnational railway, from Whitbourne to Heart's Content, had been built and was in operation by July of 1915.[84] Pollett joined a number of his peers who also had obtained similar jobs. This paid labour enabled him both to satisfy his father's wishes and to establish himself among other boys of his

own age group. In his adult writings, while he makes no mention of the death of his mother, he recalls with delight the disposition of his friends, these "eagle-eyed bedlamers of the depot station" who appeared worldly-wise and "ripe for anything that smacked of storybook adventure."[85] They, too, were waiting for opportunities to earn their keep; they probably had in mind permanent jobs in Grand Falls, where their fathers and relatives had found employment for some time.

Though somewhat apart in his ambitions from most of his peers, Pollett enjoyed the self-made entertainments of the group during that summer and fall. Summer evening sessions at New Harbour Bridge included storytelling, dancing, and sing-alongs. As avid a participant in these activities as he had been in sports and pastimes with his friends years before, Pollett was known for his ability to make up rhyming stories about recent local events and to perform them for the gathered group. Jim Thorne recalls one of Pollett's poems, "Eeling," which described humorously the actions and maneuvers of some local boys who set their eel-lines on New Harbour Bridge, as boys always did each summer evening.[86] Storytelling such as this was interspersed with jigstepping on the wooden planking of the bridge, and singing, for which local young men, particularly Aubrey John Woodman, provided accompaniment on the violin or concertina. In cooler weather these nightly meetings were relegated to family houses. Bertha Pollett recalls many impromptu concerts at Ron Pollett's home, noting Pollett's love of performing for the assembled group stories and jokes of his own devising, and of singing locally composed songs, one of which was "Nicholas Tobin."[87] Nightly card games and weekly dances at local stores and the schoolhouse were other diversions for the group.

Thus before Pollett left New Harbour in January of 1917, he had experienced several seasons of labour as a participating adult at home and at the nearby railway, and from years of close observation and listening had learned to contribute to local entertainment imaginative literary diversions, of which "Eeling" is one example. Remembered by his contemporaries, Ralph Higdon and Reg Woodman, as a quiet and good natured young man, a hard worker and a scholar, and by Bertha Pollett and Jesse Fogwill as a friendly, well-mannered young man who never swore and

had a pleasant disposition, his personal qualities were ones that members of his community found attractive.[88] Pollett's ambitious nature, however, is the quality for which he is best remembered by all those who knew him. That he never fostered a desire to settle at New Harbour during his young manhood is one notion about which his peers are certain. Instead, he was the first of six of his family to abandon the traditional outport way of gaining a livelihood, namely the cod fishery, and to seek out opportunities and challenges elsewhere.

II

LEARNING HIS TRADES: THE TRANSIENT YEARS, 1917-24

Ron Pollett's life between the years 1917 and 1924 was characterized by job-hunting and moving from place to place. In January, 1917, he began a brief career as an outport schoolteacher at English Harbour, Trinity Bay; two years later he held a similar position at Green's Harbour, Trinity Bay. The challenge of developing other skills and exploring more distant places may partly explain Pollett's search for responsible positions elsewhere in the summer of 1919. He obtained one such post as a record-keeper in the offices of the A.N.D. Company at Grand Falls, and he lived and worked in this town for more than three years. Subsequently, in 1923-4, Pollett served an apprenticeship in linotype craftsmanship at Montreal. His mastery of this trade, which in the 1920s was an integral part of the printing industry, facilitated his emigration to New York. In Glen Cove, Long Island, Pollett began to practise his profession of linotypist, a trade which enabled him to realize his ambitions and, finally, to begin to establish himself firmly in the world beyond New Harbour.

I

Ron Pollett arrived at English Harbour in January of 1917 to take the position of schoolteacher at the local All Saints' School maintained by the Church of England. English Harbour, located near the town of Trinity on the north shore of Trinity Bay, was a fishing community of about four hundred people.[1] The history of English Harbour dates from c.1675,[2] but the village had not prospered substantially. Because all trade was linked with the centre of Trinity, no local merchant firms operated there; and until the twentieth century there was rarely an opportunity to obtain full-time employment, apart from the fisheries, except for the position of schoolteaching. At the time Pollett embarked on his journey to English Harbour via the newly instituted Heart's Content branch line of the transnational railway from New Harbour, the majority of young adults from English Harbour had left there on the slightly older Bonavista branch line.[3] The steam trains

had effectively become a symbol of opportunity in distant lands for many Newfoundlanders of Pollett's generation. Pollett later recalled how as a boy of about twelve, he had watched with fascination the smoke of the Bonavista branch line train, which he could see at a distance from his family's garden on New Harbour Point;[4] and for him, some four years later, perhaps the area across Trinity Bay encompassed the scope of his ambition to explore the larger world.

The place represented a striking contrast to the physical area with which Pollett had been familiar. The name of English Harbour is a deceiving one, as Ian Penney points out, because there is no harbour in the community;[4] the place is exposed to the open sea, the appearance cliffy and rugged. Pollett boarded with the family of Lucy and Frank Penney, whose house was located among the cluster of homes in the village, which were connected by numerous narrow footpaths near the gravel main road along the shoreline.[6] The family's daily routines were familiar to Pollett for, like the people of New Harbour, they were dependent upon the fisheries, but his new role in the community set him somewhat apart. Schoolteachers were accorded high regard there because their occupation was relatively inaccessible to the ordinary young person whose tasks were confined to traditional pursuits, and because teaching demanded a close association with church interests. Apart from daily teaching, Pollett was expected to assist the local minister, Arthur Pittman, by acting as lay reader each Sunday at services held in the local church. He also served the church vestry by recording the minutes of meetings.[7] These records written in a fine hand still exist in the local church, and the copious detail of the meetings' proceedings recorded by Pollett suggests that he served the vestrymen well. A remarkably extensive and sophisticated vocabulary for a young man can also be noted. And there were still other duties expected of Pollett in English Harbour. Each week he taught the parish children Sunday school. Like all Newfoundland teachers, he also was theoretically responsible for presiding at the burial and baptism of members of the church. Pollett was only sixteen and his exalted new role in an unfamiliar community presented great challenges.

With two years of student teaching behind him, he was anxious to assume fully the duties and responsibilities of the profession. Pollett's daily tasks at the school occupied most of his time,

although his classes were comparatively small: he had twenty-eight students during his first year of teaching, and thirty-seven during his second.[8] He was the only teacher for the one-room school, however, and therefore he was expected to teach and to supervise each of half a dozen grade levels simultaneously. His first experiences were no doubt difficult since he began midway through the school year, and needed to ensure that his students had mastered the first halves of their yearly Readers before proceeding to teach them the concluding halves. To help them to accomplish this, Pollett made his time available to all students both during the seven-hour school day and after hours. "He was always there if we needed him," one former student, Jo Ann Penney, has said, recalling Pollett's constant attentiveness to them.[9] Facilities must have caused great discomfort to Pollett no less than to his students.[10] The students sat for long hours on wooden benches, each of which accommodated six children. They did their lessons in the dilapidated school building which was inadequately heated by a single woodstove, and was poorly lit by several oil lamps. By day and night this paucity of physical amenities may have affected students' interest in the classwork, and thus Pollett's tasks were made fairly formidable.

From the beginning, however, Pollett seems to have been determined to do his job flawlessly, and an indication of his abilities may be found in the annual school reports. In 1917 Pollett's teaching of junior and senior studies, his maintaining of classroom discipline and order, his keeping of the school's register, and his performance of other duties all were given excellent ratings by Superintendent Blackall.[11] Such ratings, on a scale of one to five, or excellent to poor, were determined both by annual progress reports which teachers submitted to Blackall, and by Blackall's personal visit to each Church of England school in Newfoundland. Both forms of report enabled assessments to be made of the teacher, the students, and the schoolhouse. The visit, however, probably was the more valuable source of information, helping Blackall to form his own judgment of the teacher's abilities and weaknesses.[12] During these visits, Blackall scrutinized the performance of students; it would seem that the students' abilities to answer Blackall's questions and in other ways to demonstrate their progress were critical in shaping his opinion of the teacher. As the report of 1917 indicates, Pollett and his students performed extremely well during

the visit, although the rating for the school building was very poor.[13] Like his own former teacher Colin Jones, Pollett may have helped to secure a loan of $100 to be used for the building's improvement.

The meagre salary of $259 per annum which Pollett earned for the variety of tasks which he performed in the school and church did not dissuade him from conscientious work. In 1918 Blackall in fact noted the difficulty for the school administration of keeping qualified people in the profession, giving as the reasons teachers' poor salary and poor prospects.[14] Lack of incentives, in addition, may have affected their disposition toward the work and perhaps toward the children; but if Pollett responded in a negative way his students were not aware of it. "They didn't make [teachers] nicer than Mr. Pollett," Debbie Butler has said: she was one student to whom Pollett taught the alphabet and other early lessons.[15] He was relatively patient and even tempered, yet exacting. Gertrude Bugden recalls that Pollett was angry if students did not have their homework done, although he never became excessively upset or resorted to physical punishment.[16] As well, in her case he understood that poor eyesight presented difficulties in studying by lamplight during the evenings and that her family could not afford to buy her eyeglasses; and he was not disposed to respond harshly to boys, in particular, whose work at home precluded regular school attendance. Thus it appears Pollett understood well the constraints on education imposed by local economic conditions. His performance seems to have paralleled the achievement of men like Jones, Brett, and Scammell, who had been his own teachers. Pollett had learned from them the skills of the profession; and he was able to impart a love for learning similar to that which they had implanted in him. At least three girls whom he taught later became teachers themselves, and one of them, Jo Ann Penney, attributes her ambition to Pollett, whom she afterwards took as her model.[17]

Evidence suggests that in his first year in the profession Pollett proved himself an able teacher and provided a positive example of character and behaviour to the students in his care. If Pollett had left home, not merely to test his abilities as a teacher in a new place but possibly to discover adventure, then he was no doubt disappointed by the ordinary, traditional lifestyle which

now restricted his activities. Much of his time was spent with the children outside the regular school hours: each week he taught them Sunday school, and he supervised occasional school picnics and school concerts. Familiar pastimes such as dancing and card-playing, which he had always enjoyed, were disapproved of by local parish officials, and as teacher he was expected to adapt to the devout character of the community where most social activities were organized and supervised by the clergyman.[18] He therefore apparently spent his free hours at the limited pastimes that were acceptable at this village: reading at the Penney home, chatting with the family and visitors, and in warm weather taking long solitary walks in the surrounding woods and hills. A photograph of Pollett from the period depicts him as a confident and distinguished gentleman, holding an open book and sitting on the grass in the countryside of Champneys West, chin arched sideways and gaze focussed on the nearby hills.[19] He appears to fit well the stereotype of diffident schoolmaster. His students recall him as a handsome, dark-haired young man who was always well-dressed, wearing "his Sunday clothes everyday." He was a very quiet man, one former student recalls; and she says further, "There's not much to be said about him-- only on the good side."[20] Pollett remained as sole teacher in English Harbour until 1918.

ii

When, during the summer of 1918, Pollett learned that a teacher was needed at Green's Harbour, Trinity Bay, he resigned his position at English Harbour. It was at his home in New Harbour, apparently, that Pollett learned of and obtained the new position, for St. Matthew's Church of England school at Green's Harbour was part of the New Harbour school district, and the church was served by the minister who resided at New Harbour. Pollett had returned to New Harbour in the summers of 1917 and 1918 to spend time with his family and friends, and to resume his favourite pastimes: fishing at familiar spots, dancing, card-playing, and storytelling with companions on New Harbour Bridge. Teaching at Green's Harbour would make these homely pleasures accessible throughout the year, for one could use the daily train between the two communities or else walk the distance of about five miles. A slight increase in his annual

salary to $326 was an incentive for him to make the move,[21] but Green's Harbour's proximity to New Harbour was no doubt also a factor.

His ties to New Harbour helped to make establishing himself at Green's Harbour in September, 1918, a relatively simple process. Pollett arranged to receive room and board from Sarah and George Harnum, a resident family related to his mother. Other residents also were known to him beforehand, for local young men frequently came to New Harbour to take part in Saturday night entertainment on the bridge, and some women from New Harbour had married into local families.[22] In these circumstances Pollett was not forced to cope with as many challenges as he had encountered at least initially in English Harbour. The physical geography also was familiar. Green's Harbour was a community spread out along four miles of a horseshoe-shaped cove; flakes and stages bordered the shoreline, above which were the houses, and the land beyond rose to a rolling hill topography.[23] In terms of physical appearance, the fishing village, comprising a population of about 660 persons,[24] resembled the beauties of New Harbour, and perhaps after his two-year absence from home, young Pollett no longer sought new vistas.

Pollett's new working conditions at first must have appeared ideal, for although his salary was increased, he was expected to teach only about half the number of pupils he had taught in English Harbour.[25] The average attendance was now seventeen and most of these pupils had been through only the first few Royal Readers. It appears, however, that their low level of achievement was due to slow progress previously. One student, Bertha Burt, can recall her own and other students' great difficulty in mastering Reader three during Pollett's year there. She has said, "I was in grade three Royal Reader for quite some time...[Progress was slight] and we figured we were in that book to stay."[26] In Green's Harbour, as elsewhere in Newfoundland, students commonly left school by the age of twelve to begin assuming an important role in traditional tasks, and heads of households often considered the acquiring of fundamentals of literacy and mathematics adequate training.[27] In these circumstances, the challenge to foster a keen and ambitious desire for learning could bring great demands upon outport teachers.

There is no evidence to suggest that Pollett, now aged eighteen, made his time available to

students after regular school hours as he had at English Harbour. Nor is there an indication that his help was sought. For the most part, Pollett simply performed his required tasks of teaching daily all grades and all subjects in the one-room school, teaching the children's weekly Sunday school classes, and conducting the Sunday service at St. Matthew's Church. He left the school promptly after each school day, and went to the local telegraph office where news from the outside world was posted daily.[28] In this way he kept in touch with developments in the Great War and other current issues. He had made a point to announce to his pupils that he had been rejected for war service owing to, he said, "flatfootedness,"[29] and perhaps his thwarted ambition to become a soldier now resurfaced as a keen regret. He also was made aware that many parts of the Newfoundland economy were experiencing a "boom" as a result of wartime prosperity, and he may have now begun to feel that his position and responsibilities as a teacher demanded more sacrifices than other modes of employment.[30]

Other circumstances during Pollett's year at Green's Harbour may have focussed his attention on the limitations of the profession. Although his new position enabled him to resolve the dilemma with which he had been faced while an unpaid student teacher at New Harbour-- to be able to enjoy the delights of his outport home and yet also to secure a satisfying, salaried position away from the fishery-- Pollett probably was aware that his father Jim disapproved of his son's choice of profession. The choice brought about a noticeable strain in their relationship. On one occasion, Jim and other members of Pollett's family were annoyed at a joking remark Pollett made at the dinner table to the effect that as he was no longer a fisherman, he could not distinguish a haddock from a herring.[31] To Jim's mind, not only was his eldest son neglecting the rare opportunity of prosperous years in the fishery, but he seemed at times to disown his heritage. Jim's attitude, together with a recent addition to the Pollett household-- namely, a housemaid, Sophia Piercey, from nearby Winterton--may have made weekend and holiday visits home difficult for Pollett. The high standards of moral conduct which were demanded of Pollett in the teaching profession possibly had caused him to volunteer some criticism about his widowed father's and housemaid's living situation. Evidently the situation had become a subject of village

gossip.[32] It is possible that for this reason young Pollett confined his activities to out-of-doors pastimes, a circumstance which probably quickened his desire to break home ties, and to re-evaluate his plans for the future.

It is perhaps revealing that Pollett did not take the opportunities available to him to advance himself in the teaching profession; instead he continued to hold a Grade Three certificate. This level of certification required simply that a candidate hold a Preliminary diploma (which Pollett received in 1913), and be "qualified, in a reasonable measure, to assume the responsibility of taking charge of a small elementary school."[33] Advancement to the Grade Two level, which offered a rather substantial increase in salary, required candidates to hold an Intermediate diploma (which Pollett received in 1914), and have a half year of teaching experience. Pollett obviously met these two requirements to obtain Grade Two certification, although additional requirements may have been in the form of prescribed courses in advanced teacher training at St. John's and subsequent formal examinations.[34] Pollett's meagre salary may not have been sufficient for him to undergo the latter requirements. Fairly poor prospects for financial and intellectual advancement in the profession thus may have caused him to lose interest in his demanding work.

As a result of these circumstances, perhaps, Pollett and his pupils did not fare well, overall, in the annual school inspection by Superintendent Blackall. One student recalls the difficulty students had in answering the questions which Blackall posed to the class.[35] In Blackall's personal assessment, Pollett thus was given a number four rating, "fair only," for his students' progress in junior and senior studies; number two rating, "good," for his maintaining of discipline and order, teaching of divinity, and supervision of students' written work; and only in one area number one, "excellent," rating this for the keeping of the school registers.[36] Blackall responded to the major weakness he observed, the students' general lack of progress in their studies, by sending to the Green's Harbour school a new set of school texts called the Princess Readers. These texts were similar to the standard Royal Readers except that they contained a greater number of illustrations, which Blackall perhaps felt would make schoolwork more interesting.[37] As such, Pollett probably found no difficulty adapting to the new set of texts. Students recall that he was patient

with them, and he did not have a strict classroom manner; furthermore Pollett was very efficient and he "knew how to organize things well."[38]

In addition, he tried to make the school year more entertaining by organizing sports and games, and several students recall a school concert which he arranged in the fall of 1918 to aid the war effort. Pollett taught his students the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," which they sang at the concert. One student recalls his wide smile and gleeful expression when he was conducting the chorus: "we really sang out the words 'Glory, glory, hallelujah!'"[39] Such respites probably helped to make Pollett's year at Green's Harbour occasionally fairly pleasant. If he had intended to stay at the village, the routine tasks at the school and church which he would have continued to perform would not have presented great difficulties for him. But perhaps for this very reason of a lack of challenge, Pollett chose to abandon the teaching profession after his one-year stay in the Green's Harbour community. By the end of the school year, an alternative for which he may simply have been waiting became available. He was able to secure a position in the offices of the A.N.D. Company at Grand Falls. This was an opportunity which demanded a different set of skills, and, once again, a move to a new community.

iii

Pollett arrived at Grand Falls in central Newfoundland early in the summer of 1919, this journey being the furthest from New Harbour that he had yet undertaken. Grand Falls was quite unlike the fishing villages which Pollett had so far experienced: its population was more than 3700 persons, and from its inception the A.N.D. Company paper mill was the community's major source of employment.[40] Alfred and Harold Harmsworth, British newspaper magnates, owned and managed the entire town as a result of an agreement with the Newfoundland government made in 1905 to develop the woodlands of central Newfoundland. By 1909 the paper mill at Grand Falls was the largest producer of newsprint paper in North America.[41] Although the Harmsworths' establishment of an inland town was anomalous in the pattern of settlement in Newfoundland, both in terms of its location away from the sea and its means of year round employment, it

readily attracted outporters seeking to improve their lot. In 1910, Lord Northcliffe (formerly Alfred Harmsworth) said publicly: "We have two objectives in view in Grand Falls, one is the making of the best paper in the world, which we are doing, and the other is to create a happy community."[42] The latter objective was accomplished in ways unique to Newfoundland life. Buildings at Grand Falls were equipped with conveniences such as electricity and running water, and among Northcliffe's projects was the establishment of a town club equipped with a library and a bowling alley.[43] The facility was open to all employees of the company, and it was only one of a range of the town's leisure structures. As late as 1937, Joseph R. Smallwood was unable to compare the town with any other place in Newfoundland, saying of it, "Like a little world in itself, is Grand Falls."[44]

In one sense, Pollett's move there was part of an established pattern among some dozen New Harbour men who arrived at Grand Falls at its inception, many of whom eventually obtained permanent positions usually as carpenters, millwrights, and general labourers. It was a common practice, according to oral report, for these men to inform their fellow villagers of positions about to become available.[45] Pollett was aided in just this way in 1919: a New Harbour friend, Ches Woodman, employed as a paper inspector, told him of an opening in the company offices.[46] Woodman, some ten years Pollett's senior, may have also helped him to obtain lodgings at the Exploits Hotel, which catered to unmarried men employed in high ranking positions at the paper mill.[47] The Exploits Hotel was owned by the A.N.D. Company and operated by a plump, cheerful woman named Maud Burry. There Pollett was able to enjoy all the modern conveniences of the town, and yet to some degree maintain the lifestyle to which he was accustomed. Charles Edwards, who boarded at the Exploits Hotel, calls it "a typical Newfoundland outport hotel;"[48] at a cost of less than $1.00 per day, men were given pleasant sleeping quarters and were served large meals of Newfoundland-style foods. Parts of the premises were given over to activities such as card-playing. Such rooms were equipped with woodstoves and comfortable furniture; and a number of former residents recall a boisterous, smoky atmosphere in these rooms, as men played cards and smoked cigarettes together on winter evenings. The hotel was located at Church and

Riverview Roads, which was a convenient location for the boarders since the area was only a short walking distance from the mill.

Pollett arrived during the town's second major period of growth, for at the time two additional paper machines were about to be installed at the mill, and a second section of the town was being developed.[49] He had obtained a post as record-keeper in the company's Orders and Shipping department, an office located next to the Finishing Room, where rolls of paper were readied to be shipped to England.[50] Pollett's duties entailed recording the numbers, weights, and destinations of these rolls, among other record-keeping tasks. This was a responsible position; the additional machines which were in operation during his years there had brought about a substantial increase in paper manufacture.[51] In 1920, for example, the mill produced 63,000 tons of paper, the recording of which was the task of Pollett and his three co-workers, Dave Green, a Mr. Forbes, and a Mr. Ross.

Pollett's background in education was no doubt a valuable asset in his new job. As far back as his school years, he had shown exceptional mathematical abilities, and his new job gave him a chance to use them. He must also have been pleased to have a substantial increase in income. The exact salary Pollett earned is not known, although it probably ranged from fifty cents to one dollar per hour for an eight-hour work day.[52] His earnings, using a most conservative estimate of $1000 per year, would have totalled three times the wages he had earned as a schoolteacher. The majority of workers at Grand Falls, in contrast, joined the company as manual labourers and earned from ten to twelve cents per hour, until they proved themselves capable of performing more responsible duties.[53] But such opportunities for advancement were made possible quite readily to all workers in a number of ways: a night school had been instituted by Lord Northcliffe, and the expansion of the mill operations created various openings in all facets of production and management.[54] This emphasis on personal achievement and industrial development was one Pollett probably found attractive. "If he was a quiet man," one of his friends, W.T. Howell, said of Pollett, "he also was an ambitious one."[55]

Writing, evidently, became one of Pollett's pastimes, for although his work was exacting, his

new job afforded ample leisure hours. He wrote out his work and shared it with friends, who in turn passed them on to other friends. Eventually, it is said, he became known in the community as "a brilliant fellow with a pen."[58] Although there was no local newspaper in Grand Falls, some residents think Pollett may have also written regularly for a newspaper in St. John's and thus became even better known as a writer. However, the only known example of his writing from this period is a poem that he wrote about life in the Exploits Hotel.[57] In it, each boarder at the time was described by name and characteristics, as were other members of the household, such as "the little waitress who could shuffle plates." No copies, apparently, were printed, but handwritten copies were given to peers, who can recall its humorous qualities.

Those who knew Pollett in the Grand Falls years recall him as an earnest and gregarious man. He was well dressed, turning out in tailored suits; and to some people, Pollett appeared as a "dapper young fellow."[58] He attended church regularly at Holy Trinity Anglican Church, and socially he "ran with the better crowd– the churchgoers."[59] Within this particular group of friends was a young woman named Emma Hackett, the church organist and choir director, with whom Pollett experienced his first romance.[60] It would seem that their interests were compatible, for both were artistic to some extent– he in writing and Emma in music. Both maintained a high and reputable profile in community affairs. Pollett, for his part, early in 1920 became a charter member of the Loyal Orange Young Briton Association, a club which likely evolved in response to the institution of a local Knights of Columbus order a few months earlier. His activities in this new venture required some industry; noting Pollett's contribution to this organization, his friend W.T. Howell emphasized that Pollett "was a good citizen."[61]

An unprecedented workers' strike at the A.N.D. Company, which lasted from May 9 to August 8, 1921, nevertheless affected Pollett no less than the entire company work force of about eight hundred men. Owing to a general decline in the paper industry, the company had felt forced to slash all salaries by one third or more.[62] The strike was called after it was evident that no negotiations were expected to take place; it was a protest against the difficult terms which men were forced to accept. Although their wages were comparable to other North American paper-

makers, the cost of living in Newfoundland was about twenty per cent higher than in Canada and the United States. Pollett, like hundreds of other men, returned to his home during the summer of 1921.

In New Harbour, he found living conditions in his family home much altered. Just prior to Pollett's return, on May 5, his father had re-married, taking his housemaid, Sophia Piercey, for his wife.[63] Whether Pollett was now willing to develop a close relationship with his new step-mother is not known; such an undertaking was made extremely difficult because Sophia was deaf, although his father Jim managed to communicate by shouting requests in a booming voice.[64] As a result, no longer did his home have the quiet and amiable atmosphere Pollett had enjoyed during his youth. Furthermore, although Sophia may not have been particularly aged, her new husband and later the entire New Harbour community took to calling her "The Old Woman," a nickname suggesting some mockery. Family life as Pollett had known it during his youth perhaps changed a great deal owing to this circumstance. Nonetheless Sophia is remembered as a "wonderful worker," always "one for the home"– making clothing, cooking, and in other ways assisting the family.[65]

Despite her efforts, however, which were equalled by the labour of Pollett's father, economic conditions of life were such that Pollett, at home and without an income, may not have felt quite comfortable. After a period of prosperity in Newfoundland during the Great War, the country's economy entered a long period of decline.[66] Throughout most of the 1920s, a national depression brought great deprivation to most outport people. If Pollett had begun at this time searching for a job elsewhere, he would have been assured that economic conditions in other parts of North America were no more prosperous, and that prospects for him were limited. When the strike at Grand Falls ended in early August, Pollett probably welcomed the opportunity to return there, where, for the most part, life had not been affected by economic conditions suffered by the rest of the country.[67] Pollett was rehired by the company and his salary was maintained at the level he had received previous to the general strike. Jobs at Grand Falls were in tremendous demand; and the government and millowners were forced to publish warnings directed to thousands of hopeful

outporters seeking employment there that all jobs were taken.[68]

But for the returning workers, life in Grand Falls appears to have been basically unaltered by the strike. Pollett returned to work and to his living quarters at the Exploits Hotel, although after his return he does not appear to have participated so actively in community affairs. (In fact a few of his peers do not recall that Pollett returned to the town after the strike.) Other leisure activities may now have consumed his time. At the town club Pollett could read at the library, and learn to bowl. In the town hall he could see movies and vaudeville shows, both of which may have whetted his appetite for the outside world.

He also resumed a serious courtship of Emma Hackett, although Pollett's firm decision to leave Grand Falls in 1923 abruptly ended their close relationship. Emma rejected his proposal of marriage, ostensibly because she was not willing to leave Grand Falls. She continued to correspond with him until his death, but at the time she, like his friends, knew only that he fostered a keen desire to "get ahead."[69] From her point of view, prospects for their future together may have seemed vague and not promising. Life in Grand Falls, by contrast, was secure. Whatever misgivings Pollett felt about her refusal are not known. If he had found the amenities of social life in the town much to his liking, his desire to develop his intellectual capacities and seek out challenges elsewhere mattered more. In each of his working days at Grand Falls he had dealt with paper used for newsprint, and his interest in the printed word may have been sufficient reason to explore aspects of the printing trade. Opportunities for doing so were not at that time available in Grand Falls.[70] These ambitions naturally led him away from Grand Falls and the island of Newfoundland.

iv

Late in 1923 Pollett decided to emigrate to Montreal, where he secured an apprentice position in the linotype trade. Exactly why Pollett initially chose Montreal can be answered only by a series of guesses. While in Grand Falls, he may have been made aware through a trade journal, Pulp and Paper, published in Quebec, that in 1922 its publishers were planning to institute train-

ing courses for workers in the paper and publishing industries.[71] Pollett may have inquired about the most efficient place to learn the printing trade; if he did so, Montreal rather than, say, St. John's, would plausibly have been recommended to him. St. John's in 1923 was not prospering. In Montreal, by contrast, a number of apprenticeship opportunities were available, for training in the printing trades had been neglected during the years of the Great War.[72] As business began to revive in most of North America by about 1922 (the country of Newfoundland being among the exceptions to this trend), a shortage of skilled labour in the printing industry was seen to exist.

Pollett may have once again followed the pattern of securing a position and a place to live prior to leaving for a new destination. He could have achieved the first by writing to one of the three local Montreal branches of the International Typographical Union (I.T.U.), all of which were now concerned with the problem of a dearth of local apprentices. Pollett's minister at New Harbour, John Beauchamp, may have offered some assistance or information about living quarters in Montreal. Almost nothing is known, however, about where exactly Pollett lived or at which newspaper he worked in the city. His family and friends cannot recall his ever speaking about his experiences in Montreal; and in his own writings appear only brief references to his memories of "smudging my hands with printers' ink" and of a routinely chilly wait for a streetcar at the corner of Craig and St. Catherine Streets.[73] He apparently used his savings to buy a train ticket to Montreal; once there, sometime in November of 1923, he must have immediately begun his apprenticeship in linotype craftsmanship, for the duration of which he earned about $25 per week.[74]

The terms of Pollett's linotypist training according to international and local union agreements stipulated that he obtain technical and practical experience on the linotype machine for at least a three-month period.[75] The linotype machine was a relatively new invention which allowed, through a complex hot metal process, an entire line of type to be cast in a single operation.[76] Until the last decade of the nineteenth century all type was assembled individually by hand; the linotype machine, which included a mechanical keyboard, enabled type to be designed, set, and rapidly cast both by manual and mechanical composition. Among the prerequisites for Pollett's

training were, foremost, a good knowledge of the English language, including the ability to spell words and an understanding of grammatical construction, and secondly, a wide vocabulary and an ability to read manuscripts intelligently. Thus qualified, he proceeded to learn the keyboard of ninety symbols and then learn the various typesetting processes of the machine, and procedures for casting the lines in a hot metal substance. Another necessary skill which Pollett needed to develop in order to meet the requirements of high rates of speed and accuracy was the ability to read quickly the final compositions, issued backwards and upside down, and thus to edit his work. Knowledge that linotype operations were not limited to newspaper work but were used readily in book printing, journals, advertising, and all branches of the graphic arts was an incentive for Pollett to master the trade. By the time of the Great War, linotype machines had become essential to all composing rooms.

On February 5, 1924, Pollett was entered as a member of the I.T.U. through the Montreal Typographical Union, No.176.[77] Pollett apparently fulfilled conditions for acceptance into the union and thus was declared a journeyman printer. He was to find that opportunities for employment, however, were severely limited in Montreal. As an apprentice, Pollett probably would not have been intimately involved with a number of local printers' strikes, one of which had begun in Montreal as early as May of 1921, and all of which were to continue until August of 1924.[78] These strikes, which involved initially nearly seventy-five per cent of Montreal's unionized printers, were caused by an international movement spearheaded by the unions to shorten the work week from forty-eight or more hours to forty-four. At a conference held by the Quebec and Ontario printers' unions in 1924, the chaotic condition of the printing industry was discussed: not only was it recognized that large numbers of skilled workers were compelled to migrate to the United States because of the forty-four hour week issue; it was further noted that the very high unemployment which now existed was in part attributable to the common practice of Canadian firms having their printing done abroad.[79] To neither of these problems was a solution put forward.

These conditions seriously affected Pollett's opportunities for advancement, and his acceptance into the local typographical union, its members comprising nearly thirteen hundred other

skilled men, did not necessarily assure him even a position in a local firm.[80] Printers, however, had traditionally been an itinerant craftsmen group in North America as elsewhere. In the nineteenth century there had been a good deal of movement between print shops in American and Canadian cities, particularly after the National Typographical Union in the United States (later incorporated into the I.T.U.) authorized recognition of Canadian union cards in 1854.[81] This movement by 1924 was fairly regular, and was facilitated by the process of simply transferring to a different local branch of the I.T.U. Pollett took advantage of this opportunity immediately upon his acceptance into the I.T.U.; he became a member of local union No.6, located in New York City.[82] He left for New York in February of 1924.

v

It would seem that Pollett's desire to advance himself in his trade was the primary reason for emigrating to New York. He was assured of an increase in salary and reasonable daily working hours; what is more, he was offered a responsible position as the head of a composing room for a Glen Cove, Long Island, New York, publishing firm. Exactly where Pollett was to work in Glen Cove is not known-- perhaps at a local newspaper called the Glen Cove Echo, which was a Republican party organ established some fifty years prior to Pollett's arrival. Other firms then operating in the city, the Sanford White Company, and another newspaper, the Glen Cove Record-Advance, were smaller operations. The position which Pollett obtained at any one of them, however, was for him a great achievement, for he advanced from the rank of apprentice beyond the rank of journeyman to "boss-linotypist."[83]

Whether Pollett chose to live in Glen Cove during the time he held this position there is not known. Glen Cove, established as a town as early as 1668, was expanding rapidly during Pollett's time there in 1924; from a town of 10,000 persons at the turn of the century (when it was called Musquito Cove) it had as recently as 1917 been incorporated as a city.[84] In some ways the developing city resembled Grand Falls; and it was surrounded by lakes and overlooked Hampstead Bay, which gave it an attractive appearance. But after his experience of living in the much

larger city of Montreal, Pollett may have come to fancy a more cosmopolitan setting. Brooklyn was easily accessible via the Long Island Railroad, and by November of 1924, if not before, Pollett was made aware that in Brooklyn a community of émigré Newfoundlanders had become established. In the Park Slope area of South Brooklyn, hundreds (very possibly, thousands) of immigrants had settled so that, in time, the neighborhood became known locally as "Little Newfoundland" or "Newfoundland Alley."[85]

The Brooklyn Daily Eagle was a newspaper which frequently printed articles of interest to this community.[86] On November 25, 1924, the Eagle featured an interview with Pollett which described how he had become the first New York recipient of a legacy bequeathed by Lord Northcliffe to all his employees (or sometimes former employees) in Grand Falls and elsewhere.[87] It may have been at this time that Pollett first became aware of this Newfoundland community's existence in Brooklyn, for in this article he suggested some feelings of estrangement from his island home and the people there. A photograph of the twenty-four-year old Pollett which accompanied the interview depicts his surprised expression; he explained, in fact, that he was amazed that the executors of Northcliffe's estate had been able to locate him, for, it was stated, he had spent the year since his employment at Grand Falls "roaming throughout [the northeastern] section of Canada and the United States."[88] Furthermore, he said that there was no one in Newfoundland with whom he corresponded. Throughout his publishing career Northcliffe publicly had praised the community-minded spirit of the Eagle;[89] and this fact, given the occasion of the interview, probably urged the staff reporter to collect more details about Pollett than one would likely expect to see about a young immigrant in a major city paper. One detail which no doubt was thought to appeal to the paper's Newfoundland immigrant readership appeared at the close of the interview. Pollett spoke for the first time of a book he intended to write "dealing with the home life of his people in Newfoundland." "There has never been one written that I know of," he said, "and I think I'm qualified to write it."[90]

Pollett's most recent experiences perhaps gave him every reason for confidence and ambition. The challenge he had set for himself in Grand Falls only one year previously, that of learn-

ing a trade appropriate to his literary interest, mastering it, and thus prospering financially, had been fulfilled. It would appear therefore that the image Pollett hoped to convey of himself in his interview was that of a capable, independent young man, who had consciously severed his ties to home and had done well enough in his profession so as not to be in any immediate need of the forthcoming money from the Northcliffe estate. "I'll put it away with the rest of my savings," Pollett said, "Since I really haven't earned this money and as it comes under the head of 'investments,' I guess I may as well save it."[91] His progress in his career and keen ambition for further advancement may have helped him to land a job as printer at the Brooklyn Daily Eagle, the major paper of the city, subsequent to his interview. The paper's owners and publishers, the Hester family, resided in Glen Cove, but whether Pollett made their acquaintance, perhaps as a result of his feature interview, is not known. Pollett was probably aware, however, of the well-known Horatio Alger-style career story of William Van Arden Hester, father of the family, who had begun his own career as a printer's apprentice.[92] Hester's accomplishments may have inspired Pollett to obtain a position at the Eagle, a newspaper held in high esteem nationally. By 1925 Pollett had chosen to reside in Brooklyn. In effect, his seven-years' experience of travel from New Harbour, first across the bay, then across the country, midway across Canada, and finally to New York, was a sound beginning for the very different future he intended for himself when, as he later wrote, "I scrubbed the squidsquirt from my neck and quit my outport home to seek a fortune."[93]

III

'NEW YORK-NEWFOUNDLANDER,' 1925-45

Ron Pollett's life between 1925 to 1945 was characterized successively by achievement, misfortune, and the rediscovery of his homeland. Soon after his arrival in Brooklyn in 1925, he decided to settle in the city, and early in 1927 he married and began to enjoy the comforts of relatively affluent family life. Crises suffered during the Depression, however, thwarted his ambitions. Financial stability eluded his grasp, and he floundered in attempts to establish himself satisfactorily in New York. Possibly because of this grim experience, Pollett sought to renew intimate ties with his homeland, particularly between 1934 and 1939. He succeeded in reestablishing many close ties to Newfoundland; in addition, by the early 1940s, he regained both financial security and prospects for achieving his career ambitions in New York. Thereafter, Pollett continued to seek out various means of bridging the two very different worlds, one earthy and traditional, the other affluent and novel, both of which he had experienced by 1945.

I

Ron Pollett had established himself in "Little Newfoundland," a section of Park Slope, Brooklyn, by the summer of 1925. In a brownstone house on Ninth Street, he rented pleasant rooms from the Bartlett family of Brigus, and here he resided near Fifth Avenue, the major thoroughfare of Brooklyn.[1] At the crossroad of Fifth Avenue and Ninth Street, groups of Newfoundlanders congregated frequently; and the site was one which Pollett later referred to as "the night-time village square."[2] There he joined other recent arrivals to the neighborhood, some of whom Pollett later recalled had come directly from the island and still had "salt-spray in their neck wrinkles," but soon "skimmed off their wool peaker caps and donned quiffs and straws."[3] Discarding the accoutrements of their homeland was but one indication of their shared desire to embrace the new American culture. Earlier settlers in the area provided an important social network for recent arrivals, providing formal references for new jobs, and acting as witnesses at

immigration proceedings, christenings, and marriages; as well, they told of local stores that carried Newfoundland food products and newspapers, of churches where local Newfoundlanders were members, and of halls where Newfoundland-style square dances were held.[4] In the company of one of these men, Abe Snow, Pollett came to know Prospect Park and Prospect Hall, but he eventually broadened his territory to Central Park, and the diverse cultural amenities of vaudeville, theatre, and movies in Manhattan. Pollett once characterized Manhattan as "the jigging ground for the whole shore;"[5] it seemed to Snow that Pollett observed everything there was to see, and he remembers Pollett's delight and curiosity toward the novelties as much as toward the unpretentious commonplaceness in the city.[6] In effect, Pollett was now able to enjoy the best of two worlds: the opportunities and pleasures of one of the largest cities in the world, and community life among local Newfoundlanders. He was able to see the sprawling and various cities of Brooklyn and nearby Manhattan as a series of neighborhoods, and recognize his connection with one, "Little Newfoundland" in South Brooklyn.

Life in this neighborhood suited Pollett's ambitious character. He eventually befriended dozens of young men from Newfoundland who, like himself, were employed in highly skilled and well-paid trades, and he later recalled aligning himself with this expectant group of "young Newfers then making our mark on the face of New York."[7] Indeed he sought out opportunities to increase his income and broaden his range of experience, and now established habits that were to characterize most of his working life. He routinely chose to work from mid-afternoon until midnight at his regular employment at the Brooklyn Daily Eagle, for this shift was more highly paid than daytime work.[8] He also "moonlighted," frequently securing work at the New York Times and elsewhere when skilled linotypists were needed temporarily. In addition, he acquired the habit of reading a minimum of five New York newspapers per day, and he may have studied the papers thoroughly, for a wide knowledge of design techniques and composition could prove useful to his career. Printers could, for instance, receive premiums for correcting errors in style and language they detected in their working copy.[9] A broad knowledge of the techniques of journalistic writing would later manifest itself in his publications. By 1926 Pollett was earning approxi-

mately $50 per week, a substantial salary for an unmarried young man, and his devotion to his work was such that, according to his friend Abe Snow, Pollett worked harder than any Newfoundlander he knew.[10]

In June, 1926, Caroline Mariah Gilbert, a recent arrival from Newfoundland, was introduced to Pollett through his friend Jack Brooking, an iron worker from Bonavista Bay; and the two men pursued a courtship of the young girl.[11] Caroline, born and educated in the small and isolated outport of Haystack, Long Island, Placentia Bay, was at the time a slim, red-haired, nineteen-year-old girl, and had come to New York only two weeks before to assume a pre-arranged private nursing position. Her background differed from Pollett's in that she was the youngest of nine children in a Methodist family, and her father, Stephen Gilbert, had been a local merchant who also owned a lobster canning factory in Haystack. Gilbert's prosperity enabled him to finance Caroline's two years of training in St. John's, which qualified her as a practical nurse; and in May, 1926, she assumed her first position, this as a private nurse for a wealthy German woman in a luxurious Greenwich Village home. "Ron was a gentleman," a polite, handsome, and fashionably dressed man, Caroline recalls when describing her first impression of Pollett. She soon showed a preference for Pollett above her other suitor, and encouraged the quiet enthusiasm he showed in speaking of their prospects together. Giving up her career was part of the plan, for although Pollett appreciated her effort to advance herself beyond the traditional Newfoundland woman's domestic roles, working wives were considered disgraceful among the Brooklyn-Newfoundland community, in that they seemed to suggest inadequacies in their husband's ability to provide.[12] Pollett, to his credit, refused to allow such an inference to be entertained by his peers. A second of his demands concerned Caroline's religious beliefs, and by late February, 1927, Pollett was pressing for a June wedding and for her conversion into his own church.

The wedding took place on March 4, 1927, at St. John's Episcopal Church on Waverly Place in Greenwich Village.[13] Two Newfoundlanders living in Brooklyn, Bill Whelan, an iron worker from Conception Harbour, and Emma Halfyard, a housemaid from Haystack, presided as witnesses. The haste in planning the wedding may account for Pollett's failure to invite his fam-

ily and friends from New Harbour to the ceremony or to the reception at the stylish Hotel St. George in downtown Brooklyn. But his wife recalls that Pollett never expressed a desire for the attendance of members of his outport family, and the presence of only his newly-made friends may suggest his desire to begin life afresh in his new role of husband and provider. He was optimistic about his future, and apparently wanted to leave the memory of outport toil, "hauling and mauling the cod trap,"[14] far behind him.

The couple soon moved to a four-room apartment on 82nd Street in the Bay Ridge section of Brooklyn. Moving from the Park Slope neighborhood was now becoming, among Pollett's Newfoundland-born friends, an indication of financial achievement.[15] That part of the metropolis no longer fitted the stereotype of "a city of homes and churches" which had long since characterized Brooklyn; increasingly by the late 1920s, the spacious brownstones had been cut into inadequate rooms lacking kitchen facilities and privacy, and were rented to transient immigrant families who often were strangers to their neighbours.[16] In Bay Ridge, by contrast, Pollett could provide his wife with spacious and pleasant living quarters, and begin acquiring more of the comforts of middle-class life. Elegant furniture was purchased, and in their leisure time husband and wife spent hours reading together, sitting in two plush Queen Anne-style armchairs, referring to one another as "Queen Anne" and "King George."[17] Pollett often read aloud on these occasions from Wuthering Heights, the plays of Shakespeare, and other classics, and did so in a well modulated voice, crisply enunciating each word. He held the belief that Newfoundlanders who moved to New York ought to learn to refine their "baymen's accents;" he had taken pains to attempt this many years before when he aspired to become a schoolteacher, and, he now confided to his wife, he felt annoyed when his Newfoundland-born acquaintances persisted in retaining their distinctive dialects. In addition, he wished to develop a familiarity with ordinary American fare unknown to the outport; and often asked Caroline to prepare meals he had seen featured on restaurant menus or had watched other diners consume. It was not long before they had their first experiences with such novelties as spaghetti and teabags. Developing a liking for many new tastes and pastimes was to commingle with the novelty of their first year of married life and establishing a household

of their own.

Pollett's first child, Ronald James, was born on December 21, 1928. The addition to the family caused Pollett to become a more patient and good-natured man in the home. Caroline had grown stout, and he now referred to his wife as "Mommy."[18] He shared his pride of fathering a son with other Newfoundlanders, among them Abe Snow, Jack Pike, and Bill French, whom he met with their children when wheeling his son to nearby Fort Hamilton Park in warmer weather. This was an idyllic spot, well-tended, and overlooking New York Harbor. Such excursions may have reminded Pollett of the rare occasions in his earliest boyhood when his mother walked him about New Harbour, visiting with relatives and neighbours. Other reminders of home perhaps resulted from a new, closer relationship that he now fostered with local Newfoundlanders who like himself had prospered, moved to Bay Ridge, and had begun to raise families of their own. Card-parties took place in his apartment each Saturday night; and recitations of poems such as "The Hesperus" and "Lucy Gray," remembered from the Royal Readers, were featured on these occasions.[19] Such parties, where the wives sat embroidering and crocheting items for their families, and men played spirited card games and looked forward to "big feeds" at midnight, could well have taken place in any house in Newfoundland. Pollett was probably well pleased with the differences in his life since his days as a teacher. He had prospered; and his pleasant home and own small family were evidence that he had adapted well to his new circumstances.

The value placed on progress and personal achievement in America was one that Pollett embraced during these first years in the city; and by 1929, his income well exceeded the yearly average of $2500 then thought to be sufficient for a family of four.[20] He was happy in his work--his wife emphasizes that "Ron enjoyed 'mind work'"--and the hectic pace of his daily routine excited him.[21] Even travelling to work appears to been a source of wonder. Pollett later observed that only on the New York subway could one have the opportunity to stand next to "a beautiful girl on one side and the craggy hip bones of a repellent garlic-fumed fish pedlar on the other."[22] Prosperity enabled him to partake of a variety of local attractions, which ranged from an evening spent at a boisterous Newfoundland-style square dance at Prospect Hall, to the next free evening

attending a local vaudeville theatre where Mae West, Pollett's favourite performer, was featured.[23] The couple's shared enthusiasm for city life, and their feeling that "there was everything to see, there was everything to do," bespoke their intentions to stay in the city.[24] In Pollett's later writings, when he recalled these years, he would revise his somewhat unarticulated ambitions and plans fostered in the outport, speaking of his many travels as a "circuitous" route,[25] and indeed implying that he had always intended to reside eventually in Brooklyn.

II

Owing to an emphasis on his work and career, perhaps, Pollett had managed to accumulate an impressive amount of savings. Exactly how he invested his money is not known, but when the banks crashed in October, 1929, he lost a considerable sum. As his son recalls from conversations he later overheard, "Maybe my father's bank paid back ten cents on every dollar-- even till the forties they were paying it back. That soured my father a little."[26] This loss prompted Pollett to move his family to a less expensive apartment on 89th Street and to cut most luxuries out of his budget.[27] Ensuing economic conditions during the Depression demanded even more self-discipline: by the early 1930s, printing firms cut back production, and Pollett could no longer rely on his weekly earnings. He became one of the millions of workers forced to accept "shared employment," an expedient tactic characteristic of the Depression era which at once levelled differences in terms of experience and qualifications among men in particular occupational groups, and thus gave to each at least a fraction of work, rather than none at all.[28] Owing to this practice, at times Pollett managed to secure work only from one to three days per week. This situation may have fostered in him his idea of the worker in New York being "just another caplin in a puntload."[29]

Ideals of progress and prosperity which Pollett had long cherished were frustrated as he increasingly suffered insecurity and poor prospects. He still lived in the Bay Ridge area close to other Newfoundlanders, although now he perhaps contemplated some differences between his own and other immigrant groups. Whereas other local groups usually had established mutual aid and benevolent societies, Newfoundlanders never had organized formally as a group for such purposes.

"No; the outporter in New York," Pollett later wrote, "had to row his own dory, both financially and socially, as far as organized help was concerned."[30] He persevered. He often walked about Manhattan trying to locate temporary printing work, although at a time when many printing companies were forced to go out of business, it could be expected that he usually failed in these attempts. He learned the layout of the city well, he saw the billboards advertising the latest Broadway shows and newest products, and he saw the expensive restaurants. All of these sights helped to foster his rather belated awareness that only prosperity enabled one to enjoy the novelty of New York life, for indeed a striking disparity had always existed in this, the largest city in America --a key cultural centre for the élite, but its attractions remaining virtually unknown to many other residents who knew only poverty.

Early in the 1930s, poor financial circumstances forced Pollett to move his family again, now to an inexpensive three-room apartment on Fort Hamilton Parkway, in a building where five American families shared with his own a drastic decline in fortune.[31] One neighbour, Paul Plumber, who had until recently worked on a glamorous yacht owned by millionaire J.P. Morgan, now was out of work, and barely made ends meet by depending on his wife's skills as a professional hairdresser. The prestige of providing for his own wife so that she need not work outside the home still mattered to Pollett, but the responsibility of tending to their young son also precluded the possibility of Caroline's searching for work. Conditions were relieved somewhat by his family's joining in the practice of sharing dinners in nightly rotation among the group of families in the building. Each of the six took turns providing meals for the rest and thus saved sums on electricity and fuel costs. This scrimping was one way in which Pollett was forced to reduce his expenses. If he looked forward to a certain variety in the conversation and fare at the evening meals, then the tedium of occupying himself through long days when no employment could be secured no doubt did not relieve his feelings of worry and frustration.

Sometime in 1933, Pollett contracted a painful gall bladder disorder and thus found it difficult to walk about Manhattan in search of work.[32] An operation was deemed necessary, and the expense of hospital care alarmed him. He had no medical insurance, could count on earning

no income during his convalescence, and as a result put off the operation. It may be that at this time he acquired a passion for gambling, and racetrack betting remained a habit of his for about the next fifteen years.[33] Like most men who bet on horse-races, and indeed there were then hundreds of thousands of such men residing in Brooklyn,[34] the mentality of getting rich quickly was one that Pollett fostered. The excitement and tension of choosing a winner from the listings in the paper, while he would chain-smoke Camel cigarettes– another nearly lifelong habit– and wait anxiously for the results of the races, occupied him daily. "He always lost," his wife recalls.[35] As a result, perhaps for the first time since his ambitious move to New York, Pollett began to entertain doubts about his prospects. But he was not a man to give up easily, and he thought things through carefully. As his friend Abe Snow recalls of Pollett, "he would never let a subject drop, he was always probing, until he got to the bottom of it."[36] Despite the levelling experience of sickness and poor finances, he came to the conclusion that he could survive well enough in New York on his own and that financial conditions could be relieved by sending his family to New Harbour. Life in New Harbour would be more comfortable for his wife and child than life in New York, he thought; in addition, he now conceived, it was easier to "make do" with less in an outport.[37]

Pollett accompanied his family to his father's home in June, 1933, the worst year of the North American Depression. His wife and son were to live there for fourteen months. Pollett's own stay was brief, as he intended to undergo his gall bladder operation immediately upon his return to New York. He must have been appalled by the impoverished conditions he saw briefly at New Harbour; in 1933, Commissioner William Warren Mackenzie Amulree described Newfoundlanders' lives as "desperate."[38] Pollett concentrated instead on the positive benefits of his plan, one of which was the opportunity to have his five-year-old son learn some of the joys of Pollett's own outport boyhood. His son could spend his days happily fishing for tomcods or romping through the woods, rather than stay at home, see his sick father, and witness Pollett's inability to obtain work. He may now have begun to see New Harbour as a pastoral idyll in comparison to the big city. Raymond Hillier recalls seeing Pollett on this visit: "I still see him stand-

ing on New Harbour Bridge leaning over the rail gazing out over the harbour while gossiping with old friends."[39] Perhaps he was tempted to stay and enjoy the simpler pleasures he imagined.

Sixteen years had passed since Pollett abandoned the traditional mode of outport existence, yet upon his return to New York he must have been struck by a keen awareness that he actually had little to show for his many years of ambitious labour. He put his furniture in storage, moved to a small, rat-infested room on 86th Street, underwent his operation, and continued a fruitless search for permanent work. Frugality was a fact of life. He managed to send adequate sums to his wife, and during their separation wrote her long letters as often as three times a week. "I hope you are having a good time," he frequently wrote, much to his wife's chagrin, for he seemed to think of his family's stay as a holiday retreat.[40] Imagined pleasures loomed large, although he knew from her replies that widespread poverty and poor prospects in Newfoundland in the early 1930s necessitated both the relinquishing of that country's powers as a self-governing Dominion, and the providing of a government dole of six cents per day to its people.[41] Thousands of immigrants now forced to return to Newfoundland, as Pollett must have guessed, were viewed chiefly as burdens on their outport families.[42] For Pollett, a man who had always taken much pride in his accomplishments and merit, there now seemed no choice but simply to stay and bide his prospects in America.

iii

In the summer of 1934, Pollett obtained a permanent position at AD Press in the Soho district of Manhattan, and was in a sense able to begin life afresh after years of suffering insecurity and poor prospects. AD Press, printers mainly of legal work, was then one of the most reputable firms in the industry, and according to some tradesmen, a job of "law printer" was the "pinnacle" of status linotypists could hope to achieve.[43] It was here that Pollett was to work for about the next fourteen years, and where he eventually became known to his fellow workers as a master of his craft. Law printers were in fact required to have mastered diverse skills and techniques in order to fulfil clients' stringent demands for extremely precise, fast, and clean productions. In

addition, owing to their expertise, they could command a higher salary than most other printers. Recognition of his ability and the promise of financial stability no doubt helped to restore Pollett's confidence in himself and his plans.

He now set about reestablishing a harmonious home life. By September, 1934, he had rented and refurbished a pleasant four-room apartment on Gelpson Avenue, a tree-lined street near Fifth Avenue bordering the Bay Ridge/Fort Hamilton sections of Brooklyn.[44] However, he soon received his first awakening to difficulties to be faced: both wife and son returned from New Harbour extremely thin and sickly, and Caroline was diagnosed by a Brooklyn doctor as having contracted tuberculosis. She recalls that Pollett, too, had lost a considerable amount of weight: "there were the three of us, thin as rakes– you could count the ribs."[45] Although he was soon heartened to discover that Caroline's disease had been misdiagnosed, he hastened to relieve her distressed condition, caused by exhaustion and poor nutrition, by hiring a maid to help with the housework, and he himself occasionally prepared meals for the family. Pollett must have been gratified when, to add to his pleasure over his financial recovery and his wife's physical improvement, his son was promoted to the first grade of grammar school after only one day at kindergarten classes. Caroline had taught the boy to read and write during their stay at New Harbour. Pollett now began to take a keen interest in his son's education, and bought him, on weekly installment plans, a number of texts, including an encyclopedia called The Wonderland of Knowledge and a two-volume dictionary. He appears to have wanted to encourage as fully as his means allowed his son's love for reading. Furthermore, he now found time to share with his son pastimes similar to those he experienced as a boy--deep-sea fishing at Breezy Point, Long Island, ice-skating, swimming, and sleigh-riding. At Prospect Park he often rented a boat for some hours to row about the scenic man-made lakes with young Ronald. "Here, I could get the taste and smell of home," Pollett later wrote of this immense park.[46] In effect, these activities with his son instilled in the boy a love for the out-of-doors, and enabled Pollett to relive the pleasures of his own childhood.

His insecure and lonely existence during the Depression years obviously had some effect in

altering the desire he once fostered of jettisoning parts of his heritage. More than at any time during his adulthood, Pollett apparently now wished to cultivate ties to his homeland. His brief trip to New Harbour in 1933 had enabled him to renew ties with his family and friends, and he since had nurtured these connections through regular correspondence. He thus was kept informed about the conditions of life in New Harbour, and his own regained prosperity provided him with the means to become, to some degree, a benefactor. He now learned how crucial the money he had sent in 1933-4 had been to the Pollett family in New Harbour. After 1934 he continued the practice of sending monthly sums to his father, a routine which was applauded by the community.[47] He also began to collect used clothing to send to needy members of his family and others in the outport. Bertha Pollett, his sister-in-law, recalls how necessary these items proved to her six sons during the mid-1930s.[48] Pollett's sense of compassion prompted these gestures, and the soundness of his own finances enabled him to establish a new relationship to the island.

By 1936 Pollett found another outlet through which to assist Newfoundlanders. He learned, apparently from his correspondence, of a new business venture--a printing operation, part of which would be devoted to a town newspaper-- started in Grand Falls by two young brothers, Walter and Michael Blackmore.[49] Pollett managed to obtain a copy of the paper, the Grand Falls Advertiser, and was so pleased with the fledgling attempt that he immediately began a correspondence with one of the brothers, Walter Blackmore. Blackmore, being known only slightly to Pollett when as a youth he was employed as an errand boy for the A..N.D. Company, recalls that Pollett offered generous advice on all aspects of the new business.[50] Pollett sent trade magazines dealing with the graphic arts in order to expand the Blackmores' knowledge of design. He searched New York for a secondhand linotype machine, for he assured the Blackmores that they needed one to build a sophisticated operation, and to the brothers' amazement he also intended to pay for the machine. In addition, he sent critiques of articles which had been published in the Advertiser that, as Walter Blackmore recalls, always offered excellent advice on how to achieve clear, concise writing. The advice, Blackmore says, matched the "wonderfully apt phrasing" of which all of Pollett's letters, even the simplest greeting card, were composed. Blackmore notes

that Pollett possessed a "huge vocabulary," not flawed by affectations, and that he "was a great hand at painting a picture with words."[51] Pollett was to remain keenly interested in the Advertiser until his death, and became, as Blackmore acknowledges, one of perhaps half a dozen benefactors who helped make that paper a success.[52] Indeed, he says, Pollett "was a man of no halfway measures. When he set his mind to doing a thing, he'd do it and do it the best way."[53] Pollett apparently saw in the Blackmores' ambitious undertaking a ready opportunity to make a contribution to his homeland.

Pollett's involvement with the Grand Falls venture enabled him to renew his literary interest in Newfoundland, and perhaps reminded him of his ambition, spoken of in 1924, to produce a book "dealing with the home life of his people in Newfoundland."[54] Whether he saw his contributions to the Advertiser, particularly his editorial assistance, as a means to practise his writing skills in preparation for his own creative output is not known. Developing an intimate connection with Newfoundland, however, apparently became an increasing concern of Pollett's in the next few years. Blackmore helped him to maintain contact with current events by sending him a copy of the Advertiser each week.[55] Pollett's regular correspondence to Newfoundlanders in the mid-1930s, according to his son, was voluminous; and he recalls, "there were always letters around the house from Newfoundland," so many that young Ronald began an extensive Newfoundland stamp collection.[56] In 1937-8 Pollett also began the practice of listening to Newfoundland programs on the short-wave band of his radio.[57] The "Doyle News Bulletin" and J.R. Smallwood's "The Barrelman" were programs, among others, which helped him to keep abreast of events in Newfoundland and to remind him of colorful bits of the island's history.

Activity relating to Newfoundland apparently took on special importance in Pollett's everyday life. His son recalls that the only time his father became angry with him was when he once "fixed" Pollett's radio by tightening the screws and so interfered with the tuning mechanism.[58] This incident stands out in his son's memory, for Pollett was ordinarily a good-natured, easy-going parent. Pollett's interest in Newfoundland soon manifested itself in a desire to spend a full summer in New Harbour. Indeed as early as the spring of 1935, his wife recalls, "Every year,

come April or May, he'd say, 'I guess we'll be going to New Harbour come summer.'"[59] He ignored her own desire to vacation at a tropical resort, giving as his reason, "You can't shake hands with a tree,"[60] and was instead insistent on travelling to New Harbour. Caroline's unsettling experience there in 1933-4 perhaps was overlooked, for Pollett now could provide the inducement of travelling to Newfoundland first-class, and had the financial means to ensure a leisurely holiday. His enthusiasm convinced her, and the family left for their journey in late June, 1939.

This extended trip was for Pollett his first chance to appreciate fully the pleasures he had known as a boy in the outport. Once his family was settled in the house of his boyhood, he eagerly set out to rediscover familiar ponds, and with his son often joined his father Jim, fishing for cod in his punt. "A brand-new codfish always looks good to an ex-outporter," Pollett later wrote, adding that catching one was "like meeting a long-lost friend."[61] In preparation for his vacation, Pollett had purchased at Macy's department store in New York an elegant split bamboo fishing rod with brass fittings and multicoloured silk line, along with special cod hooks.[62] The rod so impressed his father that Jim said "a fish around here would be proud to be hooked on an outfit like that."[63] Pollett also busied himself socializing with the people of New Harbour--house visiting, picnicking, and chatting with the men at the wharves. He frequently appeared in fashionable dress, coming into homes bearing gifts for relatives;[64] and with ample leisure time to enjoy angling and socializing, Pollett was well aware of his improved status among fellow villagers. The holiday afforded the opportunity, he later wrote, "to play peacock where you grew up crow."[65]

When his wife grew restless and bored during a week of rain, reminding him of the pleasures they were missing in the city, he planned a family camping trip when the weather cleared to New Harbour Barrens, a site he had favoured during his youth. The weather nevertheless turned unseasonably cold, and on the third night camping Caroline recalls, "Even the horse tried to get into the tent. Oh, it was freezing! But Ron wouldn't admit it."[66] As a result, perhaps, he and Caroline now took excursions to St. John's, Buchans, and Grand Falls, and in these ways Pollett fulfilled his promise made to Caroline that the trip would not be similar to the financially difficult

and wearisome year she had spent at New Harbour in 1933-4. Walter and Michael Blackmore recall a brief visit Pollett paid to their printing offices while he was in Grand Falls. Rather than introduce himself, he nonchalantly sat down at the vacant linotype machine and began "banging away at the keys," proceeding to "do things with the machine no one else could make it do, things we'd never seen."[67] No doubt the Blackmores' sentiments to the effect that Pollett was a "genius" and "could have 'made it' in Newfoundland" were communicated to the visitor and later reinforced through the correspondence he continued to undertake with Walter Blackmore.

His holiday experiences proved gratifying, and it would seem the only setback Pollett acknowledged was simply that his trip did not last long enough. The onset of World War Two on September 1,1939, forced him to take a hurried leave with his family despite his plan to stay until mid-September. They had some difficulty reentering the United States, as they had no documents to prove they were residents of Brooklyn. A paid utility bill which his wife carried in her purse was in effect the only such evidence they had. "That's what saved us," Caroline recalls.[68] This unforeseen problem, as well as the growing restrictive measures on immigration to the United States and the uncertainty of the war years, may have alerted Pollett to the necessity of obtaining American citizenship. He had not followed a trend during the 1920s among Newfoundland immigrants of giving up their citizenship.[69] His reasons for not doing so are not known, although his most recent experiences on the island may have made this choice more difficult. Indeed in the next few years, his memories of that trip were to influence much of his experiences in the city.

iv

The early years of the Second World War would appear to have brought greater prosperity and stability in Pollett's life than he enjoyed at any other time. Printing companies flourished and salaries increased, circumstances facilitating Pollett's move in September, 1939, to a four-room apartment in a prestigious six-story brick apartment house on 92nd Street in Fort Hamilton, Brooklyn.[70] The building was replete with such adornments as marble stairways and canopied entrance doors serviced by a doorman. His new apartment cost him the weighty sum of $52 per

month, and it was here that Pollett lived for the rest of his life. His daughter, Ethel Mae, was born during this period, on August 4,1941. News that his wife was pregnant with their second child after a twelve-year interval, probably accounts for his decision to seek the security of American citizenship. Pollett and his wife had been fond admirers of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and realized that as citizens they could benefit from the federal programs which Roosevelt had instituted.[71] For Pollett, the most important of these measures was the Social Security Act passed in August, 1935, which stipulated that all Americans would be provided for in their own lifetimes. Pollett became an American citizen on May 6, 1941.[72]

According to local custom, two Newfoundlanders were his witnesses at the citizenship hearing– Alice French and Bill Whelan, both of whom lived closeby in Bay Ridge. When subsequently Pollett declared himself to be a Republican, the national party associated generally with larger business interests and men of wealth, he alienated himself somewhat from other local Newfoundlanders, who for the most part were Democrats. In the Bay Ridge/Fort Hamilton locality, his friend Abe Snow has said, "The Democrats lived on Fifth Avenue; the Republicans lived on Shore Road"[73] – this being the accepted, broad geographical distinction between the politics and financial means of men from Bay Ridge on the one hand, small businessmen and tradesmen, and men from Fort Hamilton on the other hand, citizens of substantial wealth. Pollett's career and family now, clearly, figured larger in his plans than did local, ethnic affiliations, and indeed these concerns had long surpassed his initial bond with the local community. Contact often was infrequent. Whereas many Newfoundlanders, including Pollett's wife, belonged to local churches and socialized frequently in their church organizations, Pollett had stopped attending church soon after his marriage, though his motives for doing so are not clear.[74] Abe Snow has said that this change in Pollett was not unusual, for male Newfoundlanders "lost their religion in New York. Religion didn't play much of a part in their lives."[75] In fact, except for his union affiliations which were required for his work, Pollett was never to belong to any any organized group– a sharp contrast to others' involvement in local groups such as the Knights of Columbus and the Newfoundland War Veterans' Association.

Pollett may have wished to cultivate an image of himself as an independent and diligent worker and provider, one aloof from community concerns, and this attitude persisted despite a variety of Newfoundland-related activity that now occurred. During the war years, the general Newfoundland community in New York began to foster a somewhat higher public profile than in the past as a result of a resurgence of the Newfoundland War Veterans' Association, and the instituting of various New York-Newfoundland clubs and a branch of the Newfoundland Tourist Bureau in Manhattan.[76] Ventures within these organizations included the publishing of a community newspaper, The Newfoundland Weekly, edited by Major R.H. Tait, sponsoring dances and card parties for fundraising, and presenting lectures about Newfoundland's history and development at which slideshows and movies of the island's scenic, tourist attractions also were featured. Given his own keen interest in Newfoundland, Pollett's infrequent participation in these ventures seems inconsistent; indeed he responded critically to the new activities he saw, and began favouring the traditional world he remembered. He later wrote, "You only have to peek in at some of the square dances...to see the change– the floor either deserted or flapping with the second generation in the tame 'barn' interpretation of the one-time knock-down-and-drag-out dust raisers of their parents. And at the card parties the old verve that smashed the table whisting the Five has largely been superseded by the subdued bustle of women playing Bridge."[77] Attending Lee Wulf's films about sport fishing in Newfoundland aroused in Pollett only this fleeting fancy: "as a trouter I might have become internationally famous like Lee Wulf...if I had stayed in Newfoundland."[78]

Nostalgic sentiments he fostered would increasingly affect his enjoyment of urban pleasures. Current films such as Gone with the Wind and The Grapes of Wrath were taken in three or four times; the novels on which the films were based he read as many times, rather than indulge in the impressive variety of entertainment available in New York.[79] The time when he felt that "there was everywhere to go; there was everything to see" clearly had passed. He joined in eagerly anticipated family excursions to Coney Island, although at forty years of age amusement parks and eccentric side-shows had little appeal for him. He had a marked distaste for the place. In his view, Coney Island was nothing more than a beach crowded with obese women in bathing suits

whose broods of children threw garbage into the Atlantic waters.[80] A photograph of Pollett from the period in which he is fully dressed in tailored suit, hat, and matching accessories while sitting the crowded beach, sternly staring into the camera, appears to suggest this disapproval of the highly commercialized funland.[81] The only break in the tedium was provided by reunions with visitors from Newfoundland, some of whom were sent to Brooklyn on military maneuvers, and others who were able to plan vacation trips as a result of wartime prosperity. As his wife recalls, "Whenever he heard someone from Newfoundland was coming to New York, he'd write and say, 'Don't go to a hotel, they're expensive and lonely. Stay here.'"[82] Eventually their apartment became known among their neighbours as "Pollett's Hotel." The visitors joined Pollett in animated recollections of their homeland, and he relished the pastime, relegating to his wife the task of hosting his guests on daily sojourns into Manhattan. His niece Blanche Gilbert remembers that he did show some enthusiasm for the 1939-40 New York World's Fair, to which he escorted her,[83] although, as he recalled, what impressed him most about the event was the Maine's fishing exhibit. "Here was a dream!" he wrote, "I could stand on a rustic bridge and look into a real stream, and what could be in that stream but trout!"[84]

This experience apparently encouraged Pollett to seek out what to his mind were authentic Newfoundland pastimes. In the summer of 1941, for instance, he made his first attempt to fish for trout in nearby Westchester County. On the day of Pollett's first outing, however, no impressive fishing gear, special bait, or personal expertise brought him, or any one of perhaps one hundred other New Yorkers who lined the bank of a favoured stream, a successful catch.[85] As his son comments about the typical hordes of trouters, "The poor trout don't stand a chance!"[86] Pollett and his wife also began the practice of sharing the rental of a summer home at Wareham, Massachusetts, on Cape Cod, along with Caroline's sister Lil and her husband Marcel Fournier, who lived in Boston.[87] During these two week-long visits, Pollett's activities were similar to those he could have enjoyed at New Harbour: he spent his days fishing, clamming, and berrypicking. Although these vacations were restful and scenic, his wife recalls that Pollett would never agree with her that Wareham was in any sense "better" than New Harbour. Just as Worchester

County lacked the natural panorama he was used to--"the babbling brook with over-hanging crags and mossy banks... and all the other happy surroundings that are as much a part of real trouting as the rod and reel itself"[88] -- so Wareham lacked the friendly camaraderie he loved at New Harbour. Pollett's inability to travel to Newfoundland during the war years owing to a lack of accessible, speedy transportation was cause perhaps for a growing impatience with a well-heeled lifestyle that yet could not afford him the simplest of pleasures to be had on his native island.

A small business venture Pollett undertook in 1940-1 with his brother Jim, who lived in Buchans, a mining town in central Newfoundland, perhaps reflects his desire to create still further ties to home.[89] Pollett exported stylish clothing from New York to Buchans, these items ranging from suede coats for women, fashionable rainwear for men, and dainty outfits for children-- all of which were not readily available for purchase to the workers in Buchans. Pollett's motive in establishing this business is not known; for while immediate profit was not his aim, his efforts were beyond the realm of mere charitable gestures. Jim sold the clothing for the price which Pollett paid for it in New York, and Pollett simply used the money from purchases to buy more of the items in demand, shopping for them in his spare hours, and himself shouldering the costs of mailing. Eventually, however, he was persuaded by his wife to dispose of the business when it became too time consuming. Jim too was made uneasily aware of the mining company's disapproval of outside ventures undertaken in the company town. Pollett abandoned the business by 1942. If his own renewed prosperity led him to search for broader horizons, he nevertheless underestimated the difficulties of creating for himself new opportunities in Newfoundland.

V

The ambition which had most attracted Pollett to New York initially-- advancement in his profession-- was one that he realized fully by the mid-1940s. He was promoted to the position of foreman at AD Press, and moreover had gained a reputation among his fellow workers as a master at his craft. Pollett, as his son once observed, could disassemble and repair with little effort the complex linotype machine whenever his work appeared slightly less meticulous than he wished.[90]

His family perhaps had no reason to suspect he had developed this capability, for at home, in contrast, Pollett would never help with home repair even so far as driving a nail. "Ron would use a hammer and take his thumb off!" his wife recalls.[91] It was in the workplace that Pollett gave most of his energies as he approached middle age. As well, he joined the company's weekly bowling group, and he visited his co-workers at their seaside summer homes on Long Island. Despite his achievements, it was to simpler pleasures with the familiar group of workers to which he now turned.

"A Brief for Appellants" is the only known example of Pollett's writing during his initial twenty years in New York, and this was a comic prose sketch he wrote for and about his co-workers.[92] It described a series of absurd charges in an imagined legal case and named each of the company's employees as the litigants and defendants. In his spare hours, Pollett printed "A Brief for Appellants" on blue legal paper, folding it like an authentic brief, and gave a copy to each of the men. No copy is known to exist, although its attention to detail and its humour apparently were qualities that his fellow workers long remarked on. For one of them, a Mr. McNulty, the most memorable quality about "A Brief for Appellants" was that it was composed by so quiet a man. Pollett was well liked and respected but never demonstrative of the affection he felt toward his fellow workers. In the workplace, amidst the noisy machines and the busy composing room atmosphere where independent and rapid productions of precise work were required, Pollett pursued his tasks and interests apart from the other men.

While at home he pursued his active interest in Newfoundland-- keeping attuned with the Grand Falls Advertiser, maintaining his correspondence, and listening to radio programs.[93] But he did so for the most part alone, for his wife was busy tending both to Ethel Mae and to church affairs. So busy was she that she told him she did not desire the company of his frequent guests from Newfoundland. Pollett and his son's paths now seldom crossed. Young Ronald left for school before Pollett arose for the day. New courses training boys in wartime mechanical skills required him to remain at school until after Pollett left home for work on his regular evening shift. Occasional festive times drew the family together, and as can be surmised from a very

large collection of ornate greeting cards from Pollett to members of his family– for birthdays, Mother's Day, and other such special days– he was never one to forget such an occasion; but in daily life, Pollett's activities and interests and those of his family were on disparate paths.

In the spring of 1945 Pollett learned that his father had suffered a serious heart attack, and the news prompted a hasty journey to New Harbour.[94] Despite the wartime urgencies which made all travel difficult, he pressed the matter with authorities and obtained speedy passage on a modern seaplane from New York to Botwood, near Grand Falls, arriving at New Harbour with a plan to bring his eighty-year-old father back to New York. Perhaps he envisioned days spent chatting and joking with his father, providing Jim with the comforts of his home and valuing this addition to his family. He learned, however, that Jim had no desire to see the city. Pollett now purchased an expensive cabinet radio for his father to help make his convalescence more comfortable. Jim thoroughly enjoyed the gift, but he always kept the volume hardly audible, Pollett being unable to convince his frugal father that monthly electricity charges would not increase if he raised the volume. Pollett stayed in New Harbour only long enough to ensure that Jim was able to manage his chores independently. The speed with which Jim recuperated enabled Pollett to make a brief visit to Grand Falls and see his friends the Blackmores before departing for home, but again he felt it was too short a trip. It would seem, given the exigencies of his career and family responsibilities, that only in New York could he nurture his ties to his homeland. Subsequently, both his affinity for his homeland and his ideals of a simpler, far richer experience of daily life on the island were to intensify. For the time being, however, the image of a dedicated worker and provider was one that Pollett clung to. His conception of himself as an achiever and as a man of substance indeed was one Pollett had embraced for many years, and it remained a measuring glass to indicate the place he had carved out for himself in America and the world he had left behind.

IV

LOOKING HOMEWARD: THE WRITING OF THE OCEAN AT MY DOOR, 1945-55

Ron Pollett's life between 1945 and 1955 was characterized by disease and a longing for a return to his homeland. In mid-1945 he became seriously ill with heart disease, and there followed a ten-year struggle against chronic pain, financial pressures, and confinement to hospitals and home. Pollett took up the avocation of writing in 1946, his pieces focussing for the most part on aspects of his outport inheritance. He rapidly won popular acclaim among the readership of the Atlantic Guardian, a new monthly magazine which was devoted to the interests of Newfoundlanders at home and abroad; and his early literary success led him to plan a second career as an author. A visit to Newfoundland in the summer of 1947 provided new insights and materials for his imagination and provoked a desire to retire there eventually. With this goal before him, he kept himself informed of changes occurring on the island as a result of Confederation with Canada in March, 1949. But on observing these changes during a summer visit to New Harbour in 1951, Pollett realized that he could no longer dream of returning to the pleasures of his boyhood, and that the familiar outport way of life he had loved was vanishing. As his health worsened considerably in the early 1950s, he nevertheless tried, both in his writings and his personal plans, to recapture the traditional way of life he had abandoned some forty years before.

1

This ten-year period of physical struggle, defeating Pollett's ambitions, was unmatched by any other setback he had so far experienced. In mid-1945 Pollett began to suffer from symptoms of heart disease: shortness of breath, stabbing chest pain, and dizziness;[1] and as a result, henceforth even the most ordinary routines would lead him to perceive the pace and demands of New York life as formidable obstacles. Climbing the fifty-eight steps at the 95th Street Subway station upon his return from work, for example, became an effort he would compare to scaling the cliffs at Pouch Cove.[2] Although he was only forty-five years old, Pollett began to associate his

chronic illness with aging, and later wrote, "While you're young and can bounce around like a rubber ball, everything is fine and dandy; it's afterwards, when you want to lie around like a dead fish, that the stairways and work and everything else get to be tough... for the New Yorker who must still believe he's as [fit] as ever."[3] It will be noted that he referred to himself now as a New Yorker, although clearly the tag denoted none of the ideals of sophistication and achievement to which he had aspired some twenty years before.

Pollett was never made fully aware of the terminal nature of his disease, called "acute mijocardial infarction." This condition was to be the cause of numerous major heart attacks, the first of which he suffered by the autumn of 1945. At this time, his chronic pain was accompanied by the strain of worrying over loss of salary and accumulating medical bills during his seven weeks of confinement at Brooklyn Hospital. And this experience, too, was exacerbated by a much longer period of enforced convalescence at his home, where an oxygen tank became a fixture of his bedroom, and uneventful days passed tediously. For an active man used to a rigorous daily work routine, succumbing to long periods of confinement would always be a source of frustration. In these circumstances, Pollett had to content himself with reading a great deal and enjoying as well as he could the pleasures of family life. As his wife recalls, their bedroom and parlour were "simply filled with library books and magazines and newspapers;"[4] and he and Caroline now resumed the practice they had begun as newlyweds of reading together occasionally, Pollett often reading aloud. When his daughter Ethel Mae brought home a stray black dog, Blackie, he gave her permission to keep it, and the pet became a welcome addition to the household, for the dog would sit with Pollett as he listened to his radio, or delved into his small collection of books-- including the works of Shakespeare and a tattered copy of E. Everett-Green's Squib and his Friends, which as a boy he received as a prize. Caroline recalls that he now would often speak fondly of Downey, his own work dog to whom he had been devoted in his youth. He developed an anecdotal tendency in much of his conversation. His wife and daughter remember his daily practice of fixing lunch for his daughter, while he told her of incidents and customs from his own boyhood.[5] Pollett was a doting father, his niece, Blanche Gilbert, recalls from a visit she paid to the family at the time.[6]

She also remembers an aquarium Pollett bought for his daughter, and his daily practice of giving her small sums of money for a new fish. Perhaps he began to contrast some of these daily, limited routines with the freedom and pleasure he knew in his youth. For although he now had as much time as he had had as a boy to enjoy the out-of-doors, he was unable to walk the ten city blocks to rest among the trees by New York Harbor, and even the simplest of his new domestic activities left him exhausted.

Early in 1946, however, when one of his friends gave him a present of Thomas Wolfe's autobiographical novel, Look Homeward Angel, Pollett at once found temporary release, it would seem, from the boredom of confinement.[7] In this novel Wolfe, born in the same year as Pollett, wrote on such subjects as a boy's enthusiasm for learning despite an education at a backwoods school, and the excitement youths had felt as they imagined the glamorous life of a soldier fighting in the Great War. These descriptions of boyhood were comparable to aspects of Pollett's own life experiences— the ordinary, nevertheless, was rendered in Wolfe's prose lyrically and poignantly. This first introduction to Wolfe led Pollett immediately to acquire all of Wolfe's works. In these, too, he possibly recognized artful renderings of events that intimately reflected his own experiences and concerns. In Of Time and the River, Wolfe provided a highly detailed evocation of a cycle beginning with man's need to break home ties, to his ambitious experience in foreign cities, and finally, to his desire to return home.[8] The enthusiasm with which Pollett read, often re-read, and spoke of these books suggests the impact of Wolfe's works upon his experiences and sentiments. Since boyhood Pollett had returned again and again to the works of Shakespeare for leisure reading but in Wolfe's version of "the seven stages of man" in You Can't Go Home Again, he possibly discovered a review of the passages from youth to aging that now spoke directly to him. Wolfe writes on the aging city man: "If he is lucky, he saves money;"but despite having it, "his weary eyes look upon the scenery of strange lands for which in youth his heart was panting. Then the slow death, prolonged by costly doctors."[9] His first experiences of reading Wolfe possibly encouraged Pollett to develop an idea that he, too, had a story worth telling.

When Pollett was able to return to work in 1946, he had the opportunity to typeset a

manuscript called The Road to Wimbledon, to be published by Charles Scribner and Sons that year, and this book too apparently provoked vivid memories of his own early experience. The book was an autobiography by Alice Marble, a former Wimbledon tennis champion, which began with a description of her childhood in the Sierra Mountains of Nevada– an area which, though distant from Newfoundland, was in fact similar in some ways to the outport Pollett had known as a boy.[10] Marble's portrait of traditional life in an isolated setting was one Pollett easily could identify with: her father had been a "high-climber" in the lumber industry, his a fisherman-farmer and woodsman; and her family, like Pollett's own, participated in a daily, rigorous work routine. She marvelled, nevertheless, at the comforts and rewards obtained in ordinary, rural family life, this despite her worldly experience. Pollett evidently read the rest of her story with great interest, although Marble, it can be assumed, was not known to him beforehand, for he was not a fan of professional tennis or of any other sport, even baseball.[11] But indeed she wrote very little about the actual game, instead depicting her defeats and achievements, both professional and personal, as universal human events. She also evoked an intimacy that engaged the reader in her story by peppering her book with passages such as: "I know that everyone is endowed with qualities of the champion, and can succeed in spite of handicaps in the most important game of all – the game of life."[12] According to his wife and son, Pollett wrote Marble a long letter conveying his appreciation of her work. She replied by sending him one of the first printed copies of her book, inscribed on the flyleaf, "For Ronald Pollett, 'My First Fan,' With best wishes and sincere thanks, Alice Marble,1946."[13] Thus as Pollett's latent ambitions to become a chronicler of his own life and times were now ripening, perhaps as a result of illness and physical confinement, he was spurred on by the example of Wolfe, Marble, and possibly other writers, who had made literature out of domestic experience.

II

Sometime in the spring of 1946, Pollett became aware of the creation of a new national magazine, the Atlantic Guardian, and saw in this journal, subtitled "The Magazine of Newfound-

land," the opportunity to express his own literary impulses.[14] The Atlantic Guardian was published in Montreal by three expatriate Newfoundlanders: Ewart Young, Brian Cahill, and Arthur R. Scammell. Its first issue had appeared in January, 1945; and in it a characteristic format was established. Each month it featured autobiographical sketches, fiction, and poetry confined to an island setting, graphic articles detailing historic events and future developments in Newfoundland, pictorial stories of island towns, and other items that would help achieve the editors' goal, "To Make Newfoundland Better Known to Newfoundlanders at Home and Abroad." In addition, each month advertisements appeared welcoming the submissions of native-born novices. Nevertheless, by June, 1945, owing to a deluge of unsolicited manuscripts of dubious literary quality, Brian Cahill had been forced to publish these guidelines to potential contributors: not only should submissions be brief and concise, but, he added, "Don't write about 'Sunset on Fortune Bay,' or 'Boyhood Memories of a Land I Love.' Believe us...it's been done."[15] Pollett's early literary attempts would conform to these directives but eventually his approach to Newfoundland topics also would establish his role among the magazine's contributors as a spokesman for the émigré Newfoundlander. Brian Cahill recalls that by the late spring of 1946, "We received a very nice, diffident letter from Ron from his home in [Brooklyn]. He said he was a native Newfoundlander who had come across the Atlantic Guardian and liked it and its role as a two-way window for Newfoundland. He enclosed some quite good bits of writing about life in the outports and we were delighted to publish them."[16]

Pollett's first two pieces of writing printed in the magazine were "The Outport Millionaire," in July, 1946, and "A Born Trouter," in August, 1946. In each, he contrasted the life of a harried, frustrated exile in New York with the simpler, more satisfying life of the outport Newfoundlander. The folly of chasing a dream in some far-off land when all the comforts of a full life were to be had on the island was now a prominent idea in Pollett's thought. His approach to the Newfoundland experience was also one perfectly in keeping with the goals of the magazine's managing editor and publisher, Ewart Young. Young was then part of a growing movement advocating Confederation with Canada.[17] The Atlantic Guardian was in part a vehicle for per-

suading Newfoundlanders to adopt a new political philosophy-- namely, one recognizing that an island heritage was both unique and valuable, and thus Newfoundland could contribute to, and develop as an integral unit within, the larger country of Canada. The sentiments of an aging exile like Pollett were seen as enhancing these views, and as a result, both of his first two vignettes were listed as "special features." As co-editor Cahill remembers of Pollett's early work, "the gentle, humorous--if perhaps idealistic--accounts of life in the outport submitted by Ron Pollett were just what Atlantic Guardian was looking for at the time. The fact that they were written by a Newfoundlander living abroad was a plus in that we were...trying to put across the idea that Newfoundlanders did not have to isolate themselves from the rest of North America in order to remain 'true' Newfoundlanders."[18] Thereafter, almost all of Pollett's submissions were given prominent attention, either by their heading an issue's table of contents, or by the use of "teasers" on an issue's cover, a typical example being, "Inside: A new story by Ron Pollett". These techniques alerted the magazine's audience to the new author's work, and, in the editors' view, his timely concerns.

Popular acclaim from the magazine's wide and notably large readership was won almost immediately. Pollett's uncomplicated, anecdotal style and benign view of his outport heritage obviously struck a familiar chord. The glowing reception to his work in Newfoundland was expressed by one fan who, on the basis of Pollett's first two publications, commented that he would rather read Pollett than Shakespeare.[19] When a German-speaking tourist to the island asked for and received permission to translate and publish "The Outport Millionaire" in a Swiss magazine, Pollett's dream of creating a new future for himself as a writer was enhanced.[20] Almost overnight, in fact, he could begin describing himself as a professional author, since he earned from $25 to $45 per item.[21] Yet this most ordinary and expected financial transaction between author and publisher nevertheless was rather remarkable. Many former contributors have noted that the fledgling magazine "was run on a shoestring" budget until poor financial management forced it to merge with the Atlantic Advocate in December, 1957; and Brian Cahill has said, "Some 'contributors' were just that -- unpaid!"[22] Arthur R. Scammell, whose work had appeared regularly in the

magazine since its inception, has corroborated this remark, noting that he received no payment whatsoever either for his submissions or for his editorial assistance; and Michael F. Harrington, a professional journalist and poet, has said that, though he was paid a relatively meager sum (perhaps $15) for each of his own submissions, on at least one occasion, owing to the magazine's poor financial straits, payment was long deferred and in fact never materialized.[23] Pollett, however, was probably unaware of these circumstances. He was flattered by his early success, welcomed this new source of revenue, and was anxious to earn more.

Writing became more than a hobby for Pollett; it began to shape the nature of his daily routine.[24] He now wrote for a minimum of four hours per day before going to work and during weekends. Hearing the incessant tapping of typewriter keys from behind his closed bedroom door, is perhaps the most vivid of his family's memories of Pollett at this time. Like many of his previous ventures and interests in Newfoundland, he obviously devoted himself to this new one with great enthusiasm. He was not restricted by deadlines, however, and was aware of only one demand by the magazine's editor--namely, to produce more works "with a salt-water tang to them."[25] Achieving this quality was in fact quite formidable. Working alone in his bedroom, composing on a manual typewriter set upon his wife's dressing table, he occasionally peered out the window not at the open sea but at a brick apartment house, The Majestic, across the street from his own. But despite this inauspicious setting, Pollett apparently achieved the "salt-water" quality his editor required in his next three sketches: "Let's Look at the Squid," published in September, 1946; "The Cat with the Yaller Face," in November, 1946; and "Where Christmas is Christmas," in December, 1946. In these he drew heavily upon boyhood memories of outport life. His confidence grew as each piece he submitted was accepted without excisions or other editorial interference. Furthermore, he was aware that scores of fan letters were received regularly by the magazine, and so knew that his talent was quite marketable. Young had found a writer who could sell.

Pollett's new commitment to writing brought forth altogether positive results. The Ocean at My Door and Other Newfoundland Outport Stories, was his first published collection, and appeared in mid-1947. In this work, published by Ewart Young's fledgling Montreal enterprise,

Guardian Associates Ltd., were reprinted the five pieces Pollett had published in the Atlantic Guardian during 1946, along with illustrations; a sixth item, the autobiographical essay entitled "The Ocean at My Door;" and a brief biographical sketch of the author. In sum, this small volume represented the literary achievements of the author to date, and foretold the direction of his literary efforts in the future. In his forward to "The Ocean at My Door" written in April, 1947, Pollett explained his intention-- to describe the traditional Newfoundland outport "as seen through the eyes of a boy."[26] He further indicated that he saw this particular essay as the first chapter of a much larger work that would provide a detailed "record of the comings and goings, the ins and outs, and ups and downs of family life in the outport village;" adding that "The subject material for a readable book [using this setting] is limitless."[27] Pollett thus was preparing to fulfill an intention dating back at least to 1924, though the deliberate use of a boy's perspective represented a change from his original conception. Co-editor Brian Cahill's unreserved enthusiasm for those of his writings, particularly his detailed story "The Cat with the Yaller Face," narrated by an outport boy, no doubt reinforced Pollett's decision to use this same narrative point of view exclusively. In a published review of The Ocean at My Door and Other Newfoundland Outport Stories, Cahill wrote that Pollett "manages with humor and unobtrusive sentiment, to convey.... the unique quality which 'outport' life, at its best, has to offer in early youth and adolescence."[28] He added, "If he gives one side of the story only, however, he gives that side superbly. The work of the professional and amateur folklorist is too often pedantic and almost inevitably dull. Mr. Pollett's work suffers from neither of these handicaps."[29] His first published collection reflected his editor's enthusiastic promotion of local literature;[30] and through his active correspondence with Young, Pollett surely was encouraged to embark on his second project and was assured that he had a ready market both in the Atlantic Guardian and in its parent firm, Guardian Associates Limited. All signs pointed to a bright future.

In the spring of 1947, however, Pollett suffered a second heart attack, and herein began a pattern that was to characterize most of his life as an author in middle-age. Bursts of writing were punctuated by long periods of silence. Enforced convalescence frustrated his new plans for a

literary career. Nevertheless, his illness had caused his Newfoundland-born friends to draw closer to him, and in nurturing a renewed relationship with the local community, Pollett also developed ideas for writing. Card parties resumed in his apartment, and on these and other occasions he would question his friends closely about their own experiences in the outports. Abe Snow recalls Pollett's keen interest in such matters as how Christmas, New Year's, and other holidays were celebrated at his boyhood home in Clarke's Beach, Conception Bay.[31] This eager interest in the island obviously exceeded the casual and occasional interest displayed by his family and friends. The topic of Newfoundland was, according to Snow, "a real mania with him."[32] Indeed, Pollett once described this avid attachment of his to Newfoundland as "summer madness," a seasonal "deep-down yearning for the homeland in summer."[33] Whereas in winter "the happy pictures of the homeland" would fade, and city conveniences could be thoroughly enjoyed, for then one could lounge "with warm feet in soft chairs--no firewood to chop, no water to fetch from the well, and no cows mooing for hay"-- in spring, Pollett said, "the roots we left imbedded in the home soil begin to breathe again."[34] "Summer madness" was, simply, "the going home complaint."[35] His urge to return home no doubt was now spurred by his desire to refresh his memory with materials for his intended book. But he was wary of travelling alone in his weakened condition, and could not persuade his wife to accompany him to the island, particularly since he wanted to enjoy an extended, leisurely stay.

Perforce he merely read. Still essentially a novice, he perhaps was now influenced somewhat by yet another literary model along with Wolfe and Marble-- Edmund Wilson, a noted journalist and critic, whose work of fiction, Memoirs of Hecate County, recently had appeared. Memoirs, seen by certain critics as a rather unwieldy novel,[36] is in fact a collection of six distinct stories, their continuity deriving from Wilson's use in each of the same, quite inscrutable main character who is the narrator, and of a central location, Hecate County, a suburban summer resort near New York City. During subsequent months and indeed later years, Pollett would adopt some of Wilson's techniques. He also would come to share somewhat in his own writings the concern of the narrator of Memoirs: the concern to chronicle the often shallow, materialistic values of many

characters he meets both in the country and in the city. Pollett's immediate reaction to Wilson's work, however, was muted, as his son recalls; Memoirs was after all being suppressed as obscene soon after its publication, though in fact only a few of its passages could be cited in justification of the banning.[37] But perhaps merely reading of a summer resort whetted still further Pollett desire to return home, there to observe a whole range of traditional activities he remembered in a village far simpler than Wilson's. Thus when Pollett was able to persuade his son to accompany him on a summer trip to New Harbour during July and August, 1947, he embarked on the journey with great enthusiasm.

III

The many comforts of improved travel he and his son now enjoyed may have caused Pollett to envision the island's eventually becoming a "tourists' mecca,"[38] an idea perhaps encouraging him to look ahead to many more journeys even before the one in 1947 had begun. The pair travelled on Royal Dutch Airlines (KLM) from New York to Gander, then obtained first-class railway passage on "The Newfie Bullet." A mere glimpse from the train window would have assured Pollett that the beauties of the island remained unspoiled. Once in his native village, he fully expected to find the traditional, simple style of life he remembered to have remained unaltered, and materials in his first article written during his stay, "The Manly Sport of Handlining," provide every indication that he did find this to be so. In it he describes his first night and morning in the village: hardly had he taken off his hat before his father began speaking of the next morning's fishing outing.[39] Pollett relished the opportunity of fishing with his father, and found little changed in Jim's practices, such as preparing the night before by forecasting the weather and storing necessities in the punt, and then, despite some seventy years of repetitious experience, still eagerly looking forward to fishing at familiar grounds, and routinely cooking a dinner of fresh cod aboard the boat. Pollett's re-experiencing of these timeless pleasures obviously spurred his enthusiasm to see everything with a fresh eye; and indeed, in "The Manly Sport of Handlining," he attempts to catalog every maneuver on the boat, even how his father gutted and cleaned a

fish. Though he adds somewhat sheepishly, "Leave it to me to note such trifles!"[40] he wanted to recapture the ordinary and mundane accurately and vividly. He apparently also spent much time questioning his father about events and characters he now only vaguely recalled, such as one incident concerning two men who had let their new boat burn at sea as they wondered where they could find water for dousing the flames. So remarkably foolish had the men appeared to the people of New Harbour that a song entitled "Nicholas Tobin" had been composed to commemorate the event, and it was one Pollett as a youth had known well.[41] Other local figures such as Jake Jarvis, the man who could drink tea from the bib of a boiling tea kettle, were also discussed with his father,[42] and again suggest Pollett's wish to reacquaint himself with the lore of his boyhood.

Pollett's son and many villagers corroborate this impression of Pollett as a folklorist. His son says of Pollett's activity during this trip, "My father was like a sponge, just soaking up the [outport] atmosphere for his stories. He was always going off to visit someone, he really liked talking to the old men."[43] Clarence Cranford and Ralph Higdon recall Pollett's keen enjoyment of meeting with local fishermen at New Harbour Bridge, noting that he "was always one for a yarn," and that, like his father Jim, he "could make a joke about anything at all."[44] But perhaps his son's most vivid memory is of his father's relaxed posture as he leaned over New Harbour Bridge in the evenings, where he often went after supper to fish for trout and eels, and a benign expression on his face as he looked about, one suggesting that he was musing, "Gee, it's good to be here."[45] Taking part in these simple pastimes of chatting and fishing represented a welcome relief from city living and caused Pollett to think of his holiday diversions as brief but potent "tonics."[46] His dwelling on these differences in the qualities of rural and urban life is most apparent in several vignettes which formed part of a subsequent article entitled "Vignettes of the Village." In one of these, Pollett reflects on the traditional virtues of endurance and frugality as he tells of a villager who once was unable to chop his own woodsupply, being so crippled by arthritis that he "couldn't pick up a $1000 banknote from the floor."[47] By the time Pollett observed him stacking firewood in the summer of 1947 the man's health had been restored, and the author explains why. The villager had switched to coal, but being afraid it might lose some "burning power" if left out

in the snow, ingeniously contrived ways to haul it manually into his shed; and, in doing so, "cured" himself of his malady.[48] This was one experience that convinced Pollett there was a great deal to be observed in the quality of traditional village life worthy of being recorded in literature.

Widespread changes occurring in the village reinforced this conviction. For the traditional world to which he clung in his memory and sought out among the elderly villagers had not after all remained altogether static. A salaried mode of life, available to many Newfoundlanders for the first time in the war years, had given many local people opportunities to start businesses, to travel, and to obtain previously unheard of luxuries.[49] Tastes for American culture had developed. At Cranford's Hotel, where owing to his heart condition he arranged to take a special diet of plain fare, and at small local stores, jukeboxes had been installed, their magazines comprised almost exclusively of imported country music records. It was to these establishments Pollett would go to escape from the din and fumes of the equally recent occurrence of heavy local traffic, only to be met, he said, by "a tangle of raucous tintinbulations that jolted my pet fly sipping soda drops off the wood table."[51] The tone and sentiments of an alienated local analyst would come to dominate many of Pollett's subsequent publications based on his experiences in 1947; and in one of these he wrote, "Hearing all that western wow was like meeting the Lone Ranger chewing hard tack in the jigging hole."[52] Other changes, particularly among the younger generation, seem to have been just as incongruous and even more disquieting. Not without some disdain did Pollett explain that the rust on the clothes of local "young bloods" resulted from their new preoccupation with cars and trucks rather than from labouring with cod-trap anchors, and the callouses on their hands were from monkey wrenches rather than from splitting knives.[53] Being physically unable to participate actively in daily chores or even in the variety of pleasureable pastimes he remembered, he observed new activities among the young very critically, and consistently ignored the drudgery of performing traditional daily tasks from which he himself once had longed to escape. The marked changes Pollett perceived in what he termed "the new village"[54] heightened his sense of nostalgia. Indeed in many of his subsequent writings, remembered tasks and skills would be presented as invaluable traditions and as virtues; but he was not reticent in voicing his criticism to the youths

of New Harbour at the time of his visit. Of Pollett's conversations and attitudes that summer, one of his nephews, Ted Thorne, recalls, "He lived in the past."[55]

But the issues of change and progress were in no way limited to Pollett's small village. In the summer of 1947, propaganda broadcast over the airwaves and in pamphlet literature reached a national audience in preparation for the country's first referendum on Confederation on June 3, 1948.[56] Popular views on the topic were voiced in every home and store. Some men, like Pollett's father Jim, were adamantly opposed to Confederation, fearing its impact on the traditional Newfoundland lifestyle; and Pollett's son recalls the speed with which the literature promoting this choice was relegated to the woodstove and outhouse his grandfather owned.[57] Pollett himself could not be altogether critical, however, for it was becoming widely known that among the benefits accruing to Newfoundlanders from Confederation was Canada's social security program. The chance for his eighty-three-year old father to be relieved of financial worries and uncertainties in his last years was one which Pollett welcomed. He looked ahead, thinking how his own recurring illness might bring to an end his longstanding practice of sending monthly sums to his father. In addition, during this summer he no doubt learned of the will his father had drawn up in June, 1947, in which Jim bequeathed to him his house, lands, and other possessions.[58] Pollett saw in this the possibility of retiring to New Harbour. Much of his time would be spent hereafter envisioning the opportunity of beginning life afresh at some later date in the familiar village where, in part, "the wonderful world of the Newfoundland outport" he recalled from his youth still endured.

iv

As a result of this trip in 1947, Pollett's literary concerns and to some extent his personal plans became quite closely aligned with contemporary political issues in Newfoundland. Evidence suggests that immediately upon his return to Brooklyn he wrote a number of sensitive but critical articles, evoking his sentiments as an ex-outporter returning to his native village only to find jukeboxes drowning the birdsong, and well-used highways coating the gardens with dust.[59] In

"The Village Goes to Town," "On Going Home Again," and "Vignettes of the Village," Pollett was now developing a different dimension in his writing from the simple urban/rural contrast that had characterized his early work. Instead he now pondered the discrepancies between the traditional outport lifestyle and the commercialized contemporary village life. Pollett's negative assessments of the Newfoundland village in cultural transition, however, obviously were not well-received by his editor.[60] Young, an ardent supporter of the Confederation movement, no doubt perceived Pollett's new work as too blatantly anti-Confederate, or at least anti-development. The Atlantic Guardian found it difficult to maintain a non-partisan approach as the Confederation era dawned, and attitudes voiced in published editorials and articles were aimed at promoting Confederation, hand in hand with change and development. Thus, except for Pollett's detailed article, "The Manly Sport of Handlining," published in September, 1947, in which Pollett --being out at sea and away from the changing village-- presented a favourable view of outport life, no other article based on this trip was published until March, 1949. By the fall of 1947 he had either received his very first notice of rejection of his other material, or else had been given by Young some form of excuse for not seeing these other articles in print. This situation, lasting for a seventeen-month interval between publications, might have induced Pollett to submit his work to the Saturday Evening Post at this time. Here too his material was rejected, Pollett's son recalling that the event "piqued my father a little bit."[61] By 1948, Pollett thus would have been alerted both to the highly specific nature and narrow appeal of his Newfoundland material and to the fact that his prospects of creating a new future as a writer were uncertain.

His health, too, gave increasing grounds for concern. Returning to his work refreshed and invigorated after his trip, his family and friends recall that he spoke frequently of retiring to Newfoundland, Abe Snow noting however that "he never said exactly what he'd do there, he was too busy working."[62] But by 1948 another heart attack interfered with Pollett's routine, this one perhaps the most severe he had yet experienced. He was forced to leave his demanding work at AD Press permanently, thus losing the professional prestige accruing to legal printers. Financial circumstances at once prompted him to give up his habit of racetrack gambling, though evidence

suggests that he never completely lost his long-nurtured passion for it. Pollett's daughter recalls heated arguments which took place regularly between herself and her father when he simply changed the radio channel from her favourite programs to news of the daily racing results.[63] This was one circumstance which caused her to view Pollett as a stern father, a man aloof from family life, keeping much to himself. Perhaps it was his interest in horse-racing that led him, when he was able to return to work, to seek employment at Armstrong Publications, printers of The Green Sheet, a standard racetrack betting form.[64] He soon lost interest in this work, however, and was to change jobs frequently in the next several years. His life now would appear to have been at something of a standstill, for he was a master of the linotype trade who could not obtain work suitable to his skills; he was a gambler who did not gamble; and he was a writer who was neither writing nor publishing.

Despite these setbacks, Pollett maintained a strong interest in Newfoundland, and continued to think that he could make a contribution to the island's literature. In a letter to his editors published in the Atlantic Guardian in October, 1948, he commented on a number of short stories printed in the magazine that year that had made use of Hollywood-styled crime story formulas, while simply inserting Newfoundland settings and occasional native dialectical phrases. He assessed such stories as "The Fugitive" (August,1948) and "The Crucifix" (September,1948), as "too, too lugubrious and not Newfie at all."[65] Despite his awareness of the renewed interest in short fictional literature by native-born authors, Pollett said, "I am still hoping to see something in a short story that could be written only of Newfoundland...as only a Newfoundlander can interpret it."[66] In this same published letter of October, 1948, he suggested the small way in which he already had begun to realize that goal, and why he thought such contributions important; namely, to give a literature based on local traditions back to the people who lived them. By way of illustration, he described the reaction of one of his fans, a Mr. Mercer, who in the summer of 1947 undertook to haul a car in which Pollett and his son had been driving from a ditch near New Harbour. When Mercer learned who they were, he declined payment, saying, "I got so much fun reading 'The Cat with the Yaller Face,' I am well paid for this."[67] In 1948, though he had no

other literary outlet suited to his concerns, Pollett nevertheless seems to have been neither timid nor retiring in voicing his opinions about the development of a native literature; on the contrary, he maintained a good-natured attitude, and an enthusiastic willingness to be part of this development, however humble his contribution.

Pollett's sentiments about the new drift of the magazine appear to have affected Ewart Young minimally. The pair maintained some ties, mainly financial ones, for throughout 1948, Young published monthly advertisements for Pollett's first collection, The Ocean at My Door and Other Newfoundland Outport Stories, and evidence suggests sales were brisk. In addition, late in 1948, Young mailed him 100 copies of the book, and Pollett's son recalls that he helped his father sell 95 copies in one evening at a dance at Prospect Hall.[68] This success might have been effective in boosting Pollett's morale. The incident also might coincide with Pollett's writing of an unsigned article that later appeared in the Atlantic Guardian, describing a Newfoundland-style square dance at the hall in Brooklyn.[69] It compares closely with some of Pollett's later writings, particularly in voicing a somewhat critical assessment of the non-traditional style of dancing performed by the second generation of Newfoundlanders in attendance. A photograph of Dave Green, Pollett's former co-worker in the A.N.D. Company's Orders and Shipping department at Grand Falls, accompanied the article; and it might well be the case that Pollett sought out at least this one opportunity at the local dance to seek out materials he might be able to publish in the Atlantic Guardian. In addition, during the period, information for an article by Brian Cahill in the Atlantic Guardian was supplied by Pollett, who perhaps was too ill to organize and write the piece himself.[70] But there can be no doubt that the Atlantic Guardian had changed, and not much Pollett's liking. Brian Cahill, soon to leave his position as contributing editor, notes that the Atlantic Guardian, owing to Young's political bias, was moving increasingly away from its original purpose as a national magazine of general interest.[71] As one result, by 1949 a large number of firms had withdrawn their advertising. Perhaps as something of a response to this trend, in February, 1949, Young provided a five-year survey of the Atlantic Guardian's accomplishments, and some of these statistics, given the time and place, seem remarkable. Most

noteworthy were the circulation figures-- since January, 1945, it was reported, 250,000 copies had been printed "which have been read (allowing what our circulation manager tells us is a conservative estimate of four readers to each copy) by 1,000,000" readers.[72] It can thus be argued that the Atlantic Guardian, along with a number of newer local magazines (these, nevertheless, far less sophisticated, and often short-lived[73]), was now encouraging the development of a popular local reading public interested in local issues. But it was an audience Pollett could not reach through the Atlantic Guardian until the Confederation issue was settled.

Events in 1949 brought a change for the better in Pollett's prospects. In March, he was given the title "contributing editor" at the Atlantic Guardian. It was, for the most part, merely an honorary title, one which he held along with authors Arthur R. Scammell and Ted Meaney, but perhaps it aroused in Pollett a feeling that he now had the opportunity to exercise a decided influence in literary matters and editorial policies. Such was not the case; although in the March issue, the last issue before Confederation, he finally had an article published, "On Going Home Again." By way of introducing Pollett as a new contributing editor, and summarizing his earlier publications, Brian Cahill wrote, "He returns to Newfoundland frequently and his stories of life in the outports have an authenticity and a skill in presentation that has made them widely read in and outside the island."[74] In "On Going Home Again," however, this 'skill in presentation' is most difficult to appreciate. This fault lay not with Pollett, but rather, it would seem, with Ewart Young, who as editor may have decided deliberately on an oddly disjointed layout for the piece. Paragraphs in which Pollett criticized the recent commercialization and erosion of traditional lifeways were sandwiched among articles written by the nine premiers of Canadian provinces welcoming Newfoundland into Confederation, and various other pieces promoting the development of Newfoundland's resources and other potential innovations resulting from the political change. The effect of this choppiness was to minimize Pollett's role as something of a champion for an opposing point of view.

The key idea which was to concern Pollett in his non-fiction for most of his career nonetheless still can be gleaned from this particular article. He was now an advocate for gradual transi-

tion, and welcomed only innovations that could be adapted well to the traditional Newfoundland milieu. For this reason, Joseph R. Smallwood's platform for the future of the new province--"Develop or Perish!"[75] -- never engaged Pollett's full support. Nor, for that matter, did a rather belated attempt by Geoff Sterling in 1949 to sway an estimated 75,000 Brooklyn-Newfoundlanders toward the alternative idea of economic union with the United States.[76] In time, as Pollett perceived the growing impact of Smallwood's ideas upon the attitudes of Newfoundlanders, his nonfictional, descriptive writings would be characterized more and more strongly by sentimental adherence to traditional life and sarcasm toward the new, though in his autobiographical essays and in his fiction he would develop on another tack. At any rate, by June, 1949, the Confederation issue now settled, Young seemed ready to print everything Pollett wrote. In 1949-52 Pollett enjoyed his most productive years as a writer.

Pollett's new sketches and stories, among them "Epitaph for Downey"(June, 1949), "The Tongue that Never Told a Lie" (November,1949), and "The 'Dicky-Bird' Dish" (December,1949), evince qualities that were to distinguish many of his later writings. "Epitaph for Downey," one of the first new pieces published after the seventeen-month hiatus, does appear at first glance to be little more than an ordinary, sentimental account of a boy's loss of a beloved pet. Yet in it Pollett begins to create a vivid outport setting, mingling his extensive knowledge of a distinctive outport landscape with the native folkspeech that best describes it. He was at last evidently making use of some materials he had reacquainted himself with during 1947, and now did so not to criticize but to illuminate that other world. His ability to evoke the outport setting would soon be praised by one reader, who said of his works, "It has been a great joy to go back over one's boyhood with Ron Pollett, to smell once again the clean fragrance of birch billets and taste the sharp tang of marshberries."[77] Pollett's sentimentalism in this piece is, as well, redeemed by engaging in humorous editorializing. For instance, he describes how he and his work dog Downey tried to shun the many difficult tasks inherent in getting and hauling the family's wood supply, thereby bringing forth his father's timeworn admonishment: "Hard work never killed anybody;" and to this Pollett now appends, rather chummily, "which of course was not true then any more than

today."[78] But he continues the narrative by describing how, imitating his father's gruff voice, he as a young boy would use the same "saw" to his dog. This unsophisticated yet intimate humour was to prove very endearing to the local readership of the day. The timeless quality of an outport setting rich in beauties and lore was one he achieved again that year in "The Tongue that Never Told a Lie" and "The 'Dicky-Bird' Dish" by focussing on more aspects of his own boyhood. In steeping his imagination with the materials from his youth, Pollett was perhaps again becoming more attuned in 1949-50 to pursuing his long nurtured plan for a full-length book telling of the outport world "as seen through the eyes of a boy." Indeed in the March, 1949, issue of the Atlantic Guardian Brian Cahill wrote, from recent information received from Ewart Young, that Pollett planned soon to write such a book.[79] Whether or not such autobiographical sketches and short stories as he now was publishing were the seeds of it, the plan would bring forth potentially new developments both in Pollett's life and in his career.

v

Amidst the literary ups and downs he experienced since 1946, Pollett no doubt was made aware how closely his fortunes were linked both to the Atlantic Guardian and to its editor, Ewart Young. Sometime in 1950, an opportunity to forge even closer ties presented itself to Pollett. He received a promising offer of employment both as a printer and as a writer for Guardian Associates Limited, the parent company of Atlantic Guardian.[80] Ewart Young, managing director of the company, was in the process of moving its operations to St. John's from Montreal, and he travelled to New York partly to try and persuade Pollett to join his permanent staff. Young had recently received a loan of $50,000, and prospects for his new ventures seemed bright; as well, to facilitate Pollett's move Young had located a suitable apartment for the Pollett family in St. John's. These plans, together with the enthusiastic nature of Young's character for which he is well remembered, no doubt swelled Pollett's own hopes. Though he was not a man to plunge blindly into new undertakings, he now eagerly broke the news to his wife. He learned, however, that Caroline adamantly refused to accompany her husband to Newfoundland and to "tear up our

roots" in Brooklyn. "He was going!" she now maintains, "If not for me and the children, he would've gone back there then."[81] Perforce Pollett settled for an alternative. In 1950 he invested substantially in the Atlantic Guardian, a choice which suggested his confidence in a new Newfoundland venture.[82] He would continue to be involved with the intellectual and industrial future of his homeland --but, as before, from afar.

Perhaps as a result of Young's offer to reestablish himself on the island, by mid-1950 Pollett's writings began to show a new emphasis upon the benefits of Confederation. In his extended essay "There's No Place Like an Outport" (July, 1950), he emphasized such novelties as the convenience of a new system of highways (a major project of the new government), these making it possible for natives and tourists alike to enjoy the indelible, natural beauties and wonders of the island. Pollett wrote of "epicurean delights" and "pristine beauty" as one could guess a travel agent might, and indeed the Newfoundland tourism industry was one key emphasis of the new provincial government.[83] The uneasiness he had felt in 1947 toward aspects of the new money economy and local commercialization now were referred to as merely matters of personal taste; and in fact, in his short story "Rum in the Puddin'" (December, 1950), Pollett presented an uncharacteristic panegyric on the changing post-Confederation lifestyle. He emphasized its benefits, particularly for elderly Newfoundlanders: "Now, with their social security pensions," he wrote, "they were finished with scraping the pennies and were living like decent people should instead of just existing. The fact was they couldn't afford such luxury until a time a while back when they went to sleep Newfoundlanders and woke up Canadians."[84] Though he focussed upon mundane matters such as financial security and the peace of mind which Confederation brought specifically to elderly Newfoundlanders, in this story Pollett was able to achieve both humour and a fairly realistic portrait of hard-working elders receiving their just deserts. In recreating a family incident that had occurred in 1933,[85] the story became a depiction of new lifestyles on the island, which reflected his lingering desire to retire there and his positive vision of aging in that changing, though in many ways still timeless, world.

These new sentiments appear to have prompted Pollett to write a number of articles on the

contrasting ways of life among Newfoundlanders in New York, which were published between 1950 and 1951. He first of all actively set about researching aspects of the émigré experience, doing so through interviews, study of census data, and reading surveys about New York. Perhaps quite unintentionally at first, Pollett seized on a topic that as yet remained largely unrecorded in the annals of American social history. For he progressed from a short biographical article, "Captain William J. Connors" (January, 1950)– an account of one Newfoundland sea captain and Brooklyn dockyard official– to vivid accounts of the entire Brooklyn-Newfoundland community in articles such as "Summer Madness" (July, 1950) and "Memories of 'Didder Hill'" (February, 1951). The factual information provided, such as the large contribution made by Newfoundlanders in building the Empire State Building and the George Washington Bridge, focussed for the first time in print on the ethnic identification of the workers rather than, as usual, on the New York monuments themselves. Brooklyn neighborhoods where Newfoundlanders lived and places they congregrated were delineated, for the first time in print distinguishing the group from the neighboring Irish residents. As well, Pollett drew on the general sentiments and outlook of the Newfoundland émigré that at times could serve to distinguish them from the larger population of some eight million other city residents. In "Summer Madness," for example, he wrote this of Newfoundlanders sitting in Central Park in spring: "Where city-bred people...see only rowboats on the park lake we envision tall-sparred schooners, white sails spread... for the spring airing, mirrored in the harbour calm."[86] And a three-part series of articles entitled "Up in the Big City" provided the broad scope in which to emphasize in detail the demanding routine imposed by city life (everyday "shooting with both barrels until you are out of breath"[87]) as a clear antithesis to the outport idyll. Possibly as a result of writing these articles, the simpler pleasures he imagined of an island retreat again loomed as large as they had in 1933, when his physical condition was also weak and his finances unstable. In addition, his eager desire once again to return to his homeland was made keener by recent reports he received from local friends who had travelled to Newfoundland since Confederation, and who claimed that life there had changed "1000 per cent for the better."[88] Their sentiments, corroborated by many letters and journals Pollett read, provided the

incentive to plan a family trip to New Harbour in 1951.

Pollett embarked on this journey in August, 1951, as enthusiastically as he had on any before. Despite the superficial changes he was prepared to perceive in the post-Confederation outport, he nevertheless had great expectations of finding life in the outport idyllic in comparison to the exhausting tempo of life in the city. He was planning to impart "the wonderland of fun" of his own outport childhood to his ten-year-old daughter Ethel Mae, who "had never been off the city pavements."[89] Taking her fishing and berry-picking, and showing her how to skip stones at the landwash, could enable him to relive exactly the same pleasures of youth he had once known. She recalls nonetheless, very possibly because of his illness, that he spent relatively little time with her during their month-long stay.[90] Other limitations on his plans were equally disappointing. He had looked forward to lounging on the veranda of his boyhood home and sharing with his wife the pleasure of viewing the scenic panorama around the harbour, which he termed the "Newfoundland Riviera."[91] Certainly it remained beautiful, but in an unsettling new way: widespread and rapid economic changes had resulted in the erosion of the inshore fishery. "The beach has become as bare as before John Cabot," Pollett later wrote.[92] Though as early as 1947 he had written of the villagers that "the new generation and most of the old are occupied with other things, away from the shore,"[93] adaptation to the new lifestyle now seemed decisively complete. "I was living in the past: scarcely anyone...gets up that early anymore;" indeed "there are scores of villagers...who never dip a codhook all summer long!," Pollett wrote with unsuppressed amazement as he described his difficulty in locating someone to go fishing and angling with.[94] All of these experiences no doubt led him to the disquieting realization that he was now at home, and yet home was a strangely unfamiliar world.

There was one pleasing consolation that he could dwell on when he grew restless. Many residents of New Harbour now subscribed to the Atlantic Guardian and so knew of Pollett's publications. He was indeed seen as something of a local celebrity, both as a former villager and as a former islander, for news of his travelling to the island had been the subject of a broadcast on radio from St. John's, and Pollett himself, after his arrival, also gave talks on radio from the

magazine's offices in St. John's. Clearly he thought that his role as a native-born author and the attention he received elevated his prestige locally. He wrote, "And who knows-- you may even rate an 'ask' to join these private picnic excursions of the village elite! Here you can gorge on [a variety of delicacies] while sitting on the same roadside rock where you nibbled your tom cod and hardtack and sipped your switchel as a boy. Oh, a lot of these things can happen to you now."[95] Thus his involvement with writing could provide an escape from what he perceived as his lowly status as a fisherman's son. After some thirty-five years, this still mattered.

He now pursued his interests in writing by gathering materials for what eventually became a series of five articles based on this month-long trip. One nephew, Charles Thorne, recalls that Pollett "was always writing his stories,"[96] and it is apparent that the author deliberately set about interviewing local villagers about their changing lifestyles. He noted that "the old folks don't go over the hill to the poorhouse anymore. They go over a hill, all right, but it's down to the post office to collect a monthly pension cheque from the government;" then he visited local merchants to ask how the monies were spent or saved.[97] He learned from them that old and young customers alike demanded only the most modern merchandise from mainland catalogs. So too he interviewed, among others, women whose husbands now were employed in salaried positions at distant centres, and then described his findings. Much of his writing, in short, attempted to take the form of detached reportage, while in other parts of his articles he developed an equally noticeable tendency to preach about simpler times and traditional values. Of children's former pastimes, he wrote, "Maybe there are new things just as good to replace all that. But I failed to note any last summer. Here endeth the lesson."[98] Observing and writing themselves no longer seem to have been activities that enabled Pollett to escape from the contemporary world. For documenting in great detail the former rich and distinctive way of traditional life taxed the imagination; while describing the new led him to imagine, often ironically, the total demise of outport culture in the very near future. He wrote, "Grandpa sits around on his Old Age Security, his mouth watering for a meal of scrod as he snags a frozen fillet from the grocery store. And his grandchildren if they ever hear mention of rounder or leggie probably think it is some sort of bird."[99]

Pollett apparently returned from his holiday in New Harbour determined to achieve a new purpose in his writing. In late 1951 and 1952, he embarked on his most ambitious literary project, Peter the Grate: An Outport Character Study. This work was a sixty-odd page detailed account of a typical outport figure, one Pollett had himself earlier termed the "outport millionaire"--a grown man or, rather, "an overgrown boy" who lived all his days "with a gun in one hand and a trout pole in the other."[100] The character was not only an expert outdoorsman, but also, though illiterate, a superb storyteller and songmaker. "Peter" was in fact an agglomeration of personalities Pollett had known during his youth; and the figure's habits and traits were ones, so Pollett thought, that could not withstand the sweeping changes in the contemporary village. The death of Pollett's own father Jim in April, 1952, no doubt reinforced his desire to preserve on paper his people's distinctive traditional lifeways. Though writing of Peter as seen progressively through the eyes of a young boy, an adolescent, and briefly, an expatriated adult, Pollett was able to review outport life during a time span of some fifty years. "As any folklorist will recognize," he said in his introduction to the work, Peter "provides a most convenient peg on which to hang a mirror of the times."[101]

It was, as well, a highly imaginative work that attempted, in using a first person narrator-- ostensibly Pollett himself-- to relate in a traditional storytelling style a "true" story of Peter's life. In part, this particular narrative technique might account for the immediate success in sales of the completed book, especially in the Trinity Bay region. In New Harbour, however, the reception was hostile.[102] Opinion in the community opposed Pollett's interpretation of outport life and of Peter, and the book was thought little short of scandalous. Some readers were outraged that Pollett, as a former villager, could publish a work whose artistry was based on esoteric village gossip about an actual townsman. In retrospect, it is perhaps revealing that Peter, the central figure of the book, has been identified by townsmen as distinctly one particular individual, but at least three separate names have been identified to support this claim. Nonetheless, at least a few villagers took, and some still do take, considerable pains to ensure that the book should remain concealed from a former community member, who is ostensibly the daughter of the long deceased

"Peter the Grate."

Whether Pollett was made aware of the local furor he had created is not known. If he was, it evidently did not thwart his ambitions. Possibly his long concentration on Peter, who "never punched a timeclock in his life" and "always mixed in where there was company and fun,"[103] reinforced Pollett's own plan to retire to New Harbour. As his wife recalls, having received his father's legacy, now "he wanted to build his own house there," despite her arguments that there was nothing for them to do in the village.[104] She worried, too, about his rapidly declining health, this in view of the limited medical services available in the outports. For by 1952 Pollett was not able to work steadily as a printer, and in the next few years he earned a meagre disability pension of about $100 per month.[105] Nevertheless, despite chronic illness, his literary output had been rather extensive; and evidently he thought that with this source of revenue added to his pension and savings, he could return to live in the village and partake of the simplicity and humble values still obtainable in New Harbour. Possibly he hoped to savour what he thought was yet left of the old lifestyle-- fishing, the natural surroundings, the camaraderie at the bridge.

Such an illlusion served him well as his fortunes and health declined considerably in the early 1950s. It was a rude shock to receive a telegram from his editor and publisher Ewart Young, by the summer of 1952, urging him to send money in order to keep Guardian Associates afloat.[106] The bankruptcy of the firm by November, 1952, was a blow to Pollett, for he lost an investment of more than a few thousand dollars. Only now, as his wife recalls, would Pollett agree with her that he had been wise not to become entangled more intimately with the venture.[107] Yet the failure of the business caused the Atlantic Guardian to remain out of print from November, 1952, to April, 1953, removing his usual outlet as a writer. However, hospital stays were now becoming more frequent and difficult, for he often could not rest there or at home until he received an injection of morphine; and thus it is doubtful that Pollett was now willing or able to seek out other literary outlets or to experiment with other subject material. All communication was difficult, although his son recalls Pollett's adamant refusal of his family's offer of a television set, giving as his reason, "You can't talk to the people" while a television set was playing.[108]

His writing had become one of the few sources of personal and intimate communication left to him, and Newfoundland life his major topic in conversation and in literature. His friend Abe Snow indeed recalls how difficult it was to visit Pollett, for even on the day before his death, he "still believed everything would turn out fine. He was so optimistic it hurt to see him, and hear him talk about going back to Newfoundland when he got better."[109]

One event late in 1954 no doubt further spurred him on to visualize himself in those new circumstances. In a ten-year review of the Atlantic Guardian's achievements, Pollett was selected, on the basis of fanmail, the magazine's "Favourite Storyteller," and, as well, his story "Rum in the Puddin'" was voted the readers' favourite work.[110] This was the story in which Pollett had best conveyed his positive sentiments on aging and cultural change in the outport, and perhaps as a result of earning such praise, he attempted to resume publishing and to plan for the future. He worked only intermittently, for he had suffered several massive heart attacks by 1955; in mid-June, 1955, however, his plans for writing were extensive. In an appendix to a letter to his editor Ewart Young, Pollett sent summaries of more than a dozen articles and stories he intended to write. Beginning his appendix with the heading "Suggested Subject Material That Might Help AG [i.e. Atlantic Guardian] Come to Life," Pollett enthusiastically went on to describe the new kinds of material he was "bursting" to deal with.[111] Despite his enfeebled condition, his outlook remained, as Walter Blackmore recalls, "keen and full of ideas."[112]

Pollett died on September 9,1955, at his Brooklyn home. According to the accounts of his family and friends, his idealism, his optimism, and his decisiveness, all were traits that distinguished Pollett's outlook even as death neared. The only indication that Pollett was aware of the seriousness of his condition was suggested in a letter to his brother Jim, written in mid-July, 1955. Pollett said, "Boy, if I could crawl at all, I would be in New Harbour this weather and out on the Rock [beside New Harbour Bridge]... But the way it looks, I doubt I'll get off the room at all."[113] He noted that he was unable to travel without the assistance of his wife, for he needed her to administer injections, and he added, "I look like hell in a gale of wind; my bones rattle like a windjack. In fact, I really don't want to go anywhere among people I know looking the way I do

now."[114] Alarmed by the letter, Jim and his wife travelled to Brooklyn in August, visiting him each day in Brooklyn Hospital, where he had been confined all that month. Bertha Pollett recalls that he wanted to talk only about New Harbour;[115] and several days after their leavetaking in early September, he asked to be taken home, where for some days, deliriously, he continued to speak of events that had occurred some fifty years before. It was such a circumstance that has caused his son to reflect, and his wife to corroborate, "that if he had survived... he'd be there now on the bridge with his split bamboo fishing rod."[116]

Pollett's embracing of that simpler way of life was the focus of various obituary notices and tributes; and, a year later, the compiling of most of his published works in a large volume entitled The Ocean at My Door was itself a response to a widespread desire for preserving his vision of the Newfoundland outport. At the time of his death, a comment by Ewart Young, in a published editorial, suggested that the intimacy which Pollett had striven for in conveying his unique view of the outport had been achieved. Young wrote that the "news of Ron Pollett's sudden passing...must have brought a sense of personal loss to many thousands of people in Newfoundland and abroad."[117] The editor of the Grand Falls Advertiser, in praising Pollett's ability to portray Newfoundland outport life, corroborated Young's assessment and furthermore noted: "His was a gift rarely encouraged, and his passing is a great loss to Newfoundland literature."[118] But laudatory as this comment was, it is worth noting that few writers of these tributes, which as Young reported were given wide and sympathetic attention in various media, mentioned any details about Pollett's personal life. Ewart Young, in a personal letter of condolence to Pollett's wife, said that he himself was "shocked" by the news of Pollett's death, for he had never guessed the seriousness of Pollett's illness.[119] Indeed the majority of writers of Pollett's tributes disregarded his life as an author and instead focussed on the nature of his writings, and of the outport world which he rendered with "a color, a vividness, a pulsating alive-ness."[120] As well they should have. For his writing was, largely, an escape from the urban world and the pain and frustration of daily life. He wrote mainly of quite another world, the outport he knew, idealized, brooded over, and hoped to know again. For Pollett's success in New York had been fleeting and sporadic;

and despite his own better judgement, he seemed, to the very end, determined to disprove the notion that "you can't go home again."

V

POLLETT'S WORKS: RECAPTURING AN OUTPORT HERITAGE

Ron Pollett pursued a career as an author only late in his life, and his output was relatively small: he produced two volumes of prose in his lifetime, and in a third volume, entitled The Ocean at My Door, thirty-three of his known published pieces were reprinted posthumously in 1956. The extent of Pollett's oeuvre and his lifelong interest in authorship are described in the first section of this chapter. Pollett's three major publications comprise autobiographical writings evoking his sentiments as an émigré Newfoundlander; and the second section of this chapter examines the development of the literary style in which he defined the nature of his experiences at home and abroad. All of Pollett's work appeared in print during a period of cultural transition in Newfoundland. How Pollett's writing relates to that context, but was also touched by literary influences from the world beyond Newfoundland, is discussed in the third section of the chapter. The fourth section of the chapter provides a concluding critical assessment of Pollett's achievements as a writer.

I

Although most of Ron Pollett's approximately forty known pieces of writing were produced between 1946 and 1955, from an early age he had an interest in storytelling. "Eeling," a poem he composed when an adolescent in New Harbour, was among his first literary efforts; it described an incident which occurred among some local boys who set their eel lines off New Harbour Bridge. Its humour and exactness of localized detail are qualities townsmen recall of "Eeling." The poem played some role in local entertainment, for such pieces once were recited frequently by Pollett and his contemporaries. In Peter the Grate: An Outport Character Study, a semi-fictionalized autobiographical work first published in 1952, Pollett recorded single stanzas of several rhymes which he attributed to himself and other local townsmen, referring to them as "strictly homespun."[1] Among the examples is a slight rewording of one stanza of "Welcome Robin," a

poem contained in the Grade Two Royal Reader school text; and Pollett is depicted as a boy of about seven as he recites: "Hopping o'er the carpet/ Picking up the crumbs/ Peter knows the Polletts/ Feed him when he comes."[2] None of Pollett's poems composed in New Harbour was published during his life there, however, nor was "The Exploits Hotel," a poem he wrote (but did not print) in Grand Falls during the early 1920s. There, too, he is said to have established his reputation as a writer after privately circulating his poems. A third known item, entitled "A Brief for Appellants," was a prose vignette featuring fellow workers in his printing office, composed and printed during his years in New York; it was circulated privately, and no copy is known to exist. These three known examples of ephemera indicate that Pollett maintained an occasional interest in the pastime of writing throughout his early years.

In 1924, Pollett spoke of a book he intended to write "dealing with the homelife of his people in Newfoundland" in an interview published in the Brooklyn Daily Eagle. [3] This evidence suggests that Pollett did have plans to pursue writing actively in his early twenties, but how seriously we can take this youthful declaration remains questionable. As early as 1919 he is said to have written occasional newspaper articles while living in Grand Falls; the same was said of him when he settled in New York. Specific articles attributed to Pollett have not been located, although an absence of a known by-line might account for this gap.[4] Lack of information on the identity of a "Special New York Correspondent" whose work appeared occasionally in The Newfoundland Weekly (Boston) may further impede a study of Pollett's involvement in journalism in the mid-1920s. During these years, when Pollett is believed to have worked at the Brooklyn Daily Eagle and to have acquired the habit of reading a minimum of five metropolitan newspapers per day, articles about Newfoundlanders in New York, some first appearing in the Eagle, were sent to The Newfoundland Weekly for reprinting; and in the April 25, 1925, issue, one article in particular suggests comparisons with Pollett's known writings.[5] The article described a lecture and slideshow entitled "A Night in Newfoundland," presented by Major R.H. Tait; and the exactness of detail and sophisticated vocabulary, describing the delight and "vociferous applause" of expatriated Newfoundlanders viewing lantern slides of their particular birth-

places, resemble somewhat the extant records of Pollett's minutes of vestry meetings at English Harbour. Furthermore, its description of these pictures, which enabled members of the audience "to rekindle the memories of boyhood days spent in the old homeland," is remarkably similar to a passage in Pollett's article "Memories of 'Didder Hill,'" published in 1951.[6] Though this notion of expatriated Newfoundlanders sharing a special relationship to the island characterized all of Pollett's later works, so typical might this sentiment once have been among the group he lived with in the United States that suggesting other attributions in The Newfoundland Weekly seems unjustified. It is known, however, that Pollett's extensive involvement in the Grand Falls Advertiser, beginning in 1936, was based on a sophisticated knowledge of the techniques of journalism. Pollett contributed highly detailed critiques of articles printed in the Advertiser, and the thought lingers that these could only have come from somebody experienced, not just in printing and reading newspapers, but in writing for them.

The publication of Pollett's vignette "The Outport Millionaire" in the Atlantic Guardian in July, 1946, launched his second career, that of an author, and one who was essentially a spokesman for the émigré Newfoundlander. This sketch described the seasonal pastimes of a typical "lucky" figure, one who "needs no money" and has an "enviable capacity for enjoyment of simple things," and as such represents a clear antithesis to the mundane routines of hundreds of outport immigrants "who have spent their years roving around the world and worrying about the little things."[7] In subsequent early vignettes and essays, "A Born Trouter," "Let's Look at the Squid," and "Where Christmas is Christmas," he chronicled in sensuous detail outport customs and traditions, and the paucity of comparable urban experience again was emphasized. All of these publications established for Pollett an important relationship with the editors of the Atlantic Guardian, who sought to use the fledgling magazine as a vehicle for "Making Newfoundland Better Known at Home and Abroad." While the magazine's monthly column "Newfoundlanders Abroad" emphasized achievements of expatriated Newfoundlanders, Pollett's focus on the feelings of the alienated immigrant was a response that at once emphasized the tenacity of outport upbringing and seemed to corroborate the editors' own view that Newfoundlanders could in fact

live anywhere and remain "true Newfoundlanders."[8] His approach to Newfoundland topics thus was both welcome and timely.

Pollett's works proved to be so popular that in mid-1947 the editors undertook to reprint his first six efforts in one small volume, entitled The Ocean at My Door and Other Newfoundland Outport Stories. This publication was a milestone in Pollett's early career. The book sold well, and received unreserved local acclaim. Furthermore, a translation of his earliest vignette, "The Outport Millionaire," was undertaken by a German-speaking visitor to the island and appeared in a Swiss magazine. These achievements encouraged Pollett to develop an emphasis upon the rich outport world--its customs, values, and dialect. Indeed, two of the most popular items included in the volume--"The Cat with the Yaller Face" and "The Ocean at My Door"-- simply present a boy's fresh, uncritical perspective upon objects normally given scant attention. On the publication of his book, he indicated that the outport world as seen from a boy's perspective would be his major topic henceforth; and he concluded the autobiographical essay "The Ocean at My Door" with the notion that he had a good deal yet to say. He wrote that during his years in New Harbour "the many interesting things that happened in our family life and out into the wonderful world of this colorful Newfoundland outport-- around the wharves, in the boats, at school, and among the woods and streams-- would make a long, long story."[9] Shortly afterwards, in his extended essay "There's No Place Like an Outport," he explained further that "it would take a couple of thick books to cover in detail the few years I spent in the village."[10] Pollett continued to speak of such a book frequently in essays and letters between 1947 and 1950. By 1949 he had earned the title of "contributing editor" at the Atlantic Guardian, where he continued to publish his work. But he never produced quite the book he envisioned, one in which he would tell his own story and tell it "as seen through the eyes of a boy."[11]

Between the publication of The Ocean at My Door and Other Newfoundland Outport Stories, and Pollett's second book, entitled Peter the Grate: An Outport Character Study (1952), he produced twenty-three pieces, comprising seventeen descriptive essays and six short stories. Although in 1947 Pollett pictured "The Ocean at My Door" as the opening chapter of his pro-

jected book, these publications could not be regarded as subsequent chapters. In the essays he continued to focus on the experience of the native Newfoundlander as contrasted to that of his own in New York, although he added new dimensions to these accounts by describing in greater detail the immigrant's urban lifestyle and by chronicling the changes he perceived in the outports during two summer excursions to New Harbour in 1947 and 1951. The breaking down of community customs and traditions was emphasized in his essays, but in his short stories he resurrected the vanished past, the virtues of traditional outport life being generally his theme. Only rarely did Pollett's works during this period between 1947 and 1952 convey a positive outlook on the contemporary outport world.

Given Pollett's personal situation and attitudes in the early 1950s, his second book, Peter the Grate: An Outport Character Study, published in 1952, is not as curious a work as it first appears. Many indications suggest that this was a book Pollett had long intended to write. It was divided into fourteen short chapters, and he included much detail from previously published essays and stories, particularly material from "The Outport Millionaire," "A Born Trouter," and his most recent series of articles based on life in the post-Confederation outport. Although several chapters depict the "millionaire" figure, Peter, from an outport boy's perspective, the book is in fact a sequential narrative spanning some 50 years. It concludes at Peter's death, which coincided with Confederation, an event Pollett increasingly saw as a threat to traditional outport community life. Peter the Grate was published as a "contribution to the island's folklore."[12]

Pollett's final eight pieces, published in the Atlantic Guardian between 1952 and 1955, all are attempts to grapple with a changed outport world. He assumed the role of recorder of traditional culture in some articles. "The Garden on the Point," "The Bait Punt," "Afraid in the Dark," and "The Passing of the Stagehead" all display a propensity for cataloguing a rich variety of custom and lore that, to Pollett's mind, had disappeared quickly as a result of recent modernization. The acclaim he won from Atlantic Guardian readers in 1954--he was selected as their "Favourite Storyteller" and his "Rum in the Puddin'" (December, 1950), their favourite story--might have encouraged him to redirect his attention toward fiction and to attempt, as he had

only once, in "Rum in the Puddin'," a gentler treatment of the theme of the outport in transition. "Uncle Ben's Adventure" (September, 1954) and "The Matchmaker," published posthumously in February, 1956, succeed in this emphasis. The first was an exaggerated depiction of a notion Pollett had mentioned frequently in essays--the importance of local radio programs to older outporters. Although he previously had suggested that nightly broadcasts had replaced traditional storytelling in the village square, in "Uncle Ben's Adventure" he described how an older man, using navigational skills he had learned on sealing voyages fifty years before, successfully fought his way through a blinding snowstorm in order to be on time for the nightly "Doyle News Bulletin." The second piece, "The Matchmaker," also affirmed the breaking down of custom in the contemporary outport, particularly the custom which "chained a childless spouse to the headstone of his dear departed for at least a year."[13] Events are narrated by a romantically-inclined thirteen-year-old girl, perhaps making "The Matchmaker" Pollett's most unusual work.

Only a few months before his death, Pollett indicated that he had a good deal yet to say about the changing times. A letter to his editor, Ewart Young, included summaries of approximately twelve articles he intended to write, on topics ranging from the novelty of an excursion on "The Newfie Bullet" as compared to mainland trains, to the relationship between mink farming and the traditional whaling industry in Blaketown, Trinity Bay.[14] "The Passing of the Stagehead" (October, 1955), however, is the only one of these articles Pollett managed to produce before his death in September, 1955, and though there is evidence that he intended it to be humorous,[15] it is merely a record of a painful and failed personal attempt to reconcile himself to the stark physical changes which had occurred in the contemporary Newfoundland outport. As he saw it now, "Gone up in chimney smoke or drifted out to sea" was all evidence of the traditional inshore fishery; the setting was "as bare as before John Cabot."[16] These comments suggested that all traces of the special outport world he had known and later tried to chronicle had disappeared.

Pollett's third major publication appeared posthumously. The Ocean at My Door, published in September,1956, contained thirty-three of his pieces, most of which had appeared in the

Atlantic Guardian in 1946-55. Pollett's autobiographical essay "The Ocean at My Door"(1947) and his character sketch Peter the Grate (1952), both published previously in separate volumes, were included in this collection, the whole being advertised not by its published title but rather as "The Ron Pollett Memorial Book."[17] Pollett's material was selected and arranged by his former editor, Ewart Young, who also oversaw the book's production. The 363-page book had three variant issues-- one, a white leather-bound "deluxe" issue, one cloth-cover "special" issue intended for use in schools, and one other brown paper-bound issue intended for use in libraries and homes; the latter two issues, as a result of popular demand, underwent second and third impressions in the course of less than one year. The sole distributor of The Ocean at My Door was Guardian Associates Ltd.; and in its magazine, the Atlantic Guardian, full page advertisements for the book appeared each month until late 1957, reminding readers that Pollett had been one of the magazine's most prolific and popular contributors. After Pollett's death, the editor was quick to assume the responsibility of promoting Pollett's name. Ewart Young wrote in an obituary on Pollett that "our sadness at this moment is somewhat tempered with a feeling of pride that we were able to have a part in the creation and preservation of the classics of Newfoundland literature that poured from his gifted pen."[18] Indeed, the editor is owed credit for fulfilling Pollett's goal of completing a book, though this compilation was not quite what Pollet had had in mind. Nevertheless, the magazine itself, with its articulated intention of promoting all aspects of Newfoundland life, played no small part in shaping the materials Pollett did produce in the brief span of ten years, for it provided an outlet in which, in various forms, Pollett could depict the essential nature of his immigrant experience.

ii

Pollett's first compilation, The Ocean at My Door and Other Newfoundland Outport Stories, comprises early examples of the three main literary forms, vignette, journalistic essay, and short story, in which he rendered his own experiences as an émigré Newfoundlander. Two principal themes permeate these six pieces, namely, the struggle and alienation of the urban

immigrant and the remembered pleasures of outport inheritance. Characteristic of this collection is Pollett's conception of an idyllic quality of traditional outport life, a recreated, documented, or imagined, timeless quality, which in each of these six pieces is defined and endorsed.

"The Outport Millionaire" and "A Born Trouter" are Pollett's first two reminiscent vignettes; and in them he uses literary devices which, if limited, nevertheless convey his perception of the unbridgeable contrast between the delights of his outport youth and the struggle of his contemporary experience. In each vignette, Pollett reduces the expatriated Newfoundlander's urban lifestyle to stark, key concepts: "clockpunching," worry, frustration, fatigue, illness; and manages to emphasize his sense of loss through a device of reiterating whole sentences composed of such negative ideas in the opening and concluding paragraphs, like refrains of songs.[19] Use of this device simply underscores his principal thematic concern of the exile's daily struggle, and provides a visual frame surrounding his recollections based almost exclusively on the familiar, earthy, but rewarding, pastimes of the "lucky" native outporter. The two key figures Pollett focuses on are the rooted, penniless, but content "millionaire," who was "born lucky," and himself as an enthusiastic, naive boy. The starker the contrast the lives of these figures provide with his present day routine, the more pleasing is the recreated memory. These are unsophisticated, simple pieces of literature, requiring no special analysis; yet as autobiography the contents are significant, in that they suggest how Pollett was beginning to embark on the process of "fixing" memories of his past.[20]

"Let's Look at the Squid" and "Where Christmas <u>is</u> Christmas" are examples of journalistic essays in this first collection, and are similar to at least one dozen other such articles Pollett was to write in his attempt to attune his memory well to that other world he had left behind. They are descriptive folklore collections about distinctive and, to Pollett's mind, pleasurable, outport customs. In "Let's Look at the Squid" he describes the community tradition of squid jigging and customary work techniques associated with this activity; and in "Where Christmas <u>is</u> Christmas" he provides a compilation of family holiday practices, including house decoration and food preparation, and as well describes traditional community customs such as janneying. As recorded

documents, whose implicit aim is to preserve, such detailed essays are crude by literary standards.[21] Yet he does provide in them some wry, moving anecdotes about living apart from the culture he records. In "Let's Look at the Squid" he notes the irony of the outport immigrant gazing into a fish store window, imbuing the squid "with tradition and romance," while some other more practical ethnic residents actually buy the fish for supper; and in "Where Christmas is Christmas" the physical surroundings of outport revelers are compared nostalgically to a holiday greeting card.[22] In his later efforts to depict the outport setting, Pollett would often refer to windows, to pictures, and also to travelogue films and scenes– all of which suggest the modes in which he as an exile could receive or visualize information from home.[23] His earliest essays are, however, his least accomplished publications in terms of literary style and technique. Pollett's voice, for the most part, is that of a disengaged folklore collector, and, as is typical of authors attempting to record folklore materials rather than to develop them imaginatively, "Let's Look at the Squid," "Where Christmas is Christmas" and other similar articles provide little more than a description of milieu.

Two other pieces in this collection, "The Cat with the Yaller Face" and "The Ocean at My Door," perhaps provide a more sophisticated evocation of that traditional outport world; and Pollett achieves this transformation by telling of that world exclusively through the eyes of an active, enthused boy. "The Cat with the Yaller Face" is the first example of the episodic short story format which Pollett was to use in most of his fiction, this being a genre well suited to a boy's narrative voice and to the themes of learning and growing up. In this story, Pollett focuses on a simple incident– a boy's loss of an ornery yellow cat– in order to suggest the particular pleasures and constraints that would be known to a typical outport boy in a traditional family home. In contrast to his earlier reminiscent vignettes, in his short stories the world outside the outport is never referred to, so that no strident authorial emphasis is present to disturb the narrative by making points with the reader. As well, he does not provide mere catalogues of aspects of traditional life, but manages in fiction to create an imaginative world by using only such information as relates to the action of the stories. In "The Cat with the Yaller Face," for example, a list of weekly tradi-

tional fare is presented in terms of what the boy's finicky cat will and will not eat, and a boy's domestic tasks are described in terms of how this household pet plunges its owner into mishaps that interfere with the entire family's daily work routine. Pollett attempts here to tell the story in native dialect, a technique indicating his intention to describe a very particular place. But perhaps more accomplished is the pace of the story, which has been described by one critic as a "headlong rush"[24]--a feature which imparts a sense of immediacy and urgency appropriate to a boy's world. In this story, Pollett seems no mere praiser of his past, but a fledgling artist. But it is perhaps in the title piece, "The Ocean at My Door," that one finds the first sustained example of Pollett's distinctive voice. It is enthusiastic, musing, and engagingly anecdotal; by writing retrospectively of an earlier time, ostensibly "as seen through the eyes of a boy," he re-acquires a childlike outlook that sees nothing that meets his eye as trivial or ordinary. There is something childlike and wholehearted in most of his mature pieces. This is part of his unique quality. Here his keen interest in the tales his grandmother tells, and his admiration of his father's masculinity, strike us as in keeping with this boyish viewpoint, which is sustained throughout the sketch. Again we see Pollett the artist, revising, selecting, and recreating aspects of his own early outport life to evoke that idyllic quality he favoured.[25]

Pollett's second publication, Peter the Grate: An Outport Character Study, is in a quite different medium--the extended character sketch-- and it is autobiographical in the sense that in it Pollett traces his own changing attitudes over a period of some fifty years toward an "outport millionaire" figure and toward a benign quality of outport life which the character, Peter, represents. Its theme is the unrealized potential of a nonconformist in a traditional outport community, and the study's intended focus is on the eccentric, now deceased, "millionaire," an illiterate songmaker and storyteller. This choice of theme suggests that Pollett was moving toward challenging the nostalgic view of the outport that he had earlier attempted to recreate. Whereas the telling and singing of stories, lore, and songs are pastimes that in this work as in many of Pollett's other pieces he usually associates with camaraderie and "fun," he now also describes how among most outporters the creative impulse is used only to sanction the customs

and mores of traditional life. Midway through the study, for example, numerous tall stories are used to chastise Peter, a bachelor who rarely undertakes difficult labour, loves hunting and fishing as pastimes, and who has never travelled away from the harbour, as family men must to obtain supplementary wages. "Tender good Lord," an outporter back from seasonal work in the lumber-camps, says in Peter's hearing, "Wasn't the rabbits in thousands down there in Glenwood this winter!....Every time I swung an axe I chopped the head off one."[26] Each of a group of men contributes, with slight variation, a story of plentitude; as Peter gapes, the narrator indicates that the stories are a form of verbal punishment, for the men who had laboured now use them to take a "psychological whack" at Peter who they think has merely sat by a hot stove all winter.[27] But the narrator here has been given an interpretive function; by drawing on his own wider experience, he attempts to posit a fuller story of Peter's life than members of this community, absorbed with the exigencies of daily life, can know. This deliberate questioning stance toward cultural constraints represents an important development in Pollett's rendering of outport life. For Pollett now seems to have an ability to evaluate "the wonderful world of the outport"[28] from a distance and to achieve, to some extent, the stance of an outsider, so necessary to the author of fiction.

Peter the Grate. Pollett's most extensive work, is perhaps also his most ambitious attempt to do what he set out to accomplish as an author: to present a celebratory, detailed portrait of traditional outport life, and in the process to define his own experiences in and away from that particular milieu. It can be argued that the main flaw in the piece is an uncertain narrative point of view. For although in each of the fourteen chapters he adheres firmly to a chronological enactment of episodes which shed light on Peter's character, there is always an intrusive "I"--Pollett himself constantly confirming, denying, and assessing many perspectives on a figure who is, after all, a fictive one. Autobiographical intrusion is, perhaps, inimical to the artist's task of boring into the nature and character of other people.[29] The narrator here also tiresomely persists in maintaining that this is a "true" story of Peter, a figure whom he claims to have known best through "stories handed down to us,"[30] pervasive gossip referring to Peter's lackadaisical and irresponsible nature, and his own close observation. Again we feel the storyteller's heavy hand,

interrupting the narrative flow. Pollett's narrative "I" would always be too close to the real Ron Pollett to allow a full release of his narrative instincts.

Yet perhaps we can look at this lack of literary sophistication in another light. All of these seeming literary flaws suggest standard aspects of an oral storytelling technique. The work's reliance on the narrator's personal experience establishes the teller's veracity; and the reiteration of statements regarding the "truth" of the narrative, as well as the addition of frequent digressive incidents and cultural items supposedly known to the listeners, all help to suggest a familiar place and recognizable characters and thus create a credible narrative.[31] Aspects of Pollett's use of these techniques can be described as follows: in his earliest chapters, he chronicles rather indiscriminately his own earliest recollections of Peter, both by describing his habits and appearance as a boy could know an adult figure, and also by supplying much detail about Peter's family and the exact location and appearance of his house. He thus establishes his own narrative role and the nature of the central figure in the story who has a normal history and a connection with a specific place and people. What attracts young Pollett, in part, are Peter's extraordinary skills at hunting and fishing and the uncommon lives of his family, particularly of Peter's father, whose hair turned white and who became a perpetual recluse upon digging for treasure at Petty Harbour. Pollett notes with boyish wonder that Peter's father "was the only one left alive to tell the tale. Only, he never told it."[32] Repetition of this particular incident suggests Pollett's fear that the "untold story" might be lost; indeed, telling Peter's untold story is the basic premise motivating the narrative. The artistic, essentially impoverished, bachelor is scorned by the community, he is ridiculed because he lives differently from his neighbours: that too Pollett needs to reiterate and thus establish a "truer" story of Peter. Thus he wishes, in common with many rural storytellers, to preserve the life history of a remarkable, though misunderstood local figure, and to vindicate him by telling his story properly. He can do this best by claiming his own special place as an observer, and restating it. When we examine Peter the Grate in this way, we are less likely to locate "flaws" than to see it as a piece of literature with strong connections to the oral tradition which Pollett knew in his childhood.

In Pollett's third major work, The Ocean at My Door, are collected basically in chronological order most of his published pieces from 1946 to 1955, the major exception being Peter the Grate, which is placed as the final selection. Of these, his essays on the city--among them "Summer Madness," "Memories of 'Didder Hill,'" and a three-part series entitled "Up in the Big City"--display an adult consciousness somewhat different from the perspective in his earliest pieces in The Ocean at My Door and Other Newfoundland Outport Stories. His themes of alienation and absence of reward are the same, but in these essays, written between 1950 and 1951, he poses as an objective chronicler, relying on records, statistics, interviews, and personal anecdote to explore the sense of place and belonging (of lack thereof) which he and other Newfoundland immigrants experience in the city. Generally, Pollett evokes the city as a vast milieu of fleeting, foreign images. Wall Street, for example, is merely a maze of office buildings, each one large enough to house entire populations of towns in Newfoundland.[33] Of the hugely populated and various metropolis, he says that each city block is as crowded "as Grand Falls station at train time on Sunday night--except on weekends, when one can "not see enough people to haul up a punt."[34] Pollett's apt analogies to home suggest how he and no doubt other outport Newfoundlanders in New York viewed the concrete city and adapted to its way of life. Not that the attractions of life for the outporter in "the wonder city"[35] ever wholly faded. But when, as in "Memories of 'Didder Hill,'" he explores the absence of community, and alludes to the immigrants' yet unfulfilled dreams, his tone seems tired and jaded. In "Up in the Big City" he says that no one finds gold in the streets of New York,"because there isn't any there."[36] To emphasize the folly of his once held vision of novelty and wealth, Pollett frequently employs a device of using boldface headings which underline the contention he now holds, namely that the so-called vast differences between city and outport life could be reduced to purely monetary terms: "Fish 75¢ a Pound" and "Fishhooks $55 Each" are examples of such headings in "Up in the Big City."[37] Irony also pervades his new attitude to urban delights. An occasional splurge at a "swank" restaurant where dinners cost $30 and higher, he notes, might include "lobster, brook trout, and partridge--not uncommon fodder in Newfoundland."[38] This renewed sense of the disappointments

of city life leads Pollett to reassess the hectic daily struggle simply to "make ends meet." In "Up in the Big City" he expresses his bleakest vision of the outcome of one's labour: "all the plodding city man can hope to leave to posterity are the sweatband off his hat and a pimple of dirt in some lonesome big graveyard."[39] In these essays we find an outharbour vocabulary of belittlement, and homely, earthy description, applied (with sometimes striking effects, as in "pimple of dirt") to the metropolis. These touches, together with the ironic, weary tone alluded to earlier, are new developments in Pollett's writings, hinting at rich possibilities for his work if he had lived to produce a more extensive oeuvre.

The idea of return, or, retreat, permeates a large number of Pollett's descriptive essays. Whether his focus is on the city or the traditional village, his theme in them is the unique appreciation which an immigrant has for his outport inheritance. As Pollett had shown in his earliest pieces, the outport could be seen as a rich source for literature; and in "The Manly Sport of Handlining"--his first piece based on his visit home in 1947--he enforces that sentiment by suggesting how the outharbour's natural surroundings inspire a poetic vision. From his father's punt, he describes in detail the "verdant" forests he could see on the shore, then turns to the movement of waves, flowering "the headlands like white horses dashing along the shore;" at dusk, he notices "the changing moods of the evening sky as the sun glided into a gold-fringed cloudbank."[40] These naturalistic passages are charming, but there is little in them that is distinctive. Yet they help to underscore a timeless sense of belonging, as does Pollett's habit of evoking a series of visual maps with each scene he views when he comes home. Unlike an ordinary tourist, he knows that each local site has a history, whether it be his father's fishing berth, "Peter's Rock," or other specific landmarks he associates with boyhood experiences or ghostly legends. And he often shares the immediacy of his experiences as a returned immigrant by creating tall stories, a genre of traditional lore he evidently favoured. Of his first night in his boyhood home during his trip in 1951, he writes:

> The mice operated a complete sawmill in the bedroom upstairs. Laden with augers, gimlets, chisels, cross-cuts, and portable buzz-saws, they climbed the chimney casing and started work the minute my head hit the pillow....

> The first night in the bedroom I did hear something [else]. It was a persistent pat-pat on the clapboards just outside the window. The sound was not the knocking kind the goats make bumping their horns against the lee side of a house where they often seek shelter from the wind and rain. In any case, I knew there were no goats in our well-fenced yard; we were on the windy side and the sound was too far up anyway.
>
> As the taps grew louder, the floor-length flimsy white curtains spread half across the room in a sudden gust through the open window. The night had been stark calm just before the tapping began.
>
> But, in a minute or two, the noise subsided and the curtains folded back like hands on a lap. The ghost had passed through the room! My wife must have heard and seen all *of this, through she uttered not a word. It was not time for talk.*
>
> In the morning I looked out the window into the cheery sunlight and saw an apple tree alongside. It was loaded with fruit, and a big branch hugged the clapboards. I broke the branch off, killing the ghost for good.[41]

Again we see the oral tradition influencing "formal" literature. In stories such as these he suggests how his identity and qualities have been shaped through his early cultural training. He is well-suited to become a trusty narrator in Peter the Grate.

In such late short stories as "The 'Dicky-Bird' Dish," "Ship Ahoy," "The Tongue that Never Told a Lie," and "Rum in the Puddin'" Pollett hints that the enduring quality of a distinctive rural community with its own set of practices and values will thrive despite contemporary change.[42] One exception contradicting this hopeful theme, however, can be found in an extended character sketch entitled "Johnny the Pear." It resembles Peter the Grate insofar as it too attempts a balanced and realistic depiction of traditional outport life. But its narrative technique differs strikingly; and, to turn to theme, the effacing quality of time, not, as in Peter the Grate, the single event of Confederation, is presented as the destroyer of outport culture. Traditional customs devoid of meaning or appreciation, fragments of oral art forms, the whole forgotten owing to disuse, are elements in the story denoting Pollett's view of the effects of time on practices in traditional life. In the story a youthful narrator merely spins an adventuresome yarn set in the "rum-running days of the 1920s," a yarn which culminates in his identification of a stranger, "Johnny the Pear," a government liquor board official.[43] The narrator tells his story, but only in passing is an earlier time, rich in lore, evoked. Two central events of the tale are a group of young outporters' "lucky" find of a case of contraband rum and their subsequent mischievous thievery of barrels to be used at Bonfire Night, an acknowledged custom of which "the

significance meant no more to us than to a fly on the wall."[44] The device of stories within stories, their unifying motifs being stealing, greed, and informing, underlines the parallels between the two events which the naive narrator does not fathom--he is, after all, too preoccupied with the fast-paced, adventuresome events themselves. But it is the disintegration of custom rather than its enriching quality over time that is emphasized. As the narrative concludes, a new generation of children is somewhat irrelevantly singing one refrain from one of the many songs Johnny the Pear had taught their fathers.[45] These children, the new breed of carefree youths, essentially are uninterested in the significance of all the events told in the narrative. Johnny the Pear will not be one of the immortals.

In Peter the Grate, Pollett's last major piece of writing, he succeeds in summing up his many poses as an immigrant storyteller and chronicler--among them, the panegyrist of the distant past, the alienated urban spokesman for the values of the traditional outport community, and the exacting recorder of a passing way of life. Telling about the outport past, describing its true nature, finding lessons in that time and place, all were objectives that Pollett had pursued consistently in his writing. In this last extensive work the overriding idea seems to be that traditional outport life clearly had passed away. Yet the meaning even here is equivocal: there are traces of nostalgia; there is still hope, pitted against the bitter foretaste created by the develop or perish mentality of the new Newfoundland.[46] Indeed, his subsequent renderings of outport life resume rather than develop his same, well-used, and limited poses, which, as such, provided limited scope to develop his skills as an author and interpreter of the Newfoundland cultural milieu. At bottom, he remained a sentimentalist. A nostalgic remembrance of outport life in the distant past, informed by his experiences as an immigrant, remained characteristic of Pollett's writing from beginning to end.

iii

Despite this lack of development in his writing, both in terms of experimenting with literary form and technique and expanding his limited range of emphases, Pollett's works contributed to a

timely trend participated in by a number of other native-born authors whose writing on the Newfoundland experience reflected two popular issues of the day--broadly, tradition and transition. The post-war years fostered a spirit of nationalism, when nostalgia in the face of imminent cultural change was an attitude shared by many, and Newfoundland's past, present, and future became the major topic of discussion, socially and in literature. A new wave of literature appeared in a spate of fledgling journals that developed during the mid-1940s. Among these were the Atlantic Guardian, (subtitled "the Magazine of Newfoundland"), and the more exclusively literary The Newfoundland Story, The Newfoundland Writer, and The Newfoundland Companion. [47] Most significantly, in these journals ordinary Newfoundlanders now took to expressing themselves in print; and in what had been essentially (though not exclusively) an oral culture, this material represented quite a new cultural development. Authors' uses of traditional oral stories and their devices, motifs, and functions have not yet been the object of an extensive study; nor has any study suggested how this transition from oral to written culture might account for an awkward use of literary techniques among some new authors whose only previous experience had been school compositions and correspondence.[48] Nevertheless, each of these neophytes embarked on a new avocation or career with one sound principle in mind: each drew on what he knew, or remembered, or imagined, of Newfoundland life, making use of the common body of cultural knowledge he knew best. And the Atlantic Guardian was for many the most available vehicle for their work, for its editors invited expressions of popular opinion on the islanders' legacy and their future prospects and gave roughly equal space to opposing views in each issue.

As a regular reader, Pollett could keep pace with the contemporary issues, but those writers in the Atlantic Guardian who shared with him a nostalgic view that eschewed change appear to have influenced him most as a storyteller of outport cultural values and traditions. One of these was Arthur R. Scammell, a Newfoundland-born schoolteacher living abroad and a popular, regular contributor who appears to have been something of a model in Pollett's career. Pollett's early autobiographical vignette, "A Born Trouter," in which he describes drollishly the malady of "trout fever" contracted by every Newfoundland boy, is ostensibly a lighter treatment of the

conflict rendered in Scammell's first short story, "Sea Fever," involving a boy's choosing to become a fisherman rather than a schoolteacher.[49] Eventually, Pollett's short stories, all set in the traditional outport milieu, suggest (though do not develop) similar conflicts: mere homesickness for a day of trouting can, in Pollett, flower into a lengthy reworking of his decision to abandon the traditional ways of life. And in "Ship Ahoy!" young Ernie Tarn, whose father had drowned, ignores his mother's urging to prepare himself for the far less rigorous profession of schoolteaching when an uncle convincingly teaches him about the many rewards and challenges that a skilled fisherman enjoys. The link with Scammell is clear. But the traditional outport world of Scammell and Pollett is not always portrayed sentimentally. Both could render its customs and values with irony and humour. In Scammell's short story "Buyer Must Be in Good Condition," when the erratic starting mechanism of an outboard motor demands more labour than the traditional sailboat, its owner decides to sell, and composes an advertisement from which the story takes its title.[50] There is similar laughter over modern machinery and devices in Pollett: both men watch with pleasure an old breed of men tinkering with the novelties of the twentieth century. Pollett admired Scammell's tolerant attitude to the new age, although his own brand of humour was usually more sardonic. He often used the traditionally popular tall story as a tool for contrasting values in a new era of transition and materialism. In several instances set in the distant past, a merchant who "went to church barely once a month to spare on collection and even then sang only one verse to save his breath," is presented as a local example of notorious greed.[51] Pollett's frequent descriptions of a new generation of outporters that ignores traditional chores and custom, and squanders large sums on novelties, make the traditional frugality of the ordinary outporter a comparative virtue, even when, for instance, he exaggerates his telling of how, when a fly fell into an old man's sugarbowl, "he picked the fly up and shook the sugar off its back into the bowl before letting it go."[52] Pollett, one feels, had the makings of a satirist in him; not so Scammell, whose sketches of the outport are prevailingly gentle and lyrical.

But Pollett needed to define a distinctive traditional setting to enhance his treatment of acquisitiveness and frugality, misapplication and skillful prowess; and in drawing this, he appears

to have been influenced by at least two local poets, apart from Scammell. He admired the work of Eli Miles, a Newfoundlander living in Boston, and Rose Sullivan, both of whose poems, or rhyming sketches, appeared regularly in the Atlantic Guardian; and their eye for detail was a quality he thought enhanced their special ability to "catch the spirit of their locale."[53] Sullivan and Miles took for their subjects ordinary incidents, such as seasonal preparations for sealing and for work in the woods, an excursion on the "Newfie Bullet," and traditional Christmas celebrations. They were literary cataloguers, and Pollett was as well, to a degree. His own approach to the same milieu was perhaps more journalistic (or even pedestrian) than poetic. His vignettes and articles resemble the notes of an amateur local historian of any small community. Like the folklore collector P.K. Devine, he amassed information on custom and practice; and his articles and vignettes relate how a traditional Christmas table was set, provide an inventory of his family's weekly fare, or give a detailed catalogue of local flora and their traditional medicinal and dietary uses. While such exercises were doubtless important in reminding him of materials he would draw on and interpret in his stories, what their significance was for readers of the Atlantic Guardian is hard to determine.[54] Presumably, they functioned to reawaken an enthusiasm for ways of life that for some were no longer practised. This was a part of Pollett's contribution to what was an essentially nationalistic, popular literature of the period, seeking to define the islanders' distinctive character and traditions.

Yet Pollett also sought to direct his collective audience's eye, not only toward the remembered past but also away from present day commercialized change and novelty. He was a sort of homely moralist. In his fiction using a boy as the protagonist, and in his autobiographical accounts featuring himself as an outport boy busily occupied with learning important out-of-door skills and community values, Pollett appears to have drawn on a late Victorian didactic tradition of popular writing for and about children. Authors of this fiction sought to impart "wholesome" moral and practical lessons; indeed it was from this wealth of juvenile literature that the Royal Readers, Pollett's and his audience's main early school texts, were compiled.[55] One full-length novel in particular– Squib and his Friends, only one of several hundred novels by Evelyn

Everett-Green-- appears to have had some influence on how Pollett set about depicting his own outport boyhood, although it was written in the author's well-used formula-- a combination of adventurous exploration, nature study, and historical wonders.[56] Squib's holiday to the Swiss Alps opens a door of beauty, intricately detailed by the author, and of folk belief, among these fables of "ice maidens" who lure unwary travellers to mountain precipices. These are relayed to Squib by his friend Herr Adler, an erudite and pious man whose fables and anecdotes always have a message for the credulous youth: in them he is urged to excel, to sympathize with the weak, and, most importantly, to appreciate the beauties in nature and his fellow men. An outport world, superficially commonplace in contrast to this foreign setting, could be made to seem extraordinary by adopting just such a boy's limited perspective. Pollett's reading of a second author appears to have encouraged him in the idea that he too had an important story to impart. His enthusiasm for the autobiography of American author Alice Marble may be explained in part by her ability to turn into literature ordinary, rural family life much like his own. Like Marble, he too wished to evoke a setting where "Days came and went in an unchanging pattern,"[57] but yet contained a great deal to explore and learn from. Seeing the uncommon in the seemingly commonplace-- the hidden stairway in his house, the delicate mica stove front that somehow does not burn, the incongruous pattern of the wallpaper in his room-- was to be a source of inspiration for Pollett, as it had been for Marble. Reviving the perhaps rather outdated formula conveyed in sources such as his Royal Readers, the works of Everett-Green, and Marble had the effect of giving Pollett's work an old-fashioned, musty look. It was also an approach that was perfectly in keeping with his own and his audience's first experience of literature--stories that taught one to search out a lesson in both the commonplace and the foreign.

While Pollett never completed his project of telling about the rich outport world "as seen through the eyes of a boy," neither did he wholly abandon it, his short fiction being interspersed with accounts of his contemporary urban lifestyle; in effect, the local issues of tradition and transition were transferred to the urban milieu. In his recurring focus on materialism and the absence of a sense of community, his view of city life has elements of an American tradition of urban

literature. One literary historian, surveying the works of Hawthorne, Melville, Fitzgerald, and other classic American authors, has concluded that "the city" in literature most often is depicted as an "abstract receptacle for displaced feelings about other things"--namely, ambivalent feelings about "the transformation of society and of culture of which the emerging city is but one manifestation."[58] Such an attitude often fosters an attempt to imbue the stark reality of the city either with pastoralism or some other alternative vision that clearly is not "of" the city. Pollett's reading of the autobiographical novels of Thomas Wolfe would have given him an illustration of this kind of phenomenon in writing about urban America. Undoubtedly Wolfe had an influence on Pollett. In Of Time and the River, for instance, Wolfe presents an extensive sensuous catalogue of commodities available at the Faneuil Hall food markets in Boston, and tells how the lonely Eugene Gant peers at stores and warehouses in the evening, perceiving the place as only a southerner could understand it.[59] The window of memory through which only an immigrant could see is an important image in Pollett's first book. In both "A Born Trouter" and "Let's Look at the Squid," immigrants are depicted as sombrely gazing into actual city windows, in the first vignette with noses flattened against a restaurant window watching a "gorgeous show" of trout, and in the second musing over squid in a fish store window, thinking of home despite the variety of attractions in New York, and endowing the "lowly squid with tradition and romance."[60] As in Wolfe, the city provided Pollett with a wealth of images. Pollett's inability to find beauty or comfort in the city expresses itself in a hostility to the metropolis that is perhaps characteristic of much of American urban literature, though he finds a vocabulary to describe it that is "of" his former seaside home. His frequent ironical natural images allude to outport life: the harried "subwayite" hurrying down stairs toward the dank underground is compared to a diving bullbird; and indistinguishable, locked doors in huge apartment complexes are "like periwinkles on a wharfstick."[61] But unlike more accomplished and prolific American authors, Pollett appears to have relatively little of real substance to say about the impact of the urban experience upon himself or other Newfoundlanders. He produced no sustained attempt describing the years between the initial enthusiasm that led them to New York and their decline in middle age. The full story remains

untold.

A cultural community uprooted by circumstance was an idea which certainly had potential for a novel. It was one which Pollett came upon frequently in his numerous re-readings of two particular American novels, John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath and Martha Mitchell's Gone with the Wind. While these authors' influences on Pollett's works appear limited, his reading of them might well have encouraged him to embark on a study of the effects of time and urban experience on a transplanted people and a community. He comes closest to beginning to render this idea in literature in "Memories of 'Didder Hill'," where he describes the unique heritage shared by Newfoundlanders living abroad and denotes their special character and place in the city– their distinctive dress, speech, skills, attitudes-- and even the recording of a local place name legend of "Didder Hill," the men of Little Newfoundland's favoured meeting place, all would seem to enrich a segment of the urban milieu.[62] Nevertheless, after initially telling of this community's bold vision of the promise of America, Pollett resisted telling each man's story, and resorted instead to the pose of objective chronicler. The latter half of the article is a mere compilation of names, occupations, and activities, mere reportage that fails to render "the densely woven fabric of all their histories," such as Wolfe attempted.[63] In narrative technique, he would appear to have been influenced by the American journalist and critic Edmund Wilson, who, in Memoirs of Hecate County, creates an inscrutable narrator who is always commenting distantly on the folly or the accomplishments of a group of thinly-drawn characters who share a common bond merely because they live in a distinct place– Hecate County– but have little in common beyond this choice of residence.[64] The narrator never personally raises questions about their lives or actions; and therefore what one cannot help but gather from this book (or group of loosely-drawn stories) is merely that over time, things, sometimes extraordinary but more often ordinary things, just happen. Pollett, too, in his modest attempt to universalize the Newfoundland immigrant experience in America, fails to find an appropriate literary form suitable for the making of fiction. Although he was partially influenced by American literary sources in the rendering of his topic, he can only be said to have a very minor place in American literature, one likened to writ-

ers of ephemera or colorful local sketches whose works find a voice in any daily newspaper.

He turned to the outport of his imagination for his most sustained work. It is doubtful that Pollett was reading the Canadian writing of his day, yet his concerns in Peter the Grate parallel those of writers of Atlantic Canada: Ernest Buckler's The Mountain and the Valley was published in the same year (1952), following Hugh MacLennan's Each Man's Son (1951), and preceding slightly Charles Bruce's The Channel Shore (1954). All have in common the examination of seemingly unchanging rural communities, and focus on inarticulate artistic or ambitious figures set against a parochial, traditional background. In David Canaan's house in The Mountain and the Valley, his grandmother weaves used clothing once worn by all members of the Canaan family, each piece imbued with intimate associations, into a rug; this rug is a symbol of unity, emphasizing the difficulty of breaking away from custom--a breaking away which David longs for, for he sees the traditional cyclical and seasonal farm routines not as tiring but tiresome.[65] As in The Channel Shore, this frustration is not vented; Hazel McKee, in Bruce's novel, wants to pursue a career as a singer and knows "it [isn't] practical. Music has no place on the Shore except in church concerts."[66] Individual inherited obligation is as much a problem as individual choice; to diverge is a threat in unified, traditional communities where members depend on one another. Pollett's resolution to these sorts of problems is no more satisfying than that suggested by Maritime novelists of his day--namely, death, sometimes untimely; emigration; or, as MacLennan unconvincingly manages for his central character, Alan MacNeil, adoption into a wealthy, learned family. The factor of a similar cultural history, which perhaps alone distinguishes the literature of the Atlantic region, suggests a Canadian context in which many other of Pollett's works can be assessed and appreciated.

Peter the Grate stands as Pollett's last major work, and in writing it he appears to have asked: despite change, what did remain essential in outport life? He had no answers. While in this work Pollett progressed somewhat from his earlier characteristic culling and rendering of pleasing boyhood memories, in most of his subsequent publications he took his own early works for his model. Important messages he originally sought to impart about the value of traditional

life mixed with ordinary middle aged nostalgia as he catalogued lost outport traditions and customs; and by the end of his career he would seem to have progressed in his art not at all. One result of this uniformity was that his own works, being perceived as "merely setting down his own tender reminiscences,"[67] inspired imitations of dubious literary merit. For instance, in 1957 Theresa Collier published a sentimental, imitative vignette entitled "One of the Millionaires," which begins, "The day I hired him to saw firewood for me I thought to myself, 'This is one of the outport millionaires so fascinatingly described by Ron Pollett in his interesting book The Ocean at My Door.'"[68] Pollett's notions about the unequal balance of the quality of life in urban and rural worlds, once typified in the figures of "clockpuncher," and "millionaire," but which he neglected to develop himself, now were ignored, Collier's focus being on a mere derelict worthy somehow of praise in flowery and stilted prose. In Pollett's wake, the urban experience also became a focal point for some local authors, and an article appearing in 1955 on Maritimers living in Boston resembles Pollett's writing on city life. Entitled "Two Maritime Advocates," this item too is flawed by a similar reticence.[69] The fact that this group occasionally socialized together elsewhere appears as the main motivation for writing the piece, but it has very little to say about their experiences. Pollett's few followers evince an inability to distinguish between his works' merits and flaws, and their writing remained in the realm of the provincial.

In returning to the idyllic outport of his imagination toward the end of his career, Pollett sought to preserve a pastoral vision that increasingly was being eschewed by his contemporaries. Indeed the issues of tradition and transition were now being handled quite differently by some new writers. In one characteristic article appearing in 1948, entitled "You Can't Go Home Again," an author in a few key sentences reduced to backwardness and doubtful accomplishment the history of outport traditions over hundreds of years.[70] Still, many other writers of the day created "typical" outports and made them colorful by locating in them drama between Hollywood-style gangsters and stereotypical country bumpkins, the latter's unschooled language and quaint thought being likened to doltishness.[71] Pollett's renewed if simplified effort to record in his final articles and stories a richly textured past was, in contrast, a more pleasing vision, and

inspired one reader to dedicate a poem to him in 1954, when he was publishing his last pieces. It was entitled "Come Back Ron Come Back," and it urged him to "tell us all about your Newfoundland ....Ere the happy mem'ries fade."[72] The phrase "your Newfoundland," whether intentionally or otherwise, nicely suggested that Pollett's outport was an artificial construct, and pointed up the ironic contrast between his delight in the now idyllic, static outport of his imagination and his own youthful impatient longing to leave his real outport home to explore the world outside. It was perhaps for other, later Newfoundland writers to explore the cultural changes in the world they knew, and provide a more complete and perhaps more balanced version of outport life as they perceived it.

iv

In his writing Pollett attempted to preserve a record of the outport experience as he saw it. The collapse of Guardian Associates Ltd. by 1957, however, was an event that seemed destined to send Pollett's name and work to oblivion. Yet there was a small attempt to ensure his fame.. In 1956 Pollett's publisher praised The Ocean at My Door as "worthy of a place in any home and school;" and evidence suggests that it was sometimes used in the schools as a supplement to world history texts and literary classics.[73] As native source material, it could provide accurate detail for study of cultural history. In focussing on the everyday past, Pollett researched neither the mainstream political nor cultural events of the first half of the twentieth century in Newfoundland, but rather suggested how great events affected the lives of ordinary outporters, from the excitement of seeing the first trains of the Bond and Morris years to the enthusiasm of Confederation brought about by "Joey" --"The Man with the Bow Tie."[74] His work is an accurate record of the common man's history; and his particular scrupulousness in providing detail presents something of a treasure-trove for the modern day folklorist. The book was never added formally to the provincial school syllabus, however, an omission perhaps indicating that local administrators and teachers were unwilling or unable to locate a place for it in the traditional courses of study, or that the world evoked in it was too close in living memory to be of interest to students. It is thought that

Pollett's publications were nevertheless partly responsible for the formal recognition the Atlantic Guardian received in 1955 for preserving the region's "cultural assets," this farther afield, on the mainland of Canada.[75] In Newfoundland, as in the rest of Canada, pedagogical reaction toward undertaking formal study of local art and culture was, at best, conservative.

Pollett was, primarily, a chronicler, though he could also be an engaging storyteller. Like some other writers of his day, he succeeded in capturing in literature a sense of the traditional outport way of life in its various manifestations, such as its religious tensions, its dialects, and its distinctive exaggerated mode of humour. In his popular short story, "Rum in the Puddin'" for example, Uncle Bill jiggles his wife's elbow, tipping the contents of a rum bottle into a Christmas pudding meant to be served to their dinner guests, four Salvation Army soldiers. Bill knows that his guests think of the liquor as "the devil's brew," but tells his wife, "Don't spare the horses, Martha, me maid...Christmas only comes once a year."[76] She later pulls off the pudding's calico cooking wrapper, and watches the raisins in "the rum-soaked enigma" stare out at her "like a hundred accusing eyes."[77] Such small events in the lives of ordinary outporters were frequently the ones that engaged Pollett's attention; but unlike his contemporaries such as Arthur R. Scammell and Ted Russell, Pollett more often does not simply seize upon such an event as the main focus of his stories or articles. In Scammell's fiction, the ordinary events, such as a fisherman's son's act of manfully and charitably parting with his first hard-earned dollar, are similar to the sentimental themes of much of Pollett's juvenile fiction;[78] what is absent in Scammell's stories is a vivid rendering of the particular quality that distinguishes the outport from communities elsewhere. Pollett's ability to evoke a distinctive place, in contrast, is achieved by his particular care in providing naturalistic and sensuous detail; it was his attention to the physical surroundings, no less than to folk customs and lore, that provoked one enthusiastic critic to comment that "even if you were born in the city you can visualize and appreciate the outport, even if you have never before seen an outport."[79] Pollett would, of course, have agreed with most of Scammell's stated opinions about the outport, perhaps even with this rather smug statement in the essay "Outport Heritage": "Newfoundlanders in their little communities have built up something worthwhile,"

Scammell writes, adding that "hundreds of little communities, far removed from the rush and bustle of city life, are rich in true social and spiritual values."[80] Pollett in his writing attempts to make a similar affirmation, but in contrast to Scammell, his way is to linger over details and lovingly explain all that meets his eye rather than issue theses. Within his vignettes and essays there is much anecdotal material that has the potential for weightier literature: we may note, for instance, his allusion to the fisherman who could be as tight-fisted and secretive at sea as he could be generous and companionable on land and who also had inherited the talents of a "seventh son."[81] Nor is this the only character who could do with longer treatment. But there are few eccentrics or bold "characters" in Pollett's community; and in this he is unlike his contemporary, Ted Russell, who began writing seriously and broadcasting his work some years after Pollett and Scammell had already published the bulk of their work in the Atlantic Guardian. Russell's attitude towards the outport is similar to Scammell's as expressed in "Outport Heritage," but his work evades sentimentality through his use of such idiosyncratic "characters" as the members of the Noddy family and its equally eccentric goat, or the shrewd and philosophical narrator of the chronicles, Uncle Mose.[82] These figures and their antics are grounded in a specific place, and indeed they are remarkable; so much so that Russell need not explain the appearance of this "typical" outport in which they live, or the routines which characterize their lives. It is the individual "character," not the place, that matters in Russell. Pollett, however, in his amassing of detail in fictional and nonfictional prose, undertook to describe the distinctive physical layout and cultural history of the outport, and to tell of the aspects of his people's ordinary lives. In Pollett, the people collectively are the center of interest, how they work, where they live.

Any final assessment of Pollett's contribution to local literature must take into account the literary milieu and critical climate of his day. His works appeared when no publishing house existed on the island, and literary culture, such as it was, was confined to a small group of creative writers and journalists living in St. John's.[83] Their criteria for judging literature was rudimentary; they examined authors' use of native culture in literature and proceeded then to bandy about notions of "authenticity." Questions of literary style and form took second place to examin-

ing bald content. Indeed, one reviewer of Pollett's posthumous compilation The Ocean at My Door noted that its content was little more than "simply reminiscent and descriptive," yet at length emphasized the work's intimate recapturing of the local flavour of bygone days: "Here is the taste of figged loaf, excursion biscuits, barksail bread."[84] This list is more reminiscent of Pollett's own predilection for cataloguing than of the techniques of literary criticism. Still, the critic saw something of Pollett's quality, namely his engaging narrative voice, and his ability to evoke a richly textured past. The intimate and sensuous treatment of his topic, making his reader "see one and every outport," was also praised by the novelist Margaret Duley, who hailed Pollett's publications as "Newfoundland gems."[85] Duley, herself an author of serious fiction in which the outport way of life was central, albeit portrayed as sadly insular and parochial, first called for the collection of his pieces in a book "so that his portrayal of the blood and bones of Old Newfoundland will not be lost to posterity."[86] She also found in Pollett's works a vividness in depicting outport life that could aid one in the understanding of the poetry written by Newfoundland-born E.J. Pratt;[87] and as such her comment represents one of the very few hints to be found in contemporary criticism that an authentic literature of Newfoundland indeed existed prior to the literary stirrings of the mid-1940s.

The Newfoundland reading public in the 1940s and 1950s was perhaps larger than is supposed, the most popular item being fiction for adults.[88] In Pollett's works (and of course in Scammell's) the country's readers were possibly seeing for the first time in print a focus upon the everyday life they knew, and reactions to his publications ranged from the reader who "eagerly looked forward to each one," to another who declared: "he wrote of the outport with such feeling that it ate into one's soul."[89] In his enthusiasm to record all he could remember, Pollett often resorted to the images of "panorama," "picture," and "scene," at times enjoining his readers to personalize these with details from their own wealth of recollection. Indeed it is difficult to recapture the enthusiasm ordinary readers, living during a time of war and upheaval, must have felt in discovering a literary recreation of their own world. They responded to his voice; and Pollett himself once said that in his desire to reach the broadest range of readers he deliberately tried to

keep his narratives "simple and spiced with hyperbole."[90] Clearly, he did not have exaggerated notions of his own talent: he would refer to his writing as "a talent for stringing words together."[91] On occasion he indulged in self-mockery, such as when he described poetically the nymph-like splashings of his wife at the "sylvan retreat" of a local waterfall, only to be told by her, "it's about the best place ever for people who don't have a bathtub at home." Pollett responded, typically, "And so it goes. I breathe rhetoric and hyperbole; I create immortal lines at the snap of a finger– and my wife reduces it to soap!"[92] The artlessness of most of Pollett's prose involved his readers not only in his own personal story, but in his view of the timeless, quality of the outport experience. His was a subjective, nostalgic view, although in depicting it and winning for it considerable acclaim, the importance of Pollett's specific audience of the day cannot be underestimated. If in writing of the city he thought of his readers as ordinary folk "picking out the words by lamplight in some far-off fishing cove,"[93] then he knew that he had to exercise the greatest caution when recording aspects of their familiar milieu. Published letters from both readers and writers in the Atlantic Guardian suggest the scrutiny given publications in each issue by readers. This occurrence alone made the journal a lively forum of debate, allowing anyone to have a say in sanctioning or deriding writers' handling of Newfoundland topics. Realism, above all, was demanded. And Pollett supplied it. When memory failed, he asked older outporters to supply the forgotten detail; and perhaps in this context of gauging authenticity, his greatest success in rendering outport life can be supposed from the response of one reader who was questioned about whether she read Pollett's writings– she said, "I lived them."[94] Beyond the sentimentalism of his works, Pollett had recaptured a good part of the cultural fabric that had shaped his own past. It also seemed to have been that part which his critics and readers wanted to recall as their own.

But Pollett also wrote of another, distinctly different place and time, and, in the years since his demise during which there have been no dearth of stories and accounts immortalizing the traditional outport, his careful focus on the émigré experience is perhaps Pollett's most significant contribution to the island's literature. This experience, though little studied, is also an important

part of Newfoundland society and culture. A small number of islanders have produced short, descriptive items to describe the experience of the city, but these pieces fail to bore into the nature of daily life known to the expatriated Newfoundlander: indeed, most are written by mere Newfoundland tourists. Autobiographical tales of youthful adventure-seeking in Manhattan and Brooklyn, such as those briefly spun by Violet Randell in Thursday's Child, and by Joseph R. Smallwood in I Chose Canada, are presented as the mere sojourns that they were, and end with the sure knowledge of return to the familiar homeland.[95] The Rev. Philip Tocque, whose preoccupation with the details of monuments and other city structures resembles Pollett's city essays, was also a visitor, not a dweller, in Manhattan, and his "Incidents of a Visit to New York," gives one no sense that there are inhabitable sites in the city.[96] In contrast, Pollett's depictions of the city provide a truer portrait: he provides as much statistical data as any interested tourist, but goes further in attempting to describe the daily interaction between Newfoundlanders and other dwellers in "the big city." Adaptation to urban lifeways was demanded of them, and he documents the attempt. That the possibility of a return to the truly familiar way of life within their new milieu was inconceivable, he knew. "Land enough to build a wharf, stage, flake, house and cabbage garden--about an acre--would run to half a million dollars on the New York waterfront," Pollett wrote."[97] His usual emphases on struggle, alienation from home, and unrealized dreams, do not make for a pleasant picture; however, his work is the single personal account of the uprooted Newfoundlander that exists in literature. As such, it has been said "that part of Pollett's value as a writer is that he speaks for a mute multitude of emigrant Newfoundlanders."[98] His writing reflects the émigré experience in its many aspects: the unrewarding experience of the city which in turn fostered his creation of the outport idyll; and the loneliness in the absence of a familiar community in the major centre in which he felt both attracted and alienated. Writing for him was cathartic; it was also a way of responding to his desire to bridge the distances of time and space that separated him from his native land. As a Newfoundland author in a foreign land, he dwelt on his cultural heritage, and exercised his literary talents, in an effort, perhaps, to feel more at home. In so doing, he expressed a part of the cultural history of his people.

ABBREVIATIONS

A list of abbreviations used in Notes and Bibliography:

ACHL- A.C. Hunter Library (Newfoundland Section), St. John's

CNS- Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland

MHG- Maritime History Group, Henrietta Harvey Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland

MUN- Memorial University of Newfoundland

MUNFLA- Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive

PANL- Provincial Archive of Newfoundland and Labrador

SPG- Society for the Propagation of the Gospel

NOTES

Preface

[1] Samuel Johnson, The Rambler, no.60, Saturday, 13 Oct.1750; rpt. in The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson, vol. 3, Eds. W.J Bate and Albrecht B. Strauss (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1969), p.322.

[2] Oral history as a research technique is increasingly being accepted as an invaluable tool for historical and biographical studies, particularly in the study of subjects where written records are non-existent. One staunch advocate of this technique is Edward D. Ives, and research methods outlined in his book, The Tape- Recorded Interview (Knoxville, Tenn.: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1980), have been used for the interviews undertaken for this study. See David J. Mitchell, "'Living Documents': Oral History and Biography," in Biography, vol. 3 (Fall 1980),pp. 283-96, which addresses the important issues of oral history as a complement to, not a substitute for, written sources and the reliability of human memory. He emphasizes the need for a cautious, critical approach to oral evidence.

I. New Harbour Boyhood

[1] Garry J. Cranford, with Raymond Hillier, Potheads and Drumhoops: A Folk- History of New Harbour, Trinity Bay (St. John's: Harry Cuff, 1983), p.7. I am indebted to Mr. Cranford for loaning me the lengthier, unedited manuscript of this book, much of which documents eighteenth- and early nineteenth- century New Harbour life.

[2] Op. cit., p.8. The original source is the Trinity Census, 1800-1801.

[3] Op. cit., p.9. See also the research on the early history of New Harbour and the Newhook family in the Nimshi Crewe Collection, P4/13, Box 9, Files 227 and 228, PANL.

[4] Newfoundland General Assembly. Abstract Census and Return of the Population of Newfoundland and Labrador (St. John's: Ryan and Withers, 1845) (hereafter cited as Abstract Census).

[5] Cranford, Potheads, p.10. A more substantial treatment of the economically depressed 1830s in New Harbour is provided in an unpublished essay by Cranford entitled "The Dirty Thirties," in his private collection.

[6] I am indebted for these references to Garry J. Cranford, from material supplied by Monsignor Raymond Lahey, whose research at the S.P.G. Archive, London, England, covered a broader range of materials than is available in Newfoundland. See also the numerous pleas for meal "for the relief of the poor in this Place," in the correspondence of New Harbour merchants and officials of the period to Magistrate Robert Pinsent, Harbour Grace, in Harbour Grace,

Newfoundland, Magistrate's Office, Coll-3, File 19, CNS Archives, MUN. Other strata of local society apparently were affected: the circuit preacher serving New Harbour, Rev. W. Bullock, for example, wrote to Archdeacon Edward Wix on Nov. 13,1833, of the "miserable destitution to which the church in this island is reduced." Of his parishioners, who were expected to provide a measure of his personal support, he said, "When I reflect upon their starving condition during the three past years, I cannot but anticipate a full measure of suffering for my own large and helpless family." See S.P.G., "C" Mss., Box 1A/20, A192, p.45, PANL.

[7] See James C. Faris, Cat Harbour: A Newfoundland Fishing Settlement, Newfoundland Social and Economic Studies, no.3 (St. John's: MUN, 1972),pp.160-1, for a discussion of Christmas "times." For a description of "times" similar to that obtained from informants in New Harbour, see Aubrey M. Tizzard, On Sloping Ground: Reminiscences of Outport Life in Notre Dame Bay, Newfoundland (St. John's: Breakwater, 1984), pp.124-8. The English traditional custom of "janneying" or "mumming" in its characteristic Newfoundland patterns and ritual activities is described in Herbert Halpert, "A Typology of Mumming," in Herbert Halpert and G.M. Story, Eds., Christmas Mumming in Newfoundland: Essays in Anthropology, Folklore, and History (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press,1969), pp.34-61. Ron Pollett records various local Christmas customs practised in New Harbour, in "Where Christmas is Christmas," Atlantic Guardian Dec.1946; rpt. in The Ocean at My Door and Other Newfoundland Stories (St. John's: Guardian Associates Ltd.,1956), pp.38-44 [hereafter, cited as Ocean (1956)]. These included annual parades by local members of the Loyal Orangemen's Association and Society of United Fishermen, community carolling and church teas for children. See also a student essay by C. George Brown, "Traditions which Exist in the Woodman Area of New Harbour, Trinity Bay in General and the Repertoire of Aubrey John Woodman in Particular," Ms.72-94, pp.14-22,MUNFLA.

[8] S.P.G., Report of the Year 1830 (London: C.J.G. and F. Rivington, 1831), p.184 (Hereafter cited as SPG, Report); and Government of Newfoundland, Journal of the General Assembly of Newfoundland, 1845 (St. John's: W.R. Shea, 1845),p.185, in which it is noted that £15 worth of materials to finish the schoolhouse's construction still were needed.

[9] Abstract Census, 1869 (St. John's: R. Winton, 1870), passim; and SPG, Reports, 1830-60, passim.

[10] Garry J. Cranford, "Potheads and Drumhoops." Various incidents involving schoolteachers' and school inspectors' visits to parents in the village to inquire why they were not sending their children to school are noted in this source. The original sources are certain SPG Reports not available in Newfoundland. See also an unsigned letter, "New Harbour School Festivities," Harbor Grace Standard, 25 Sept. 1880, p.2, in which it is stated: "The only thing one desiderated was a larger attendance of parents and friends, who in other places generally muster in good force on such festal occasions as these. The people in these parts are singular somewhat in this respect: for some reason or other they have little interest in what goes on around them--except it be to try to catch fish, or jig squids."

[11] Lloyd George, in "Some Heritage Values of the Area [from New Harbour to Blaketown] Served by the Lions Club," lecture, Lions Club 11th Annual Charter Night, New Harbour, Trinity Bay, 28 March 1981, provides a survey of local constables and their usual duties from 1823 onwards; the date and stipulations of compulsory education are noted in Frederick W. Rowe, The Development of Education in Newfoundland (Toronto: Ryerson, 1964), p.71.

[12] Anglican Church of Newfoundland, "Anglican Ministers' Registry," Queen's College Archive, St. John's. The evangelical nature of tasks accorded to local missionaries is outlined in annual reports of the SPG. Elford, the first schoolteacher in New Harbour, is referred to in these reports alternately as "schoolteacher" and "catechist."

[13] Information obtained from Hiram Silk, personal interview, Grand Falls, Nfld., 26 May 1983; and from Guy R. Brassard, "Rev. Arthur C. Waghorne (1851-1900)," Canadian Botanical Assoc. Bulletin, Supp. to vol 13, no. 2 (Apr. 1980), pp.17-18. Brassard notes that Waghorne was Newfoundland's first resident botanist, and that "he collected perhaps close to 10,000 specimens in Newfoundland and Labrador, which eventually made their way to most major herbaria in Europe and North America." Waghorne's publications include "Christmas Customs in Newfoundland," Journal of American Folklore, vol. 6 (1893),p.63; and "Death Signs and Weather Signs from Newfoundland and Labrador," Journal of American Folklore, vol. 13 (1900), pp.297-9.

[14] Much of this information on the year 1901 is from the Census and Return of the Population of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1901 (St. John's: J.C. Withers, 1903). (annual complete censuses, hereafter cited as Census).

[15] Ron Pollett, "The Ocean at My Door," in The Ocean at My Door and Other Newfoundland Outport Stories (Montreal: Guardian Associates Ltd., 1947), p.6 [hereafter this volume referred to as Outport Stories (1947)].

[16] Information about the Newhook and Pollett families obtained from Crewe Collection, PANL, and Cranford, "Potheads and Drumhoops."

[17] Pollett, "The Ocean at My Door," Outport Stories (1947), p.7.

[18] Information about Jim Pollett obtained from Church Registry, Church of St. Augustine, New Harbour, and personal interviews with Ralph Higdon, New Harbour, 1 June 1983, Elsie Thorne, New Harbour, 30 May 1983, Jim Thorne, Bishop's Falls, 27 May 1983, Reg Woodman, New Harbour, 30 May 1983, and other informants.

[19] Church Registry, Church of St. Augustine, New Harbour.

[20] Information about Norah Pollett obtained from Jesse Fogwill, St. John's, telephone interview, 22 June 1983, W. Bramwell Pollett, New Harbour, personal interview, 30 May 1983, and other informants.

[21] Information about the Pollett family obtained from Church Registry, Church of St. Augustine, New Harbour.

[22] Pollett, "The Ocean at My Door," Outport Stories (1947), p.8.

[23] Pollett, "There's No Place Like an Outport," Atlantic Guardian, July,1950; rpt. in Ocean (1956),p.135.

[24] See Joseph R. Smallwood, I Chose Canada (Toronto: Macmillan, 1973), pp.377-98, for descriptions of wages and living conditions in the lumbercamps.

[25] Pollett, "The Ocean at My Door," Outport Stories (1947), p.9.

[26] W.J. Lundrigan, Corner Brook, letter to author, 19 July 1983, and Mildred Johnson, Etobicoke, Ontario, letter to author, 17 July 1983.

[27] Jesse Fogwill, telephone interviews, 19 and 22 June 1983, Mildred Johnson, letter to author, 10 Jan. 1984, W. Bramwell Pollett and Margaret Pollett, personal interview, 9 Sept. 1982.

[28] W.J. Lundrigan, letter to author, 19 July 1983.

[29] Pollett, "The Ocean at My Door," Outport Stories (1947), p.12.

[30] Pollett, "There's No Place Like an Outport," Ocean (1956), p.132

[31] Op. cit., p.143.

[32] Pollett describes these tasks in various essays. See, for example, "The Ocean at My Door," Outport Stories (1947), p.10; "The Garden on the Point," Atlantic Guardian, Oct. 1952; rpt. in Ocean (1956), pp.283-9.

[33] Pollett, "There's No Place Like an Outport," Ocean (1956), p.128

[34] Pollett, "A Born Trouter," Atlantic Guardian Aug. 1946; rpt. in Outport Stories (1947), p.24.

[35] Jesse Fogwill, telephone interview, 22 June 1983.

[36] W. Bramwell Pollett, personal interview, 30 May 1983.

[37] New Harbour Bridge, located between the two central areas of residence in the village, was a traditional meeting place for all villagers. It was a focal point of activity during Pollett's lifetime, and every local informant reminisced about it. Pollett describes activities on the bridge in various essays. See, for example, "The Bridge," Atlantic Guardian, May 1951; rpt. in Ocean (1956), pp.207-19; and "Johnny the Pear," Atlantic Guardian, Feb.1951; rpt. in Ocean (1956), pp.179-97.

[38] Pollett. "Afraid in the Dark!" Atlantic Guardian, (Oct. 1954); rpt. in Ocean (1956), p.297.

[39] Op. cit., p.301.

[40] Op. cit., p.300.

[41] Pollett, "The Bridge," Ocean (1956), p.217.

[42] Bonfire Night was another occasion Pollett wrote about often. See especially "Johnny the Pear," a fictional character sketch in which Bonfire Night is one of two central events informing the action of the narrative. An academic treatment of the significance of Bonfire Night, its traditional rituals and functions, may be found in Catherine Ann Schwoeffermann, "An Exploration of the November Fifth Bonfire Celebration in Brigus, Newfoundland" (M.A. Thesis, MUN, 1981). For descriptions of local adaptations of these annual rituals in New Harbour, see C. George Brown, ms.72-94,pp.33-5, MUNFLA.

[43] Jim Thorne, Bishop's Falls, personal interview, 27 May 1983, and Charles Hillier, Grand Falls, personal interview, 24 May 1983. This rather extraordinary occurrence has been corroborated by Reg Woodman,New Harbour, personal interview, 30 May 1983.

[44] Pollett, "Johnny the Pear," Ocean (1956),p.189.

[45] Pollett,"There's No Place Like an Outport," Ocean (1956),p.145.

[46] Hannah Brown, New Harbour, personal interview, 10 Sept.1982, and Charles Hillier, personal interview, 26 May 1983.

[47] Jesse Fogwill, telephone interview, 22 June 1983, W. Bramwell Pollett and Margaret Pollett, personal interview, 31 May 1983, and Harold and Alfreda Rowe, Green's Harbour, 31 May 1983.

[48] Information about Colin Jones, the tasks and responsibilities of Newfoundland teachers, class size, and subjects of study, obtained from Church of England Boards, Report of the Public Schools of Newfoundland (St. John's: Herald Printers, 1905-11) (an annual publication, hereafter referred to as Report].

[49] William B. Blackall, "Inspector's Report," in Church of England Boards, Report, 1907, p.114. Information about Jones's part in raising attendance levels and the quality of teaching is from Blackall, "Inspector's Report," in Report, 1906, p.106.

[50] Ralph Higdon, New Harbour, personal interview, 1 June 1983, and Reg Woodman, personal interview, 30 May 1983. Many other local residents have commented on Pollett's unusually tidy dress and of his speech, the general view is, "you wouldn't know he was from New Harbour."

[51] Blackall, "Inspector's Report," in Report, 1910, p.46; and "Inspector's Report," in Report, 1911, p.44

[52] See especially a detailed, three-page questionnaire devised by Blackall, entitled "Local 'Nature' Observations," in appendix to Report, 1908. A former Anglican school superintendent, R.L. Andrews, has noted, in a letter to the author, 17 Aug. 1983, Blackall's ardent promotion, spanning over twenty-five years, of nature study in Church of England schools, in teachers' colleges, and in publications, such as F.A. Bruton, and Norman M. Johnson, The Bruton Memorial Book of Nature Study for Use in Newfoundland Schools, Books I and II (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd [1932?]), for which Blackall wrote the foreward in 1932. A brief sketch of Blackall's achievements, entitled "Blackall," may be found in S.J. Carew, The Nine Lives of Paton College (St. John's: MUN, 1974), pp.1-2.

[53] Royal Readers, 7 vols. (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, n.d.). In an essay in 1957 by Dr. A.C. Hunter, "The Old Royal Readers," in Clyde Rose, Ed., Baffles of Wind and Tide: An Anthology of Newfoundland Poetry, Prose and Drama (Portugal Cove, Nfld.: Breakwater,[1973]),p.47, it is noted that the texts, designed in 1870, were still in print and their mid-Victorian emphases never updated. A humorous account of the impact on twentieth-century Newfoundland children of the vestiges of early Victorian precepts contained in the Readers may be found in Cyril F. Poole, "The Royal Readers," in his In Search of the Newfoundland Soul (St. John's: Harry Cuff, 1982),pp.5-14. For an extensive treatment of the genesis of these and similar school texts, and their surprising commercial success, see J.S. Bratton, The Impact of Victorian Children's Fiction (London: Croom Helm, 1981).

[54] See Bratton, Victorian Children's Fiction (1981), pp.39-59;103, for an interesting discussion of the functions and popular appeal of "miscellanies," particularly for young boys.

[55] Royal Reader, No.1 (Preface); and Royal Reader, No.4 (Preface).

[56] Pollett mentions these books in various essays such as "The Garden on the Point," Ocean (1956), p.288; and Peter the Grate: An Outport Character Study (St. John's: Guardian Associates Ltd., 1952), p.12. Jesse Fogwill, in a telephone interview, 19 June 1983, recalls a large personal collection of books owned by Pollett, most of which were more sophisticated in subject matter than texts used in school, and which he frequently lent to her. She emphasizes that Pollett was a voracious reader; and this comment has been corroborated by Pollett's sister, Florence Pinsent, Dildo, personal interview, 10 Sept. 1983, and by his contemporary, Ralph Higdon, New Harbour, personal interview, 1 June 1983.

[57] Pollett, "The Bridge," Ocean (1956), p.211. Wordsworth's poem, "Lucy Gray," appears in Royal Reader, No.2, pp.103-5.

[58] Marion Gosse, telephone interview, 2 Apr. 1984.

[59] Council of Higher Education, Newfoundland. Report of the Examinations, 1912- 1914 (St. John's: 1912-14) (annual publication).

[60] Op. cit. Some statistics worth noting: in 1912, 1373 students sat for Primary examinations, and 484 passed, 889 failed (Report of the Examinations, 1912, p.105); in 1913, 1031 students sat for Preliminary examinations, and 577 passed, 454 failed (Report of the Examinations, 1913, p.85); and in 1914, 590 students sat for the Intermediate examinations, and 340 passed, 250 failed (Report of the Examinations, 1914, p.83). In addition, records of grades kept by the Department of Education confirm Pollett's abilities– information from these records obtained from Len Babcock, Department of Education, St. John's. The information about Pollett's teachers obtained from Church of England Boards, Report, 1911-16.

[61] Pollett, "The Bait Punt," Atlantic Guardian, Aug.,1954; rpt. Ocean (1956), p.291.

[62] Clarence Cranford, St. John's, personal interview, 29 June,1983; Max Cranford, New Harbour, personal interview, 1 June 1983; Jesse Fogwill, telephone interview, 22 June 1983. Pollett frequently mentions this routine in essays such as "There's No Place Like an Outport," Ocean (1956), p.134.

[63] Pollett, "The Bridge," Ocean (1956), p.210. The strict adherence in New Harbour to the custom of not undertaking work on Sundays has been discussed frequently in interviews, particularly in terms of examples of punishments incurred when community members did not abstain from labour. But see Faris, Cat Harbour, p.134, where it is noted that the stricture is more a folk than a Christian taboo.

[64] Caroline Pike, Brooklyn, N.Y., personal interview, 14 Mar.1983.

[65] Reg Woodman, New Harbour, personal interview, 30 May 1983.

[66] Pollett, "The Garden on the Point," Ocean (1956), p.284.

[67] Pollett,"A Born Trouter," Ocean (1956), pp.34-5.

[68] See Bratton, Victorian Children's Fiction, who provides details throughout his study about the incentives for giving reward books, the kinds of books given, and the practice itself,

which according to him dates from the early nineteenth century.

[69] Pollett, "Where Christmas is Christmas," Ocean (1956), p.41.

[70] See Pollett, "The 'Dicky-Bird' Dish," Atlantic Guardian, Dec. 1949; rpt. in Ocean (1956), pp.94-115.

[71] Pollett, "There's No Place Like an Outport," Ocean (1956), p.132.

[72] Patrick O'Flaherty,"The Myth of the Happy Outport: Ron Pollett and Art Scammell," Newfoundland and her Writers videotape series, No.19, MUN, Educational Television Centre.

[73] Frederick W. Rowe, Education in Newfoundland, p.126, notes that the required qualifications of teachers remained basically the same between 1892-1916. These qualifications are outlined in Church of England Boards, Report, 1905, Appendix A, pp.126-9.

[74] Clarence Cranford, St. John's, personal interview, 29 June 1983.

[75] Maurice Burke, in letter to author, 27 Apr. 1983, and in various informal conversations with the author, has noted that the training of teachers in the outport was usually undertaken through an informal agreement between the pupil and the local teacher. Although teachers' training colleges existed in St. John's well before 1914, minimal funds were made available to candidates from the outports. The Education Act of 1916, hailed by Rowe for increasing grants and salaries to Newfoundland schools and teachers, provided sums for teacher training, but only limited numbers of grants were made available to selected prospective teachers from the outports to travel to St. John's, where they would each receive $100 per annum. See Rowe, Education in Newfoundland, pp.126-7, and Governement of Newfoundland, The Education Act of 1916, Sections 49-53 and Schedule G, uncatalogued newspaper file, ACHL.

[76] Blackall, "Inspector's Report," Church of England Boards, Report, 1914-16.

[77] Elsie Thorne, New Harbour, personal interview, 30 May 1983, Leah Thorne, New Harbour, personal interview, 1 June 1983, Jesse Fogwill, telephone interview, 19 June 1983, and other informants.

[78] R.T. McGrath, "Why Recruiting is Low Outside St. John's," The Cadet (Nfld.), March 1916, pp.28-9.

[79] Frederick Rowe, A History of Newfoundland and Labrador (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1980), p.372. Colonel G.W.L. Nicholson, in The Fighting Newfoundlander: A History of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment (St. John's: Government of Nfld., 1964), pp.199-205, describes various recruiting drives undertaken between 1914 and 1915, and the rather stringent requirements for recruits.

[80] W. Bramwell Pollett and Margaret Pollett, personal interview, 31 Aug. 1982, Florence Pinsent, Dildo, personal interview, 10 Sept. 1982, Ronald J. Pollett, Brooklyn, N.Y., personal interview, 3 Mar.1982, and other informants.

[81] These duties of the Supervising Officer are outlined in Council of Higher Education, Newfoundland, Report of the Examinations, 1912, p.56.

[82] Maurice Burke, letter to author, 7 Apr. 1983, includes a xeroxed reproduction of Pollett's certification papers of Jan.1917. Burke has noted in informal conversations with the author that in lieu of formal examinations required of a pupil-teacher in St. John's, a local outport teacher's personal recommendation of the candidate was often sufficient for an outport pupil-teacher to obtain his teacher's certification.

[83] Caroline Pike, Brooklyn, N.Y., personal interview, 3 Mar.1983, W. Bramwell Pollett and Margaret Pollett, personal interview, 9 Sept.1982, and Jesse Fogwill, telephone interview, 19 June 1983. The large number of deaths in New Harbour during 1916 is mentioned frequently in Pollett's writings, and the fact is confirmed in the Church Registry, 1916, Church of St. Augustine, New Harbour.

[84] See Reid-Nfld. Correspondence, "Heart's Content Branch Line 1911-17" file, GN 2/9, Box 6, 48/4/5, PANL; and Melvin Rowe, I Have Touched the Greatest Ship: A Saga of Heart's Content (St. John's: Town Crier, 1976), pp.170-3, for a history of the line, and its local impact.

[85] Pollett, "Johnny the Pear," Ocean (1956), p.179.

[86] Jim Thorne, personal interview, 27 May 1983, corroborated by Raymond Hillier, Rosemead, California, letter to author, 6 Oct. 1983. "Eeling" is mentioned in a biographical sketch of Pollett by Ewart Young in "Guardian Angles," Atlantic Guardian, Sept. 1946, p.1. It is stated that the poem was printed when Pollett was a schoolboy. Pollett's ability to create rhyming stories has been discussed by Marion Gosse, telephone interview, 2 Apr. 1984, Ralph Higdon, personal interview, 1 June 1983, Jesse Fogwill, telephone interview, 27 Mar.1984, and other informants.

[87] Bertha Pollett, in a letter to author written for her by her niece Mildred Johnson, 10 Jan. 1984. The song "Nicholas Tobin" is discussed in chapter four of this thesis, p.73.

[88] Ralph Higdon, personal interview, 1 June 1983, and Reg Woodman, personal interview, 30 May 1983; Jesse Fogwill, telephone interviews, 19 and 23 June 1983, Mildred Johnson, letter to author, 17 July 1983, and other informants.

II. Learning his Trades: The Transient Years, 1917-24

[1] This estimate has been derived from the Census, 1911 and 1921.

[2] Information on the early history of English Harbour may be found in a student essay by Ian Penney, "Research Paper on English Harbour, Trinity Bay," File E-6, MHG.

[3] Penney, in "Research Paper," pp.32-3, notes the extent of emigration of persons between the ages of 20 and 30 during the period 1910-20, adding that the largest age group in the village comprised persons who were between 50 and 70 years old. His source is the Census, 1911 and 1921. Local men's enlistment to fight in The Great War may also account for the decrease, although there were other incentives for leaving. In 1933, Commissioner William Warren Mackenzie Amulree suggested that the inception of the Newfoundland Railway and its branch lines had had serious effects on Newfoundland community life: "Men were lured away from the fishery in the hope of regular and less arduous work." See Great Britain Newfoundland Royal Commission,

Report (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1933), p.40 (hereafter, Amulree Report). For a personal account of the effects of emigration on the people from the English Harbour area, see Violet Randell, Thursday's Child (New York: Carleton Press, 1975).

[4] Pollett, "The Garden on the Point," Ocean (1956), p.287.

[5] Penney, "Research Paper," p.1.

[6] Information about the Frank Penney family, the general tasks of local families, and the high regard accorded to local teachers obtained from personal interviews in English Harbour with Gertrude Bugden, 29 May 1983, Harvey Jones, 29 May 1983, Willis Penney, 29 May 1983, and telephone interview with Jo Ann Penney, 29 May 1983.

[7] Information about Pollett's tasks in English Harbour obtained from personal interviews with Ray Fowlow, Port Rexton, Trinity Bay, 28 May 1983, and Gertrude Bugden, English Harbour, 29 May 1983. The vestry records may be found in All Saint's Church, English Harbour.

[8] Church of England Boards, Report, 1917, p.14; and Report, 1918, p.14.

[9] Jo Ann Penney, telephone interview, 29 May 1983.

[10] Information about the schoolhouse and furnishings is from Church of England Boards, Report, 1917, p.14, where Blackall noted that these were "hardly satisfactory;" and from personal accounts obtained in interviews with Gertrude Bugden, 29 May 1983, and Willis Penney, 29 May 1983.

[11] Church of England Boards, Report, 1917, p.14. The rating system was used regularly, and an outline of its terms of evaluation may be found in each annual report.

[12] The day of Superintendent Blackall's annual visit was an important occasion. According to the accounts of Willis Penney, Gertrude Bugden, and others, students were expected to dress in their "Sunday best," and impress Blackall by demonstrating their progress and good behavior. A humorous account of the trepidation felt on the occasion and shared by students and teachers alike may be found in Cyril F. Poole, "For the Love of Men's Soul's," in In Search of the Newfoundland Soul, p.21.

[13] Church of England Boards, Report, 1917, p.14. The next year, in the Report, 1918, p.42, it was noted that the school board, whose chairman was the minister, Arthur Pittman, had allowed a loan and gift totalling $100 to be used for the local school building.

[14] Blackall, in Report, 1918, p.iii.

[15] Debbie Butler, Queens, New York, telephone interview, 17 Mar. 1983.

[16] Gertrude Bugden, personal interview, 29 May 1983.

[17] Jo Ann Penney, telephone interview, 29 May 1983.

[18] Information about strictures on local activities obtained from Gertrude Bugden, personal interview, 29 May 1983, and Willis Penney, personal interview, 29 May 1983. Church teas,

regular meetings of a local temperance society, and "sales of work" (i.e.,handicrafts), were among the limited social activities in the village.

[19] This photograph is in the possession of Gertrude Bugden, English Harbour.

[20] Gertrude Bugden, personal interview, 29 May 1983.

[21] Pollett's salary is noted in Church of England Boards, Report, 1919, p.19.

[22] Gordon S.A. Cox, in Folk Music in a Newfoundland Outport, National Museum of Man, Mercury Series, Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies, Paper no.32 (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1980), pp.50;54;61;117, implies this traditional relationship between the New Harbour and Green's Harbour communities. Information about Pollett's place of residence and familiarity with the Green's Harbour community obtained from Bertha Burt, Green's Harbour, letter to author, 27 June 1983, Alfreda and Harold Rowe, Green's Harbour, personal interview, 31 May 1983, and Charles and Lucy Thorne, New Harbour, personal interview, 9 Sept. 1982

[23] The physical description of Green's Harbour is based on Cox's depiction, Folk Music, p.16.

[24] An approximation based on the Census, 1921.

[25] Church of England Boards, Report, 1919, p.19.

[26] Bertha Burt, letter to author, 27 June 1983.

[27] See Church of England Boards, Report, 1919, p.iv, where it is noted that the majority of Newfoundland schoolchildren left school by age 12 and before they had passed Grade 5. Martin G. Rowe, in a student essay, "The History of Green's Harbour, Trinity Bay," Ms.G-23, p.77, MHG, notes that this community, historically, had had an especially high illiteracy rate; and in Church of England Boards, Report, 1905-12, in particular, the Green's Harbour school and its students' progress were consistently given poor ratings. Information about local attitudes toward education obtained from Ray Bennett, Green's Harbour, personal interview, 31 May 1983, Vic Cooper, Green's Harbour, personal interview, 31 May 1983, and Harrison Hillier, Green's Harbour, personal interview, 10 Sept. 1982.

[28] Bertha Burt, letter to author, 27 June 1983.

[29] Harrison Hillier, personal interview, 31 May 1983, and Bertha Burt, letter to author, 27 June 1983.

[30] S.J. Noel, Politics in Newfoundland (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1971), p.129, notes that the effect of the Great War on the Newfoundland economy was one of "exceptional prosperity" from the trade in fish. Though the "boom" was short-lived, he says that as a result of it, "Habits developed in this free-spending era, and expectations were aroused, that lingered long after the means of satisfying them had vanished." Teachers' salaries were not affected during the era.

[31] Jesse Fogwill, telephone interview, 22 June 1983; the incident was frequently related to her by Pollett's sister, Clara (now deceased).

[32] Ralph Higdon, personal interview, 1 June 1983, W. Bramwell Pollett, personal interview, 30 May 1983, and other informants in New Harbour.

[33] Education Act of 1916, Section 46(d). The requirements for Grade Two certification also are included in Section 46.

[34] As a result of the Education Act of 1916, more formal requirements had been prescribed for all grades of teacher certification, and a summer school for teachers had been instituted in St. John's. There is no evidence that Pollett attended any such school (attendance roles are listed in Church of England Boards, Report, 1917-19), and it cannot be ascertained whether his non-attendance affected his advancement in the teaching profession.

[35] Bertha Burt, letter to author, 27 June 1983.

[36] Church of England Boards, Report, 1919, p.19.

[37] Bertha Burt, letter to author, 27 June 1983, and Harrison Hillier, personal interview, 31 May 1983. These particular texts have not been located.

[38] Bertha Burt, letter to author, 27 June 1983, Harrison Hillier, personal interviews, 10 September 1982 and 31 May 1983, and other informants in Green's Harbour.

[39] Bertha Burt, letter to author, 27 June 1983.

[40] Census, 1921.

[41] For background details on the Harmsworths' agreement with the Robert Bond government, and a study of the Grand Falls paper mill's inception (which transformed the Newfoundland forest industry into a pulp and paper industry) and its production prior to Confederation, see James Hiller, "The Origins of the Pulp and Paper Industry in Newfoundland," Acadiensis vol.2 (Spring 1982), pp.42-68.

[42] George Hicks, "Newfoundland from Shadow to Sunlight," ms.(1968), p.76, CNS. The citation is from a speech Lord Northcliffe gave to Church Boys' Brigade, Grand Falls, 1909.

[43] Joseph R. Smallwood, Ed., The Book of Newfoundland, vol. 1 (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers Ltd., 1937), pp.23-6. Various informants interviewed in Grand Falls have cited additional leisure activities made available by Northcliffe, such as movies (Northcliffe donated a movie projector prior to 1920), and all of these attractions were available by the time Pollett arrived in Grand Falls. Personal interviews in Grand Falls with Robert Arkeley, 27 May 1983, John Blackmore, 28 May 1983, Charles Edwards 25 May 1983, and other informants.

[44] Smallwood, The Book of Newfoundland, vol. 1, p.23.

[45] Walter Blackmore, Grand Falls, personal interview, 24 May 1983, Jack Brown, Grand Falls, personal interview, 26 May 1983, Hiram Silk, Grand Falls, personal interview, 26 May 1983, and W.T. Howell, Grand Falls, letter to author, 29 June 1983.

[46] Caroline Pike and Ronald J. Pollett, Brooklyn, N.Y., personal interview, 6 Mar. 1983, Walter Blackmore, personal interview, 24 May 1983.

[47] Information about the Exploits Hotel obtained from personal interviews in Grand Falls with Louise Bugden, 25 May 1983, Charles Edwards, 25 May 1983, John Blackmore, 28 May 1983, and Walter Blackmore, 24 May 1983. Mr. Edwards, former town mayor, emphasizes the differences between various hotels in Grand Falls: the Cabot House and the Erin House were similar to the Exploits Hotel in catering to men with skilled positions, whereas a Workman's Hotel catered to general workers, and facilities there could be compared to the bunkhouses men lived in when they worked in lumbercamps. A number of student essays at the Maritime History Group point to other aspects of this historic division between labouring classes in the company town: see, for example, Anne George, "The Grand Falls Pulp and Paper Mill; its Origin, Growth, and Impact on the Surrounding Area", ms. ED-12, MHG.

[48] Charles Edwards, personal interview, 25 May 1983.

[49] The three phases of the town's growth are outlined in [George Hicks?], "Anglo-Newfoundland Company Ltd.: Establishment and Fifty Years of Progress," ms. (in possession of Walter Tucker, Grand Falls), p.10. Being a "closed town" in which Northcliffe owned all property rights, Grand Falls grew according to the A.N.D. Company's needs.

[50] Walter Blackmore, telephone interview, 19 May 1983 and personal interview, 24 May 1983, Charles Edwards, personal interview, 25 May 1983, W.T. Howell, letter to author, 29 June 1983.

[51] Information about the mill's production obtained from [George Hicks?], "Anglo-Nfld. Company," pp.10-12.

[52] Op. cit., pp.11-17.

[53] Op. cit. Figures for manual labourers obtained from this manuscript have been confirmed by John Blackmore, personal interview, 28 May 1983, Charles Hillier, personal interview, 26 May 1983, and Alphonsus Power, 25 May 1983--these men noting that such labourers worked a ten-hour day.

[54] See a student essay by John A. Southcott, "Church and School History of Grand Falls (1905-1940's)," ms. G-18, MHG.

[55] W.T. Howell, letter to author, 29 June 1983.

[56] Walter Blackmore, telephone interview, 19 May 1983.

[57] The specific details of Pollett's poem about the Exploits Hotel were obtained from W.T. Howell, letter to author, 29 June 1983. Other comments and impressions about Pollett as a writer during the Grand Falls years were obtained from Howell, and from Michael Blackmore, telephone interview, 25 May 1983, and Walter Blackmore, personal interview, 24 May 1983.

[58] Michael Blackmore, telephone interview, 25 May 1983; corroborated by Alfreda Silk, personal interview, 26 May 1983.

[59] Michael Blackmore, telephone interview, 25 May 1983.

[60] Information about Emma Hackett, and Pollett's relationship with her, obtained from Walter Blackmore, personal interview, 24 May 1983, Caroline Pike, personal interview, 15 Mar.

1983, Ronald J. Pollett, personal interview, 20 Mar. 1983, Alfreda Silk, personal interview, 26 May 1983, and Hiram Silk, personal interview, 26 May 1983.

[61] W.T. Howell, letter to author, 29 June 1983. A photograph of Pollett, along with other charter members of the Loyal Orange Young Briton Association, is in Howell's possession.

[62] See [Hicks?], "Anglo-Newfoundland Company," pp.13-25, for a detailed account of the conditions leading to the strike. Similar information appears in a student essay by Patrick Melvin, "Grand Falls: Past, Present, and Future," ms. G-16, pp.19-21, MHG.

[63] Church Registry, Church of St. Augustine, New Harbour.

[64] Information about the relationship between Sophia and Jim Pollett obtained from personal interviews with Caroline Pike, 17 Mar. 1983, Ronald J. Pollett, 20 Mar. 1983, Ronald J. Pollett and Caroline Pike, 6 Mar. 1983, W. Bramwell Pollett and Margaret Pollett, 31 May 1982, and other informants.

[65] Jim Thorne, personal interview, 27 May 1983; Jesse Fogwill, telephone interview, 22 June 1983. Other similar information about Sophia Pollett obtained from personal interviews with Ralph Higdon, 1 June 1983, W. Bramwell Pollett and Margaret Pollett, 9 Sept. 1982, Alfreda and Harold Rowe, 31 May 1983, and other informants.

[66] S.J. Noel, in Politics in Newfoundland, p.144, notes that the remarkable period of prosperity during 1914-19 was short-lived, and that in 1919 Newfoundland was "on the brink of economic catastrophe." See his discussion of the political and economic conditions in Newfoundland during the aftermath of the Great War, pp.144-87.

[67] See [Hicks?], "Anglo-Newfoundland Company," pp.18-29, for details about the ending of the strike, and an implied comparison between the remarkably thriving nature of life in the town and most other places in Newfoundland.

[68] See, for example, two notices by R.A. Squires, Colonial Secretary, and by the company, urging more men not to embark on journeys to Grand Falls, in Evening Telegram, 21 Aug. 1921, p.4.

[69] W.T. Howell, letter to author, 29 June 1983.

[70] Walter Blackmore, in a personal interview, 24 May 1983, notes that not until the inception of the Grand Falls Advertiser in 1936 were printing facilities and machinery available in the town. Even then, there were no opportunities for the training of printers.

[71] Government of Canada, Department of Labour, Labour Gazette, 1922 (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1922), p. 263.

[72] Op. cit., p.846.

[73] Pollett, "Memories of 'Didder Hill,'" Atlantic Guardian, Apr. 1951; rpt. in Ocean (1956), p.198; and "The Outport Millionaire," Atlantic Guardian, July 1946; rpt. in Ocean (1956), p.24. A rather dismal portrait of living conditions known to 80 per cent of the population of Montreal during the 1920s is provided in Terry Copp, The Anatomy of Poverty: The Condition of the Working Class in Montreal, 1897-1929 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), pp.70-3.

[74] Peter Neary, in "Canadian Immigration Policy and the Newfoundlanders, 1912-1939," Acadiensis vol.2 (Spring 1982), pp.69-74, notes increasingly restrictive Canadian immigration policies applied to Newfoundlanders by 1920 (whereas previously this group had been treated much the same as "returned" Canadians), and among the stipulations of an Order-in-Council issued in 1920 was the requirement that an immigrant possess $250 and payment for transportation to his destination in Canada. Pollett apparently met these requirements. An estimate of his salary as an apprentice in Montreal is derived from statistics in Government of Canada, Labour Gazette 1921, and Canada, Dept. of Labour, Wages and Hours of Labour in Canada 1920-25, Supp. to Labour Gazette, Jan. 1926 (Ottawa: F.A. Acland, 1926).

[75] The terms of apprentice training for linotype newspaper work are set forth in "Montreal Apprentice Agreement, International Typographical Union, 176," Labour Gazette 1912 (Ottawa: C.H. Parmelee, 1912), pp.546-7; later revisions are set forth in Labour Gazette 1921, pp.892-3, and Labour Gazette 1923, pp.1254-7. This training for newspaper work differed dramatically from the usual apprenticeships for very young men, whose training required a five-year apprenticeship. Information about the particular skills which linotypists were required to learn obtained from International Typographical Union, Lessons in Printing (photocopy of some chapters obtained from Gunnar Janger, New York, and Thomas Kopeck, Colorado Springs, Colo.), each lesson of which all international apprentices was required to master.

[76] Information about the linotype machine may be found in Alexander Lawson, Printing Types: An Introduction (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), pp.6-35; and Victor Strauss, The Printing Industry: An Introduction to its Many Branches, Processes and Products (Washington, D.C.: Printing Industries of America, Inc., 1967), pp.62-93.

[77] Thomas W. Kopeck, letter to author, 13 July 1983.

[78] See Government of Canada, Labour Gazette, 1921-24.

[79] Government of Canada, Labour Gazette 1924, p.861. It is noted in the Labour Gazette 1921, p.799, that New York City was "the only important city to make the change [to the 44-hour work week] without conflict."

[80] This estimated figure derived from Government of Canada, Census of 1921 (Ottawa: F.A. Acland, 1929), figures in Government of Canada, Labour Gazette 1921-1924, and in Government of Canada, Fourteenth Annual Report on Labour Organization in Canada (Ottawa: F.A. Acland, 1925), passim.

[81] Jack Williams, The Story of Unions in Canada ([Toronto?]: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1975), pp.10-11.

[82] Thomas W. Kopeck, letter to author, 13 July 1983. It is noted in various works on American immigration policy that despite increasingly restrictive measures such as quota restrictions on American immigration during 1921-4, Canadians were given preferential treatment. See Marion T. Bennett, American Immigration Policies: A History (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1963), for a study of various measures during the period; William S. Bernard, Ed., American Immigration: A Reappraisal (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1950), p.43; and George M. Stephenson, A History of American Immigration 1820-1924, p.192, which notes that Canada ranked first among countries sending immigrants to the United States, and that Newfoundland was included with Canada.

[83] Pollett is referred to as "boss-linotypist," in a feature story, "Glen Cove Printer to Save Lord Northcliffe Legacy for Some Need of Future," Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Nov. 25, 1924, in "Pollett" file, Brooklyn Eagle Morgue, Brooklyn Public Library. Information about printing firms of the period in Glen Cove obtained from Robert Reed Coles and Peter Luyster van Santvoord, A History of Glen Cove (Glen Cove, N.Y.: privately printed, 1967), pp.37-44; and Daniel E. Russell, Glen Cove, N.Y., letter to author, 29 Dec. 1983.

[84] Coles and van Santvoord, Glen Cove, pp.60-4.

[85] Information about the size and local name of the neighborhood obtained from Caroline Pike, personal interviews, 3 and 15 Mar.1983, Ronald J. Pollett and Caroline Pike, personal interview, 6 Mar.1983, Belle Feaver, Brooklyn, N.Y., telephone interview, 6 Mar.1983, Abe Snow, Coram, N.Y., telephone interview, 18 Mar. 1983, and other informants. The particular area of Park Slope in which Newfoundlanders tended to settle, according to oral report, corresponds closely to the distinct area--from Fifth to Eighth Avenues and Carroll to Twelfth Streets-- in which local Irish residents are noted to have settled. See, Julius Mitzner, Neighborhood Study of the Park Slope Community in Brooklyn (N.Y.: The New York School of Social Work,1940), p.10. No mention of Newfoundlanders as a national group has been located in any of a large number of books focussing on Park Slope or other Brooklyn neighborhoods. An oversight in census data documenting settlers' national origins is possible; see Rowland Tappan Berthoff, British Immigrants in Industrial America 1790- 1950 (N.Y.: Russell and Russell, 1953),pp.5-6;10.

[86] See "Newfoundland" file, Brooklyn Eagle Morgue, Brooklyn Public Library.

[87] See "Glen Cove Printer," Brooklyn Daily Eagle. Information about the legacy derived from Northcliffe's $150 million estate is contained in this article; other sources providing details about Northcliffe and his legacy are: John Braddock, "One Bold Venture that Started a Newfoundland Community and Industry and is Still Developing on a Massive Scale," in W.T. Howell, Comp. 'Moby Joe' (Grand Falls, Nfld.: Price (Nfld.) Pulp and Paper Co.,Ltd., 1968), pp.10-15; and W.T. Howell, letter to author, 29 June 1983.

[88] "Glen Cove Printer," Brooklyn Daily Eagle.

[89] Op. cit. See also Raymond A. Schroth, The Eagle and Brooklyn: A Community Newspaper, 1841- 1955 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1974).

[90] "Glen Cove Printer," Brooklyn Daily Eagle.

[91] Op. cit.

[92] Information about Hester obtained from Schroth, The Eagle and Brooklyn, pp.13;54;143;185;263; and Raymond A. Schroth, Worchester, Mass., letter to author, 3 Jan. 1984.

[93] Pollett, "Memories of 'Didder Hill,'" Ocean (1956), p.198.

III. 'New York-Newfoundlander,' 1925-45

[1] Information about Pollett's place of residence and a general overview of life in the neighborhood obtained from Caroline Pike, Brooklyn, personal interview, 3 Mar.1983, Ronald J. Pollett, Brooklyn, personal interview, 20 Mar. 1983, Belle Feaver, Brooklyn, telephone interview, 6 Mar. 1983, Abe Snow, telephone interview, 18 Mar. 1983, and other informants. See also Pollett's essay, "Memories of 'Didder Hill,'" Ocean (1956), pp.198-206.

[2] Pollett, 'Memories of 'Didder Hill,'" Ocean (1956), p.201.

[3] Op. cit., p.199.

[4] These functions of earlier immigrants from Newfoundland, and local institutions usually organized by or participated in by them, would appear to conform to Raymond Breton's concept of "institutional completeness," a development which enables immigrant groups to maintain their ethnic identity by not depending on services and institutions maintained by the receiving society. See Raymond Breton, "Institutional Completeness of Ethnic Communities and the Personal Relations of Immigrants," American Journal of Sociology, no.70 (1964), pp.193-205. Such a development accounts for what it termed the "beaten paths" theory of migration, in which word-of-mouth information obtained from earlier immigrants about jobs and other necessities provides inducements for later immigrants to emigrate to the same communities. See Peter Morrison, "The Functions and Dynamics of the Migration Process," in Alan A. Brown and Egon Neuberger, Eds., Internal Migration: A Comparative Perspective (N.Y.: Academic Press, 1977), pp.61-72. However, despite the commonplace knowledge in Newfoundland that Brooklyn was a key centre for immigrants-- many people have at least one relative there, in what is referred to as the "Boston States" (Brooklyn is included in this term)-- a study of the Newfoundland community in Brooklyn has never been undertaken. Studies of Newfoundlanders abroad are: Edward Vincent Chafe, "A New Life on 'Uncle Sam's Farm:' Newfoundlanders in Massachusetts, 1846-1859" (M.A. Thesis, MUN., 1982); David William Abbott, Rural to Urban Migration Adjustment: A Study of Newfoundlanders in Toronto (Toronto: York Univ., 1975); Ann Elizabeth Martin, "Up-Along: Newfoundland Families in Hamilton" (M.A. Thesis, McMaster Univ., 1974); and Larry Orton, "Newfoundlanders in Toronto," in Perspectives on Newfoundland Society and Culture: Book of Readings, Maurice A. Sterns, Ed. (St. John's: MUN, 1974), pp.82-3.

[5] Pollett, "Up in the Big City," Part I, Atlantic Guardian, June, 1951; rpt. in Ocean (1956), p.222.

[6] The term, "the jigging ground," is in popular thought associated with the camaraderie among fishermen who converge on a particular fishing ground to "jig," or, fish for, the squid, a bait fish. See a popular song by A.R. Scammell, "The Squid-Jigging Ground," in his collection, My Newfoundland (Montreal: Harvest House, 1966), pp.118-9. Pollett's reactions to Manhattan and Brooklyn obtained from Abe Snow, telephone interview, 18 Mar. 1983.

[7] Pollett, "Memories of 'Didder Hill,'" Ocean (1956), p.199.

[8] Information about Pollett's work routine and work-related activities obtained from Caroline Pike, personal interviews, 3 Mar. 1983, 14 and 15 Mar.1983, Ronald J. Pollett, personal interview, 20 Mar. 1983, and Abe Snow, telephone interview, 18 Mar. 1983.

[9] See Government of Canada, Labour Gazette 1912, p.547, in which an agreement between I.T.U. and Local No.176 states: "Operators shall receive price and a half for all alterations"– such as changes in spelling and punctuation. This clause was unaltered in a new agreement in Montreal in 1921, and must have been in force as well in New York, since all agreements and policies of the union were standardized.

[10] An estimate of Pollett's salary obtained from figures in Charlotte E. Morgan, The Origin and History of the New York Employing Printers' Association, (N.Y.: AMS Press, 1968), p.127; and from xeroxed reproductions of contracts from the period between I.T.U. Local No. 6 and the Printers' League, obtained during a personal interview with Gunnar Janger, New York, New York, 19 Mar. 1983. Snow's comment obtained during telephone interview, 18 Mar. 1983.

[11] Information about Caroline (Gilbert) Pollett and her relationship with Ron Pollett obtained from her, now Caroline Pike, in several personal interviews on 3 Mar. 1983, 15 and 16 Mar. 1983.

[12] Caroline Pike, personal interview, 3 Mar. 1983, Ronald J. Pollett, personal interview, 20 Mar. 1983, Bellle Feaver, telephone interview, 6 Mar. 1983, and Abe Snow, telephone interview, 18 Mar. 1983.

[13] Information about Pollett's wedding obtained from Caroline Pike, personal interviews, 3 and 14 Mar. 1983.

[14] Pollett, "Up in the Big City," Part II, Atlantic Guardian, July, 1951; rpt. in Ocean (1956), p.233.

[15] Abe Snow, telephone interview, 18 Mar. 1983. As Snow notes, and Caroline Pike corroborates (personal interview, 18 Mar. 1983), this move was often facilitated through Newfoundland-born friends: Pollett, for example, obtained his apartment on 82nd Street with the help of his close friend John Pike, who lived near to Snow in Bay Ridge. Both Snow and Pike formerly lived in Park Slope.

[16] A study of the rapid change in the Park Slope neighborhood during the late 1920s may be found in Julius Mitzner, Neighborhood Study of the Park Slope Community in Brooklyn, pp.5-10; and Timothy O'Hanlon, "Neighborhood Change in New York City: A Case Study of Park Slope, 1850 Through 1980" (M.A. Thesis, N.Y.U., 1982), pp.125-30.

[17] Information about Pollett's homelife obtained from Caroline Pike, personal interviews, 3 Mar. 1983, 14 and 15 Mar. 1983.

[18] Information about Pollett's changing character and new domestic routines obtained from Caroline Pike, personal interviews, 14 and 16 Mar. 1983, and Abe Snow, telephone interview, 18 Mar. 1983. A series of photographs dating from the period is in Ronald J. Pollett's personal collection. Information was also obtained from the "Bay Ridge-Fort Hamilton" file, Long Island Historical Society, Brooklyn.

[19] Details of the card-party activities obtained from Caroline Pike, personal interviews, 3 and 17 Mar. 1983, and Abe Snow, telephone interview, 18 Mar. 1983.

[20] Figures on Pollett's income obtained from Morgan, Printers' Association, p.127; and I.T.U., No.6 contracts of the period. The estimated income thought sufficient during the period is

cited in Caroline Bird, The Invisible Scar (N.Y.: McKay, 1966), p.40. Her source is a public speech by Senator Paul McKay. Bird notes that prior to Oct., 1929, more than two-thirds of American families were living on $2500 per year or less.

[21] Caroline Pike, personal interview, 3 Mar. 1983.

[22] Pollett, "Up in the Big City," Part I, Ocean (1956), p.224.

[23] Information about Pollett's activities during the period obtained from Caroline Pike, personal interviews, 3 Mar. 1983, 15 and 16 Mar. 1983.

[24] Caroline Pike, personal interview, 3 Mar. 1983.

[25] Pollett, "Memories of 'Didder Hill,'" Ocean (1956), p.198.

[26] Ronald J. Pollett, personal interview, 6 Mar. 1983.

[27] Caroline Pike, personal interview, 3 Mar. 1983. Other information about Pollett's working conditions obtained from this interview.

[28] Caroline Bird, in The Invisible Scar, pp.61;79, provides a detailed explanation of "shared employment." Raymond A. Schroth, in The Eagle and Brooklyn, pp. 13;24, suggests that the Eagle's fortunes were better than most other local newspapers, although during the 1930s it began to lose its considerable prestige nationally.

[29] Pollett, "Summer Madness," Atlantic Guardian, Aug.1950; rpt. in Ocean (1956), p.122.

[30] Pollett, "Memories of 'Didder Hill,'" Ocean (1956), p.202.

[31] Information about Pollett's new quarters and routines obtained from Caroline Pike, personal interviews, 3 Mar. 1983 and 14 and 15 Mar. 1983. Caroline Bird, in The Invisible Scar, notes throughout her book that similar practices of sharing and scrimping were typical among American families during the Depression.

[32] Information about Pollett's health condition obtained from Caroline Pike, personal interview, 3 Mar. 1983, and Ronald J. Pollett and Caroline Pike, personal interview, 6 Mar. 1983.

[33] Information about Pollett's newly acquired habits obtained from Ronald J. Pollett and Caroline Pike, personal interview, 6 Mar. 1983, Ethel Mae Barnes, Centerreach, N.Y., telephone interview, 19 Mar. 1983, and Abe Snow, telephone interview, 18 Mar. 1983.

[34] The figure is from Caroline Bird, The Invisible Scar, p.64. She notes that pari-mutuel betting on horse races was legalized in 1933.

[35] Ronald J. Pollett and Caroline Pike, personal interview, 6 Mar. 1983.

[36] Abe Snow, telephone interview, 18 Mar. 1983.

[37] Information about Pollett's plan, his trip to Newfoundland and return to New York, obtained from personal interviews with Caroline Pike, 3 Mar. 1983, and Ronald J. Pollett and Caroline Pike, 6 Mar. 1983.

[38] See Amulree Report, p.78; various other references to the dire conditions of the populace are to be found in this report.

[39] Raymond Hillier, Rosemead, Calif., letter to author, 6 Oct. 1983.

[40] Caroline Pike, personal interviews, 3 and 6 Mar. 1983. Some New Harbour residents indeed thought of their stay as an extended holiday, as noted by Mildred Johnson, letter to author, 17 July 1983, Max Cranford, personal interview, 1 June 1983, and other informants in New Harbour.

[41] For an examination of political and economic conditions leading to Britain's instituting of Commission of Government, see Noel, Politics in Newfoundland, pp.186-214. A graphic description of the "poverty and misery" suffered by Newfoundlanders of the period may be found in Joseph R. Smallwood, I Chose Canada, pp.180-96.

[42] Amulree Report, pp.76-7. In addition, the lack of remittances (totalling approximately $1 million per year) formerly provided by immigrants exacerbated families' financial situations. These remittances, as noted in R.A. Mackay, Newfoundland: Economic, Diplomatic, and Strategic Studies (Toronto: Oxford Univ. Press, 1946),p.72, were reduced by about 75 per cent during the period.

[43] Information about AD Press obtained from Michael Weinberg, N.Y.,N.Y., telephone interview, 14 Mar. 1983. The status and tasks of "law printers" were described in personal interviews in Grand Falls with Walter Blackmore, 24 May 1983, and Bruce Fudge, 25 May 1983; and with Ted Long, St. John's, 27 June 1983.

[44] Information about Pollett's new home, his family's situation, and his new domestic activities obtained from personal interviews with Caroline Pike, 6 and 15 Mar. 1983, Ronald J. Pollett and Caroline Pike, 6 Mar. 1983.

[45] Caroline Pike, personal interview, 3 Mar. 1983.

[46] Pollett, "Memories of 'Didder Hill,'" Ocean (1956), p.199. Information about Prospect Park obtained from "Prospect Park" file, Long Island Historical Society, Brooklyn, N.Y.

[47] Ralph Higdon, personal interview, 1 June 1983, Max Cranford, personal interview, 1 June 1983, and other informants in New Harbour.

[48] Mildred Johnson, letter to author, 17 July 1983.

[49] The inception of the town's newspaper and the ambitions of its young owners are described in Laura Blackmore, "A Boyhood Dream Comes True," Grand Falls Advertiser, 7 July 1980, pp.1-3; and in Fraser Lush, "The Press in Central Newfoundland," Journal [of Business and Commerce, St. John's] (Nov. 1967), pp.29-32.

[50] Pollett's active participation in the development of this newspaper was described by Michael Blackmore, telephone interview, 25 May 1983, and by Walter Blackmore, telephone

interview, 19 May 1983, and personal interview, 24 May 1983.

[51] Walter Blackmore, personal interview, 24 May 1983.

[52] Walter Blackmore, personal interview, 24 May 1983, although Pollett's name is not mentioned in various articles describing the success of the paper, such as L. Blackmore, "A Boyhood Dream," and Lush, "The Press in Central Newfoundland."

[53] Walter Blackmore, personal interview, 24 May 1983.

[54] "Glen Cove Printer," Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Nov. 25,1924.

[55] Walter Blackmore, personal interview, 24 May 1983. Ronald J. Pollett, in a personal interview, 20 Mar. 1983, notes that Pollett and other local Newfoundlanders shared a custom of trading island newspapers they either received in the mail or bought from various local newsstands in Brooklyn and Manhattan which regularly carried Newfoundland newspapers.

[56] Ronald J. Pollett, personal interviews, 6 and 20 Mar. 1983.

[57] Ronald J. Pollett, personal interview, 6 Mar. 1983. The full influence of these popular radio programs on Pollett's later writing can only be conjectured. He would acknowledge the surprising popularity of the "Doyle News Bulletin" very frequently in his prose (see, for example, "On Going Home Again," Atlantic Guardian, Mar. 1949; rpt. in Ocean (1956), p.60; and "Uncle Ben's Adventure," Atlantic Guardian, Sept. 1954; rpt. in Ocean (1956), pp.294-6.). Echoes of "The Barrelman" can also be found in Pollett's writings. See for example his ironic description of an "unusual occupation" in New York in "Up in the Big City," Part II, Ocean (1956), p.232.

[58] Ronald J. Pollett, personal interviews, 6 and 20 Mar. 1983.

[59] Caroline Pike, personal interview, 3 Mar. 1983.

[60] This, apparently, was a remark Pollett often made. It has been relayed by Ethel Mae Barnes, telephone interview, 18 Mar. 1983, Caroline Pike and Ronald J. Pollett, in various interviews, and Abe Snow, telephone interview, 19 Mar. 1983.

[61] Pollett, "The Manly Sport of Handlining," Atlantic Guardian, Sept. 1947; rpt. in Ocean (1956), p.49.

[62] Ronald J. Pollett, personal interview, 6 Mar. 1983; it is also described by Pollett, in "Seven League Boots" Atlantic Guardian, Dec. 1951; rpt. in Ocean (1956), p.256.

[63] Op. cit.

[64] The strong impression of affluence Pollett conveyed is recalled by Alfreda and Harold Rowe, personal interview, 31 May 1983, Max Cranford, personal interview, 1 June 1983, and other local informants.

[65] Pollett, "Summer Madness," Atlantic Guardian, (Aug. 1950); rpt. in Ocean (1956), p.121. This opportunity for the returned immigrant nevertheless has been given some derisive attention in local prose. See, for example, Helen Porter, "They Do it Every Summer," Atlantic Guardian

Jan.-Feb. 1954, p.31; Jesse Beaumont Mifflin, "The Return of the Native," Newfoundland Quarterly, vol.79 (Spring, 1984), pp.43-4;48; and a rhyming sketch entitled "Mary Phool," by Rev. Canon G.H. Earle, Ms. 76-93, Tape C2439, MUNFLA.

[66] Caroline Pike, personal interview, 6 Mar. 1983. Other information about their subsequent activities obtained from her, in personal interview, 17 Mar. 1983, and from David Gilbert, Grand Falls, personal interview, 28 May 1983, Mildred Johnson, letter to author, 17 July 1983, and other informants.

[67] Michael Blackmore, personal interview, 25 May 1983, corroborated by Walter Blackmore, personal interview, 24 May 1983. The brothers' impressions of Pollett's abilities were obtained during these interviews.

[68] Caroline Pike, personal interview, 6 Mar. 1983.

[69] See Peter Neary, comp. "U.S. Bureau of the Census, Newfoundland-born Population," ms., 1971, CNS., which provides statistics of numbers of Newfoundlanders in New York relinquishing their citizenship during the 1920s. Of the approximately 6000 Newfoundlanders said here to reside in New York City, by 1920, 48.7 per cent of the males, and 50.5 per cent of the females had become naturalized.

[70] Information about Pollett's new quarters obtained from Ronald J. Pollett and Caroline Pike, personal interview, 6 Mar. 1983.

[71] Caroline Pike, personal interviews, 14 and 15 Mar. 1983. Other information about his citizenship hearing and political affiliations obtained during these interviews, and from Abe Snow, telephone interview, 19 Mar. 1983. Snow notes Roosevelt's particular popularity among the entire Brooklyn-Newfoundland community. Details of Roosevelt's programs during the period may be found in Elliot Roosevelt, and James Bough, A Rendezvous with Destiny: The Roosevelts of the White House (N.Y.: G.P. Putman, 1975), and Caroline Bird, The Invisible Scar, passim.

[72] Charles C. Sava, New York, N.Y., letter to author, 5 Dec. 1983, in which he includes xeroxed reproductions of the contents of "Ronald Pollett" file, Immigration Section, U.S. Dept. of Justice, New York, N.Y. These documents note that Pollett, prior to 1941, had lived in the U.S. as a "Permanent Resident," which did not enable him to receive federal benefits or to vote.

[73] Abe Snow, telephone interview, 19 Mar. 1983.

[74] Caroline Pike, personal interviews, 3 Mar., 6 and 17 Mar. 1983.

[75] Abe Snow, telephone interview, 19 Mar. 1983.

[76] Information about the resurgence of Newfoundland-related activity during the period, obtained from Belle Feaver, telephone interview, 6 Mar. 1983; the Newfoundland Weekly (N.Y.), 1940-1; R.H. Tait, Newfoundland: A Summary of The History and Development of Britain's Oldest Colony from 1497 to 1939 ([New York?]: Harrington Press, 1939), pp.5-6. Various columns entitled "Newfoundlanders Abroad" and "Who's Who Abroad," in the Atlantic Guardian 1945-6, and the "Newfoundland" file, Brooklyn Eagle Morgue, Brooklyn Public Library, describe these activities. See also Pollett's account in "Memories of 'Didder Hill,' " Ocean (1956), pp.198-206.

[77] Pollett, "Memories of 'Didder Hill,'" Ocean (1956), pp.202.

[78] Pollett, "A Born Trouter," Ocean (1956), p.35.

[79] Information about Pollett's new activities obtained from Caroline Pike, personal interviews, 3 and 17 Mar. 1983.

[80] See also Pollett's description in "Up in the Big City," Part III, Atlantic Guardian (Aug. 1951); rpt. in Ocean (1956), p.240.

[81] This photograph is in the possession of Ronald J. Pollett.

[82] Caroline Pike, personal interview, 3 Mar. 1983.

[83] Blanche Gilbert, Halifax, N.S., telephone interview, 23 June 1983.

[84] Pollett, "A Born Trouter," Ocean (1956), p.36.

[85] Op. cit., pp.36-7.

[86] Ronald J. Pollett, personal interview, 6 Mar. 1983.

[87] Information about Pollett's activities in Cape Cod obtained from Caroline Pike, personal interviews, 3 and 6 Mar. 1983.

[88] Pollett, "A Born Trouter," Ocean (1956), p.37.

[89] Information about Pollett's business venture in Buchans obtained from Mildred Johnson, letters to author, 17 July 1983 and 10 Jan. 1984, Caroline Pike, personal interview, 3 Mar. 1983, and Ronald J. Pollett, personal interview, 20 Mar. 1983.

[90] Ronald J. Pollett, personal interview, 6 Mar. 1983.

[91] Caroline Pike, personal interview, 6 Mar. 1983.

[92] Information about Pollett's activities with his co-workers and about "A Brief for Appellants" obtained from Caroline Pike, personal interview, 3 Mar. 1983, and Ronald J. Pollett, personal interviews, 6 and 20 Mar. 1983.

[93] Information about Pollett's activities obtained from Caroline Pike, personal interviews, 6 and 14 Mar. 1983, and Ronald J. Pollett, personal interviews, 6 and 20 Mar. 1983. The greeting cards are part of a large collection of mementos owned by Caroline Pike.

[94] Information about Pollett's trip to New Harbour obtained from Walter Blackmore, personal interview, 24 May 1983, Ralph Higdon, personal interview, 20 Mar. 1983, Alfreda and Harold Rowe, personal interview, 31 May 1983.

IV. LOOKING HOMEWARD: THE WRITING OF THE OCEAN AT MY DOOR, 1945-55

[1] Information about Pollett's illness obtained from personal interviews with Caroline Pike, 3 and 17 Mar. 1983, and Ronald J. Pollett, 6 Mar. 1983. The seriousness of Pollett's illness can be inferred from Pike's recollection of her husband at their son's high school graduation in June, 1945; she said on 3 Mar. 1983, "Even then we knew he was dying."

[2] Pollett, "Up in the Big City," Part I, Ocean (1956), p.220.

[3] Op. cit.

[4] Caroline Pike, personal interview, 3 Mar. 1983. Other information about Pollett's activities during his convalescence obtained from her in various personal interviews.

[5] Ethel Mae Barnes, telephone interview, 19 Mar. 1983, Caroline Pike, personal interviews, 18 and 19 Mar. 1983.

[6] Blanche Gilbert, telephone interview, 23 June 1983.

[7] Pollett's enthusiastic response to Wolfe was described in personal interviews with Caroline Pike, 3 Mar. 1983, and Ronald J. Pollett and Caroline Pike, 6 Mar. 1983. See C. Hugh Holman, The Loneliness at the Core: Studies in Thomas Wolfe (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State Press, 1975), pp.xv-xvii, which notes a similar first reaction to Wolfe's novel by millions of his readers prior to the 1950s.

[8] See Thomas Wolfe, Of Time and the River: A Legend of Man's Hunger in his Youth (1935);(rpt. Garden City, N.Y.: Garden City Books,[n.d.]). The author's frequent repetition of particular sentences and phrases, such as, "He awakes at morning in a foreign land and thinks of home," makes it difficult for the reader not to grasp the author's major thematic concerns.

[9] Wolfe, You Can't Go Home Again (Garden City, N.Y.: Garden City Books, 1940), p.433.

[10] See the first chapter of Alice Marble, The Road to Wimbledon (N.Y.: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1946), pp.1-17.

[11] Pollett's family notes Pollett's aversion for spectator sports, in various interviews. Documents of the period, in contrast, note the general Newfoundland community's keen enjoyment of them and especially of baseball (the Dodgers were then at their winning best) and the instituting of various Brooklyn-Newfoundland sport teams. See The Bulletin of the Newfoundland Assoc. Inc. of Brooklyn, N.Y., Jan. 1945; and The Newfoundland Weekly (New York), 1940-1.

[12] Marble, The Road to Wimbledon, p.167.

[13] The autographed book still is among Pollett's small collection of books.

[14] A brief survey of the Atlantic Guardian and its editors may be found in Patrick O'Flaherty, The Rock Observed: Studies in the Literature of Newfoundland (Toronto: Univ. of

Toronto Press, 1979), pp.150; 152-4; and a student essay by Joe Jennings, "The Atlantic Guardian 1945-1956," ms., Patrick O'Flaherty collection, CNS.

[15] Brian Cahill, "Guardian Angles," Atlantic Guardian, June-July 1945, p.2.

[16] Brian Cahill, Ottawa, Ont., letter to author, 1 Aug. 1983.

[17] See Richard Gwyn, Smallwood: The Unlikely Revolutionary (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968),pp.61-2, in which Young is singled out as a catalyst for the "golden vision" of Smallwood's leading Newfoundland into Confederation.

[18] Brian Cahill, letter to author, 1 Aug. 1983.

[19] Ewart Young, "Guardian Angles," Atlantic Guardian, Sept. 1946, p.1.

[20] Ronald J. Pollett, in personal interviews, 6 and 20 Mar. 1983, has supplied information about this translation. Various letters written by Rose F. Eggli, Berne, Switzerland, appearing in the Atlantic Guardian between 1946 and 1950, suggest that it was she who undertook the translation.

[21] Information about Pollett's earnings obtained from Caroline Pike, personal interviews, 3 and 6 Mar. 1983, and Ronald J. Pollett, personal interview, 6 Mar. 1983. A statement dated 1955, from the Bank of Montreal, St. John's, where Pollett deposited most of his earnings from his writing, corroborates this estimate (Ronald J. Pollett collection).

[22] Brian Cahill, letter to author, 1 Aug. 1983. The precarious finances of the magazine were noted by Don Ryan, St. John's, telephone interview, 12 Apr. 1983, Joseph R. Smallwood, St. John's, personal interview, 9 Feb. 1983, and other informants.

[23] Arthur R. Scammell, St. John's, personal interview, 31 Jan.1983, and Michael F. Harrington, St. John's, personal interview, 23 Feb. 1983.

[24] Information about Pollett's writing routine obtained from Ethel Mae Barnes, telephone interview, 19 Mar. 1983, Caroline Pike, personal interviews, 3 Mar., 6, and 19 Mar. 1983, and Ronald J. Pollett, personal interviews, 6 and 20 Mar. 1983.

[25] Ewart Young, "Guardian Angles," Atlantic Guardian, Sept. 1946, p.1. Young's enthusiasm for Pollett's work is suggested by the context of this remark; he wrote to readers, "You can depend on it--we are going to keep hammering on his door for more stuff that has a real salt-water tang to it."

[26] Pollett, Foreward, Outport Stories, (1947), p.3.

[27] Op. cit.

[28] Brian Cahill, "Books and Such," Atlantic Guardian, Dec. 1947, pp.26-7.

[29] Op. cit., p.26.

[30] Guardian Associates Ltd., as noted by Harold Horwood, Annapolis Royal, N.S., letter to author, 30 Apr. 1983, was not a publishing house but a printing company which occasionally published books. Among the titles Young published after Outport Stories (1947), are a large number of books which deal exclusively with Newfoundland topics, such as Young's Around Newfoundland with a Camera (1947), and Leo F. English and Ron Pumphrey, Strange Facts about Newfoundland (1948).

[31] Abe Snow, telephone interview, 18 Mar. 1983.

[32] Abe Snow, telephone interview, 18 Mar. 1983.

[33] Pollett, "Summer Madness," Ocean (1956), p.116.

[34] Op. cit., pp.117-8.

[35] Op. cit., p.116.

[36] Charles P. Frank, Edmund Wilson (New York: Twayne, 1970), p.138, cites various reviews of Memoirs of Hecate County, which describe critics' impressions of the book's form; for example, Malcolm Cowley thought it "a grouping of novella," and Harrison Smith thought the book comprised "three short novels prefaced by three short stories." See the 1947 version of the book (N.Y.: Doubleday, 1947), which Frank notes, pp.153-4, was unavailable (in the unexpurgated version) between 1947 and 1959 in the United States, and is still not for sale in New York State.

[37] Ronald J. Pollett, personal interview, 20 Mar. 1983. See similar comments in Frank, Edmund Wilson, pp.14;153-4, where it is noted that the book was banned in New York almost immediately after its publication. Some reasons for its suppression are provided.

[38] Pollett, "There's No Place Like an Outport," Ocean (1956), p.133. Details about their travel obtained from Ronald J. Pollett, personal interview, 6 Mar. 1983. The luxury of their means of travel is described generally in Kenneth Westcott Jones, Romantic Railways (London: Arlington, 1971); see ch. 7, "The 'Newfie Bullet' through the Wilderness," pp.70-81, which provides an account of the train ride and airport facilities of the day.

[39] Pollett, "The Manly Sport of Handlining," Atlantic Guardian, Sept. 1947; rpt. in Ocean (1956), p.46.

[40] Op. cit., p. 51.

[41] Op. cit., pp.51-2.

[42] Op. cit., p.54.

[43] Ronald J. Pollett, personal interview, 6 Mar. 1983. Similar information obtained from Max Cranford, personal interview, 1 June 1983, Hannah Brown, personal interview, 10 Sept. 1982, and other informants in New Harbour.

[44] Clarence Cranford, personal interview, 29 June 1983, Ralph Higdon, personal interview, 1 June 1983.

[45] Ronald J. Pollett, personal interview, 6 Mar. 1983.

[46] Pollett, "On Going Home Again," Ocean (1956), p.76. Here and in other articles, Pollett would frequently refer to his trips as "medicine," or "tonics."

[47] Pollett, "Vignettes of the Village," Atlantic Guardian, Aug. 1949; rpt. in Ocean (1956), p.86.

[48] Op. cit., pp.86-8.

[49] See Patrick O'Flaherty, The Rock Observed, pp.144-9, for an examination of the economic and social effects on Newfoundlanders resulting from Newfoundland's becoming an international strategic outpost during World War Two. Information about changes in New Harbour obtained from personal interviews with Max Cranford, 1 June 1983, W. Bramwell Pollett and Margaret Pollett, 9 Sept. 1982, Charles and Lucy Thorne, 10 Sept. 1982, Elsie Thorne, 30 May 1983, and other informants.

[50] Pollett's disdain of the jukeboxes has been noted in various interviews, with Ronald J. Pollett, 20 Mar. 1983, Charles and Lucy Thorne, 9 Sept. 1982, and other informants. Charles Thorne notes that during the period, even the smallest stores in the area had had the machines installed.

[51] Pollett, "Vignettes of the Village," Ocean (1956), p.83.

[52] Op. cit., p.85.

[53] Pollett, "The Village Goes to Town," Atlantic Guardian, July 1949; rpt. in Ocean (1956), p.80.

[54] Op. cit., p.77.

[55] Ted Thorne,New Harbour, personal interview, 31 Aug. 1982.

[56] See Joseph R. Smallwood, I Chose Canada, pp.235-314, in which the chapter, "A Crusade is Born," describes the radio broadcasts and the political literature that "blanketed the country."

[57] Ronald J. Pollett, personal interview, 6 Mar. 1983.

[58] Jim Pollett's will is in the possession of Ronald J. Pollett.

[59] Pollett, in these articles, emphasized these particular effects of modernization, though many other innovations concerned him. Many informants from New Harbour recall his attentiveness toward the slightest changes he now perceived. This experience preoccupied him long afterward. As his friend Abe Snow noted, in a telephone interview, 18 Mar. 1983, Pollett's views on change and Confederation were not shared by the general Brooklyn-Newfoundland community. They, for the most part, welcomed new developments, this in view of the benefits for their families and friends on the island.

[60] During the period 1947-9, Young frequently published his own editorials and articles in which his favourable views toward Confederation were described. See, for example, his article,

"The Challenge of Confederation," Atlantic Guardian, Sept. 1948, pp.4-8. A curious inconsistency has been noted in many of Pollett's articles from the period. All of these articles, mainly unreceptive to Confederation, refer to "last summer," or "1948" in brackets--which in context suggest that Pollett's trip and the time of writing the articles were in the summer and late fall of 1948; actually, the relevant time was summer and fall, 1947. No explanation can be cited for this discrepancy.

[61] Ronald J. Pollett, personal interviews, 6 and 20 Mar. 1983.

[62] Abe Snow, telephone interview, 18 Mar. 1983.

[63] Ethel Mae Barnes, telephone interview, 19 Mar. 1983.

[64] Information about Armstrong Publications and Pollett's work there obtained from Gunnar Janger, personal interview, 19 Mar. 1983; and Pollett's work file, International Typographical Union, No. 6, N.Y., N.Y.

[65] Pollett, letter to editors, Atlantic Guardian, Oct. 1948, p.9.

[66] Op. cit.

[67] Op. cit., pp.9-11.

[68] Ronald J. Pollett, personal interview, 6 Mar. 1983.

[69] See unsigned article, "Vet's Ball in Brooklyn," Atlantic Guardian, Feb. 1949, pp.35-6.

[70] See Brian Cahill, "Guardian Angles," Atlantic Guardian, Apr. 1949, pp.3-5. Cahill acknowledges Pollett's contributions in the introductory paragraph of the article.

[71] Brian Cahill, letter to author, 1 Aug. 1983.

[72] Brian Cahill, "Guardian Angles," Atlantic Guardian, Feb. 1949, p.3. E.C. Boone, former circulation manager, has noted that the figure for readers per copy was probably as high as ten (in a personal interview, St. John's, 5 July 1983).

[73] A brief historical review of the magazines of the period may be found in Patrick O'Flaherty, The Rock Observed, pp.149-51.

[74] Brian Cahill, "Guardian Angles," Atlantic Guardian, Mar. 1949, pp.12;14.

[75] A discussion of the slogan and the platform, may be found in Joseph R. Smallwood, I Chose Canada, pp.340-72.

[76] This particular attempt by Stirling is described in "Newfoundlanders Seek Aid for Economic Union with U.S.," Brooklyn Eagle, 23 Mar. 1949, "Newfoundland" file, Brooklyn Eagle Morgue, Brooklyn Public Library.

[77] George Smith, Allston, Mass., letter to editor, Atlantic Guardian, Feb. 1950, p.12.

[78] Pollett, "Epitaph for Downey," Atlantic Guardian, June 1949; rpt. in Ocean (1956), p.66.

[79] Brian Cahill, "Guardian Angles," Atlantic Guardian, Mar. 1949, p.14.

[80] Information about Young's offer to Pollett, and about Young's new venture, obtained from personal interviews with Walter Blackmore, 24 May 1983, Michael F. Harrington, 23 Feb. 1983, Caroline Pike, 3 Mar. 1983, and Brian Cahill, letter to author, 1 Aug. 1983. The financial status of the St. John's firm is noted in "Guardian Press Ltd." file, Registry of Deeds, Companies, and Securities, Government of Newfoundland, Dept. of Justice, St. John's.

[81] Caroline Pike, personal interview, 3 Mar. 1983.

[82] Caroline Pike, personal interview, 3 Mar. 1983. The investment is noted in "Guardian Press Ltd." file, Registry of Deeds, Companies and Securities, St. John's. Pollett is among the largest of the shareholders. His occupation is listed as "writer."

[83] Pollett, "There's No Place Like an Outport," Ocean (1956), p.126. Peg Godden, St. John's, personal interview, 12 Feb. 1983, notes that as a former assistant secretary to J.R. Smallwood, she wrote more than 2000 letters per year during the period to prospective tourists. See also various articles in the Atlantic Guardian and other journals of the day promoting tourism.

[84] Pollett, "Rum in the Puddin'," Atlantic Guardian, Dec. 1950; rpt. in Ocean (1956), p.165.

[85] Caroline Pike, personal interviews, 3 and 17 Mar. 1983, notes the occasion in summer, 1933, when she cooked a rum-soaked pudding to be served to a number of Pollett's relatives who belonged to the Salvation Army.

[86] Pollett, "Summer Madness," Ocean (1956), pp.118-9.

[87] Pollett,"Up in the Big City," Part III, Ocean (1956), p. 240.

[88] Abe Snow, telephone interview, 18 Mar. 1983. Snow notes that this was the general consensus among his large circle of Newfoundland-born friends in Brooklyn.

[89] Pollett, "Fun for the Family," Atlantic Guardian, Jan. 1952; rpt. in Ocean (1956), p.260.

[90] Ethel Mae Barnes, telephone interview, 19 Mar. 1983.

[91] See Pollett's descriptions in his essay, "Newfoundland Riviera," Atlantic Guardian, Nov. 1951; rpt. in Ocean (1956), pp.247-9.

[92] Pollett, "The Passing of the Stagehead," Atlantic Guardian, Oct. 1955; rpt. in Ocean (1956), p.303.

[93] Pollett, "On Going Home Again," Ocean (1956), p.61; and "The Village Goes to Town," Ocean (1956), pp.79-80.

[94] Pollett, "Seven League Boots," Atlantic Guardian, Dec. 1951; rpt. in Ocean (1956), pp.256-9.

[95] Pollett, "Home Grown Happiness," Atlantic Guardian, Feb. 1952; rpt. in Ocean (1956), p.267.

[96] Charles Thorne, personal interview, 9 Sept. 1982.

[97] Pollett, "On the Pig's Back," Atlantic Guardian, Mar. 1952; rpt. in Ocean (1956), pp.270-2.

[98] Pollett, "Home Grown Happiness," Ocean (1956), p.266.

[99] Pollett, "The Passing of the Stagehead," Ocean (1956), p.308.

[100] Pollett, Peter the Grate: An Outport Character Study (St. John's: Guardian Associates Ltd., 1952), p.6.

[101] Op. cit., Author's Note, inside back cover.

[102] Accounts of the book's reception obtained from personal interviews in New Harbour with Ada Woodman, 9 Sept. 1982, Louise Woodman 31 Aug. 1982, Neil Woodman, 31 Aug. 1982; telephone interviews with Garry J. Cranford, 7 Sept. 1982, Jesse Fogwill, 22 June 1983, and other informants. For the majority of informants, Peter the Grate is the work for which Pollett is best remembered.

[103] Pollett, Peter the Grate, Author's Note, inside front cover, and p.7.

[104] Caroline Pike, personal interviews, 3 and 6 Mar. 1983.

[105] "Pollett" file, International Typographical Union, No. 6, New York, N.Y.

[106] Caroline Pike, personal interviews, 3 and 6 Mar. 1983; Ronald J. Pollett, personal interview, 6 Mar. 1983. In April 1953, Ewart Young in an editorial explained to his readers that the cause of the Atlantic Guardian's lapse was the failure of Guardian Press, but that the finances of the magazine were sound, Atlantic Guardian, Apr. 1953, p.2.

[107] Caroline Pike, personal interviews, 3 and 6 Mar. 1983.

[108] Ronald J. Pollett, personal interview, 20 Mar. 1983. Pollett's daughter also recalls her father's firm refusal to acquire a television set, telephone interview with Ethel Mae Barnes, 19 Mar. 1983.

[109] Abe Snow, telephone interview, 18 Mar. 1983.

[110] See Atlantic Guardian, Nov.-Dec. 1954, pp.5;13.

[111] Pollett, letter to Ewart Young, 13 June 1955, Appendix, 2 pp.

[112] Walter Blackmore, personal interview, 24 May 1983.

[113] Pollett, letter to Jim Pollett, 14 July 1955.

[114] Op. cit.

[115] Mildred Johnson, letter to author, 10 January 1984.

[116] Ronald J. Pollett, and Caroline Pike, personal interview, 6 Mar. 1983;

[117] Ewart Young, "Ron Pollett Passes On," Atlantic Guardian, Nov. 1955, p.1.

[118] [Laura Blackmore?], "Former Grand Falls Man Dies in Brooklyn, N.Y.," Grand Falls Advertiser, 15 Sept. 1955, p.1.

[119] Ewart Young, letter to Caroline Pollett, 14 Sept. 1955.

[120] Muriel McKay, "A Tribute to Ron Pollett," recorded 13 Sept. 1955, St. John's, Nfld., CJON; rpt. in Atlantic Guardian, Nov. 1955, pp.23-4.

V. POLLETT'S WORKS: RECAPTURING AN OUTPORT HERITAGE

[1] Pollett, Peter the Grate, p.41.

[2] Op. cit., p.17. Compare "Welcome Robin," in Royal Reader, No.2, pp.26-7.

[3] "Glen Cove Printer," Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 25 Nov. 1924.

[4] Information about Pollett's activity as a journalist obtained from Michael Blackmore, telephone interview, 25 May 1983, Max Cranford, personal interview, 1 June 1983, W.T. Howell, letter to author, 29 June 1983, Florence Pinsent, personal interview, 10 Sept. 1982, and other informants. An extensive search of newspapers such as the Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Evening Telegram, Newfoundland Weekly (Boston), and Newfoundland Weekly (New York), was undertaken in order to locate articles by Pollett. Many articles in the American newspapers are unsigned; and authors' use of pen names (such as "The Dolphin" or "Britisher") in the Evening Telegram (not indexed) during Pollett's Grand Falls years (1919-24), makes identification of the authors difficult or impossible.

[5] See "A Night in Newfoundland," Newfoundland Weekly (Boston), 25 Apr. 1925, p.1; and various articles by a "Special New York Correspondent," published in this newspaper between 1924 and 1927.

[6] "A Night in Newfoundland," p.1. Compare Pollett, "Memories of 'Didder Hill,'" Ocean (1956), pp.202-3.

[7] Pollett, "The Outport Millionaire," Ocean (1956), p.21.

[8] The magazine editors' philosophy was stated in each issue of the Atlantic Guardian. The particular enthusiasm the editors felt toward Pollett's early work was stated by Brian Cahill, letter to author, 1 Aug. 1983.

[9] Pollett, "The Ocean at My Door," Outport Stories (1947), p.13.

[10] Pollett, "There's No Place Like an Outport," Ocean (1956), p.127.

[11] Pollett, Forward, Outport Stories (1947), p.3.

[12] Pollett, Author's Note, Peter the Grate, inside back cover.

[13] Pollett, "The Matchmaker," Atlantic Guardian, Feb. 1956, p.5.

[14] Pollett, Appendix, letter to Ewart Young, 13 June 1955, 2 pp.

[15] Pollett, letter to Jim Pollett, 14 July 1955, p.1.

[16] Pollett, "The Passing of the Stagehead," Ocean (1956), p.303.

[17] See full-page monthly advertisements for the book in Atlantic Guardian, Sept. 1956-Dec. 1957. Also noted in these advertisements are various popular reactions to the book, statistics of its sales, and descriptions of the variant issues available. Most of this information was corroborated by Caroline Pike, personal interview, 3 Mar. 1983, who arranged with Young to have the book published.

[18] Ewart Young, "Ron Pollett Passes On," Atlantic Guardian, Nov. 1955, p.1.

[19] See Pollett, "The Outport Millionaire," Ocean (1956), pp.21;24, and "A Born Trouter," Ocean (1956), pp.35;37.

[20] The notion of "fixing," as a conscious process that autobiographers must engage in to define their changing world, is described in Georges Gusdorf, "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography," in James Olney, Ed. Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1980), pp.30-48. Gusdorf notes, p.39, that this process is not a disinterested or objective task; indeed, as Barrett J. Mandel describes the process, it is never impartial and fosters an "illusion of the past." See his essay, "Full of Life Now," in Olney, Ed., Autobiography, pp.60-4.

[21] See Carlos C. Drake, "Literary Criticism and Folklore," in Journal of Popular Culture, vol.5 (1971), pp.287-97. He raises these points, and yet notes the value of the immediacy which such collections impart, in contrast to the "detached and labored quality" of literary accounts which attempt to fictionalize these raw materials.

[22] Pollett, "Let's Look at the Squid," Ocean (1956), p.27, and "Where Christmas is Christmas," Ocean (1956), p.38.

[23] Pollett's numerous references to pictures, scenes, windows, and other modes of visualizing his thoughts and sentiments, often provide more than an image and impart a sense of immediacy, for he often enjoins his reader to see and recall with him the vivid details he remembers or imagines of the outport. At times, however, he lapses into the sentimental and highly personalized nostalgic memory, such as when, on dreaming of a trip home, he merely says that "the superficial glance around the old homestead can unfold an album of memory pictures...good for hours of reverie" "Summer Madness," Ocean (1956), p.120.

[24] Brian Cahill, "Books and Such," Atlantic Guardian, Dec. 1947, p.26.

[25] See Roy Pascal, Design and Truth in Autobiography (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960), pp.3-10, which describes the objective of coherence which the autobiographer strives for. Indeed much of the current writing on the "art of autobiography" likens the crafting of life stories to the techniques of fiction.

[26] Pollett, Peter the Grate, pp.50-2.

[27] Op. cit., pp.46; 52.

[28] Pollett uses this phrase in "The Ocean at My Door," Outport Stories (1947), p.13, and in context, he suggests that no part of his experience, however novel, after leaving this home had made him doubt the rich quality of outport life he said he had known.

[29] Pascal, in Design and Truth in Autobiography, p.177, raises this point about the restrictiveness of autobiography: "The autobiographer can neither get inside other people nor outside himself;" but William L. Howarth expands upon the reason for this limitation, noting that although the form "welcomes all the devices of skilled narration" of historical writing, it "observes few of the restrictions-- accuracy, impartiality, inclusiveness." See his article, "Some Principles of Autobiography," in Olney, Autobiography, p.86.

[30] Pollett, Peter the Grate, p.4. The innumerable times in this work in which Pollett refers to gossip about Peter ("some people said," p.5, or, "Indeed there were those who insisted," p.6) are matched by the number of times which Pollett insists that he has set out to tell the "true," if less colorful, story of the figure. See for example, "Author's Note," inside back cover; pp.5-6; p.46.

[31] These aspects of traditional storytelling have been outlined and scrutinized in a plethora of folklore articles and textbooks. A general discussion of the various forms a personal narrative may take, which in turn impose cerain demands on the teller's technique, may be found in Jan H. Brunvand, The Study of American Folklore, An Introduction (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968). The first person narrative in literature, of course, also can be a standard device serving to impart immediacy and veracity.

[32] Pollett, Peter the Grate, p.11.

[33] Pollett, "Up in the Big City," Part II, Ocean (1956), p.227.

[34] Op. cit., pp.227-8. Various informants from Grand Falls have noted that congegrating at the train station to see who was coming to town was the major source of Sunday night entertainment in the 1920s. Interviews with Robert Arkeley, 27 May 1983, Walter Blackmore, 24 May 1983, Alphonsus Power, 25 May 1983.

[35] Pollett uses this phrase rather ironically to depict a tourist's view of the city in "Up in the Big City," Part I, Ocean (1956), pp.220; 226. Indeed he frequently attempts to dispel the illusion of novelty, by, for instance, describing a Broadway play as "usually nothing more than the kind of tale the village gossip whispers to her neighbor over the back fence" ("Up in the Big City," Part II, Ocean (1956), pp.231-2).

[36] Pollett, "Up in the Big City," Part I, Ocean (1956), p.222.

[37] Op. cit., Part III, p.239; and Part II, p.232. In the latter instance, he is of course referring to such luxury trinkets as gold-plated fishooks available at exclusive shops on Fifth Avenue. Pollett underscores the irony toward the idea of a professional fisherman acquiring such commodities by including them in a list of a "few of the interesting items a fellow who's done well with the fish could buy on a trip to New York," p.232.

[38] Op. cit., Part II, p.228.

[39] Op. cit., Part I, p.221.

[40] See Pollett, "The Manly Sport of Handlining," Ocean (1956), p.52; "Seven League Boots," Ocean (1956), pp.256-7; "Newfoundland Riviera," Ocean(1956), p.242. He has refreshed his memory as a result of his recent trips, and displays his ability to render sensuously the ordinary, natural landscape; although in cases when some years have elapsed between trips, his writing tends to take on an ardent lyrical quality that is uncharacteristic of his usual reminiscent tone. He describes, for instance, how small fish and insects perceive the piles of offal underneath the stages: "cod spleens were emeralds, the eyeballs pearls, the gills ten shades of roses," in "The Passing of the Stagehead, Ocean (1956), p.304.

[41] Pollett, "Newfoundland Riviera," Ocean (1956), pp.242-3.

[42] In stories such as "Ship Ahoy!" Pollett focuses on two key figures--the earnest and diligent fatherless young boy, Ernie Tarn, and the weathered and knowledgeable teacher figure, Uncle Bill. He is careful to note that the pair are always coupled when an important lesson is to be learned. In this case, Ernie Tarn participates with Uncle Bill in a boat race against Old Arch, an inept fisherman who depends on good luck. He observes his uncle exercise sound knowledge of winds, tides, and other nautical skills, which enable the pair to win the race; and as a result Ernie understands why reward is rarely the consequence of mere luck. See the episode in Ocean (1956), pp.158-61.

[43] The choice of narrator of "Johnny the Pear," is an unusual one in Pollett's writing: while most of his child narrators are naive and credulous toward outport life, this one displays a jaded manner toward most events of a traditional nature.

[44] Pollett, "Johnny the Pear," Ocean (1956), p.189.

[45] Op. cit., p.197. It should be noted that this story is far richer in descriptions of the practice of Bonfire Night customs, and also in the recording of the songs and activities at regular meetings on the local bridge, than is Pollett's later essay, "The Bridge," in which similar occasions are merely alluded to.

[46] See Pollett, Peter the Grate, p.64, where he raises the point that Peter was neither a particularly good nor harmful character, and "the cemetaries everywhere are full of people about

whom can be said the same thing." This rather flat and mundane final statement nevertheless alludes to the innumerable phrases from local gossip peppering the narrative, and emphasizes Pollett's concern to redress the simple interpretations generally held about the figure and his qualities.

[47] The latter three magazines, though more "literary," were unabashedly nationalistic in tone and content; and after Confederation, those magazines that managed to endure chose to maintain that outlook. In 1953, Herbert Cranford, the editor of The Newfoundland Story, seized upon the recent Report on Arts, Letters, and Sciences by the Massey Commission, which said that periodicals play a vital part in the arts and represent "the nearest thing to a national literature." He used these findings in order to deride local advertisers' refusals to support local ventures such as his, but instead had supported "those smooth-talking outsiders." See his editorial in The Newfoundland Story, vol.7 (1953), p.1.

[48] This thesis does not attempt to address the entire body of literature of the period from these perspectives. A brief discussion of one local author's use of traditional elements may be found in Roberta Buchanan, "Some Aspects of the Use of Folklore in Harold Horwood's 'Tomorrow Will Be Sunday,'" Lecture, Folklore Studies Assoc. of Canada, Learned Societies Conference, Montreal, 1980, CNS.

[49] See Arthur R. Scammell, "Sea Fever," Atlantic Guardian, June 1945, pp.11-16.

[50] See Scammell, "Buyer Must Be in Good Condition," Atlantic Guardian, July 1948, pp.27-31.

[51] Pollett, "Johnny the Pear," Ocean (1956), p.192.

[52] Pollett, "Newfoundland Riviera," Ocean (1956), p.248.

[53] Pollett, letter to editors, Atlantic Guardian, Nov. 1948, p.9. Among the brief sketches in the magazine by Miles are "The Widow I Met from Corner Brook," Oct., 1948, p.17, and by Sullivan, "Mummering at Christmas," Dec. 1948, p.12.

[54] Letters from readers suggest a thoroughly enthusiastic response to Pollett's collecting-to-interpreting method. The catalogues in, for instance, "Where Christmas is Christmas," were ones he transformed to create a more sophisticated, sensuous treatment for his Christmas story "The 'Dicky-Bird' Dish," which was praised by one reader as "real as a Christmas gift as any I hoped to find under the tree." See George Smith, letter to editors, Atlantic Guardian, Feb. 1950, p.12.

[55] See J.S. Bratton, Victorian Children's Fiction for a detailed examination of this genre of literature and a broad discussion of school Readers.

[56] See Evelyn Everett-Green, Squib and his Friends (London: Thomas Nelson [c.1900]). See Bratton, Victorian Children's Fiction, pp.192-208, which links Everett-Green with the trends of a later school of Victorian fiction, i.e., one that had evolved from evangelical tracts to a more general, moral emphasis in literature.

[57] Alice Marble, The Road to Wimbledon, p.15.

[58] Leo Marx, "The Puzzle of Anti-Urbanism," in Michael C. Jaye and Ann Chalmers Watts, Eds., Literature and the Urban Experience: Essays on the City and Literature. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1981), pp.63-4.

[59] Thomas Wolfe, Of Time and the River, p.141, although the catalogues proceed from pp.137-41.

[60] Pollett, "A Born Trouter," Ocean (1956), pp.35-6; and "Let's Look at the Squid," Ocean (1956), p.27.

[61] Pollett, "Up in the Big City," Parts I and III, Ocean (1956), pp.223;234.

[62] See Pollett, "Memories of 'Didder Hill,'" Ocean (1956), esp. pp.198-203.

[63] Wolfe, You Can't Go Home Again, p.89.

[64] See Edmund Wilson, Memoirs of Hecate County: among the characters who people the book are a recluse who raises turtles, and a repressed housewife, who might make for interesting stories, although the narrator is a distant and smug fellow who is preoccupied with writing a book on art history. He merely imagines some rather bizarre stories about his neighbours, but this gift for the bizzare does not compensate for a complete absence of realism.

[65] Ernest Buckler, The Mountain and the Valley (1952; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1961), p.11.

[66] Charles Bruce, The Channel Shore (Toronto: Macmillan, 1954), p.10.

[67] Muriel McKay, "A Tribute to Ron Pollett," Atlantic Guardian, Nov. 1955, p.21.

[68] Theresa Collier, "One of the Millionaires," Atlantic Guardian, Jan. 1957, p.8.

[69] Marion Wathen Fox, "Two Maritime Advocates," The Maritime Advocate and Busy East, Sept. 1955, pp.29-30.

[70] Rev. Walter G. Jones, "You Can't Go Home Again," Atlantic Guardian, May 1948, pp.44-5.

[71] See for example, Art Harnett, "The Crucifix" Atlantic Guardian, Sept. 1948, pp.17-23; and Gladys M. Cove, "The Fugitive," Atlantic Guardian, Aug. 1948, pp.14-16. This trend in the writing provoked Brian Cahill to issue new directives to potential writers, urging them to ground their stories in the local milieu. See "Guardian Angles," Atlantic Guardian, Nov. 1948, pp.4-6. A review of subsequent issues suggests that his advice went unheeded.

[72] Daisy Mae Billings, "Come Back Ron Come Back," Atlantic Guardian, Apr.-May 1954, p.9.

[73] The citation is from monthly advertisements for the book appearing in the Atlantic Guardian, during 1956-7; its use in the schools has been noted by various informants, such as Brian and Shirley Brown, personal interview, 9 Sept. 1982, David Gilbert, personal interview, 28 May 1983, Don Ryan, telephone interview, 12 Apr. 1983.

[74] Pollett refers to Smallwood in these terms in, for example, "Rum in the Puddin'," Ocean (1956), p.178; and in "On the Pig's Back," Ocean (1956), p.272.

[75] See "Atlantic Guardian Wins Prize Trophy," Grand Falls Advertiser, 29 Sept. 1955, p.4, which describes how the magazine was the first recipient of the Canadian Wine Institute Trophy (won by Macleans in 1956).

[76] Pollett, "Rum in the Puddin'," Ocean (1956), p.167.

[77] Op. cit., p.169.

[78] See Scammell's story, "Hard Cash," Atlantic Guardian, Nov. 1947, pp.9-14.

[79] Muriel McKay, "A Tribute to Ron Pollett," pp.23-4

[80] Scammell, "Outport Heritage," Atlantic Guardian, May 1945, p.12.

[81] See Pollett's, "The Garden on the Point,'" Ocean (1956), pp.287-8; and "The Manly Sport Of Handlining," Ocean (1956), pp.49-50. The seventh son, in folk belief, has inherited the gift for curing minor ailments, such as toothaches.

[82] See Elizabeth Miller Russell, The Life and Times of Ted Russell, (St. John's: Jesperson, 1981), pp.195-6, which records some of Russell's own sentiments toward the value of preserving the outport character in literature. She ignores Ted Russell's earliest attempts at fiction, such as "The Grub Box," and "D-Day at Quidi Vidi," which were frequently reprinted in the various journals of the day, and were indistinguishable from the bulk of parochial topics and amateur fictional attempts rendered by authors of that day. Russelll began broadcasting his series "The Chronicles of Uncle Mose" on C.B.C. St. John's in 1954. These pieces have since been collected in The Chronicles of Uncle Mose (Portugal Cove, Nfld.: Breakwater, 1975) and Tales from Pigeon Inlet (Portugal Cove, Nfld.: Breakwater, 1977).

[83] A comment on the absence of a local publishing industry was obtained from Harold Horwood, letter to author, 30 Apr. 1983. The critical reviews of new literary works that appeared in newspapers and journals of the day give an indication of the literary milieu. In a weekly column in the Evening Telegram by Sylvia Wigh, if a new book alluded to Newfoundland or was by a Newfoundlander, in general the image of Newfoundland was examined, not aspects of the literary style. See for example, her column "The Telegram's Wednesday Bookshelf," Evening Telegram, 5 Sept. 1956, p.7. This nationalistic sentiment, however, was not confined to the literary realm: a provincial archives (1956) and a provincial museum (1955) were now instituted—the past would seem to have taken on a new cultural significance. See Wallace Stegner, "The Provincial Consciousness," Univ. of Toronto Quarterly, vol.4 (Summer 1974), pp.299-310, which addresses the topics of a national literature and its value, and provides a broader framework for these topics by encompassing early directions and developments in Canada and the United States.

[84] Rev. of The Ocean at My Door and Other Newfoundland Stories, Daily News, 23 Nov. 1956, p.7. As a rule, the weekly book reviews in this paper devoted one paragraph to each book. Five paragraphs were devoted to Pollett's book.

[85] Margaret Duley, "Glimpses into Local Literature," Atlantic Guardian, July 1956, p.25.

[86] Op. cit.

[87] Op. cit., p.22

[88] See Michael F. Harrington, "Newfoundlanders Read More Books," The Newfoundlander, Feb. 1953, p.13. In it he also noted the extent of services provided by travelling libraries, and the kinds of organizations and people these facilities served, such as lighthouse keepers and church groups. Similar weekly articles appeared during 1954-6 in the Evening Telegram, in its column "Notes from the Library," many of these articles attempting to guage the response of readers to the recent inception of television on the island.

[89] W.J. Lundrigan, letter to author, 19 July 1983, Raymond Hillier, letter to author, 6 Oct. 1983.

[90] Pollett, Preface, "Uncle Ben's Adventure, Atlantic Guardian, Sept. 1954, p.5.

[91] Pollett, "The Ocean at My Door," Outport Stories (1947), p.6.

[92] Pollett, "Fun for the Family," Ocean (1956), pp.232-3.

[93] Pollett, "Up in the Big City," Part I, Ocean (1956), p.222.

[94] Jesse Fogwill, telephone interview, 19 June 1983.

[95] See Violet Randell, Thursday's Child pp.30-48; and Joseph R. Smallwood, I Chose Canada, pp.126-70.

[96] Rev. Philip Tocque, "Incidents of a Visit to New York [1893]," in Kaleidoscopic Echoes, Ed. Annie Tocque (Toronto: Hunter, Rose Co. Ltd., 1895), pp.168-75. This writing is similar to Tocque's earlier work, A Peep at Uncle Sam's Farm (Boston: Charles H. Pierce and Co., 1851), in which Tocque seeks to document the history, geography, monuments, and industries of Boston and its surrounding cities: the personal touch that would give one a sense of life in any of these places is remarkably absent.

[97] Pollett, "Up in the Big City," Part II, Ocean (1956), p.233.

[98] Patrick O'Flaherty, The Rock Observed, p.155.

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29. "Home Grown Happiness." Atlantic Guardian, Feb. 1952, pp.16-17;19-20.

30. "On the Pig's Back." Atlantic Guardian, Mar. 1952, pp.36-41.

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38. "The Matchmaker." Atlantic Guardian, Feb. 1956, pp.5-11;29-32.

39. The Ocean at My Door and Other Newfoundland Stories. St. John's: Guardian Associates Ltd., 1956. [This volume comprises the items above numbered 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 (in part), 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23-25 (appearing as one article, entitled "Up in the Big City"), 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35 (in part), 36, 37. In all, this volume includes 33 of Pollett's publications, but note that "Uncle Ben's Adventure," which is included, is absent from the table of contents.]

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