

THE JEWS OF ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND:
A RHETORICAL APPROACH TO A
COMMUNITY AUTOBIOGRAPHY

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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THE JEWS OF ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND:
A RHETORICAL APPROACH TO A COMMUNITY AUTOBIOGRAPHY

by

©Alison Joanne Kahn, B.A.

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Department of Folklore
Memorial University of Newfoundland

August 1983

St. John's

Newfoundland

ABSTRACT

The oral tradition of a small community continues as long as there exists a "chain of transmission" to perpetuate the cycle. Through regeneration, the past continues to be sustained, revitalized, in the present. When the future of the community is threatened, for some reason, and regeneration ceases, the chain breaks and the tradition atrophies; eventually, the experience of the past disappears along with the last "links" unless it is translated into a more enduring document for posterity.

The focus of this study is the small Jewish community in St. John's, Newfoundland. It is a community without regeneration now, as older members die and the younger ones move away. The consensus among members is that five or ten years from now, there will be no Jewish community in Newfoundland.

In an effort to "grasp" this community and its "story," I collected life histories from members of the first and second generations. This "multiple life history" approach not only revealed historical information, but also the attitudes and values of those who derive their identities from this community. As each individual shaped his own

past and present in his own words, each contributed to a collective re-creation of a shared past, and an affirmation of community identity.

Two significant questions are asked in this study: what is meant by "community" and, is a community's life story simply a chronicle of its past? A rhetorical approach is used to explore these questions by discerning the thematic and symbolic patterns representing these attitudes and values and, ultimately, by discovering the motives behind the storytelling.

When the testimonies were juxtaposed and analyzed collectively, the rhetorical patterns served to define "community" by revealing its ethos. The rhetoric also exposed the motives behind the telling: the charting of the community in time and space, and an autobiographical impulse which motivated the community to create a monument to itself on the purported imminence of its "death."

This study further demonstrates how folklore -- in this case, the expression of traditional knowledge -- functions to educate by persuading an audience to assume a particular point of view. It also serves a cathartic function by articulating conflict through performance which accomplishes the following: it identifies and enacts conflict; it suggests a resolution to the conflict within the performance

context even if, realistically, such a resolution is impossible to achieve; and finally, by "arguing" for tradition and against change, it reaffirms the tradition of community.

PREFACE

It was a Friday night in the spring of 1981. I sat in a rear pew at Beth-El Synagogue in St. John's, Newfoundland. A spare minyan (the minimum of ten men required for a service) and a sprinkling of women peopled the austere sanctuary. Men rocked and swayed gently, fingering their talesim (prayer shawls) and muttering the ancient Hebrew prayers. Punctuating the hypnotic drone were periodic synapses of prayerful unity, followed by retreat to that rhythmic rocking and davening (praying) in private dialogue with God. I was an outsider to my own faith.

It easily had been years since I had been to a Jewish service for even the most sacred High Holy Days, Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur. I think back and the most immediate association is that hateful weekly ritual for seemingly endless years -- Sunday school -- at the contemporary Reform Temple Israel in the Connecticut town where I grew up. On the major holidays, our parents would insist that we go to services if we were to be allowed to stay home from school. I prided myself on reciting the prayers -- in English, of course -- by memory, although they were words without meaning for me. Eventually, as I reached junior high school

age. I was not even interested in "getting a Jewish holiday off." My closest friends were Protestants and Catholics, or other "low-profile" Jews, and I hated being made to feel different. After all, we hung our Christmas stockings on the fireplace and woke up to brimming Easter baskets too.

At that particular fragile stage of childhood when conformity is paramount, my mother's very "Old Country", Orthodox parents moved in with us. Suddenly, our way of doing things came vehemently face to face with our "forebears" -- the assimilated second and third generation Americans vs. the stubbornly Russian-Jewish, patriarchal tradition. Initially excited, then agitated, finally resentful -- I rebelled. This was an intrusion on our hamburger-and-a-glass-of-milk lifestyle (in disregard of the traditional dietary laws which prohibit the mixing of meat and dairy products).

As a child, when asked, "what I was," I would answer that I was Jewish. It puzzled me that people were (and are still) surprised to learn this. What did they expect? I didn't understand. I would certainly never advertise the fact as some Jews did. I couldn't see the point. After all, what difference did it make? I knew "what I was" and my life nevertheless went easily onward. My real identity was American. I identified with the televised grief of

Caroline and John-John and never blinked over the Six-Day War.

Again, I think back, and a very different association comes to mind. I remember marveling at the seemingly infinite stream of relatives, beyond the realm of great aunts and uncles, into the confounded outer spheres of progressively distanced cousins. Because all of them were somehow family, I remember that instant bond of kinship. And because the occasions for these huge reunions were always marked by some holiday or other celebration, my own deepest identity as a Jew derives from that wonderful sense of belonging to this close knit, extended family -- the humor, the warmth and support I derived from it, and to which I owe many of my earliest and happiest memories.

I open with this preface, a brief glimpse of my own story which perhaps will lend insight to my inquiry. To all of you who so candidly and trustfully told me your stories, and opened your community to me, I dedicate this thesis in gratitude and reciprocity for illuminating the common strands. And for instructing me as to "what I am":

Maurice and Ruth Cohen Wilansky
Lorraine and Larry Nathanson
Ralph and Ella Levitz
Rae Perlin
Donald Wilansky

Bertha Wilansky Kessler
Fanny and Otto Sidel
Bernard and Rosie Levitz
Harry and Sarah Sheffman Pearlstein
Eddie Sheffman
Norman and Sonia Cohen
Sylvia Wilansky Smith
Morris and Sonia Wilansky
Bernard Dubow
Sidney Epstein
Cyril Banikhn
Herb Feder
Graham Wilansky
Ida Sidel
Leonard Levitz
Horace and Anna Rosenberg
Louie and Marian Swersky

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My debt of gratitude extends most deeply to those whose voices emanate from these pages. There is a strong, silent majority, however, without whose multifarious contributions this study could not have been completed. The following members and friends of the St. John's Jewish community welcomed me into their homes, and gave generously of their time and thoughts, not to mention fine cuisine: Barbara and Adrian Fine, Naomi and Simon Skoll, Alison Feder, Ruby and Marge Smilestein, Philip and Tova Auerbach, Leon Alexander, Louie and Grunia Ferman, Wally and Paye Grobin, and Leah Ferman Belfon. My thanks also go out to Philip and Dorothy Riteman, Moishe Kantorowitz, Nardy Nathanson and Rabbi Berman for their kind consideration and interest.

I had the good fortune to work under the supervision of the unflappable Dr. Neil Rosenberg. In that rare, old-fashioned spirit, the good doctor even paid housecalls to administer emergency aid. Most exemplary was his sojourn beyond town, beyond the bay, to the "Washington-States" to edit this manuscript. Neil's personal interest in and enthusiasm for this project, coupled with his patient and

constructive counsel, spurred me along. Dr. David Buchan and Martin Lovelace were always ready with an open ear, a discerning word -- and the odd kick in the pants. Ann Hart, and the staff at the Center for Newfoundland Studies, were invaluable in the pursuit of hunches and otherwise obscure impulses. Edward Schwarz so generously sacrificed a precious Sunday to photocopy some sixty, annoyingly multi-form, old photographs. My father retreated to the basement and transformed the film into negatives for me. The ETV staff at Memorial managed to maintain their composure and smiles despite the deluge of negatives; most deserving of extra thanks is Bill Wheeler who printed photo after photo, I dare say after photo, and most obligingly accommodated my troublesome lay-outs. Historian David Rome, of the Canadian Jewish Congress in Montreal, offered insightful comments and much encouragement. CJC archivist, Judy Nefsky, perused her files and compiled a helpful packet of archive material. For the arduous task of typing this manuscript, I am most grateful to Barbara Lewis and Janet Cason.

My graduate studies could not have been completed in such financial grace without the generous two-year fellowship awarded by Dean Frederick Aldrich of the School of Graduate Studies, and the Archive assistantships offered by the Department of Folklore.

This study is about community and family, and I was fortunate to have been part of several. A special bond forms between fellow graduate students, and they become one's family. On the strength of that connection, I never felt alone; for their compassion and humor, I am grateful to everyone. To those special few -- Jane Burns, Catherine Schwoeffermann, Patti Fulton, Cheryl Brauner -- with whom the laughter and tears, walks, talks and tea flowed constantly and cathartically, I owe more than I can ever say. I must also mention Mrs. Hugley, the Skipper and Jack who made our house feel like home; Michael Jones whose friendship, conversation and quiet confidence helped more than he knows; the gang at 77 Bond Street with whom I passed many pleasurable hours in diversion, in contemplation, in immeasurable learning; my friend, Peter Bundy, whose companionship spanned the miles and the years, and who helped to keep my perspective in tune.

My parents offered nearly four seasons of refuge and, along with my sisters, Lisa and Claudia, tolerance, unflinching support and enthusiasm, faith that the tunnel would indeed end in light and, above all, love. My mother painstakingly translated my raw thoughts into a legible typescript which my father finely edited. This thesis is also for them -- for helping me to become.

A final thank you goes to Newfoundland, a very special island indeed.

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Old paint on canvas, as it ages, sometimes becomes transparent. When that happens it is possible, in some pictures, to see the original lines: a tree will show through a woman's dress, a child makes way for a dog, a large boat is no longer on an open sea. That is called pentimento because the painter "repented," changed his mind. Perhaps it would be as well to say that the old conception, replaced by a later choice, is a way of seeing and then seeing again.

That is all I mean about the people in this book. The paint has aged now and I wanted to see what was there for me once, what is there for me now.

Lillian Hellman
Pentimento

INTRODUCTION

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

In 1935, in a lecture on narration, Gertrude Stein said:

I do not cannot believe that anything is or can be more interesting than the way and the fact that everybody is always telling everything and that anybody can in their own way go on listening or not go on listening. But everybody can feel about telling and about listening like that. Anybody can.

From such a process of telling and listening, I gathered life histories from members of the small Jewish community in St. John's, Newfoundland. Through these testimonies, I hoped to compile an oral history of the community. As I proceeded, a question arose which steered my inquiry: is the life story of a community simply a chronicle of its past? This posed an even more fundamental question: what is meant by "community"? The reference was used frequently, and in several different senses: from the global Jewish community, to the current synagogue congregation in St. John's to the original community "family" comprised of the earliest Jewish settlers and their descendants. The

question of "community," with respect to the latter sense, is the focus and unifying theme of these testimonies.

Through a series of metaphors, descriptions and themes, this community is evoked; it is expressed as a "family," a system of values, a way of life, a space in time, an ethos. Subsequently, the premise that a community's life story represents more than a chronicle of the past forms the basis of this study. This will be demonstrated by a comparative, rhetorical analysis of the testimonies. From this, a symbolic dimension of the collective narratives will be revealed, including exposure of the motives behind the telling; the charting of the community in time and space and an autobiographical impulse which was spurring the community to create a monument to itself. It will also be revealed that the collective has an aggregate voice with its own resonance, greater than the sum of its individual voices.

I propose two approaches which, when combined, demonstrate this concept: first, a multiple life history approach to a community's oral history; and second, a rhetorical approach toward an analysis of the material. The symbolic dimension revealed by this process is that which I have interpreted as a community autobiography, an internal history.

As these individuals shaped their pasts in their own words, each contributed to a collective recreation of a

shared past and an affirmation of their community and culture. The persistent patterns of themes, topics and symbols suggested that an underlying motive was spurring the telling. Its message seemed to be conveyed obliquely by a "community voice." This "voice" is the unconscious articulation of the essential community or "community self." It projects both how the community sees itself now and how it wants to be seen and remembered. This is the process of community mythmaking. It also projects the community's ethos. The ethos of any group, according to Clifford Geertz, is the

tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood; it is the underlying attitude toward themselves and their world that life reflects.²

This image of a "community self" is arguably a metaphor of my own invention. If, however, one regards man as a "symbolizing, conceptualizing, meaning-seeking animal,"³ one can explore, through those symbols, the drive to make sense out of experience and to give it form and order.⁴ Furthermore, if symbols are to be understood as strategies for encompassing situations, then it is important to understand how people define situations and come to terms with them.

The "community voice" accomplishes the objective of identifying both situation and conflict. This is evidenced

in the rhetorical patterns which alluded to an obscure meaning hidden behind the apparent, literal narrative. Through an examination of the rhetoric, I gained access to this symbolic content and formed my own interpretive metaphors. For this strategy, I thank James Olney who wrote, in Metaphors of Self:

It may be that the nearest one can come to definition is to look not straight to the self, which is invisible anyway, but sideways to an experience of the self, and try to discover or create some similitude for the experience that can reflect or evoke it and that may appeal to another individual's experience of the self.⁵

Thus, the creative process by which that "voice" was revealed to me may be regarded as the making of a larger metaphor: an autobiography of a community.

The advent of my research coincided with a traumatic period within the community. While the community had flourished in the 1940's and 50's, its numbers are now dwindling rapidly as the older members die and others leave. "There's nothing more for us here" is a frequent plaint, and the consensus is that five or ten years from now, there will be no community. Some will go so far as to say that the "community" no longer exists but as a shadow of the past. The trauma of facing so bleak a future has heightened their

reflexivity -- their urgency to "tell," to "get the history" -- not only out of nostalgia but with concern for posterity. "Ten years from now," they say, "there won't be a history."

As long as the future was assured, the coddled memories of the present could sustain the past -- could actively harbor it, shape it and transmit it. A finite future, however, makes the past suddenly seem vulnerable and precious, an endangered species unless it is translated into a more permanent medium such as print. Thus, these people feel that unless a "history" is done now, they will lose their past with its lives and its life.

James Olney wrote, in Metaphors of Self: "Only with the coming of death must the self settle its accounts."⁶ Be it death or a consciousness of change and of time lost, the "autobiographical impulse" within this community was pervasive: the desire to selectively order and shape their past into a document that would endure to tell their story after they were gone. It was this impulse to tell and record which met my impulse to inquire.

It should be apparent by now that I have been discussing two objectives for this project: an autobiographical document and an analysis of the narrative collection. This dichotomy was the source of great frustration.

As I neared the end of my interviews, and began the process of sorting the material into a workable form, I realized that I had assumed obligation to two audiences: the St. John's Jewish community and the academic community. The product for each had a singular set of requirements, objectives and mode of presentation. I felt an obligation to complete, for the community, a document to be the product of our cooperative efforts -- that is, an oral history in the form of a multiple life history of the community. If was with this expressed objective that I approached the community, and which consequently stimulated their interest in the project. In effect, I had gathered their life histories on credit with the expectation that I would "return" them in some finished form. I was also interested in a "form" that would make their lives accessible to a wider audience. If the lives of "ordinary" individuals, in cultures and contexts different from our own, are portrayed sensitively and in detail, empathy might be generated between strangers, and a transformation effected. Having created these expectations, for the community as well as for myself, I felt obliged to fulfill them. On the other hand, the more pressing concern was to meet the demands of the academic audience and analyze the material.

The dilemma between the making of a finished product and analyzing the process persists as I write. Ideally, I would

have liked to include both, each complementary to the other, but it is simply not feasible to present all of the testimonies here. Instead, the thesis focuses on the methodological and interpretive processes involved in the making and understanding of that final product. The sections and chapters reflect these processes as follows: the methodological processes of fieldwork, and research techniques and concerns will be discussed in the Methodology section; rhetorical process, as a theoretical approach for breaking down and analyzing a body of related life histories, will be presented in Approach and Analysis; and in Configuration, the findings will be synthesized, and the primary motive behind the testimonies will be identified as autobiographical. I have included an Appendix (Application) containing two sample "texts" (edited testimonies) to demonstrate the form by which a community's life story might be applied and presented. The entire collection, including photographs, will be available under separate cover.

Thus, this thesis serves as an expose of the autobiographical process of a community, and a model for extending the life history method in folklore so as to more fully grasp and represent the "inside" perspective. In addition, it will also demonstrate how folklore functions to reaffirm a sense of "community" at a time when its traditional "life" is threatened, by presenting an "argument" for tradition.

In order to understand this process and the motives, however, a historical perspective is essential. The following chapter offers a tripartite historical context for the St. John's Jewish community: the Old Country, the New World and Newfoundland.

NOTESChapter I:

- ¹ Gertrude Stein, Narration: Four Lectures (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1935), p. 35.
- ² Clifford Geertz, "Ethos, World View and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols," Antioch Review, 17 (1957-58), 42f.
- ³ Geertz, p. 436.
- ⁴ Geertz, p. 436.
- ⁵ James Olney, Metaphors of Self: The Meaning of Autobiography (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1972), p. 29.
- ⁶ Olney, p. 6.
- ⁷ L.L. Langness and Gelya Frank, Lives: An Anthropological Approach to Biography (Novato, CA: Chandler, 1981), p. 1.

Chapter IIHISTORY

Recent studies have challenged the degree to which a life history can stand alone. The argument posed is that the narrative should be "situated" in a cultural and historical context to preclude invalid assumptions and overcome the "foreignness" of the individual and the group.⁸ Clyde Kluckhohn emphasized that the meaning of a life experience will remain opaque to the outsider unless she has an understanding "of the different world in which the subject was lived, felt, thought."⁹ Sidney Mintz maintained that it is imperative for the researcher to know the culture and community in which the individual interacts and sees himself as a member to facilitate understanding of how something is said and why it is said. Therefore, one should consider the patterned experience within a society.¹⁰

It was only after my supplementary research into Jewish European and cultural history that I began to recognize the interdependence between the "little" and "great" traditions as Robert Redfield describes them:

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Great and little tradition can be thought of as two currents of thought and action, distinguishable, yet ever flowing into and out of each other.¹¹

The "little tradition" of the original St. John's Jewish community -- that "taken for granted and not submitted to much scrutiny," in Redfield's words¹² -- is transmitted through the narratives. At the same time, the cultivated "great tradition" of Judaism is handed down, but in the specific, vernacular language and context of the "little" lives as opposed to institutional channels.¹³ While there is a confluence of these two traditions, there is a divergence as well, as will be evidenced later, and members of the community have been forced to choose between the two. In order to avoid intermarriage and "assimilation," and assure the continuity of the "great tradition" (Jewish identity) for their descendants, many members have left St. John's to join the larger Jewish communities in Toronto, Montreal and elsewhere. In this way, the local "little tradition" is being sacrificed for the perpetuity of the "great." Thus, the interaction becomes clear.

On the basis that people are at once products and makers of their social and cultural systems,¹⁴ I will consider some of the influences on this "little tradition." The purpose of the following history is to provide a context for this immigrant group's oral self-portrait.

A persistent topic throughout the testimonies is the "Old Country." It is a point of reference, orientation and contrast; it is a descriptive metaphor for the "old" St. John's community; and it is the embodiment of a nostalgic myth of the past. The "Old Country," then, is not simply a geographical reference but a symbol of the "original" community's identity and ethos. In order to decipher the significance of the association with the "Old Country," it is essential to have a basic understanding of Eastern European Jewish history.

The following section is an historical overview of the political, social and economic influences which shaped the lives and culture of the Eastern European Jewish community in a sustained struggle between assimilation and survival. The polarity is rife throughout the history, and always, the struggle to survive is dominant. Survival is also a major theme pervading the autobiography of the Newfoundland community; the parallels illuminate the confluence of the "little" and "great" traditions.

The threat of cultural dissolution existed throughout the history of Eastern European Jewry. In Eastern Europe, the "disabilities" levied on the Jewish community, including residential restrictions, enclosed the Jews in a predominantly Jewish environment. As Saul Hayes noted:

Everything around him -- language, folk ways, religion, calendar holidays, meals, newspapers and the theater -- was Jewish. He did not need to learn 'Yiddishkeit,' what it meant to be a Jew, or how to be a Jew.¹⁵

While the majority of children (boys) went to school, those who did not could not have escaped a Jewish "street" education. The non-Jewish culture with which they were familiar was often less sophisticated than that of their own, largely because of the traditional Jewish emphasis on education and literacy. Thus, the Jewish way of life dominated the community and the world view of its inhabitants.¹⁶

The question of survival persisted in North America although for very different reasons. In North America, the Jews were a small minority group "individually integrated," as Hayes says,

into the social, economic and political life of the country, while as a group they strive to retain their religious and cultural identity in a democracy which permits them to worship and to live their lives in accordance with their traditions and religious principles.¹⁷

Survival in North America, therefore, became contingent upon the maintenance of Jewish identity (cultural and religious) as a group while in competition with an attractive and sophisticated majority culture. The difference is that survival and development of the North American Jewish

community depends on Jewish consciousness by choice, not merely by birth and environment. Each local community is a link in a chain "which binds them together into one united, nation-wide...Jewish community."¹⁸

I can only begin to suggest the interplay of the myriad factors in the long and complex Eastern European Jewish history. The danger is to oversimplify or idealize for the sake of brevity. Lucy Dawidowicz, in her compilation of autobiographies for The Golden Tradition: Jewish Life and Thought in Eastern Europe, established guidelines to this effect for her own work:

...to show the diversity of Jews and their culture; the centripetal and centrifugal forces that moved them, and the variety they brought to Jewish thought and life. East European Jewry was not, as the sentimentalists see it, forever frozen in utter piety and utter poverty.¹⁹

The "centripetal and centrifugal forces" continued to shape the lives of the transplanted Eastern European Jews in the Newfoundland community as, later, their rhetoric will reveal.

I. The Old Country

Post-Diaspora, world Jewry is divided traditionally into three, primary groups: the Sephardim, the Oriental Jews, and the Ashkenazim. Each is distinguished by its language, customs and liturgy. The Sephardic Jews are of Spanish and

Portuguese descent, and include those who settled in North Africa and elsewhere. Those Jews whose origins lie in the Near and Far East are categorized as Oriental Jews. The Ashkenazim originated from the German Middle Rhine settlements in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and spawned the Yiddish language.²⁰ As the Ashkenazim migrated eastward and inward, the language accompanied them, adapting linguistically to new cultural regions. Consequently, Yiddish was a linguistic hybrid from its inception, the original components being Hebrew, Middle High German, and Romance elements of Old French and Old Italian. Gradually, it absorbed and fused elements of Czech, White Russian, Polish, Ukrainian and some Russian.²¹

The Ashkenazim are again divided into two significant communities -- Eastern and Western Europe. Each community was subject to an entirely different set of external political, social and economic factors which shaped the lifestyles and cultures of the two populations, and determined distinct futures for successive generations. It was the Eastern European Ashkenazim who comprised the majority of all Jewish immigrants to North America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and from whom the original settlers of the St. John's community, and their children, descend.²²

The history of Eastern Europe involved a great deal of boundary shifting, and Russia was the leading antagonist in the complex plot. Many ethnic groups and nations lived under Russian rule. These groups had been absorbed by the Russian Empire following various wars and subsequential partitioning of conquered lands. Among these were the Great Russians (the Russian majority), Ukrainians, White Russians, Armenians, Georgians and Jews.

The Shtetl

The Eastern European Jews lived as a community within the larger community of Russian society. They were self-contained socially by choice, as well as by mandate, in small market towns, or shtetls, from the Middle Ages until the Second World War. The endurance of the shtetl as the characteristic Jewish domicile was a consequence of long-term residential restrictions on state and municipal levels, and general occupational and professional limitations. Though there were exceptions -- periodic policy changes giving greater freedom to the Jews -- the majority were forced to live in these shtetls and manage a living by self-employment. 23.

Often, but not always, Jews were the sole inhabitants of these shtetls. In 1897, when the majority of Russia's Jewish population was confined by law to urban centers (see May Laws, p. 32), the shtetls of White Russia and Lithuania

had the highest Jewish concentration. In Poland, Volhynia and Podolia, Jews comprised nearly half of the shtetl population while in the newly settled southeastern region (the eastern Ukraine) of the restricted Pale of Jewish settlement (see Pale of Settlement, p. 28), only a fraction of Jews were shtetl residents. This area, with its Jewish farming colonies, showed the highest percentage of villagers among the area's Jewish residents.²⁴

In 1898, the majority of Jews in Russia were employed as small traders, peddlers, middlemen, artisans, and "persons without permanent or definite occupation."²⁵ The government's term for Jewish business was "retail commerce." This covered the gamut from peddlers to exporters.²⁶ Competition between businessmen was fierce because they lacked capital and equipment, often had no place of business, and had to rely on short-term credit at high interest rates.²⁷

Jewish artisans, who also lacked capital, equipment, raw material and cheap credit, usually worked for middlemen, supplying materials, or they acted as commission agents of subsidiary suppliers for manufacturers and wholesalers. Independent workers were usually involved in repair work rather than manufacturing. They frequently lacked skills and technical knowledge, and were consequently burdened with poor working conditions and low wages. Trade was the only "escape" which supported the larger section of the community.²⁸

The shtetl demarcated a physical domain with an autonomous system of self-government (kahal, to be discussed below), but it also embraced a fully-developed and self-sufficient cultural and community life which was expressed in a word -- yiddishkeit, or "Jewishness." There was a dialectical tension between the social and religious polarities at play in the shtetl world:

Life is seen as a complex of contrasts which ...are accepted as complementary rather than as conflicting -- Sabbath and the week, Jew and Gentile, the world of Torah and the power of money.²⁹

Zborowski and Herzog point out that the primary opposition was not so much between secular and nonsecular as between Jewish and non-Jewish.³⁰

The concept, "non-Jewish," applied to Jews as well as to Gentiles. Condemnation of one's behavior as "un-Jewish" by the community was the most severe retribution one might receive, next to excommunication. The Eastern European Jew was entirely dependent on the Jewish community for survival, and therefore obligated to the community. Conversely, the survival of the community was contingent upon the solidarity of its members. A system of social control, then, was important to maintain unity. The same "centrifugal-centripetal" forces acted within the St. John's community, reflecting the persistence of the traditional, shtetl

values. There, although the community was tolerant, those individuals who strayed too far from the group were criticized as being "un-Jewish." The state or quality of "Jewishness," then, appears correlative with one's adherence to the system. Each individual was subject to constant judgement and sanctions within the highly communal network.

The following outline is meant to suggest the nature of the system, and it is only to this extent that I rely on my sources. I emphasize this point after encountering "factual" statements which may have implied the ideal social structure but offered no basis for unchallenged acceptance. The most reliable source of information was Celia Stopnicka Rosenthal's study of Jewish social stratification in a Polish shtetl.³¹

A tentative social stratification of a shtetl community is outlined below:

- the rabbi
- the sheyneh yidn (the "beautiful" or cultured Jews)
- the balebatishe yidn (the respectable "middle class" Jews)
- the prosteh yidn (the common, lower class Jews)

A system of values determined social status: occupation, wealth, learning and lineage, or yikhus. The rabbi was the most prestigious individual in the shtetl because he possessed those values ascribed to high status: occupation, learning and yikhus.³²

1. Occupation

People were identified by their trades in the shtetl.³³ The three social classes also formed an occupational hierarchy. Lowest on the scale were the prosteh who were engaged in manual labor or craftsmanship from watchmakers down to barbers, porters and shoemakers. Above them were the balebätishe, or "businessmen," who ranged from small shopkeepers to forest and mill owners. The highest category were the sheyneh, the "learners" or scholars, whose time was devoted to Torah study. They comprised the smallest percentage of the population.³⁴

2. Wealth

The second classification, wealth, was more complex than the latter. The desire for money simply as a means of material purchasing power was a practical incentive but it also allowed one to "purchase" status if it was "used" charitably. Rosenthal found one significant difference between respected wealthy individuals and those who were not:

Respected people used part of their money to do good deeds, mitsvos, for the needy. And, indeed, the common denominator of all good deeds was that they flowed from the haves to the have-nots.³⁵

An added incentive for charity was that the quality of the "afterlife" was believed to be determined by the number of mitzvot performed over a lifetime; therefore, the more

"merits," or zkhus, one accumulated, the more eternally secure one was bound to be.³⁶

The pattern of giving and receiving was not a reciprocal one. While giving brought prestige, accepting charity was shameful. A system of "checks" existed in order to alleviate the shame of the "deprived" individual and thus allowed for a charitable transaction. Donating anonymously or through community collections were two approaches. "Beautification" was another. Essentially, this was an offering of equality to one whose deprivation had lowered his stature; the offering of "surrogates" would at least temporarily eliminate the deprivation, thereby elevating the stature of the deprived individual and restoring the "normal" relationship of equality. A fundamental dialectic of the shtetl was that the assumption of equality was as important as the fact of class differentiation.³⁷

While "beautification" was considered a mitzvah, casting shame upon a deprived individual was a contemptible action. No member of the community was exempt from susceptibility to shame, and this vulnerability formed the foundation of the code of propriety:

'One is not allowed to shame a human being.
...One was not supposed to point to a person's lowly occupation, state of deprivation, bad health, or misfits in the family, for that would produce shame.³⁸

Shame functioned unconsciously, as well, in the shtetl community: first, it prevented people from asking for help because to "beg" implied deprivation which was dishonorable; secondly, shame averted the pain of refusal for both parties; and thirdly, it tended to prevent the abuse of "taking" because "one would not expose himself to the shame of taking unless he were in great need."³⁹

The manner in which money was used was also a gauge whereby one's "Jewishness" was tested. For instance, it would be considered un-Jewish to use one's money only towards the satisfaction of one's physical needs. Regardless of its utilization, however, money was identified with power. Thus, the wealthy individual who may not have used his money charitably was deferred to, and this deference Rosenthal ascribes to:

...Jewish experience with the outside world. Money was the only Jewish value that non-Jews appreciated. Hence, men of wealth had more contact with city officials than the rest of the community.⁴⁰

3. Learning

Learning was the third value and source of prestige. It should be stressed that learning was considered a continuous process. The Torah, the embodiment of Jewish teaching, was said to have "no bottom." A distinction was made between a secularly educated individual and one who "knows how to

learn," or is a "great learner," which connotes a lifelong dedication to this process. Learning was also equated with refinement of manner which assured this individual high status in the community.⁴¹

Learners were essentially supported by the community in order that they might continue to serve the community as teachers. In this service capacity to the community, there was no shame in their receiving material support from the community.⁴²

4. Lineage

The fourth source of status, yikhus, concerned the individual's lineage -- that is, ancestral status, with respect to learning, wealth and charitability. Within a community, the yikhus of its members was general knowledge.⁴³ It functioned as well as an orientation between strangers or in discussing a third party.

According to Rosenthal, those people who were considered to be of great yikhus in the eyes of the community were those

whose families traced themselves back to revered rabbis, greatly learned men, and very rich persons who were community-conscious and gave tzdokoh, justice, meaning charity.⁴⁴

Yikhus was not necessarily cumulative nor hereditary; one had a responsibility to live up to that status. A family

name was not forgotten, but the individual who failed to live up to the standards expected of him would be judged to have "squandered his inheritance." It was said that "a good name is better than money":⁴⁵

The beautiful Jew was long remembered after his death, and when one talked about his son, one always mentioned that the father gave much charity, or that the father was a great learner.⁴⁶

Poland

Prior to 1772, the highest concentration of Eastern Europe's Jews was in Poland. Russia, under Czarina Catherine II, suddenly inherited hundreds of thousands of Polish Jews as a result of three successive partitionings of Poland: in 1772, the major part of White Russia fell to Russia, followed by the remaining area plus the Ukraine in 1793 and Lithuania and most of Poland in 1795. For 145 years, a large minority of Polish Jews lived under the czars in Russia's annexed, southern territories. Thus, those thousands of Eastern European Jews who fled from that region were, geographically and politically, Russian Jews regardless of their native nationalities -- White Russian, Polish, Lithuanian, Latvian or Ukrainian.⁴⁷ References to the Russian-Jewish community, in this discussion, then, also refer implicitly to the Jewish communities of the annexed

Map 1. The Russian Annexations of Poland 1772-1795. Map
courtesy of Martin Gilbert, Russian History Atlas
(London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972), p. 43.

THE RUSSIAN ANNEXATIONS OF POLAND 1772-1795



Polish Kingdom, taking into account the social and cultural variations between these nations.

A decentralized, feudal system in Poland had preserved Jewish autonomy for centuries. Historically, Poland lacked a significant commercial or industrial class; its cities were small, and there was no real industry or shipping. In the fourteenth century, King Casimir the Great encouraged Jewish immigration to Poland by promising such privileges as religious freedom and communal autonomy. His motive was to capitalize on Jewish expertise in trade and the artisan sector so as to develop special intermediary classes which, in turn, would assure the continuing function of the feudal Polish economy. King Casimir's efforts were successful both for Poland and the Jews for the next two centuries. A Jewish economic class was firmly established and assured the survival of the population there.⁴⁸ By the sixteenth century, this part of Eastern Europe had become the center of the world's Jewish population.⁴⁹

The Jews under the Polish kings functioned for centuries as a separate nationality -- an isolated, segregated "ghetto nation" although there were no urban ghettos in Eastern Europe as there were in the West. Nevertheless, Jews spoke a different language, practiced a different religion, and maintained a separate educational system.⁵⁰

By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Jewish corporate communities were organized into officially recognized, autonomous organizations, or kahals. These self-governing networks were endowed with executive power by the crown to collect special taxes from the Jewish community. They also collected taxes towards community services and formed the community's institutional infrastructure including civil administration and judicial and educational systems. Thus, the kahals functioned as the official interface between the Polish-Jewish community and the crown government.⁵¹

It was this longstanding tradition of Polish-Jewish self-government that became the crux of Russia's euphemistically named "Jewish problem." The accustomed autonomy had cultivated, within the community, a separatist solidarity which survived the transition to Russian authority -- to the consternation of Russian officials.

The status of all minority groups in Russia fluctuated under the various czarist regimes. As government policy aimed more fervently toward centralization, the gap between "Russian" and "non-Russian" minorities became increasingly problematic, particularly with respect to the Jews. Western European Jewish emancipation had demonstrated that language substitution -- that is, the majority language for Yiddish -- quickened the process of assimilation. Amalgamation, or

"Russification," was adopted as the vehicle to eliminate minority separatism and to achieve a religiously and culturally homogeneous Russian society, modelled, of course, on the Great Russian majority.

Approaches to amalgamation of the Jews moved between two poles, characterizing what Howard Sachar calls the "schizoid" era: emancipation (meaning "civilization" or "normalization") which would induce exposure to Russian culture through education and occupation and thereby break up the ghetto-like concentration of the community; or restriction which would force the community to abandon their separatist traditions and conform to the Russian majority -- in other words, starvation or apostasy of Judaism.⁵²

For over a century, czarist policy was preoccupied with the "Jewish problem." In 1794, Catherine II (1762-1796) issued a ukase which confined the Jews to a Pale of Settlement, an area delimited by the boundaries of the former Polish Kingdom -- Poland, White Russia, Lithuania, the Ukraine and Bessarabia. In addition, Russian authorities identified the core of Jewish solidarity with the kahal; therefore, repeated efforts to destroy kahal as the organism of Jewish separatism were attempted.⁵³

Alexander I (1801-1825) advocated emancipatory measures on one hand and encouraged Jewish families to settle and farm in the new, southeastern territories. On the other

Map 2. The Pale 1835-1917. Map courtesy of Martin Gilbert, Jewish History Atlas, rev. ed. (New York: MacMillan, 1976), p. 71.

THE PALE 1835-1917



1891 2,000 Jews deported,
many of them in chains

1865 Open to Jews

1891 20,000 Jews expelled

Principal town from which in
1880 began the exodus of
over two million Jews from
the Pale to the United States,
Britain, Europe, South America,
and Palestine

In 1882 500,000 Jews living in rural areas
of the Pale were forced to leave their
homes and live in towns or townlets (shtetls)
in the Pale. 250,000 Jews living along the
western frontier of Russia were also moved
into the Pale. 700,000 Jews living east of
the Pale were driven into the Pale by 1891

The Pale of Settlement, Russian
Jews confined to this area
by laws of 1795 and 1835. By 1885
there were over 4 million Jews
living in the Pale.
Towns within the Pale barred
to Jews without special residence
permits

hand, in a "Constitution of the Jews," he denied them the right to own land. Furthermore, they were to be expelled from all villages and driven back to the larger towns and cities. They were barred from industry and commerce while the number of those obliged to depend on rural commerce and artisan trades multiplied. A population of about one million were "reduced to living on air -- the proverbial luftmenschen."⁵⁴ The term luftmenschen means literally "people of the air" and is used with reference to those individuals who subsisted without visible means of support.⁵⁵ Thus, the verbal intent to "amalgamate" the Jews was contradicted by the terms of the actual edict which further isolated the community from Russian society.⁵⁶

Restrictions continued, and special, long-term military conscription for Jewish children was instigated. The area of Jewish domicile was again reduced as Jews were evicted from Kiev and the surrounding countryside. The Siberian wastelands were opened to Jewish colonization. Several thousand moved east, wooed by an exemption from conscription. The frozen, barren land, coupled with a dearth of equipment and seed, however, made any hope of permanent settlement impossible. The majority of settlers either died or were forced to return to the Pale.

Jewish religious practice was placed under surveillance. Religious literature was censored, and public book-burning

and the ransacking of printers and libraries was commonplace. Nicholas pinpointed religious separatism as the root of the "Jewish problem" and struck a final blow at the official spiritual authority of the Jewish community by liquidating the kahals altogether in 1844. By doing so, he effectively terminated Jewish self-government, and the Jewish community was left in limbo, a group of unrecognized citizens in a country which granted them none of the rights of citizenship. Again, the external restrictions inadvertently strengthened the community internally. Networks of voluntary self-help organizations arose which functioned as an internal support system.⁵⁷

Alexander II's (1855-1881) approach to the "Jewish problem" was one of "quasi-emancipation." He abolished conscription, opened the Russian interior to Jewish merchants, artisans, and the University-educated; Jews were appointed to rural offices and Jewish lawyers were admitted to the Russian bar.

New Jewish communities were established both in the Pale and outside which was comprised primarily of these Jewish wholesale merchants, industrialists, financiers, academicians, artisans and discharged veterans. Their vocations brought them closer to Russian life, and made them more naturally susceptible to amalgamation. They adopted the Russian language (German had previously been the language of

secular instruction in the Jewish government schools), dress, behavior; their children went to Russian schools and were raised in the Russian manner.⁵⁸ In short, they became the "new aristocrats," models of Russian-Jewish life as it could be, and they actively encouraged others to "Russify," and thus escape from their internment.

This "quasi-emancipation" for the small, privileged group generated a new allegiance to "Mother Russia," and a new sensitivity to the opinion of the non-Jewish community. Formerly, in isolation, Russian Jews had been concerned neither with non-Jewish opinion nor with their image to the Gentiles because there was no significant social contact.⁵⁹

The revolt by Congress (Central) Poland against Russian rule precipitated a resurgence of reactionary policy after 1863. All vestiges of Jewish separatism were targeted for elimination by Russian authorities.

In 1881, following the assassination of Alexander II by Russian revolutionaries, rumors of a "secret Jewish conspiracy" provoked a series of pogroms, or raids, throughout southern Russia and the Ukraine, including Kiev, Balta and Warsaw.⁶⁰

Jews became the scapegoats for anti-czarist sentiment as authorities tried to divert hostilities away from themselves. By the end of 1881, 215 Jewish communities in the cities and small towns of southern Russia had been attacked.⁶¹

The regime of Alexander III (1881-1894) signalled the abandonment of efforts to amalgamate the Jews. An alternative policy of oppression and persecution was perpetrated. Only the odd group managed to "escape" through "Russification," which meant withdrawal from the Jewish community, but those numbers were very small.⁶²

October 1881 was the dividing line in Russian-Jewish history. A committee was formed to deal with the "Jewish problem." An outline of legal disabilities for Jews was drafted and endorsed by the government. In May of 1882, these "temporary rules" were issued, and became known subsequently as the "May Laws." This "temporary" policy endured until the Russian Revolution in March 1917.⁶³

The May Laws imposed the following restrictions: no Jews were to settle anew in any rural areas, even within the Pale; exits from the cities were to be closed off; strict quotas in the Russian schools made it necessary for parents to send their children abroad for education; Jews were deprived of professional status and practice; all Jews were to be evicted from Moscow. The Jewish population was no longer represented in the public sector. Private philanthropic and cultural groups had to speak on behalf of Jewish interests before authorities and public opinion.⁶⁴ Thus, Jewish life within the Pale became reminiscent of the Western European urban ghettos of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁶⁵

The last czar, Nicholas II, assumed the throne in 1894, and remained in power until the 1917 Revolution. Counter-revolutionary terrorism by the regime was targeted at the emergent, "exploitative Jewish middle class." In 1903 and 1905, planned and bloody pogroms were waged against Jewish communities in White Russia and the Ukraine. They hit specifically at Kishinev (Bessarabia), Moghilev, Kiev, Odessa, Bialystok and Minsk, to name the major targets. Along with the mob attacks of 1903 and the political exterminations of 1905, generalized pogroms escalated in frequency and violence. The events of 1903, however, had alerted the world to the situation facing Russia's Jewish population, and aroused international protest and support for the Jewish community.⁶⁶

The barrier of the Pale remained stationary until World War I. When war broke out in 1914, Jewish-occupied territory on the Eastern Front was transformed into battlefield, and destroyed by the trafficking armies. Jews residing in Russian-occupied Austrian Galicia fled to Vienna and western Austria. The Jews under German occupation in Lithuania, northwest Poland and the Ukraine were reduced to the lowest means of subsistence. Those Jews remaining under Russian control suffered the worst hardships however.

During the Russian retreat of 1914-1915, the Jews remaining in the German-occupied Pale became a source of

concern to the Russian government. Therefore, in March 1915, they were systematically expelled by its army from the Polish provinces, and from the governments of Kovno in Lithuania and of Kurland. As the war progressed, Jews from provinces threatened by the German and Austrian troops migrated to the large urban centers of the eastern Ukraine. There was a steady movement of Jews from the eastern and southern sections of the Pale; from the shtetls to the larger cities. While rapid German invasion of this territory hampered the total expulsion of the more than two million Jewish inhabitants, approximately 600,000 were driven from their homes into the Russian interior. In the 1915 expulsion, 100,000 people died, and 600,000 lost complete economic security. After 1916, when residential restrictions were lifted, 200,000 refugees attempted to return to Lithuania and northwest Poland in the hopes of finding employment; all they found was ravaged wasteland.⁶⁷

The large minority of Russian Jews were not so ready to abandon their tradition and, in fact, amalgamative measures only provoked resistance and encouraged separatism. Jewish resistance and separatism, the components of the "Jewish problem", became the scapegoat for difficulties with centralization, and other social and political troubles. As unrest grew within Russian society, "liberal," amalgamative measures towards the "Jewish problem" were abandoned for

increasingly oppressive restrictions, leading eventually to government-authorized pogroms throughout southern Russia's concentrated Jewish community; thus, Russia's third and final approach to eliminate the "Jewish problem" was a last resort attempt at annihilation. It was during these final stages that the largest exodus of Russian Jews occurred.

II. The New World

Separatism reinforced the unity of the Eastern European Jewish community and was the primary factor in Jewish survival. Alexander Herzen described it as inner emancipation in the face of external slavery.⁶⁸ This persistent struggle of the community to maintain its distinction from the society at large, preserving its integrity to assure its survival, is also reflected in the St. John's community's autobiography as will be discussed later.

By the end of the nineteenth century, events in Eastern Europe had forced Jews there to shift their sights westward towards a new homeland. There were two major focal points in the line of vision: Palestine and the New World.

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, Zionist groups promoted a return to the Jewish homeland founded on a socioeconomic, political and romantic national vision. Thus, Palestine was transformed from a religious concept to a reality; an actual place where the emigrants

might seek refuge, one among a number, including Western Europe and its colonies, and North and South America.⁶⁹

Jews had settled in the New World as early as the seventeenth century. Sephardic Jews, exiled from Spain and Portugal, comprised the majority of these early settlers. Between 1835 and 1870, there was an influx of German Jews who immigrated to North America.⁷⁰ Relatively few Eastern European Jews came until the May Laws and the pogroms of 1881 instigated mass Jewish emigration that would continue for half a century, and would shift the center of the world's Jewish population from east to west. Between 1892 and 1914, 1,314,000 Russian Jews left the country, primarily by families, and often by entire communities.⁷¹

Jewish immigration to the New World differed from that of other immigrant groups for two reasons. First, Jewish immigration was permanent, while many other nationalities came temporarily to amass enough money and return home. Secondly, Jewish emigration from Europe had so radically shifted the center of Jewish life that efforts to return "home" were met with considerable difficulty.⁷² Thus, immigration for the Eastern European Jews was a search for home, a transplantation.

Committees and relief agencies were organized around the world on behalf of the Eastern European Jewish refugees. Commissioners from the Mansion House Committee in London, a

group instrumental in the organization and financing of Russian-Jewish emigration, went to Galicia and border stations elsewhere to classify applications for emigration according to occupation. In this manner, they determined the destination of refugees. Simon Belkin quoted the following passage from the "Memorandum of Advice" (March 31, 1881) to these Commissioners:

Agriculturalists and able-bodied laborers were to be sent to the United States, Canada or elsewhere if the families were not too large. Handicraftsmen, peddlers and bakers should be dispersed in small communities in Europe, especially in German-speaking localities suitable for their absorption. Each immigrant be given \$25.00 on reaching destination. Persons of beggar class should be helped for urgent wants and advised to repatriate themselves.⁷³

There was a lull in the migrations by 1884, and then the numbers began to rise again in 1887. The Mansion House Committee found it impossible to continue subsidization of refugee passage without additional support from international relief agencies. Restrictions finally had to be imposed on those who were to be granted passage, and the situation became so difficult that refugees at the border stations were being asked, or bribed, to return to their homes. This only exacerbated the problem in these border towns by provoking vehement protest. Thus, thousands of refugees were stranded at the border stations, waiting.⁷⁴

The call for immigration restrictions arose not only out of financial necessity but in response to protest from nations destined to receive the refugees, particularly the United States. The majority of the refugees had their hopes set on immigration to America which created a major problem for effecting a balanced dispersion. At the same time, the United States did not officially encourage immigration. A U.S. policy of returning all "dissatisfied" immigrants to Europe was adopted as a deterrent to the influx:

Between 1882 and 1889, 7,580 Russian Jewish immigrants were sent 'back home.' In reality it meant making them a charge on the Jewish communities in Western Europe. The immigrants were put aboard cattle ships and were required to pay for their return passage by attending the animals. (Women and children had their return fare paid and were spared the ordeal.)⁷⁵

News of the mass exodus from Eastern Europe also panicked the Jewish communities of Western Europe and North America. While they sympathized with the refugees' plight, they were hesitant to jeopardize their own status by identifying publicly with them.⁷⁶ The prospect of resettling so many destitute migrants presented an enormous social problem. No master plan was formulated for two decades until it became clear that the exodus was not abating but was, in fact, increasing and that the scale and gravity of the situation demanded attention.

Britain absorbed its share of refugees, thousands of whom had to pass through England on their way to America. In the 1890's and the early years of the twentieth century, steamers left Europe weekly: four from Hamburg, three from Rotterdam and Bremen, and one from Libau. All of them made stops at London. During the thirty-three years of emigration (1881-1914), nearly a quarter million Jews elected to remain in England.⁷⁷

Canada began receiving Jewish immigrants later than the United States. In the early 1880's, few refugees were sent to Canada because its Jewish settlements, where they existed at all, were small, scattered and isolated. According to Sachar, many of the refugees who arrived in Canada and settled there in the two decades following the May Laws "did so by accident when British ships, offering cheap passage, happened to make their ports of call in Canada."⁷⁸

In an effort to ease the pressure on the United States, European authorities turned to Canada as a logical option. Consequently, second only to the United States, Canada absorbed the highest percentage of Eastern European Jewish refugees for most of the first eighteen years of this century.⁷⁹ Canada sought to limit the influx of refugees at its European source by admonishing the London and Hamburg Emigration Societies not to apportion to Canada more than

its share. In 1890, they asked that only "proper" immigrants be sent to Canada; however, none of those who actually arrived in Canada were sent back. Standards of acceptability were based upon those set by United States immigration policy, which established precedents for Eastern European Jewish immigration policies around the world.⁸⁰

In the 1880's, Congress began to levy head taxes on immigrants and to forbid contract labor. In 1891, a statute was passed ordering the return to Europe of immigrants suffering from contagious diseases. In 1907, another act raised the head tax and forbade entry to "imbeciles, idiots, criminals, polygamists, anarchists, prostitutes, persons with contagious diseases, contract laborers -- and persons likely to become a public charge."⁸¹

Legislation became increasingly restrictive. In 1917, a literacy test was instituted. Few Jews were literate in any but the Yiddish language and, finally, immigration authorities were persuaded to accept Yiddish as an authentic language.

In March of 1921, Congress passed a bill to limit the annual immigration of aliens of any one nationality to three percent of the total number of that nationality residing in the United States according to the 1910 census. The bill was designed to curb immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe. In 1924, a permanent immigration law was enacted

which reduced the annual quota to two percent and changed the base year to 1890, a period of minor immigration for Slavs, Italians and Russian Jews. After 1927, the total annual quota from all sources was reduced to 150,000. Thus, the door was slammed permanently on all but nominal immigration from these regions.⁸²

Other nations followed with their own restrictive policies. In 1905, the British Parliament passed the first restrictive Immigration Act prohibiting "undesirables" from entering the country. The act inhibited further Jewish immigration into England. After 1905, Jewish immigration levelled off and declined.⁸³

Canada also adopted increasingly restrictive immigration policy, although it continued to be less rigid than the United States. As Rosenberg explains, prior to the First World War, legislation permitted immigration of all persons except those within certain prohibited classes. Following the war, however, the emphasis was reversed and legislation prohibited immigration of all persons except those within certain permitted classes. Prohibition could be invoked on mental and physical, moral, educational, economic, and political grounds.⁸⁴


The Ukrainian war, following the Russian Revolution, renewed Jewish immigration to Canada. In 1923, Canada responded with an Order-in-Council. The threat of a new

inundation in Canada inaugurated a closed-door policy against immigrants from Eastern Europe except "bonafide" agriculturalists. England, Australia, Argentina, and Brazil all embraced similar policies. In this manner, Eastern European Jews were virtually sealed off from the West.⁸⁵

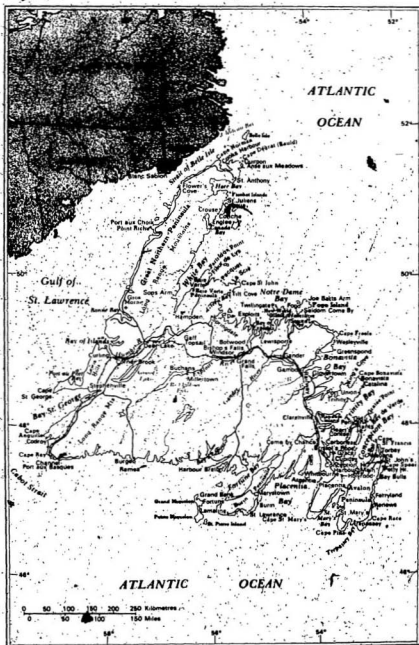
For many, the United States was the desired destination, but lack of funds and other factors often dictated otherwise. The hopes of many were thwarted by restrictive U.S. immigration policy and increasing difficulty in gaining entry into Canada. Others, dissatisfied with their initial points of arrival, would decide to go elsewhere. It was something of a catch-as-catch-can situation; if a number of these refugees reached their ultimate destinations, many others found work in transient environs and subsequently settled there.⁸⁶ This is how the story of the Newfoundland Jewish community begins.

III. Newfoundland

The island of Newfoundland, together with mainland Labrador, comprise the province of Newfoundland, Canada's tenth and newest province. From west to east, the island stretches roughly six hundred miles. Along its three thousand mile coastline, hundreds of tiny outport communities dot the island's perimeter, sustaining themselves on the sea's resources.



Map 3. The island of Newfoundland. Map courtesy of Frederick W. Rowe, A History of Newfoundland and Labrador (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1980).



St. John's, the provincial capital, is Newfoundland's first and largest city, and one of North America's oldest. It is situated on the island's Avalon Peninsula, very nearly at the North American continent's easternmost land's end. Today, it boasts a population of about 150,000 and is growing rapidly.

Until the early eighteenth century, however, the character of St. John's was that of a small fishing village. Gradually, it evolved into a town in which the island's population was concentrated. Its growth occurred along the waterfront, on what was then called the Lower Path, reserved for ships' rooms and fish curing. In 1817, a devastating fire "destroyed the last vestiges of fish flakes, old waterside sheds and warehouses"⁸⁷ along the Path. By the mid-nineteenth century, the Lower Path had become commercialized, and its name changed to Water Street. Newfoundland writer-historian Paul O'Neill describes Water Street as

probably the oldest commercial thoroughfare used exclusively by the white man in North America. From the beginning of the sixteenth century Water Street has been a place of buying and selling, trade and barter, commerce and gossip.⁸⁸

Since the mid-nineteenth century, Water Street has been "the economic heart of Newfoundland."⁸⁹ Below, one man's childhood memories paint an image of Water Street in the 1940's:

Water Street in those days was, much different from what it is today because, it was... the real waterfront. And all the streets, running, from Water Street would open on to a dock. Or a wharf. Where there was always a schooner tied up or a fishing boat tied up or a big ship would come in. And, it was always very exciting to, be able to go down and immediately you're...part of this and you'd see people from all over the world... You know, on a Saturday morning, we, would go down to Steers Cove, and buy a fish. And for a nickel, you'd, get an enormous, cod-fish so you'd, put your, fingers in the gills and, get on your bike and ride home with a fish dragging its tail on the, gravel street, you know...Oh yeah...Water Street I guess was...everything.⁹⁰

Until 1949, when Newfoundland was confederated as Canada's tenth province, the island belonged to Great Britain. Discovered in 1497, Newfoundland was Britain's oldest colony. It remained the only British possession in North America until 1620, with the landing at Plymouth Rock, but was the last to be acknowledged officially as a colony. Newfoundland was a source of wealth to England's West Country merchants and a training ground for the Royal Navy. At that time, Newfoundland's role was to "serve the Empire" as a "great ship moored near the Grand Banks for the convenience of English fishermen." The metaphor derives from the fact that, between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, English, as well as French, Spanish and Portuguese, ships voyaged annually to Newfoundland, not to settle but to fish.⁹¹

There were three types of migration to Newfoundland: seasonal, temporary, and permanent. The first establishment of permanent British settlements in the early seventeenth century was planned by British merchants and others to colonize the island and tap local resources. Gradually, English settlement expanded.⁹²

In the eighteenth century, the imperial government adopted a policy to discourage colonization in order to preserve the English ship fishery as a "nursery for seamen" for the Royal Navy. Until 1832, the small, year-round population had no legal status, no title to land, and no civil government. Despite policy, however, the population increased and a unique new colonial society took root.⁹³ Close ties with the homeland were preserved, however, and eighteenth century migrants often returned home to England to enlist capital in order to continue Old World occupations or develop new enterprises.⁹⁴

After 1800, immigration from southwest England and southeast Ireland increased. The striking factor about immigration to Newfoundland was that nowhere else in North America did such a large proportion of immigrants come from such localized European origins over so long a period. The Irish and English initially established separate communities at first, but gradually the populations merged.⁹⁵ Culturally, Newfoundland is a blend of Irish and English, its two

founding groups. Mannion notes that Newfoundland's "cultural landscape" is unique, not because the population is largely restricted to a "necklace" of coastal communities

but also because of its historic isolation from the mainland; the landscape and the technology that helped create it have preserved until recently much of an Old World character.⁹⁶

But also in this "Old World character" were "the seeds of social conflict sown from the respective traditions and memories of the two groups."⁹⁷ Religion has always played an integral role in the lives of St. John's citizens. O'Neill writes:

In tracing the story of the St. John's mother church of [the] four important denominations, we find a fascinating and contradictory tale of bigotry and co-operation that was the way of religion in Newfoundland before the 20th century.⁹⁸

The gulf that separated the Irish Catholics from the English Protestants had become institutionalized by the turn of the twentieth century. According to historian S.J.R. Noel:

There was now scarcely an area of social life into which organized religious sectarianism did not in some way intrude, sustained and reinforced by a system of education that was totally church-controlled.⁹⁹

There were no state schools. The Roman Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregational and, later, Salvation Army all

maintained their own schools with the aid of per capita government grants.¹⁰⁰

From the beginning, Newfoundland trade was controlled by European merchants rather than by individual fishermen. Contract crews were hired to fish on merchant-owned ships. Gradually, there was a transition from a mercantile ship fishery to a supply trade, although the mercantile influenced migrations until the early nineteenth century.¹⁰¹

The early nineteenth century saw a rapid growth in Newfoundland's population. The influx was comprised of poorer people who came seeking escape from severe economic conditions in Europe. During the Napoleonic wars, Newfoundland monopolized the world salt cod markets and the economic boom there attracted immigrants. Later in this century, after reliance on European contract labor declined, subsistence household production developed as a means of lessening the necessity for imported provisions. The family replaced migratory labor and labor recruited outside the family received, in return, a share of the catch instead of wages. The system of exchange between fishermen and the merchant regressed.¹⁰²

By the turn of the present century, Newfoundland trade was almost solely dependent on the fishery as the primary economic source. "Spring and fall" trade was the system coordinating the business cycle between the merchants, retailers, wholesalers and fishermen.

Merchants in the coastal districts would purchase their drygood requirements in the spring. They would advance supplies to the fishermen on credit for a share of the fishermen's fall catch; the price of fish being set by the merchant. New supplies were then taken by the fishermen with payment to be made to be paid for the following spring. Various products were accepted as payment which had to be sold before credit sales could be liquidated. These products varied from canned lobsters to knitted socks and mitts, sealskin boots to fish casks and drums. Thus, barter replaced cash as the medium of exchange, and the fisherman was perpetually indebted to the merchant. "In the flagging fishery of the nineteenth century," says John Mannion, "fishermen's debts accumulated and the credit system was greatly extended."¹⁰³

Gradually, mercantile activity centralized in St. John's and specialized outport merchant firms declined. "Town" and "the bay" were increasingly polarized; Water Street became the symbol of exploitation:

Water Street, the sea-front thoroughfare along which the leading merchant houses had their premises, was an object of hatred and fear in the outports, its name a synonym for exploitation.¹⁰⁴

Labor and production revolved around the family household unit; self-sufficiency was the objective. There was a

rise in subsistence agriculture and a burgeoning of household crafts. Cod remained the staple export and fishery labor rose until industrialization reversed the trend. Smaller boats and crews replaced the larger merchant-owned vessels.

By the 1880's, the annual average of fish production per fisherman had dropped without compensation in the prices of fish or cost of imported supplies. As a result, Newfoundlanders were forced to turn to locally exploitable resources. A combination of economic factors was responsible for the outport's increased introversion and isolation from the outside world. Among these was the fact that transportation and communications development was slow throughout most of the nineteenth century, and as the St. John's merchants tightened their control over commerce, "the range of external contacts of many outports contracted."¹⁰⁵

Socially, a sharply polarized, colonial society evolved in Newfoundland. The entire import-export trade was in the hands of a small group of British Protestant, St. John's merchants who formed the dominant social class along with the government officials, clergy and others they supported. Members of the governing elite were recruited from the narrow stratum of society, composed mostly of merchants and lawyers. The wealth and power amassed by these few merchants was tremendous because the financial structure of

the fishery was totally dependent on their capital.¹⁰⁶ Thus, they became known as the "fishocracy,"¹⁰⁷ or "cod aristocracy."¹⁰⁸ Rev. Philip Tocque wrote of late nineteenth-century Newfoundland:

There is no colony belonging to the British Empire where influence and name tend so much to form caste in society, and where it is more regarded than in St. John's.¹⁰⁹

The "fishocracy" represented a gross inequality of wealth. There was an insubstantial middle class comprised of small merchants, traders and artisans and secondary officials. The lower class included the majority of the population, consisting almost entirely of fishermen, approximately half of whom were Irish Catholic.¹¹⁰

The end of the century saw an increased diversification of employment and occupation, particularly in mining, railway work and lumbering. However, the St. John's that greeted the first Jewish settlers was less than luxurious. In July of 1892, the last and worst of a series of fires destroyed three-quarters of the city. Public services were primitive. Carriage roads existed around parts of the Avalon Peninsula, where St. John's is situated, but most amounted to rough country lanes. The only municipality was in St. John's where water, sanitation, and street services were supplied.¹¹¹ One woman recalled her first impression:

When I came here, to Newfoundland, I came here...between Christmas, after New Year's...New Year's night I think. We came on next morning. And, you know after Christmas you have the slush and the weather. And I -- oh God. The houses looked so -- Like little shacks to me. I said, my God. Look where I am. In Riga, the beautiful buildings. The streets is as clean as the table. Cleaner. And...any little bit of snow goes up, on the sidewalks it's right...you know...is cleaned up. And you don't have in the wintertime you don't wear over-shoes, at all. You can go with little shoes like, like I go in the house.¹¹²

The trans-island railway was completed in 1898 -- the forerunner of the highway system in the pre-automobile era. It brought the promise of industry in with the twentieth century. Mining and newsprint companies and mills opened. Along the railway line, large lumbering operations sprang up. There was a note of change in early twentieth-century Newfoundland.¹¹³

It is speculated that Jews have resided in Newfoundland since the early nineteenth century. For over one hundred years, however, no organized Jewish community existed. The original recorded settlers were Russian-Polish Jews who had emigrated from Russia between 1882 and 1914 to escape czarist persecution. They came to North America, via England in most cases, and to Newfoundland via New York and New Haven, Connecticut. There was no department of immigration at the time the first settlers arrived, and oral

accounts indicated that immigration was virtually open. According to an historical source, prior to November 1926, Newfoundland's immigration laws were very liberal towards individuals who sought to "avoid persecution or punishment on religious or political grounds."¹¹⁴ After 1926, the Newfoundland government apparently issued resolutions which annulled these provisions and required that immigrants possess a certain amount in "landing money."¹¹⁵ It was with the arrival of Israel Perlin in 1891, "the first authenticated Jew to live in Newfoundland," according to Rabbi David Zlatin, former rabbi and historian of the community, that the community's "official" history begins.¹¹⁶

By 1909, the number of Jews in St. John's was such that a Jewish community was organized, and the first spiritual leader was hired. Assorted rented rooms served as makeshift "synagogues" until 1929 when the first synagogue was established. It functioned for nearly thirty years until, in 1959, construction of a new synagogue was completed.¹¹⁷

The settlement pattern of the little community was a typical one. A pioneer came over, established himself, and sent for family and friends waiting in Europe. Often, large families and, occasionally, entire communities came over together to resettle where their landsleit (countrymen) had established a foothold. Thus, shtetl-like immigrant communities arose in the New World. The St. John's community grew

in just this way. Four major families essentially formed the community's foundation -- a small, strongly Eastern European, Jewish Orthodox enclave of overlapping relations and common origins. In time, families were linked by marriage, and their ranks swelled as newcomers and children arrived. These "clans," together with other individuals, comprised what is regarded as the community "family."

The St. John's Jewish community never became an autonomous, ethnic neighborhood of the sort which developed in the larger North American cities. Instead, "community" came to refer to the invisible bonds that fix the group's cognitive boundaries. There persists a strong, familial bond amongst members of this original group, regardless of their current whereabouts. Their identities are rooted in this old community, in the European immigrant experience, and in Newfoundland. The payment of dues does not buy membership into this community. It is either birthright or circumstance that warrants the claim of "belonging."

The first Eastern European Jews to settle in Newfoundland were met by a people keenly aware of their separate identity -- encouraged by their natural insularity, the absence of substantial or varied immigration, and by the unique character of their economy. They also entered a culture in which social conflict was deeply seated: between merchant and fisherman, Protestant and Catholic.¹¹⁸ How,

then, did the trickle of Yiddish-speaking, Eastern European Jews -- themselves products of a rigid class system and cultural isolation -- fit into this landscape? Prior to exploring this question, I will discuss my role in the course of this study.

NOTES

Chapter II:

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- 43 Zborowski, p. 78.
- 44 Rosenthal, p. 7.
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METHODOLOGY

Chapter III

FIELDWORK

A chiel's amang you takin' notes
An' faith he'll prent it.

Robert Burns

The fieldworker is an explorer. Spurred by curiosity, she may chart her course of inquiry but is frequently steered by circumstance and chance. Eventually, she wends her way toward home, laden with the souvenirs gathered along her journey. If her countenance appears troubled, it is because she has returned too soon, her journey unfinished. Yet, she has undergone a rite of passage, having successfully endured a series of tests and reversals which have brought her full circle but altered her perception. That which was strange is now familiar; the familiar has a startling newness. This small accomplishment signals the completion of a stage as well as a beginning from which to launch the next.

From this travelled perspective, I look back on my journey and retrace my steps.

The seed which spawned this inquiry was planted soon after my arrival in St. John's in August 1980. I recall my first walk down Water Street, St. John's commercial spine and one of North America's oldest thoroughfares. Buoyed by the novelty, I wandered and absorbed voraciously: the palette of colors; the gusty air spiked with briny tang; the striking angles of Gaelic faces; the remarkable consideration shown to stranger and friend alike, a testimony to a still human-scaled society. Storefronts lining the winding street proudly displayed the old stock St. John's surnames testifying to each establishment's Irish or English (Catholic or Protestant) lineage--McGrath, Hiscock, Squires, Jones. I also noticed the somehow incongruous, unmistakably Jewish surnames on several storefronts: Wilansky and Sons, Silver's Jeweler, Cohen's Furniture Emporium. The possibility of a story behind these storefronts intrigued me. If indeed these few names indicated the existence of a Jewish community, who were these people who had immigrated to such an unlikely outpost as Newfoundland?

That fall, I was confronted with a term paper assignment that required selecting a folk group and discussing its folk genres with respect to the functions served and the values transmitted. I selected Eastern European Jewish immigrants as my group with the intent to utilize primary, rather than secondary, sources for analysis and take the

opportunity to investigate this little group. While limitations of time forced me to utilize secondary material, I did manage some preliminary exploration.

As an outsider, I was faced with the immediate problem of finding a contact in the community. I resorted to the obvious in this case -- the rabbi.

It was mid-September when I telephoned him to introduce myself and arrange a meeting. We met the following day in the Beth-El Synagogue library -- this young and somewhat shy Brooklyn bred rabbi and the surprisingly self-conscious, once-Reform-now-unobservant Jew and, as yet, very neophyte folklorist. Unfortunately, the rabbi was also a relative newcomer to St. John's and while he offered several names as references, his knowledge of the community's background was vague and limited. We talked for a while, and then we parted as unceremoniously as we met, our business completed.

Two days passed and I followed my first lead. I phoned ninety-year old Joseph Epstein, a Polish Jew who emigrated to St. John's in 1946 following his release from a German concentration camp. I was unaware then that Joseph was regarded by many members of the Jewish community as an eccentric and opinionated old man whose critical, and frequently cynical, manner was offensive to some. Consequently, his socializing was confined largely to a few relatives and the little group of post-World War II European

immigrants like himself who still addressed one another, with Old Country formality, as "Mr. Epstein" or "Mr. Alexander", despite long years of acquaintance.

Joseph's voice greeted me when I phoned, an old man's tenor, still thickly accented despite a thirty-five year absence from Europe. I adjusted the volume of my own voice to compensate for his apparent handicap and explained, with loud deliberation, the purpose of my call. Joseph was amenable to a visit and invited me to his home the next morning.

I arrived at Joseph's tidy little suburban house, situated only paces from the synagogue, equipped with tape recorder and notebook, neither of which left my bag that morning. He ushered me in, and bade me settle in the oversized armchair flanking an obtrusively large and loud color television. I obeyed. Once my comfort was assured, the meticulously suited little gentleman perched himself on the edge of an adjacent chair. He fixed on me a penetrating gaze from clear, blue eyes framed by the proud and protuberant angles of his cheekbones and nose. In ceremonious tone befitting the gentleman, Joseph asked, "Now, Miss Kahn, what can I do for you?"

I explained and Joseph listened. He told his story, sketchily, in broken English, and I listened. He did not relax with me, however, until he had ascertained that I was

also Jewish and of Eastern European lineage as well. (This necessity to verify my own Jewish background was to arise time and again throughout my research. Clearly, my "insider" status as a landsman (countryman) inspired the confidence of many of those whom I interviewed.) Once this was verified, Joseph began to perform for me. With a great grin, spanning the width of his face, he told me humorous anecdotes of Europe, and expounded philosophically on the facts and fate of the St. John's Jewish community.

Joseph reasoned that the community suffered for lack of an experienced leader. This, he allowed, was one reason why the older members -- in particular, those who had been given traditional Jewish educations in Europe -- were withdrawing from active community life and becoming more insular. Furthermore, there are only a few children in the community now, as the younger people have either moved off the island, intermarried or simply chosen not to affiliate with the community. As the older people die away, there are fewer and fewer individuals capable of continuing the orthodox tradition and educating the children. Contrary to what some may think, he argued, it is the ingestion of knowledge, not kosher food, that makes a real Jew and perpetuates Judaism. In his own words, he instructed me: "It's less important what goes in your mouth than what comes out." The people were not religious here, and there was no history of consequence. "So," said he, "it is a dying little community."

With that, my time was up. Joseph left me dangling on the edge of the next session.

A half year elapsed before I was to see Joseph again, or for that matter, anything of the Jewish community. I became preoccupied with the immediate demands of graduate school courses and had to suspend my research. But that initial glimpse of the little community through one man's eyes must have impressed and intrigued me more than I had realized. In April 1981, I decided to do, as my thesis topic, an oral history of the St.-John's Jewish community.

In late June, I resumed the process of contacting people in the community. I also began to keep a journal which effectively became my travelogue.

Once again, I phoned the rabbi for referrals. He gave me three names but without the interest and enthusiasm I had expected -- and hoped for. Later I learned that the rabbi was also working on a history of the community and, in fact, in the coming months, there developed a glut of four researchers casting their lines in this same, small pond.¹¹⁹

The first individual whom I phoned told me flatly that there was not enough material for a thesis; however, only temporarily daunted by this hapless attempt, I tried again.

The president of Sisterhood, the women's charitable and fund-raising organization, gave me a more promising reception, and invited me to her home for an evening visit. I

arrived, somewhat winded after a trek of several miles across town, with a hefty Sony TC-142 slung in a bag over my shoulder. After a short interlude and a chat, she and her husband announced that we would be joining some of their friends for coffee. Evidently, word was out on the grapevine: a "student from the university" wanted to do a history of the community.

En route, they pointed out the homes of the various members of the community. I sat in the back seat feeling somewhat vulnerable in the expectation that I was about to undergo the first, crucial test -- going public. How unlike those safe term papers I had written where I was mistress of my ideas until the swift, final judgment. My conceptualizations about these people were on the verge of confrontation with the reality of them. My project's actualization was contingent upon the outcome of this delicate phase -- I needed their approval which would grant me right of entry into their confidence.

Three couples were seated around the dining room table when we arrived. Together, the eight of them represented a cross-section of the community: two were members of "original" families, and whose spouses were non-Newfoundlanders; one young couple had emigrated recently to Newfoundland because of the husband's teaching position at Memorial University's medical school; the fourth couple was an

intermarriage in which the wife, a Catholic Newfoundlander, had converted to Judaism and the husband was a post-War arrival from mainland Canada. All four couples were among the most active members in the community in terms of their investment of time and effort to help sustain the congregation.

They reciprocated my interest in them by questioning me eagerly about my background and, most pressingly, why I wanted to do this project. I relaxed.

The session was more a visit than an interview. My role was that of catalyst: to incite free-association rather than to direct the conversation. I had feelers out to glean an overview; depth probes would come later. I was overwhelmed by the sheer volume tossed at me by the eight enthusiastic voices, and I opted to use the tape recorder as a catch-all rather than attempt to tackle notebook and pen. With their approval, I set the microphone in the center of the table. After only minimal initial distraction, they became oblivious to its presence.

Later, an attentive listen to this circus of sound was somewhat agitating. Nevertheless, after I disentangled the simultaneous conversations, the taped session proved to be an introduction to what I later identified as the major rhetorical "themes" patterning and unifying the collective communiqués. These will be discussed later. I did not

appreciate the significance of this initial session, though, until my research was completed and I was able to consider the whole. As researcher, it was my aim to decipher the meaning of the complete work. Even the clues, however, were meaningless until I had undergone my first passage, a rite of entry; and secondly, explored sufficiently to have become empathetic to the community's point of view. I was as yet a stranger, untransformed. It was all I could do to listen and absorb; meaning would emerge in time.

I did realize very quickly, however, the timeliness of this project. Joseph, and now these four couples, emphasized that the aggregate effects of deaths, moves, intermarriages and apathy were gradually eroding the community. Again, I heard the grim prognosis: the community was not expected to survive beyond five or, at most, ten years. This would explain the pervasive reflexivity, and the urgency to "get the history" now before it "disappears." The difficulty has been to find someone to accept the task and see it to completion.

Consequently, it is not inapt to liken my feeling that first evening to that of a job applicant under inspection when, before eight sets of scrutinizing eyes, I had to establish my credentials. I recall that the nature of my Jewish background and affiliation was of particular interest as was my parents' involvement with Judaism and my father's

occupation. The other point, as I mentioned earlier, was why, after a year in St. John's, without ever contacting the community, had I suddenly decided to do this project?

Well, this was clearly going to be an awkward moment. I must admit to feeling uncomfortable with the position in which I found myself. In an attempt to bridge the gap between us, I focused on our patch of common turf. I tried to explain who I was in terms of what I was so as to emphasize our link as Jews; yet, in doing so, I was distorting my self-identity by magnifying disproportionately one of the least conscious traits of influence. I felt like a stranger in my own skin.

I resolved my dilemma by offering a candid, honest response. Rather than assume a mask in a dishonest -- and cowardly -- attempt to conceal that tell-tale trace of the "outsider," I explained that I had long ago discontinued "active" participation as a Jew. While I acknowledged my Jewish birthright, I did not live as a Jew in consciousness, belief nor practice. My interest in their community was clear and simple: I felt that a story was there to be told and that I wanted to work with them to do it.

There. It was out. I could only wait for a response. I was greatly relieved when my confession provoked a stream of assurances that I was not alone in my way of thinking. My offering had been accepted, and I knew that I had passed

the first test. Goodbyes that evening were graced with promises of future visits. I went home with new names and telephone numbers and with renewed confidence in my hunch that there was, indeed, a story to be unravelled.

There was another transpiration that evening of which I was unaware at the time. A bargain had been struck between the community and myself: I had essentially offered my services to them to compile their oral history. This established their expectations -- and mine. At that point, then, I assumed an obligation to complete a suitable product for the community. Here was the dichotomy of which I spoke in the Introduction -- that is, the conflict of writing for two audiences, the academic vs. the community.

I became "newsworthy" after this meeting which meant that I was an item on the community's lively grapevine. My position as outsider had been tenuous until the grapevine affirmed my integrity. This was, actually, a great boon because it signaled my presence and gave me visibility which would otherwise have taken much longer to establish. The grapevine primed people for my calls and swayed the more reticent members to agree to be interviewed because I had been "approved" by their friends.

The following Friday evening, I ventured to the synagogue for the weekly Sabbath service. I walked into the small sanctuary and seated myself in a rear pew. There was

no anonymity in this little congregation. One may enter as a stranger but will not leave as such. Curious heads turn to regard the newcomer, then back in consultation: "Who is she?" There were few women there that evening, as on most Friday evenings, which only further spotlighted my presence. Before long, someone wandered over to welcome me and to get my vitae.

By the end of that evening, I felt as though I had slipped beyond the periphery again. The orthodox religious service belongs to the men. It is entirely in Hebrew, which I never learned; the prayer melodies differ from those I learned in the Reform service; the rabbi's sermon was literal and fundamentalist rather than the ethical-intellectual sermons familiar to me; and the individual davening, or praying, coupled with the incessant conversation and wandering about the sanctuary, generated no rhythm with which I could drift. I fidgeted.

When the service was over, I shook a lot of hands and explained several more times who I was. The rabbi looked me squarely in the eye and told me he did not remember me. Another individual admonished that I could not publish hearsay because people within the community were very sensitive to hearsay and gossip.

I walked the long way home, feeling like an impostor, and searching for justification that such an ambivalent

"insider" as I could have the temerity to tackle this project.

From this point on, I interject my discussion with excerpts from my journal to punctuate retrospection with immediacy. I include them to illustrate my cumulative orientation to the community and the consequent development of my methodology.

July 3, 1981

Seems that history connotes truth; folklore and oral history, gossip. Must be careful.

Joseph says Newfoundlanders are very nice people but they tolerate "us," that's all.

He says there is no history to the community. He participates, if need be, for a minyan,¹²⁰ although he says he is not religious. Claims many people here are not religious but go to shul because "you're doing something for your fellows..for those who are religious and need the ten men."

July 5, 1981

The synagogue seems to be the institutional core yet the institutional figurehead. I sense different levels of commitment and participation.

Someone tells me that Joseph Epatein is an "opinionated old man"; yet, perhaps, the older people are the most honest

in recognizing the community's current situation, its inevitable demise, the hypocrisy of "religious" commitment. Seems that age grants license to be "opinionated" -- honest, abrupt, dismissive, abrasive, forthright. Nothing to lose.

Questions and possible tactics arise out of continued exposure -- an overview is gained via glimpses from very distinct vantage points.

The community is so small that each trauma is absorbed, the shock tremors felt by everyone. Empathy is the factor that coheres.

This "continued exposure" eventually yielded a great deal of repetition; however, this repetition was instructive as it isolated the significant and revealed the structure.

July 7, 1981

Seems there were several outstanding individuals and families. Ask.

"...at one time, every other store on Water Street was Jewish." Look behind those storefronts -- at the people, the network, the myth.

July 13, 1981

Distinct time differentials between pre- and post-World War II. Time line determines distinction between "old" and

"new": 25 years in Newfoundland, and an individual is still considered a newtomer because it's post-War¹

This was an "Old Country community" ² -- is there possibly a tiny shetl community in this history? The tailor, the grocers, the butcher, the merchants, the mohel and shochet, the shul ¹²¹ -- images of Sholom Aleichem.

August 28, 1981

Idea: the birth of a community -- the establishment of institutions and networks, i.e., cemetery, synagogue, essential services, school. Focus on the family: generations, individuals, deviants.

By late August, I had done a number of interviews and I decided that I was ready to make a visit to the Jewish cemetery, the only one on the island. I grabbed my notebook -- my constant companion of late, and my camera, and set out with a mixed sense of exhilaration and anticipation at this first meeting, as with an individual about whom I had been told and formed impressions, but never confronted.

I arrived at the austere, little patch of ground, humbled by its flamboyant neighbor, a sprawling Salvation Army cemetery. I paused outside the black iron gate, the six-point Star of David set and centered in the iron grillwork to signify the enduring affiliation of the community

within the gates. As I passed through those gates, I felt an uncanny rush of familiarity and animation. The crowd of monuments surrounding me conveyed an immediate sense of community. Some, emblazoned with the now-legendary names of the pioneers such as Perlin and Frelich, and the precursors of the Jewish "clans" -- Wilansky, Levitz, Epstein, Cohen, plus the Sheffmans and Rosenbergs -- were testimonies to the existence of the protagonists of the folklore. Others, less heraldic, denoted the minor characters, many of whom had not yet emerged from the narrative tapestry. There were still others who would likely never be evoked, quiet reminders of children and travellers whose brief lives within the community never earned them presence in folk memory.

I wandered amongst the monuments, photographing and making notations. But the quiet seemed supplanted by a montage of voices in accompaniment to the images I had conjured. The past, with its dead generations, had been summoned to life for me through those oral portraits to which I had been audience. I realized now that they had formed a bridge which spanned past and present, allowed me access, and assured continuity into the future.

If I were to return to the cemetery now, the meaning of the past contained in that little cordoned piece of land would be that much greater. I have "encountered" nearly all of those individuals, and each fits more uniquely and

significantly, a piece of a jigsaw puzzle, together forming the whole.

My research reached a hiatus towards the end of the summer with the arrival of visitors, and the start of the new fall term. In early October, coincident with the Jewish New Year, I resumed my research for the third time.

October 8, 1981

It seems somehow appropriate to renew work on this project with the New Year -- when the community is re-energized from within, strengthened, however temporarily, in celebrative unity.

My presence of late has been acknowledged, and I've not only been approved of, but included. Many social invitations.

This holiday period was one of the most enjoyable phases. I broke my long absence from the synagogue, and attended services on Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur. The normally sparse attendance had blossomed into a near capacity crowd as even the least avid allowed themselves this annual immersion. For this brief period, the community seemed revitalized and unified as one big family. And I sensed, for the first time, what the "old community" must have been like, prior to the Second World War -- the humor,

the familiarity, the open houses and plethora of food, drink and company. As I write these impressions now, I realize that I have not been immune to the influence of the myth of the past that nostalgia has perpetrated.

This was a period of reinforcement for me. I was no longer a stranger but a familiar face with a name, as many of the people were to me. The intensive interviews had generated genuine warmth, and for me, a sense of belonging. This, in turn, enabled me to move freely within the group.

November 8, 1981

I step outside to see my own reflection of the culture I'm looking in on, feeling peripheral to, yet of which I am undeniably a member.

I also see their perplexity at my ignorance, pleasure at my curiosity and at the prospect of acting as my teachers.

November 11, 1981

I phoned Joseph's home today. His grandson told me that Joseph had passed away this morning. No plans for a funeral or memorial service, because he's willed his body to the university. I'm not surprised.

People grope for guidance. They want to write the last chapter, close the book, but Jewish law only advises that this donation of his body was an un-Jewish act and, therefore, no post-mortem rites are to be held. "It's all up to

the rabbi," they say. Everyone is uncomfortable. Community guilt. They wait for him to advise a course of action that will absolve them of their guilt. There is no service.

I feel sad -- for Joseph? He was pedantic, dogmatic -- he offended and alienated people. But I think he liked me because I questioned and listened. He appreciated the attention; I appreciated the clarity of mind, the sharp intellect and those piercing blue eyes; the indefatigable spirit inside the shrunken 90-year old body, and the smile of delight; the sardonic, hissing laughter at his own humor which was often at the expense of those he regarded as fools, "idiots."

I think he tested me at times. But he seemed to approve. His candor belied his trust. He matched my enthusiasm, my persistence in wanting to know with his concerted efforts to make me see. He was a philosopher. He evaluated, then commented -- or shrugged, accepted fate; his self-imposed isolation. He was an anomaly, a survivor of the Old World. Guided by reason, intellect, the power to judge, he'd had his faith tested in the concentration camp, the ultimate in irrationality. He looked blind faith squarely in the face, at age sixteen, and decided it was all lies. That there was no God, no nothing.

So while there are those who pray in syllables and phonemes, Joseph thought about the meaning -- and internally ordered his own existential universe.

So much for eulogizing.

In November of 1981, I learned that several officers of the congregation had approached the Dean of the Arts Faculty at Memorial in the interest of finding a historian to "do a history of the community" with grant monies awarded them. My work had either eluded them or my affiliation with the Folklore Department had portended a difference in interests. In any case, they evidently wanted an historian. As my proposal had not yet reached the Dean's office, he was unaware of my project and consequently put feelers out to the Departments of History, Sociology and Anthropology to find a suitable individual. A woman, who had partially fulfilled her master's degree in history, was recommended and eventually hired. It was in this way that I met with "competition" in such an unlikely arena as the little Jewish community of St. John's, Newfoundland. Fortunately, by the time she began to interview, I was nearing the completion of my research and I experienced only a few awkward instances when someone complained that they had already "told everything to the other girl."

Throughout the course of my research, I was told, "You should'a been here five, ten years ago when so-and-so was around. He could'a told you everything." While a number of the old raconteurs have passed away, many have relocated to

the mainland. With a trip home to the States imminent in December, I applied for travel funds from the university to visit Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa on my return trip so that I could interview as many of the expatriated first and second generation members of the "old" community as possible. I contacted a number of people by letter, explaining my project and indicating when I would be in town. Nearly all of them responded by mail, and with enthusiasm. I received the travel advance, and I was thus able to gather some very rich, supplementary material. I also spoke with other individuals in Maryland and New Jersey.

I might add that my actual visits were preceded by "word" from the grapevine. I was welcomed like family, and I felt not unlike a wandering griot.¹²² One little girl, not quite sure how to place me when she learned that I was not the babysitter and not exactly a friend, resolved the problem: "I know what you are. You're a visitor. You visit people." A professional visitor. She was not far off.

January 15, 1982

I hear repeatedly in so many words, and in fewer words but incredulous looks, as I recount my travels, how "privileged" I am to be mobile enough to have access to all of these people and to be gathering so many perspectives on the community. Interesting -- the epic of the stranger in the domain of a foreign past.

I have become so vicariously familiar with the individuals in this story that I may even appear too familiar sometimes. I breeze in, an intimate stranger, and spotlight buried thoughts and memories with false familiarity. It's a strange dichotomy.

Sylvia said to me today, "It's funny how you roll off these names as if you knew them all."

February 2, 1982

Made two attempts to set up interviews and was told that someone had just been there asking the same questions. That did it. I phoned Nardy to find out about this rival project and to get the name and phone number of the woman hired to do it. He asked if I had any information for her, to which I responded with a firm negative. He then asked what I was working on, and I explained that it was an oral history as opposed to a conventional history -- that I was more interested in how people were expressing their pasts than I was concerned with getting all the facts. To which he replied, "Well, we don't want all the facts. We just want to know who the people were and when they came." Sounds as though they want to monitor and censor the history.

February 3, 1982

(Phoned Lyn, the historian, today. She confirmed my suspicion that a censored history was the objective. We

discussed generally our mutual projects, and she seemed determined to follow the historian's ethical code and record the facts as they were. Made tentative plans to meet in the next couple of weeks. She suggested that we swap information; I refrained from comment.

I hung up and felt angry. Territorial? Paranoid? Sort of takes the steam out of my project knowing that someone else is shadowing me. And it's not fair to subject people to two rounds of interviews.

March 9, 1982

Sometimes I feel like an analyst, playing off the psychology of individuals and situations. Each session is a catharsis: people air out dusty old corners and seem truly relieved when it's said and done.

March 22, 1982

The eventual presentation requires that some sense of structure be conveyed, but one which hopefully reflects the true ethos of the community. Prior to commencing the process of interviewing, I fabricated a picture of what I wanted to present; now I wanted to formulate the community. I realize now what will determine the form of my presentation is my understanding of this conceptual structure and my recognition of the group's priorities, i.e., the pre-War vs. post-War time frame and the significance of one's links with the original families and the "old community."

Each year, the members of the congregation sponsor a memorial celebration to commemorate the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943. In early April, I received a phone call from the organizer of the program with a "favor" to ask of me. It seemed that one of the survivors of the concentration camps "had something to say" about his experiences but could not speak publicly. Since I was "such an intelligent girl," and knew how to interview with a tape recorder, would I go to see this man immediately and gather his words. I was not to ask questions. Thinking that it would be an interesting change, and flattered that they would ask me, I agreed. We did a forty-five minute interview, during which time Philip ran dry and requested that I ask him questions. I confess that I did.

I transcribed the tape and selectively edited the narrative down to twelve minutes. While I shuffled some paragraphs, I preserved the integrity of Philip's speech and flow so that the narrative was essentially his own.

It had been planned that someone else would read the excerpted interview; however, after the team work and the production, I felt strongly that I wanted to present it myself. The program was altered and I was to read "Recollections of a Concentration Camp Survivor, Philip Auerbach: A member of our Congregation" as part of the two-hour program of prayer, music, poetry, biographical and historical

readings, personal testimony, and keynote speech by the president of Memorial University.

It was an impressive production. The public had been invited via press releases as had the local newspapers and the CBC television news crew. The synagogue hall was filled with members of the Jewish community as well as many non-Jews (not to mention the small hybrid crowd of folklorists). A photojournalistic essay outlining the history of the Uprising lined one wall and the little stage was decorated with paintings, banners and candles. The mood might best be described as fervent sobriety and it was contagious. The audience was enveloped for the duration.

My part was near the end of the program which allowed ample time to cultivate a nervous sweat. When the time came, though, the audience blurred before me into a hot, white haze of television lights, and all I saw were the words before me. I read them slowly, a drama of real horrors, and I noticed that the room was dead still. Six typewritten pages later, it was all over. I only wish that I could have seen Philip's face.

April 18, 1982

Tonight was a real turning point. I suddenly feel as though I not only proved myself to them by producing something of quality and performing in public, but I gave them

something as well for the first time after the months of cooperation and confidence they'd given me. I wasn't prepared for the overwhelming response and praise. Everyone said they could hear Philip speaking through my words. (They were Philip's words.) This was the very note that touched them and communicated to them. The directness, the rawness, the simplicity. What's more is that they seemed to respond to the honesty of the approach (the medium) to capture and present an individual's reality through his words. I think that now they understand what it is I'm trying to do with theirs. This was my task in a small measure for the program, and the objective of this community project on the grand scale -- in other words, to portray these lives in such a way that their individual realities might be conveyed to strangers through their voices.

Rosie: "I'm gonna tell all my friends about you."

Dorothy: "Well, Alison, you're really integrated into the group now."

April 21, 1982

Surely, anyone who has ever done extensive fieldwork in one community is sensitive to the process of her acceptance by that community. One can't escape that initial status of "stranger" -- and must, unfortunately, undergo a trial period, or series of tests, however subtle, before a balance

of trust and mutual acceptance is attained. It is this balance towards which one strives on a humanistic basis, apart from professional concerns. Therefore, the most crucial -- and delicate -- period is the initial one during which both "sides" are evaluating each other. The folklorist's imploring "won't you divulge...?" and the individual's "why should I tell you? Who are you anyway?"

I look back on that preliminary, awkward phase and breathe with relief that it's behind me. My personal file has been stamped "Approved."

Last night, I was awarded the ultimate affirmation of my acceptance -- my rite of passage. Word of my incorporation came to me, appropriately enough, over CBC's evening news program, "Here and Now." Their coverage of the event devoted a generous portion to my reading, and I was identified as an anonymous "member of the community." I felt that something had transpired, after the ceremony on Sunday evening. But hearing it objectively, even if it had been a CBC presumption, suddenly clarified what had happened. The classic case of the folklorist being incorporated into the very group she was studying so that she came full circle to be in fact studying herself. I had somehow metamorphosed from insider-outsider to insider-insider.

I can't help but reflect back on those "armchair anthropologists" -- Edward Tylor and James George Frazer, for

instance -- who studied "primitives" like animals, caged in their own environments for the anthropologist to observe, to move amongst but never touch or be touched by. Certainly one sacrifices objectivity to an extent by becoming vulnerable to emotional attachments and human bonds. One also gains far greater insights by capitalizing on one's very human capacity to communicate, draw others out by identifying similarities in experience, etc., and giving of oneself. Reciprocity is vital, and human dynamics depend upon it.

Thus, my experience has shaped my priorities, the bottom line being my concern, not as an academic or professional, but as a person. By opening myself up, and being candid with these people, a contract of mutual trust and openness was created. That has been the groundwork of this project.

NOTES

Chapter III:

119 In the past, several attempts were made to write the history of this community. Only two studies have come to fruition and neither is regarded as "acceptable" by the community. (See Zlatin; Leopard Mars, "Some Social Changes in the Jewish Community of St. John's, Newfoundland, 1900-1964," M.A. thesis Univ. of Edinburgh 1965.) A third is currently in progress by historian Lyn Hicks. Other written material relating to this community includes the following brief sketch: Benjamin Schlesinger, "The Jewish Community in Newfoundland," TS, 1977.

120 A minyan is the minimum of ten men required to conduct a service.

121 A mohel performs the ritual circumcision on male infants; a shochet is the authorized slaughterer of animals; a shul is a synagogue.

122 A griot, in traditional black African culture, is a wandering poet, storyteller or musician. The griots constitute a particular caste outside the traditional social organization; because of this, they are often called upon to arbitrate disputes between individuals or entire tribes.

Chapter. IVRESEARCH TECHNIQUES, AND METHODOLOGICAL CONCERNS

Having charted the course of my fieldwork, I will outline below the series of methodological concerns which shaped these personalized experiences.

1. Defining the Scope

The first problem was to delimit the scope of this project. At the start of the last chapter, I made the point that the fieldworker is led often by circumstance and chance. These were instrumental factors, particularly in the early stages when my course through the community was charted by its members. I proceeded as they advised but, as my ideas coalesced, my criteria for selecting informants became more clearly defined. While I would have relished an interview with each one, it was simply not feasible. I had hoped to cover the first wave of immigrants and their children, who comprise the original community, and the (post-World War II) second wave of immigrants -- the refugees, or "survivors," as they are referred to. I have had to exclude the second group from this collection and restrict my scope to members of the original community.

2. The Small Group Interview

The second problem was that the preferred one-to-one interview was often impossible because of the presence of other interested family members or friends. This tended to interrupt the concentration and narrative flow of the primary informant -- the conditions I was trying to encourage.

Prior to each session, I would explain that I was working on an oral history of their community whereby the community's story would be told in the words and through the eyes of those who were part of its foundation. I stressed also that the community's story was the confluence of all of its members' lives and experiences. Despite my explanation, the "folklore" association, combined with the "oral" qualification I attached to the "history", caused some confusion as to what it was I was trying to do. History was comprehensible: it meant, of course, the facts of the past. Most people presumed I was after the facts. I paraphrase the words of one man who understood the difference: "A few years back, a man came here asking questions about when the synagogue was built and such things, but now you want to know about me." Yes.

Additional people at the interview tended to break the flow by interjecting their comments. While this frequently inspired streams of new associations and introduced other perspectives, they were disruptive in many cases, and in

several extreme instances, exhausting exercises in patience. However, as the risk of appearing aggressive, rude or otherwise suspect was too great to warrant a request that the other(s) please leave, the problems of the small group interview had to be accepted and reckoned with.

I attempted to resolve the problem by focusing initially on the primary informant. I justified my bias by explaining that I was concentrating on those individuals who belonged to the "original" community -- that is, the pre-World War II settlers and their descendants. In order to avoid arousing jealousies, however, I would sometimes "interview" the other individual (especially in the case of elderly couples) although their story may not have been relevant to this study. I never made an issue over contributions offered by others present during the course of the session.

The small group interviews were also advantageous for several reasons. First, the likelihood of factual accuracy was greater when one individual's testimony could be verified or challenged by another. Individual recall was certain to distort historical particulars such as dates, names and places. Secondly, the process of verification and challenge distinguished idiosyncratic attitudes from those shared by everyone.

3. Framing the Interview

During the course of interviewing, I was always delighted to find an eager narrator. Sometimes, however,

circumstances encouraged eagerness to the extent that a life story would be delivered prematurely, before I was prepared to receive it. This was the third difficulty which I encountered.

I interviewed in stores and offices but most frequently in people's homes. While I usually managed to arrive under my own steam, occasionally someone would offer to pick me up at my home and save me a walk or a frustrating ordeal with the St. John's metrobus system. There were, also, those generous individuals who would have a meal prepared for me upon my arrival.

Each of these situations encouraged social rather than professional interaction between us. It seemed that often, during these interim social periods, the most spontaneous and animated life story narratives would flow. It was only natural that people would project themselves and inquire about the other person in order to establish a basis for communication and diminish the social distance between strangers. They were aware that my interest was in their life stories as they related to the St. John's Jewish community, and this must have encouraged their anxiousness to spill everything to me immediately. As a result, by the time we arrived at their homes, the most important narrative performances had been elucidated.

Unfortunately, these unrecorded, impromptu renditions were often far superior in richness and spirit to the second

performances which I elicited later during the formal sessions. While the first communique was inspired by the genuine excitement of imparting new information, the second version was often self-conscious, mechanical and lackluster for the less inspiring impetus, repetition for documentation's sake.

It seemed, then, that the establishment of a social rather than professional rapport at the outset diminished my control of the interview. The format was more likely to slip into chunky question-and-answer format instead of the preferable free associational, fluid exposition. In an attempt to avoid this situation, apart from resorting to foot and bus, I would artfully try to discourage the premature "life story spill" by immediately navigating the conversation towards safer, more neutral ground. The most successful sessions were those where I initiated the interview soon after my arrival. The socializing would then follow the session. It seemed to be the more formal framing, then, which actually elicited the most spontaneous narrative, and at the same time, served the social function of orienting strangers to one another.

4. Assumed Knowledge and Narrative Editing

A fourth problem was related to the wide access I had to the community. This was both a boon and a hindrance. The degree of familial intimacy that I had reached with many

people was such that I seemed to slip into the role of extended relative, and for some, that of surrogate daughter or granddaughter. This encouraged people to entrust their thoughts with me; however, it also led people to assume that I knew about particular topics and, consequently, they would sometimes gloss over or ignore them unless I prompted them. I noticed that the explanatory-style exposition on certain topics, which I had gathered earlier during my "green" stage, was progressively being eliminated on the basis of these assumptions. Chunks of commentary might have been lost had I not realized what was happening and started listening for those clues in the course of the session. Thus, when the inevitable lead, "you've heard about..." would arise, I would deliberately play ignorant to elicit comment. While this may have appeared neglectful on my part, and connoted my inefficiency or incompetency as an interviewer to some, I ignored ego for the sake of commentary.

5. Changing Interviewing Technique

The question of the less-than-satisfactory interview leads to the fifth problem. At the outset of this project, I was an inexperienced interviewer. I had to develop my own technique as I actively gathered material; thus, the interviews themselves represent substantive texts as well as practical experiments in the course of my own training as

fieldworker. This presents a problem. As my approach changed, and I became more adept at eliciting narrative response, and more sensitive to the dynamics of interviewing as well as more familiar with the community, the format of the interviews changed along with the informants' presentation of the material. It is only in retrospect, when I can review the transcripts and discern my influence by the quality of the material which I elicited, that I can appreciate the wholly subjective nature of this project, and the instrumental role of the interviewer in the creation of each testimony. As for a remedial solution to the problem of "unsatisfactory" interviews, I decided against re-interviewing in order to preserve the integrity of the collection as based upon single-interview sessions.

6. Directing the Interview

Regarding the actual process of conducting an interview, I learned quickly that it is not simply a matter of designing the ideal set of questions that would send the individual reeling into reverie, and inspire effusive streams of consciousness. Nor would "narrative" be delivered in neat, generic divisions -- as anecdote, personal experience narrative or joke -- according to Olrik's laws, with tight, evocative openers and pithy endings, timed perfectly and executed in meticulous vernacular. The sixth problem was this: how was I to go about this business of collection?

Two of my primary responsibilities were to create a relaxed and personal ambience, and establish a rapport with each person whom I interviewed. This entailed altering our relationship from that of strangers to empathetic, "intimate" strangers. The material results were contingent upon the success of this transition. Empathy is perhaps less essential for objective, fact-seeking interviews; however, a stranger's thoughtful life story and candid reflections are not gathered straightforwardly and objectively as "facts." My active participation in the conversation was demanded in order to establish a basis for trust and confidentiality in the matter of a very short time. This was accomplished by dialogue -- verbal and empathetic..

I found that an informal, conversational approach was the most successful way to relax people and encourage them to speak freely. While I would generally try to avoid extended personal comment during the course of an interview, there were times when my contributions were catalytic and triggered a response or association. Frequently, when I contributed my feelings and experiences -- essentially sharing in the exposure which accompanies candor -- a mutual empathy was found. In turn, this reciprocity put us on a par which encouraged reflective and introspective discourse. Thus, each testimony was a cooperative, creative effort.

I directed the interviews initially with a broad field question: "Tell me the story of how you and/or your family came to Newfoundland." This would generally elicit a fairly lengthy, uninterrupted life story. Often, I would follow up on this by asking, "Why Newfoundland?", if that question had not been addressed previously. My subsequent questions were intended to guide the individual towards the more specific, and personal or emotional issues, to which he or she had alluded earlier in the interview. These would vary according to the generation and birthplace (Europe or Newfoundland) of the individual. Such topics as the following might be covered: arrival in St. John's; peddling; the transition from peddler to shopkeeper (or other occupation); the language handicap; encounters with anti-semitism; relationship with the "Gentile" community; growing up as a Jew in St. John's; maintaining tradition; sense of identity; different expectations for boys and girls of the Jewish community; rebellion against the "Old Country," parental authority; the sense of obligation to the community; and others.

Generally, I tried to run open-ended sessions and encourage each individual to steer the course of the interview. In this way, I interpreted this select content to express the individual's priorities -- that which he or she deemed most significant for posterity. Clearly, manner of

speaking is as unique as each individual. While some spoke assuredly, coherently and fluidly, others were reticent, more sparing with their words, and required urging and prompting by questions. Certainly, the latter situation necessitated that I intervene more than in the former; however, my voice is undeniably present throughout. It is only the matter of degree that remains variable.

7. Standards and Evaluation of Narrative

The seventh consideration, the variable nature of narrative form and content, forced me to confront a basic question regarding classification and presentation of this material: could I realistically expect narrative to meet certain "standards" according to which I might accept or reject material for my projected scheme?

I soon learned that expectations of perfect form and the realization of my projected goals had no place in the field of human communications. Even methodological controls will not eradicate inconsistencies in these infinitely human -- therefore, individualistic and often idiosyncratic -- exposures. It must be accepted that form will vary in each case which in itself is not cause to dismiss the "lesser" performances. A positive approach to the problem of resolving form and content in a given body of material is to look at it and say: this is what I have rather than this was not what I wanted.

8. Classification and Theoretical Approach

My subsequent interpretation and handling of the texts leads to the eighth consideration: how was I to classify the material I had collected? This presented both a taxonomic and theoretical problem.

Each testimony comprises essentially what Degh and Vazsonyi term a first-hand account of an "event,"¹²³ formulated from the speaker's personal experience and observations. In the course of gathering the stuff of one individual's life, the narrated life-subject becomes entangled with the consciousness of the present. The result is a creative representation of that subject but is not a re-creation; it may resemble or recall facets of that life but will never embrace all of them. A new personal vision is created with each such telling; herein lies the element of fiction. How to designate this form, shaped by performer and audience, in which fact and fiction merge?

Settling the question of taxonomy was no mean task. Much of my difficulty stemmed from the fact that I regarded the narratives as processes as opposed to genres. Generic classifications and definitions abound but they are largely individually schematized and, therefore, remain ambiguous and arbitrary. This is particularly so with respect to the less "formulaic," personal narrative genres such as personal or life history, life story, biography and autobiography.

which have played a far less active role in folkloristics than in anthropology until recently.¹²⁴ Each of these terms also implies the method by which the material was gathered and subsequently transposed into a written document. Recent anthropological writing is critical in that, in the past, rarely did information about the fieldworker's methodology, frequently and informally labelled "autobiography," accompany the material. This bred a general distrust of any personal document's validity because of its misrepresentation as "autobiography," when it was, in fact, an edited or contrived document by the fieldworker-as-medium who quietly disavowed his or her part in the creative process.

Clyde Kluckhohn explained what he maintained was a too liberal interchange between "autobiography" and "biography", (with which "life story" and "life history" are correlated respectively):

The lumping of 'biographical' and 'autobiographical' documents is dictated by circumstance that it is often a highly arbitrary decision as to which category is the appropriate one...editors have frequently re-arranged, omitted, modified to much more than a trifling extent. Many documents that are entitled 'autobiographies' could more correctly have been called 'biographies' based upon materials provided by the subject.¹²⁵

L. L. Langness and Gelya Frank make an important point about this deceptively quiet voice of the fieldworker. They refer specifically to life history and biography, but this applied as well to the personal and life history, the life story and oral history:

...a life historian consciously attempts to accurately portray the subject of the biography. At the same time, because a document that expresses the ethnographer's experience in the field is involved, he or she will be shaping a self-portrait composed of attitudes taken with regard to that work.¹²⁶

It was my intent in the previous chapter to acknowledge and identify my own voice. I will discuss the complex role of audience-participant at greater length later. Having outlined my practical methodology, I now turn to the theory behind the method.

There are a variety of scholarly schemata for differentiating the various types of personal documents as I mentioned above. The terms and definitions change but the intent is consistent: to clarify the distinctions between them. Scholars concur that to use the terms interchangeably is to misuse them. Each category reflects a purpose and a point of view. Each is shaped by the following criteria: the fieldworker's objectives; her methods; her attitude towards her informant(s); and her self-consciousness throughout the creative process.

It was a confusing matter to assign a label that would represent the material as I saw it. There is no one scheme that I support without qualification, perhaps because they are all genre-oriented whereas I regard the communiqués as process. I either had to select an appropriate classification from the melee, or invent my own. I considered the available options: life story, personal or life history, oral history, biography or autobiography. I eliminated all but life story and life history, and debated with myself as to which represented the keener accuracy.

At first, I was convinced by Jeff Titon's article, "The Life Story."¹²⁷ Titon argues convincingly that the life story is a "self-contained fiction" distinguished from "its historical kin: biography, oral history, and the personal history (or 'life history')." ¹²⁸ The biographer's allegiance is to "the facts of his subject's life;" ¹²⁹ his objective is to meet historical standards of accuracy. Titon calls the biographer a historian or "life writer" who engages in an active, co-authorship with the informant. ¹³⁰

Titon distinguishes oral history from biography in that it focuses on "events, processes, causes and effects rather than on the individuals whose recollections furnish oral history with its raw data," as biography does. "The question of authorship," says Titon, "is central to the problems

of oral history and the personal history," while "the lines are clearly drawn in biography."¹³¹ Both, however, are concerned with the historical and factual accuracy rather than with the fictive.¹³²

The life story, on the other hand, is a sustained narrative comprised of the informant's own words and chronological sense, unshackled by the law, rationale and facts which are the historian's concerns. Titon stipulates that an actual life story is "self-contained" — that is, the listener must permit the speaker to continue, uninterrupted, until he or she is finished.¹³³ The question and response interview, on the other hand, yields the stuff of which a life history is made.

Titon views the life story as an "expression of personality and self-conception" of the storyteller, and this is only put forth justly if the whole fiction is allowed to run its natural course:

Personality is the main ingredient in the life story. It is a fiction, just like the story and even if the story is not factually true, it is always true evidence of the storyteller's personality. The most interesting life stories expose the inner life, tell us about motives. Like all good autobiography, as opposed to mere chronicling, the life story's singular achievement is that it affirms the identity of the storyteller in the act of the telling. The life story tells who one thinks one is and how one thinks one came to be that way.¹³⁴

Titon draws an essential distinction between story and history. He associates these qualities with story: fiction, "making," "language at play," creative, and "literature of the imagination." In contrast, he associates with history the qualities of fact, "found out" rather than made, "language at work," discovery, knowledge.¹³⁵ Each testimony sustained what Titon called a "tension between story and history."¹³⁶

Titon's thesis was logical but it gave me trouble. I could not seem to fit my material into his neatly delineated genres, and there was constant overlapping. In his effort to "distinguish...sharply" the life story as genre from the other forms, Titon was unnecessarily restrictive -- and idealistic. I question qualifying and confining the life story as a genre, a "self-contained fiction" which the "listener" elicits from the "storyteller" by allowing him or her the latitude of an uninterrupted train of thought through the story's finish.¹³⁷ I argue that a life story is a narrative process which is unfurled gradually, rarely neatly, over a given period of time.¹³⁸ Clearly, what I regarded as process was not going to work as genre.

Langness and Frank, in their book, Lives: An Anthropological Approach to Biography,¹³⁹ present a process-oriented approach to the life history. On this basis, I selected life history, for its purportedly broader base, as

the taxonomic classification for these testimonies. For my purpose, it is intended to include life story as well as question-and-answer (informational) material, as well as my editorial hand. I regard the collection, in the immediate sense, as a multiple life history of the community, symbolically, as an autobiography of the community -- its life story.

A series of questions arise at this point. Is this simply a hit-or-miss approach? How does one work with a vital interview which seems to amount only to scraps and fragments of teasing information imbedded in that dreaded format, question-and-answer? Is there any validity to interpreting these "fragments" and, if so, how does one read them? What do they reveal? At this point, the three different but complementary phases of this project may be addressed.

Approach and Analysis

The process begins with the question posed at the outset of this study: is the life story of a community simply a chronicle of the past or the accumulation of events between "birth" and "death"?¹⁴⁰ Is there an underlying reality being represented?¹⁴¹ I considered the material I had amassed. There was historical content; however, this intrigued me less than the rhetoric through which the ethos of the community seemed to be expressed. By breaking down

and analyzing the rhetorical content of the testimonies, I discovered that the collection had a symbolic dimension.

Configuration

Rhetorical analysis exposed a "community voice" which expressed the unconscious, unarticulated ethos of the community and the motives behind the testimonies. This was the voice which, for me, cohered and shaped the whole. The process by which this "voice" was communicated represents what I see as the configuration of this collection: an autobiography of a community.

On what basis do I make this claim? The answer lies in understanding how something means in addition to what it may mean. Meaning derives from relations, perceptions and images. There are potentially many levels of meaning contained in these testimonies; I claim no more than to offer my own audience-interpretation after all was said, heard and juxtaposed:

Application

My original motive for collecting these life histories was to compile a life story of the community through the narrated lives of its members. The objective for this final phase was to produce a document in which all of the individual voices would continue to speak through the printed word and photographs -- and from which the "community voice" could tell its autobiography. Furthermore, it was my intent

to make these lives "available" through publication. The collection is in fact like a Cubist portrait: the words create multiple perspectives of the community in time, space and perception, all compressed and exposed simultaneously in one plane. The result is a kaleidoscopic series of images of one traditional "community" constructed from as many personalized "communities." The "community" is as it is perceived; it becomes as it is told. Because of its volume, I cannot include the entire "autobiography" in this thesis; however, I will include several exemplary narratives.

9. Editing and Presenting the Testimonies

The ninth problem regards my approach to editing the narratives for the collection. The decision entailed staying close to the transcribed speech or exercising editorial license to "polish" the narratives.

There is a genre of popular oral literature in which anthropologists, folklorists, oral historians, journalists, and others have presented the (purportedly) very words of an individual, or a community of individuals, in the interest of giving the silent, "common man," a public voice. (Some examples include: novelists Ronald Blythe's Akenfield: Portrait of an English Village¹⁴² or, in a different form, James Agee's Let Us Now Praise Famous Men,¹⁴³ whose writer's eyes see for us and document his interpretation of their lives; anthropologist Oscar Lewis' The Children of

Sanchez;¹⁴⁴ oral historian Paul Thompson's The Edward-
ians: The Remaking of British Society;¹⁴⁵ folklorist
 Linda Dégh's People in the Tobacco Belt; Four Lives;¹⁴⁶
 or journalist Dorothy Gallagher's Hannah's Daughters: Six
Generations of an American Family, 1876-1976.¹⁴⁷

Those which have been intended as scholarly works have invited critical comment for their lack of editorial and contextual information. Both omniscience and absence of the fieldworker leads the reader to believe that the individuals actually spoke the words exactly as they are printed to an entirely passive audience. Having, experienced for myself the problems of interviewing, I am also aware of the editorial manipulation required to turn a raw transcript into a literary passage.

The fundamental problem is this: oral speech does not make perfect prose. It often represents a stream of consciousness. As one listens, however, one is usually unaware of fragmentary speech patterns because other non-verbal senses augment the performance and distract from the verbal. To name a few, these include inflection, modulation, accent, gesture, eye contact, touch, and silence. Unfortunately, transcriptions can only convey the verbal. These same words on the page burden the reader visually with extraneous matter -- false starts, stuttering and digressions to name a few. Unless the objective is to make a

linguistic -- or rhetorical -- analysis, there is no purpose served to include this extraneous verbal material. Therefore, my rhetorical analysis was based upon the unedited, transcribed speech, and my examples in Chapter 6 are drawn directly from the transcriptions. As for the final collection of edited texts, my objective was different and so my editorial approach changed.

I have "manipulated" the material for final presentation, preserving the integrity of the individual's speech but editing out the extraneous, distracting elements and shuffling paragraphs to form a more coherent and aesthetic product. While the purists' allegiance to the verbatim test is admirable, these texts are often irritatingly unreadable. As medium for this material, I am concerned with its integrity. I am also concerned that it communicate sensibly and aesthetically, retaining the flow of speech but accommodating the differences between the spoken and the written word.

As for acknowledging my presence, I periodically remind the reader that I am there by including my significant questions; and when the speaker directs a statement to "you," that specific "you" is me as audience. The narratives in print, however, extend the audience beyond myself. The nature of the texts is explanatory; they demand a listener. The role of "you," then, extends to and is assumed by each

reader. Thus, the reader, although not immediately involved in the interview, becomes a participant in the rhetorical situation.

10. Processing the Material

As for the tenth, and final, methodological problem, I processed the material which I collected as follows. Each cassette tape was transcribed completely and a table of contents done for each. The tapes and transcriptions were given numbers which included the initials of the individual interviewed, the number of the tape, and the year. The entire collection of tapes has been deposited in Memorial University's Folklore and Language Archive and assigned a corresponding MUNFLA number. There is a fifteen-year restriction on the collection in order to assure the confidentiality of the material.

I have outlined above my methodology for gathering and approaching the material. In the following brief chapter, I will introduce the rhetorical theory on which I based my analysis.

NOTES

Chapter IV

¹²³ Linda Degh and Andrew Vazonyi, "The Memorata and the Protomemorata," Jour. of Amer. Folklore, 87 (1974): 225-9.

¹²⁴ For elaboration on and discussion of these forms, see the following: Barbara Allen, "The Personal Point of View in Orally Communicated History," Western Folklore, 38 (1979), 110-8; Kluckhohn; L.L. Langness, The Life History in Anthropological Science (New York: Holt, 1965); Langness and Frank; Martin J. Lovelace, "The Life History as an Oral Narrative Genre," in Papers from the Fourth Annual Congress, 1977, Canadian Ethnology Society, ed. Richard J. Preston (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1978), pp. 211-24; Mintz; John A. Robinson, "Personal Narratives Reconsidered," Jour. of Amer. Folklore, 94 (1981), 58-85; Jeff Todd Titon, "The Life Story," Jour. of Amer. Folklore, 93 (1980), 270-92.

¹²⁵ Kluckhohn, pp. 81-2.

¹²⁶ Langness and Frank, p. 100.

¹²⁷ See citation above.

¹²⁸ Titon, p. 276.

- 129 Titon, p. 280.
- 130 Titon, p. 281.
- 131 Titon, p. 281.
- 132 Titon, p. 281.
- 133 Titon, p. 276.
- 134 Titon, p. 290.
- 135 Titon, p. 278.
- 136 Titon, pp. 284-5.
- 137 Titon, p. 276.
- 138 See Robinson, citation above.
- 139 See citation above.
- 140 Langness and Frank, p. 88.
- 141 Langness and Frank, p. 88.
- 142 Ronald Blythe, Akenfield: Portrait of an English Village (New York: Pantheon, 1969).
- 143 James Agee, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men (1939; rpt. New York: Ballantine, 1966).
- 144 Oscar Lewis, The Children of Sanchez: Autobiography of a Mexican Family (New York: Random, 1961).
- 145 Paul Thompson, The Edwardians: The Remaking of British Society (Bloomington, IN: Indiana Univ. Press, 1975).
- 146 Linda Degh, People in the Tobacco Belt: Four Lives, National Museum of Man Mercury Series, No. 13 (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies, 1975).

147. Dorothy Gallagher, Hannah's Daughters: Six Generations of an American Family: 1876-1976. (New York: Crowell, 1976).

APPROACH AND ANALYSIS

Chapter V

A RHETORICAL APPROACH TO ANALYSIS

...it seems to be a fact that, the more urgent the oratory, the greater the profusion and vitality of the formal devices. So they must be functional, and not mere 'embellishments.'

Kenneth Burke
A Rhetoric of Motives

The rhetorical approach to folklore, says Roger Abrahams, is "a point of view which proposes areas in which insights might be gained by using comparative or relational methodology."¹⁴⁸ In this chapter, I will discuss the theoretical ramifications of a rhetorical approach to folklore and establish the structure of context in which the narratives were conceived. In the next chapter, I will demonstrate application of that approach and examine the rhetorical strategies to which I was audience.

I borrow from the methodology of rhetoric -- most generously, from Kenneth Burke's theory -- and Roger Abrahams' rhetorical approach to folklore, in order to examine the collection of life histories as a whole and expose its structure and motives.

Rhetorical Theory: A Précis

The domain of rhetoric as the art of persuasion dates back to the ancient Greeks. Its scope has since extended beyond those classical parameters into the general realm of symbolic communication. Previously, discourse (oral or written) was rhetoric's medium. Contemporary rhetoricians, however, influenced by behaviorism and social psychology, maintain that behavioral and communicative acts, in which a message has been conveyed to and influenced an audience, are rhetorical. Thus, the very concept of discourse, as confined to the verbal exchange of ideas, has been revised. The "New Rhetoric," fathered by Kenneth Burke, endorses the more comprehensive definition of rhetoric as the art of identification (which includes instruction). The increased breadth of rhetoric embraces any non-classical and non-persuasive situation in which audience response and affect are intended. One such case would be the ways in which members of a group promote social cohesion by acting rhetorically upon themselves and one another.¹⁴⁹ Unconventionally discursive (or conventionally non-discursive) events such as film, art, theater, even demonstrations are also regarded as rhetorical media. Thought itself, according to the rhetoric of philosophy, is a situation in which each of us is audience to our own rhetorical motives. For my purposes, I will consider the rhetoric of oral discourse and performance.¹⁵⁰

A Rhetorical Approach to Folklore

In a seminal article entitled "Introductory Remarks to a Rhetorical Theory of Folklore,"¹⁵¹ Roger Abrahams proposed an approach for analyzing traditional expressive culture that would emphasize all aspects of an aesthetic performance: performance, item and audience. The assumption behind the rhetorical method is based on Kenneth Burke's premise that words have power. In performance, words persuade through entertainment as they assert an idea or course of action. Language is a process of naming and the speaker feels control in his ability to name. The more self-conscious and artistic the performance, the greater the dimension of personal power in word usage.¹⁵²

Regardless of the form, nature or intent of the rhetorical medium, the principal considerations of any rhetoric are sacrosanct and mirror those of folklore: the speaker, artistry and product of the performance and the audience.¹⁵³ Strategy and audience are the influential factors of rhetoric. Through strategy, the speaker strives to unite himself with, or relate himself to, the audience by selecting a set of relations (or topics) with which the audience can identify. Burke explains situations and strategies in terms of poetry; Abrahams substitutes, for poetry, "any self-consciously voiced expression".¹⁵⁴

We think of poetry as the adopting of various strategies for the encompassing of situations. These strategies size up the situations, name their structure and outstanding ingredients, and name them in a way that contains an attitude toward them.¹⁵⁵

That attitude cannot be identified or evaluated, however, until the expressive work has been completed. Although the individual may be

conscious of selecting a certain kind of imagery to reinforce a certain kind of mood, etc., he cannot possibly be conscious of the interrelationships among all these equations. Afterwards, by inspecting his work statistically, we or he may disclose by objective citation the structure of motivation operating here. There is no need to 'supply' motives. The interrelationships themselves are his motives. For they are his situation; and situation is but another word for motives...however consciously he may go about such work, there is a kind of generalization about these interrelations that he could not have been conscious of, since the generalization could be made by the kind of inspection that is possible only after the completion of the work.¹⁵⁶

There is art and artifice in the organization of each item of expressive folklore. As in any work of art, its materials are manipulated into a coherent and vital form. It differs from other modes of experience, however, in that it is vivified only in a specially organized and habitual action called "performance."

Structure of Performance Context

As contemporary folkloristic methodology mates "text" with "context," rhetorical methodology defines the systemic relationship between "figure" and "ground," essentially different terms for similar concepts.¹⁵⁷ Both are concerned with performance as it reveals how an item affects an audience. How can an understanding of the relationship between performer and audience lend meaning to the "item" being performed?

The initial step is to examine the structure of context which is, as Abrahams explains, "the relation between participants in an esthetic transaction...as the relation is modified by time and place and occasion."¹⁵⁸

Each speaker, in the course of remembering aloud to me, was an actor playing out a drama of his or her past and present. Each individual assumed a role for the occasion of the performance which I instigated. Barbara Myerhoff, in her book, Number Our Days,¹⁵⁹ coined the apt term, "Homo Narrans," to describe humankind's role as storyteller. The "story" we tell about ourselves embraces culture in general, specific culture and, as Victor Turner says, "the fabric of meaning that constitutes any single human existence."¹⁶⁰

The ability to "name" appropriately, with respect to a particular audience, marks the skill of the speaker. The dexterous speaker must be not only a deft performer; he must

also know the audience whom he desires to affect, or his performance loses its power. The speaker controls the ideas and images, and thereby controls his audience to the extent that, if successful, he manipulates their sympathies and converts them to his point of view. Thus, his personal power is determined by the effectiveness of his performance. It is augmented by the naivete and, therefore, vulnerability of the audience which is likely to offer less resistance to the narrator's point of view.

On the other hand, since the audience is the factor that determines the speaker's strategy, the audience is the factor that determines the speaker's strategy, the audience exerts a direct influence on the shaping of the communique. Thus, rhetorical strategy implicitly invites the audience to collaborate in the performance since form and content are designed in the audience's interest. "So, then," as Gertrude Stein says:

The audience is the thing. It helps a lot to know anything about this thing if you think are always really thinking about the narrating of anything of narrative being existing...This you all of you know.¹⁶¹

Storytellers, asserts Myerhoff, need audiences because:

Audiences, listeners, witnesses are essential for self-awareness, even when a person is his or her own mirror, at once subject and object, speaker and listener in the same story.¹⁶²

In this project, I was audience to, and collaborator in, the narrations. My purpose and presence in each case helped to shape rhetorical strategy. My collaboration was manifest not only during the actual interview when my very presence, questions and responses directly affected the communiqué; by initiating the occasions for these performances, my role was participatory and affective from the outset. I was the catalyst, inducing reflection. It was thus that, in each case, we collaborated in a one-to-one "storytelling event" of the sort described by Robert Georges below:

...the total message of any given storytelling event is generated and shaped by and exists because of a specific storyteller and specific story listeners whose interactions constitute a network of social interrelationships that is unique to that particular storytelling event.¹⁶³

Furthermore, each individual conjured a series of impressions and suggestions which in turn enabled me to imagine the subject -- an image of the subject created by the individual at that moment as he or she elected to portray it for me. Thus, for example, the multiple images I have gathered have enabled me (and the reader) to imagine one and many communities: Otto's and Joseph's and Fanny's and Ralph's and the others'. I, in turn, interpret their performances, making new images from theirs, and thereby contribute to the "storytelling event." The media involved

here are the two sensibilities of the teller and the listener in dynamic rapport. Lee Haring expresses this role and contribution of the audience as participant-observer:

The interviewer...is...not an observer...He is the audience, or more likely a member of the audience, for the performance of aesthetically expressive items or pieces...the items the interviewer receives and decodes are selected by the performer on the basis of their appropriateness to that audience at that moment. Such a process of selection, being one of the circumstances making the storytelling event unique, determines what the interviewer records: thus the presence of the 'observer' determines the phenomenon observed.¹⁶⁴

Our primary roles were thus established. I was the uninformed researcher whose objective was to learn about this community, which implicated each speaker as my "instructor," thereby granting him or her both control and power during the interview.

Identity is the contextual factor upon which rhetorical identifications are based. Every individual possesses numerous identities which shift in priority and relevance with varying situations. In my audience role, I likely projected the following identifications: graduate student; folklorist; writer (of a thesis or book depending upon the individual's comprehension of my purpose); third generation Jew with an Eastern European background like their own; single, young woman; American -- in short, an insider-

outsider, as yet "uneducated" about their community, who sought to write about them and their community's story."

In retrospect, I speculate that these identifications would have been translated in a manner such as follows: I was a landsmen (a countryman), and thus part of the "family": a member of the younger generation to whom the past had to be entrusted, effectively adopting me as a surrogate daughter or granddaughter, a generational link in the chain of transmission; respected intellectually, as a student researcher and reinforced by the emphasis Judaism places on education; an accessible and timely scribe who would "write the history of the community" given the prevailing urgency to do so. Perhaps the last identity -- the commitment to record the ephemeral knowledge and memories of the members -- was the most significant identification as it assured a document for posterity.

The significance of this hypothetical evaluation lies in its providing the basis for a strategy. If I was to be the creditable vehicle for these people's words and "history," it was essential that I be "educated" and made empathetic to their point of view. Thus, our respective roles were established: I became the student and they, my teachers. This context, then, accounts for the explanatory nature of the narratives and the underlying rhetorical motive to make me understand the present.

The rhetorical approach is concerned with techniques of argument. It is based on the assumption that all expression is designed to influence and that the object of study is to discover the design. Folklore argues traditionally via rhetorical techniques developed in the past to deal with recurrent social problems which threaten the group's existence. By "naming" recurrent social conflicts, expressive folklore makes them into a "representative and traditionally recognizable form."¹⁶⁵ In this way, folklore functions as a cohesive force to maintain conformity by arguing adherence to the norm. It guides by "confronting and projecting anxiety-producing situations;" and it "proposes potential solutions and attempts to produce action in accordance with its proposals."¹⁶⁶ The essential transaction is to elicit the audience's sympathy or empathy.

Burke refers to the persuasive tools of rhetoric as "identifications." There are a variety of formal rhetorical devices which serve as identifications. It is unfortunate that the non-verbal dimension of a performance cannot be transcribed as easily as the words on a page. Much of rhetorical identification is accomplished subtly by tone of voice, gesture, facial expression and even silence. The use of weighted words, or "tonalities," is the most common rhetorical practice. Through suggestion and inflection, the force of a message is communicated in the tone (or attitude).

without the explicit form.¹⁶⁷ The emotional appeal invites the audience's empathy. As Burke suggests, the implication of this technique is: "This is the slant you have too, if you have the proper slant."¹⁶⁸ Other examples of rhetorical devices include: imagery, setting up oppositions, repetition, exaggeration, understatement, rhetorical question, irony, humor, taking the audience into confidence, comparison, entreaty and censorship.¹⁶⁹

I have compiled a list of some specific rhetorical devices utilized in these narratives:

And that's the truth.
Do you know what I mean?
Follow?
Right?
You can see it?
You must remember...
See?
Look,...
Are you with me?
Don't forget...
What you got to realize...
Now you see how...
You heard about...?
It's not like today...

The jargon used by members of the community might also be regarded as rhetorical in terms of its tonality. It defines and reaffirms "community" as they perceive it. For example, I construed the following meanings:

everybody, nobody (connote group consciousness and solidarity; affirm community; establish the opposition between "we" and "they", as will be seen in the next chapter) to mix with (the Gentiles)
original, old-timers, the older families (references to individuals who belonged to the pre-World War II community; there is value judgment connoted)

University crowd (used pejoratively)
community-minded (a value)
assimilated, Americanized (descriptive terms for any individual who was not active in Jewish community affairs or did not acknowledge his Jewish identity)
lost, drifted apart (references to any individual or family who left the community or never belonged)
inside (reference to the community)
outside (reference to any individual or group, Jewish or non-Jewish, not belonging to the community)

In the next chapter, rhetorical content is discussed at length. I note the above to preview their presence in the more extensive examples later.

The controlling power of folklore is the accomplishment of its rhetorical intent: the identification between a real situation and its "artificial embodiment."¹⁷⁰ The audience is distanced from the real situation by the controls imposed during the performance. In this way, the conflict is both impersonalized and universalized. "This," says Abrahams, "is the essence of play: the objectifying and impersonalizing of anxiety situations,"¹⁷¹ enabling them to be played out without the threat of social consequence. Thus, rhetoric promotes accepted attitudes and actions.¹⁷²

The rhetorical approach suggests a method for discovering the relationship between the expression and the performance context; the method is, to understand the strategy of the piece by determining what its motive is and how it goes about convincing the audience.¹⁷³ In the next chapter, I

will look specifically at the rhetorical process which motivates these narratives.

NOTES

Chapter V:

148 Roger D. Abrahams, "Introductory Remarks to a Rhetorical Theory of Folklore," Jour. of Amer. Folklore, 81 (1968), 149.

149 See Abrahams; Gregory Gizelis, Narrative Rhetorical Devices of Persuasion: Folklore Communication in a Greek-American Community (Athens: National Centre of Social Research, 1974); Cynthia Lamson, "Bloody Decks and a Bumper Crop: The Rhetoric of Counter-Protest," M.A. thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland 1978.

150 Above based on readings in the following: Peter Dixon, Rhetoric (London: Methuen, 1971); A. Craig Baird, Rhetoric: A Philosophical Inquiry (New York: Ronald, 1965); Donald C. Bryant, "Rhetoric: Its Functions and Its Scope," in Rhetoric: A Tradition in Transition, ed. Walter R. Fisher (East Lansing: Michigan State Univ. Press, 1974), pp. 195-230.

151 See citation above.

152 Abrahams, pp. 144-5.

153 For discussion see classic essay by Bryant (see citation above).

- 154 Abrahams, p. 145.
- 155 Kenneth Burke, The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action, rev. ed. (Berkeley: Univ. of Cal. Press, 1973), p. 3.
- 156 Burke, p. 20.
- 157 Bryant, p. 15.
- 158 Abrahams, p. 146.
- 159 Barbara Myerhoff, Number Our Days (New York: Dutton, 1978).
- 160 Victor Turner, Foreward, Number Our Days, by Barbara Myerhoff (New York: Dutton, 1978) p. xi.
- 161 Stein, p. 49.
- 162 Myerhoff, p. 222.
- 163 Robert A. Georges, "Toward an Understanding of Storytelling Events," Jour. of Amer. Folklore, 82 (1969), 163.
- 164 Lee Haring, "Performing for the Interviewer: A Study of the Structure of Context," Southern Folklore Quarterly, 36 (1972), 387.
- 165 Abrahams, p. 148.
- 166 Abrahams, p. 149.
- 167 Kenneth Burke, A Rhetoric of Motives (1950; rpt. Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of Cal. Press, 1969), p. 94.
- 168 Burke, Rhetoric, p. 98.
- 169 Burke, Rhetoric, pp. 66-7.

170 Abrahams, p. 148.

171 Abrahams, p. 149.

172 Abrahams, p. 149.

173 Abrahams, p. 149.

Chapter VI

STRATEGIES AND MOTIVES: EDUCATION OF AN AUDIENCE

People in all cultures seem to desire, even need in order to survive, patterns that give meaning to their lives. To find those patterns that will work best for us is one of the most critical challenges of contemporary Western culture...

L.L. Langness and Gelya Frank
Lives: An Anthropological
Approach to Biography

As a "student," I derived my "education" from the people who remembered aloud to me. At the same time, I was audience to their creative performances. Performance, says Roger Abrahams,

is...an active part of the social drama, reflecting in a small way the ever-present existence of conflict in everyday life. On the other hand, the item has an existence of its own, since it can be re-enacted by any of a number of performers. As such, it enunciates artificially a conflict of its own. 174

An exploration of the nature and function of that artistry yields insight into conflict through these channels of inquiry: how is an image made meaningful to an audience.

through rhetorical strategy; how do persistent images and ideas appear as narrative themes and topics; and when does an image/theme become a symbol?

In this chapter, I will examine the consistent rhetorical devices used in the narratives; the themes, topics and symbols; and the primary symbol -- or "associational cluster" -- which, in Olney's terms, functioned as my "side-wise" glance and illuminated the primary motive behind the community's life story. My objective, at this stage, is to evaluate the symbolic communication within this creative process of remembering. Essentially, my evaluation is a revelation of my own audience response to their rhetoric.

The narrative themes and topics function as rhetorical "identifications" as well as reveal the speaker's attitudes towards particular topics. How and what do they communicate? (What is the strategy?) Why are they so consistent? (What is the motive?) These questions are explored by examining the themes in context.

Oppositions

The form in which the themes most often appeared was in the swing of oppositions: "we" vs. "they" and "then" vs. "now"; the positive defined by the juxtaposition of its negative. Each served to define the community's boundaries:

the former in space and the latter in time. Opposition acted as a form in which to cast images of the community and as a vehicle for communicating significant ideas. These pairs of oppositions appear throughout the narratives -- explicitly and implicitly, intertwined and complementary. They enact the central conflict: the struggle for continuity and identity in the face of change.

Burke identified this "we...but they..." opposition as a formal and functional rhetorical device which forces the audience to participate in the speaker's assertion by awakening in them "an attitude of collaborative expectancy."¹⁷⁵ "Then...but now..." may be substituted and functions in the same way. The device works in the following manner:

Once you grasp the trend of the form, it invites participation regardless of the subject matter. Formally, you will find yourself swinging along with the succession of antitheses, even though you may not agree with the proposition that is being presented in this form.¹⁷⁶

Although the audience might not support the point of view, the tendency is to yield to the form "for the duration of the statement...surrendering to its symmetry as such."¹⁷⁷ we do or think this, but they do or think that. The more resistant the audience, the less yielding the degree of collaboration with the form. If the audience is ambivalent

or unbiased, however, "a yielding to the form prepares for assent to the matter identified with it."¹⁷⁸ Thus, the audience is drawn to the form because of its "universal" appeal, and the "attitude of assent may then be transferred to the matter which happens to be associated with the form."¹⁷⁹

There are several themes which appear in the format of oppositions. Those themes classified as "we vs. they" are as follows: first generation vs. second generation which includes a sub-theme, the immigrant as bungler vs. the self-made man; and the themes of identity, Jew vs. Gentile and Jew vs. Jew. The themes classified as "then vs. now" include the opposition, pre-World War II vs. post-War and community as family vs. community as a "group of Jews."

Interwoven with the themes are topics which address specific ideas associated with a particular theme such as the questions of identity and intermarriage. They are used as examples to solicit audience identification with the speaker's viewpoint. Related to topics are what I call rhetorical "slogans." These are the ubiquitous and ready ideas, conveyed in a phrase or a sentence, that are constant reminders and reinforcers of the intended image. They include the following: "we were free to associate;" "we were like one family;" "it's a different world;" "the community is dying." There are also several topics which

functioned as symbols in the course of the narratives. These will be discussed in context and include Water Street, the old and the new synagogues, and the war. Only one symbol is signified in advance by a slogan: "You heard about Perlin?" This will be discussed in the last section of this chapter. Finally, the oppositions provide a context in which to assert the community's values.

The passage below is a lucid example of this process of opposition between the old community and the new. Here, the esoteric distinctions between "we" and "they" and "then" and "now" are illustrated by the interweaving of two major themes: the community as family and the uncertain future (survival):

Yeah, the numbers are dwindling, in that some of the oldtimers are...dying. They are not...being replaced, maybe, in numbers but it isn't a community. It's just a bunch of Jewish people that are here. There's no association, there as a bond, in the old group. And every time, somebody else goes, it's it's a very sad thing for me. A lot of people don't feel that way, they didn't know them or something like that. But we have, friendships that, we don't have to see each other every, every week or every month. I had a call from, Rose Levitz, on Sunday, congratulating me on becoming a grandfather for the first time last week. And, it's something. I said 'Rosie, it was so nice of you to call' and she said 'Sidney, we've been friends for so many years, you know and, it just, it was really touching, to me. That she did it. I think it's about the only phone call I got except from a couple of close aunts or something, like

that. But she is not a relative of mine and see, this is going back from, we had, we got something between us, Rosie and I see? And, it's it's, going back a long time. And, it was really nice but I would never get that from, so many other people who, who could be here for a hundred years and, you know. So, the community, it's sad, the community is going, the community as I knew it, the community as a lot of other people know it is, is still alive, you know. But it's not my community, it's it's somebody else's.

[AK: So there are a lot of different communities. Your community is the native Newfoundland --]

Yeah, the native Newfoundland, the ones that came here in the twenties. And earlier. My parents' generation, are what I consider the community.¹⁸⁰

As the example above implies, "community" was an interchangeable reference. The term embraced at once several ideas of "community" depending upon the specific context and the speaker's vantage point. To elaborate, "we" was a variable reference to the following: the Jewish people (in which community I was included); the Jewish community in Newfoundland (as opposed to Jewish communities elsewhere, implying the exceptional circumstances and demands); the St. John's Jewish community at large; the "original" (pre-World War II) St. John's Jewish community; the particular generation to which one belonged; and one's own family. Regardless of reference, each "we" seemed to be offset by an antithetical "they," and each pole was charged with a value, positive or negative.

The most elusive "community" was that of the "original" or traditional community because it exists only when it is recalled from memory. This is affirmed below as three second-generation members comment on an expatriate relative who has expressed a desire to return to St. John's:

- ...she's thinking of it in different terms than now...She's remembering the community as it was.
- Yes, exactly.
- It doesn't exist.
- It doesn't exist. 181

The question is: what are those "terms" by which memory marks the past, and do they designate a reality or a myth? The "original community," as it was, does not exist. The "original community," as it thrives in memory, is an amalgamation of fact and fiction, a product of the present's consciousness. Memory and imagination are fodder for the oral image. Like Camelot, the audience must be made to believe in the myth of the past. By charting it in time and space, the community seems tangible. This is the accomplishment of the oppositions: to generate the images that will create a point of view for the audience. This charting of the old community is the first rhetorical motive.

In the broadest sense, the oppositions asserted -- pan-generationally -- that the community perceived itself as

a distinct and bounded entity with the implication that they were regarded as such by outsiders. Those who count themselves amongst "we" of the original community share, among other bonds, a unique past which distinguishes them from those "outside." "Outsiders" is a reference, not only to non-Jews but to other Jews who share neither the lineage nor the tradition of the original group.

I tried to abet my orientation to the community by asking questions. On occasion, a simple question would touch a nerve and what I later identified as a rhetorical "slogan" would issue forth. For instance, once I asked whether there had been a Jewish "neighborhood" at any time. My question inadvertently insinuated "ghetto." That impression was promptly corrected by resorting to the "slogans":

- No, no ghetto!
- No. We lived everywhere.
- No. We were free to associate. 182

In contrast, the passage below offers a "real" glimpse behind the rhetoric. In a less literal interpretation of my question, the explanation makes associations that create a more meaningful spatial picture of the community:

Yeah. It was a small group unto itself. This is the only way, it ---- it, stretched into the, outside, greater St. John's, community through these, well like these, few things I mentioned [various fund-raising functions] plus, fashion shows, the ladies

put on, Hadassah put on. In the synagogue and ...they'd send invitations to, people of the, of St. John's. Through tickets, and -- Other than that I don't think there, was not too much that was open to the general public....

[AK: Do you think they wanted to stay a little group like that? Was that important?] Oh. Rather than branch out? Yeah. Yeah I think they were quite satisfied I mean, they realized, ---- that they were, Jews and, they had a lot of things in common, with, each other. And ---- and, the religious barrier separated [laughs] it was a, separation point I'd say as, oh you couldn't, easily mix outside the, the community itself.

[AK: Do you think the fact that they came from the shtetl...helped preserve these ideas of trying to stay together?]

Yeah. I'd say very definite. Yeah ---- Yeah, in a way, it was a sense, an extension of the ghetto, it was in a, a sense a ghetto. But, without being confined to one particular area of the city. But, if you use the, synagogue as the focal point of, you'd say you could say, in a roundabout way that we were, a ghettoized, the term fits in. Without, the literal meaning of it. We usually associate it with, like the Warsaw ghetto or you know, where the Jews live in a, separated, a physical separation but that didn't exist. Everybody lived all, over the place so. Different parts of the town.¹⁸³

Temporally, the community is affiliated with the years preceding the Second World War. In the narratives, the war is the time line for, and a symbol of, change. Change is a state of breakdown of the old community's autonomy, of the old world. The war "opened things up," brought in new people and ended the insularity of the little community.

The first, really break came of course was just after the war when some of the immigrant families moved in. And, because of that, it was, all, you know. First and second generation now this was they really the beginning. Of anybody coming in.¹⁸⁴

The story goes that

when the American bases opened up, during the war, that created a little flurry of activities around because everything had been sort of -- you know, very, slow-moving and everything. And they [newcomers] moved in, suddenly there was money in circulation, so young people, you know, began to move in and, start businesses of various types.

[AK: Was it at a low ebb right before the war then?]

Oh yeah. I would say so. Yeah. As far as immigrants coming in. Before the war it was nothing, was it? It was hardly anybody came in.¹⁸⁵

The appraisal of the "new" people creates the opposition which defines the old:

I just think that, the people who are here, had come from such a varied background. Who were, Reform, Conservative, Orthodox. All kinds of people, from all kinds of countries. From England. From Europe. From Africa. From all over. And, there's just conglomeration...¹⁸⁶

The assertion of change and difference are the rhetorical ideas that commence the charting of the "original" community, as expressed below:

The community has changed, from the community that I knew. I enjoyed, and liked, the old community...there are many things that have happened since the old days because I was one of the, I'm fifty-one. And, have lived here, except for a couple of years away, at university, I've lived here all my life. And I know, I knew this community, I knew the people who were here originally the oldtimers, my parents' generation and, their children. But many many people have come since then and, ... There are very few of us, who are, were born here and raised here. And, in some ways, I resent, some of the things that have happened... But the old days, in the olden days, it was a, I really liked the community.¹⁸⁷

The "change" came "after the war" and "because of the war" when several European survivors of the holocaust came in and brought with them "a different outlook on life."¹⁸⁸ They were regarded as "a different breed, completely different,"¹⁸⁹ a "community" apart. Consequently, each community "stuck together and this is just the way things were."¹⁹⁰ What was the "difference"? The "original" people also came from different backgrounds. The following passage offers a clue to the "difference":

...the original people... came, came from, different backgrounds but, we only looked at them as our parents with respect. And, friends of our parents...we only, associated with them at these functions and everything was fine you were a little boy or a little girl and, you know, nothing, happened. But, when your contemporaries, when people your own age, come over or people a few years older or younger, and their lifestyle is different, then, these are people you're

supposed to go around with. --- The question I ask everybody is, if you were in a community the size of Montreal or New York or Toronto or somewhere like that, would you still associate with the people, you see now. I don't believe in associating with people because they happen to be Jewish. You know. 191

The passage above identifies a possible source of the myth of the "original" community. This community as it is evoked in the present, is not an entity fixed in space and time. It is a perception, a point of view, a childhood impression which has been preserved, unmatured, in memory. Through adult eyes, it remains an idealized record of the past, revived to quell conflict in the present. The childhood vision is not the only source of imagery; for the elderly, it is the perspective of "carefree" young adulthood that is the image-maker. In the passage below, the inverse message is that "we're different, we've changed -- we're older." The eyes of age see differently than those of youth, and the perspective of each transforms the same subject into different images:

Today, it's a different life cause it's a different generation. All the older people, some have moved away. Some have died. You know? And there's newer, ones come in? And they are, different entirely. It's not the same at all.

[AK: Can you explain how you sense the difference in generations?]

It's a, there's a generation gap. That's -- the first thing. And these people, they're, it's sort of like, ohhh, like, they get in cliques. You

know, it's not the same at all. We had a, we had a young crowd here years ago, but we were younger too of course. We were younger. And they they used to mix. The younger ones never thought of anybody being so much older as to, not to invite you if there's, anything going on. It was mixed. Young and old together. There's no difference. It made, no, difference in age. See, today it's entirely, different. We have a new, new generation here. They're younger, they're different, they're not that young either. But they're a different type of, different class of people than, than what we had years ago. Different entirely.¹⁹²

In the discussion to follow, the "difference" is further clarified, and some of the "real" ideas, hidden behind the storytelling, are identified.

Charting of the Community

I. First Generation vs. Second Generation

An understanding of the narrator's point of view lends insight into any story. The narrators, in this case, were first and second generation Newfoundlanders.¹⁹³ The experiences of each generation differed radically which accounts for the similarity of attitudes within each age group and the differences between them. Still, all share an emotional, if not romantic, regard for the community's "frontier" history, its cast of pioneers and its "Old Country" idiosyncracies. The legacy of the immigrant-cum-survivor has been inherited by the children and, with it, their pride. Both generations relate the family sagas,

anecdotes, and "origin" stories of the community. As they do so, they engage in a dialogue in which each generation asserts its point of view and reaffirms its link with the past.

My question, "why Newfoundland?", elicited a series of explanations and descriptions that explained the origins of the community. The examples below express the range of attitudes from serendipity to the "Every-Community" story, respectively:

Yeah, why did anybody come? Some people fell in by accident. Some people stopped off here on the way to somewhere else. There were some Jewish people here. Very few, some of the oldtimers, Perlman, is a name that comes to mind. Abraham Cohen. I think is one who comes to mind, these people were oldtimers here... They wanted to get out of conditions in Russia, the way things were and, would come to an older sister and these were normal things... and, find a somebody who, who was somewhere but how they got, somebody had to come here first and, you know, God-forsaken place like this in those days especially. In the early nineteen hundreds, I imagine, things were pretty rough here. [laughs] They're bad enough now. But, why anyone came I don't know. I think that, if somebody might have come to the first place, they came to, and it's the first, on this side of the Atlantic, and, probably they got off the boat and just stayed. And then, it grew from there. 194

It follows a pattern you know, everywhere. And, usually they get into the small towns, because I think they felt more secure coming from smaller towns, in, Europe. And you know, sort of, got along with the populations there maybe a little better than they

would in the cities because you, just, become a lost soul there. And they go on from there. Instead of living in the ghettos in the big city, you become a member of the community in a small town because of the security they feel there.¹⁹⁵

The first Jewish immigrants linked the "Old Country" with Newfoundland by rooting their Yiddishkeit (Jewishness) -- the customs and values of the shtetl -- in the New World community. This foundation, coupled with the compromises made in adaptation to the new environment, conceived the hybrid Jewish culture that characterized the St. John's community.

A host of portraits of the "oldtimers" was my introduction to the original community. "We were always taught to have respect for these older people," spoke one individual for his contemporaries.¹⁹⁶ If there was respect for the heritage, there was also much humor. With fondness, and sometimes gentle mockery, the second generation looks back at the fumblyings of its progenitors, and the first generation recalls and laughs at itself from a now secure distance:

They were tremendously colorful people. Each one was a strong, solid character for one reason or another. Really, very very interesting to see. If you remember. I remember, Banus Levitz, Bernard, always used to spit. Spit spit spit. Cough and spit. It's funny. [laughing] I was a kid, you remember these things. You remember those things. Charlie Levitz the other brother had a grocery store on Gower Street. And

Isaac Levitz, who lived next to us on Flavin Street, that's Ralph's father, and Leonard's father, and they, had a store next to us on Water Street. He was a short little man, and he had glasses that were as thick as this. They would stand out like headlights on a car. You know? I used to be afraid of him. He used to bellow and shout. 197 [laughs]

There's a story about Isaac Levitz. They had, they were all at a meeting one day and, one night, and, they were sick of the rabbis coming over and using us as a, a halfway station, and then, leaving after, six or seven months and going on the States. So, they said well from now on, what they'll do when they hire a rabbi, they'll, they won't send him, his money, to come over, but once he comes back, to St. John's, then they'll reimburse him. So Isaac Levitz got up, says, 'Yes'. And in the meantime we'll give him back the money. While we're reimbursing him. [laughing] 198

That reminds me...on Bell Island you know? When they were running the, the dance? And the tennis club? They were gonna have a, turkey dinner? And...you said, 'go over to _____ and make sure that it's eviscerated,' he says 'I don't want it eviscerated I just want it all clean.' [laughs] He was an old man. Oh, they were beautiful people. 199

- Like, I want to celebrate her [mother-in-law's] birthday, nobody ever even thought of it. Am I right?
- Oh, they wouldn't hear of it because they didn't know when the birthdays were.
- So I said, 'Mom, when was your birthday? I don't want to look in the passport, I am not, interested in your age. But when was your birthday?' 'We-ell, it was about the time they used to dig potatoes in Russia.' That's it. So it's around the

fall of the year. So, let's say, September the twenty-seven. I don't know how correct it is. My own mother's birthday is March the ten. She hasn't got a clue if it's the right date. 200

David Saxon... He was, quite worldly, in all truth. Well-educated. And quite a Yiddishe scholar really. And could daven (pray) with the best of the rabbis and what not. And a great humorist. Oh God. That's where I learned half my humor. --- One of his, pet stories, he used to tell. He was driving along Topsail Road, you know how carefully I drive. And he says, 'Just after you pass Rennie's, the river there, he says there's a slight incline. So I had to step on the gas you see to go up the hill a little faster. And, just as I got to the top of the hill, I looked down the street and there, it was summertime, the door of a house was open. And there was a woman sitting in a chair. I'm telling you, if she had been in the middle of the road I would have killed her.' [laughs] Such humor you know. And, mostly Yiddishe humor. And he loved, to tell jokes. He never married, for one single reason. He snored, like a chainsaw. And, he was afraid no woman would accept him. And, he was a handsome man. 201

Now I remember the old folks Levitz... the Levitz' mother and father. Who lived on Gower Street? --- the Bubba and Zada [grandmother and grandfather] yes. And that's where all the kids learned Yiddish. And I was so green with envy because my parents rarely spoke Yiddish, and I was dying to learn it, and I felt I was being left out-you know? 202

My father's father was here. And it was he who taught me Yiddish... Sam. Samuel... Yeah, he used to help me, he used to teach me davening. Praying... And, it was he who I think almost started my, disbelief in God.

At the end of every prayer session, and there was, he couldn't speak English. Ich kenn nit reden English. Du muss reden in Yiddish. [I can't speak English. You must talk in Yiddish.] 'Okay, Zada, Okay.' So when we're finished davening and, getting ready for my bar mitzvah, I out of the corner of my eye while I was still davening, I'd see his hand go in his pocket, and he's an old man you know, he'd fool around. Find a little five-cent piece. Bring his hand over my head. 'Ahh, gib a kook.' [Have a look.]. And then I stopped believing in God 'cause I knew it was my Zada. 203

[AK: did you know an old man Stebaerman?]

- I used to collect money from Stebaerman... He called himself doctor. But he had one, what do I don't know whether you could say a _____ ointment.
- A little box, an ointment. And he says 'that's ointment is guarrrrranteed [rolling his rr's] to cure every sickness.'
- [laughs] Was going around peddling with his, a poor man... So he married a shiksa [Gentile woman]. He married a goy [a Gentile]. That's Stebaerman. She had a wooden leg. But they had a child. Sabina. And she married an American soldier after. She went to the States.

[AK: So he was peddling this magical medicine?]

- He was, living there in the country. About five or six miles.
- He was really very poor. He was very very poor. And we all, used to give money towards so he, he should be able to buy clothes and eat.
- I used to collect from everybody, so much you know. Try to keep 'em up a little you know... Yeah, he was living in a, an old... church he lived there, an old wooden house. An old church where he lived... In the country. About five miles. Just a little village outside of St. John's. I forget the name of the place now. 204

The second generation frequently describes the original community as an "Old Country" community. The reference is less a geographical place than a state of place -- an identification. It connotes authenticity, pedigree, purity. The "good old days" could be its synonym. Earlier, I noted Burke's premise that language is a process of naming and that the speaker's power is the power of suggestion through words.²⁰⁵ The descriptive use of the name, "Old Country," was rhetorical. It functioned as a symbol that stood for the speaker's associations with the name; in turn, it suggested an immediate identification to the audience who, in turn, translated the name according to her own set of associations. The description created a poetic image "built," as Burke suggests, "of identifications."²⁰⁶ The following passages exemplify the range of identifications with the Old Country. Particularly noteworthy are the values it represents: humility, equality, independence, charitability, education and family:

- This is very much an Old-Country Jewish community too, I believe. Because all those people who are here, up until a few years ago, were first generation people.
- Right. So they have the warmth, the closeness of the Old Country people.²⁰⁷

They all came from around Minsk and them places you know? And, there was no German Jews there, very f-- none. And there

was, no Polish Jews either. Most White Russians and, a few Litvaks. That's all.²⁰⁸

They all came from that background. Nothing.²⁰⁹

...they were all, on an equal level. They all came from Europe. They were all immigrants. Up to that time there was nobody born here in Newfoundland. Until, you know after, the Second World War, well after the Second World War. When they became -- you know when they were all here. So here was, really, they were all pretty well on an equal level. As I said I don't think anybody had, any...more education there might have been the odd one but, really nothing.²¹⁰

Well most of them came from, small places like this. you know? Like all the Levitz'. They came the six brothers. They were all the same thing, doing the same thing you know? And, yup, doing the same kind of business.²¹¹

...they all came from, I don't even know what Grandfather did over there but they just came from very poor, peasant families. My mother's father was a teacher. I don't know what my grandfather did. I couldn't tell you. I never heard. Some of 'em, you know when I start talking to Morris Gordon and, he starts telling me about stories that his mother and my grandmother who were sisters and, they had little shops there. But they'd get jealous when they sold a bit of herring or something, a few bagels or something in the store and they'd get jealous if one had more than another. And I suppose if they took in two hundred dollars for the year they were wealthy people. That's the, the background that a lot of 'em came

from, as I said there was very very few, that came over with any formal education.²¹²

...you know in the Old Country when the men were scholars and the women worked and supported the families well they had a great deal of that, and the women were strong. And I think when they were needed in the business, they were there.²¹³

The first generation came to Newfoundland as they did elsewhere in North America. "One brought over the other one"²¹⁴ -- a bridge of extended family.

...you see...when they came over, and as I said one would bring the other...most of them came...you know, they, they just wanted to get away and, the, people, in Europe. Because -- you know every time I go see Fiddler on the Roof I cry. Because then you get a better relation and I think of my mother. Who emigrated in, just before the First World War. And I always think of the father when he's bringing his daughter to go on the train when she was going to Siberia. And I can think of her grandfather, here sending her thousands upon thousands of miles away to an aunt. So they wanted to make a better life for her cause they knew there was no life over there. And this was why, they all moved away.²¹⁵

Below, the image of the community as family then is heightened by opposing it with the dissimilar community of today:

...whenever anybody came, well, when one man came over he'd bring over his whole family I know my mother brought her whole family

over. And, my father brought his, brothers, two, brothers over. And, they'd all live together in one house, until, they were able to, I know I had three aunts, living with us at one time. Before they got married... Celia, Marian and Norma. Three of them. And Celia was married in our house... And there was that feeling of, you know, it's not like today, where, it's an imposition, if somebody stays with you you know. There, in those days, they'd have three and four, I think, Chaika Wilansky used to have three and four families living with her, at one time, and they all shared.²¹⁶

"One brought over the other one" but the passage was not gratuitous. Self-sufficiency and independence were demanded of each new arrival as membership dues to join the community:

They were friendly. No question about that. Very friendly. Listen. You have to start making a living, you had to go off, you know, fight for yourself. That's all. They wouldn't just take you in, 'Come on, we'll support you,' you know. They were nice you know. Very nice.²¹⁷

[AK: Who helped your husband get started?] No nobody helped him. We helped ourselves. He just, he started with just, with nothing.²¹⁸

The immigrant's initiation, in nearly every case, was the ordeal of pack-peddling goods around the island. Each family saga commences with a peddler, the Everyman protagonist of the rudimentary hard-luck story. He typified "anybody" who emigrated to the Newfoundland frontier as a business-minded pioneer:

Well that was the custom. Anybody used to come to Newfoundland. Perlin was in the wholesale business. And he had a lot of stuff, like, for the country you know? All they knew when they came, take the pack on your back, go in the country in, small villages, go around and, they'll buy, that's all they they knew. How to start nobody, went to anything big you know? 219

They're all peddlers. Everybody came here was a peddler except, Dr. Miller. And, some of the family now like me and my brother, you know, but all the rest of 'em, they were all peddlers. All, Europeans... It was quite an interesting ---- little country, you know? 220

The immigrant's story is so communal that individuality has been all but sheared from the accounts, leaving the essential messages standardized, matter-of-fact and well-worn. Below, the oppositions establish the rhythm of that message -- "now...but then"; "we...but they".

Well now, you see, what you got to realize, that you're in an entirely different way of life today, than when you were fifty years ago or sixty years ago. See, all the settlements, were isolated. And, if you had a map of Newfoundland, you looked at the map, the only communities, were around the coast, or on the railway line. And to get from one little settlement to the other either you had to go by train, or by boat. Now, a settlement had say thirty families. Twenty families. Fifteen families. So my father'd come on the boat, and get off, and he'd go from door to door. And he sold, whatever they could now, when they start getting up where they had, maybe five hundred dollars worth of merchandise, they had trunks with them that they'd take and they'd go in, and

take a house. And somebody'd go say, 'There's a peddler here.' ---- And they'd come up to the house and they'd get a bit of underwear, a bit of cotton, or whatever they carried, they would sell. And, then, when that was gone, they'd write the letter, to Mr. Perlin, in the Jewish letter, and, he'd send it out to the next place. Eh, where they were gonna be like in a week's time. And that's how, everyone of 'em, went like that. 221

The uniformity is exemplified below where the story is summarized in several variations on the theme:

I mean they didn't have no professions so, they didn't have nothing, no, something like, carpentry or, plumbers. They didn't have no pro, nothing, so they had to do something so and that was the easiest way, to get some goods and go around peddling and sell it. My uncle was doing the same thing when he came. So when we came he says, 'Take a pack and go from door to door you see a chimney, smoke come out, knock at the door.' [Laughs] That's all. 222

My father came here. My father came here like on a Thursday? The Friday they took him down and gave him some merchandise. [AK: 'Who's they?'] The brothers. The older, the brothers looked after him, gave him a pack, and put him on the train. Says, 'Go.' Couldn't speak English. Well he could because he lived in England for six months. See, so he could speak about, three words or something. And that's how he started off. 223

As if in dialogue, the youngest of those "brothers" affirms his nephew's testimony:

I had no choice to go with the pack... Now I had one week holiday. When I came here. My brothers give me one week holidays. And they they tell me, 'Brother, go on for yourself. --- Now you're on your own. Make your own,' and I did. 224

"Why always dry goods?" I asked:

- In Newfoundland? Well nobody knew better, that's why. There's a lot of better business if they didn't take to dry goods. There's a lot of money in the real estate you know. And, when you start to, buy real estate or buildings. That was big business. And Perlman, the first one he came he started a dry goods, so they all knew the same thing. You'll open a store. Even the goyim, like, used to go around the bay. Go around with a pack. Oh, you'll be on Water Street next year. You'll be on Water Street next year.
- You'll make so much money that you'll be able to buy the store.
- Because they knew all the Jewish stores, about fifteen, eighteen stores Jewish. So we were all on Water Street. 225

A store on Water Street was the embodiment and symbol of the immigrant's dream. If peddling was the rite of initiation, Water Street was incorporation; it completed the rite of passage:

...after a year or two they made a few bucks, they quit peddling. And, opened up a store on Water Street. And that was the big thing... That was the only street where there was business. I mean St. John's, only up to the last, fifteen years, that we had any of these, shopping centers. Before up to fifteen years ago, everybody, was on Water Street. Everybody was on Water Street. See, you gotta go back. 226

Newfoundland writer Paul O'Neill called Water Street "the economic heart of Newfoundland."²²⁷ It was also the artery of assimilation, the euphemism for achievement, as was explained inadvertently above: "You'll make so much money that you'll be able to buy the store." For the individual, Water Street meant visibility for one more Jewish Horatio Alger. It was the interface between the Jewish and Gentile communities, again as noted above, "even the goyim" understood the process and encouraged the peddler's dream: "You'll be on Water Street next year." For the community, the plethora of little shops signalled its incorporation into the community at large, a crucial transition for any immigrant group. Thus, it is no wonder that recollections of the old community in its heyday exaggerate the Jewish presence on Water Street:

Alison, every other store on Water Street was a Jewish name.²²⁸

...you can go from one end of Water Street to the other and the Jews were there.²²⁹

...Water Street it was most of the Jews.²³⁰

Well, I can remember I used to go down, on Water Street, when I was a little girl, and I'd go into my uncle's stores. You know, every, third or fourth one was my uncle's, and I'd always ask them for ten cents or five cents so I could go and buy an ice cream soda.²³¹

Other accounts exposed the myth and explained the appearance vs. the reality as this individual does via anecdote and opposition:

You know at one time it, seemed that, all the...downtown was run by Jewish people. Really it never was. But there were a lot more than there are now. There's only a handful, a couple now. But, in the old days, there were a lot more of us. I remember one time, getting involved with a guy who came from Europe, who went through the war. A young fellow around my age. And, he had a business going, he said, 'Let's, put a big ad in the paper on Rosh Hashonah saying the following stores will be closed.' And we took out a full page ad, and we listed all the stores, trying to get these people not to come downtown, which was the only place to shop at that time. And we said, 'Look. If all these places are closed we won't go down then. We won't lose so much business,' 'cause we always close, our store, continues to close, on Rosh Hashonah. And Yom Kippur. I remember doing that that one time. Getting involved in, well it wasn't a very nice, thing to do. We just had an ulterior motive to it. But, at that time at least there were enough people to make a list. Now, Today, you know. It just wouldn't be worthwhile. Especially a whole page. [laughs]²³²

Behind the ubiquity of the "Everyman" peddler story and his austere beginnings is the motive to assert the egalitarian, democratic roots of the community. Implicit in the rhetoric is an intolerance for delusions of grandeur and one-upsmanship, and the individual who "forgets" his humble origins or who flaunts his achievements is rebuffed.

- Well, he's quite a mucky-muck now in the Newfoundland government.
- Is he? How?
- Oh he's a, Chairman of the Board of Liquor Control. It...is, such a position, but he is not the Chairman. He's a chairman of one of the sections of the Board of Liquor Control.
- [AK: And he was Deputy Minister of Labour before.]
- Yes, for quite a while.
- My goodness. How impressive. [sarcastically]
- Yeah. He really went ahead. As soon as he got out of the shoe business.²³³

If I had to name the predominant adjectives responsible for my impressions of this community's origins, one would surely be "small." As one former peddler summed up the era:

So that's how they, gathered up after work. They settled down here...So anyway, the story is, very, very little, to talk about.²³⁴

and another evaluated the business prowess:

There wasn't too many, Jews with great imagination. With great fling. For business. For enterprise.²³⁵

Descriptions frequently favored the diminutive, the "little" story, "small" merchants, "narrow-minded" thinking. The diminutive case also described the immigrants, "small" self-image, for some of whom the stigma of their accent-ridden English belittles them still.

I can speak English but not good...because I didn't go to school. I didn't have a chance you know. 'Cause I had to go, I had to go right away to my brothers they wouldn't keep me they said...236

This same man asked me to replay the tape at the end of our interview. He was uncomfortable, embarrassed, to hear his own voice. When mine interjected, he announced to his wife, "Now that's English."

The topic in tandem with diminution was education, explained as cause and effect:

...most of them had very little education if any. The first settlers. They all came from little villages. You must realize that, a hundred years ago, education as you, understand, was, restricted. First, it wasn't developed. And, it was certainly not open to Jews. ---- With the exception of very few. So.237

From education came the association with survival:

Well I went to a Russian school. But, here I didn't go to school. ---- Just picked up, there was no Jewish families there so I had to pick up the English language. My brother had a store. And I used to, help him out in the store, and the customers used to ask me for things and that's the way I, picked it up and I learned. And I never went to school but I can read and I can write English, I can.238

I'll never forget when I, when I came there, and I wanted to go, and I wanted to get some, envelope and paper, there was a store down below, you know a, half a block or so, and I, I went in and, "bad man," people looked at me what did I want?, so I went to

the shelf and I showed them I want that. I couldn't speak a word of English. I got myself, paper and envelope... You learn. You learn you learn. You learn. You pick up. [AK: Wasn't it soary, to go out there and not know the language?] What could you do? You had to make a living. 239

If he ever heard me say this he'd kill me but my uncle, the dearest man in the world to me right now... Ran a grocery store and, I don't know if they ever told you. But he doesn't read or write, English. He reads, he... used to read Hebrew. He used to read the, the Jewish papers. But he never did, read or write English. And, he and Fanny ran a grocery store and if Fanny had to go out and do something, or pay a bill or go somebody came in, to the store, to charge. He would, whatever the customer took, he would take another and put it on the floor. This is a, it was really a marvelous idea. You know. So and so came in, had a tin of beans, and two tins of milk and, something else and he'd have all these things and he couldn't remember everything, and maybe two lots of customers came in. So as long as he had another one of the same thing, he'd put it on the floor. And when she came back she'd enter it in the book... yeah. I think it's the truth. [laughs] 240

...Hirschl Wilansky used to, he was a, he knew his business. But I remember his father, his father. -- I forgot his first name. He made himself, he knew how to, circumcize, boys you know. So he did one job on one boy he almost killed him. That's right. Never forgot that... They thought he's kosher, he's OK.

[AK: What was his name?] Shmuel Drenum was his name. His specialty was selling Prince Albert tobacco. He used to, he used to have it in shul (synagogue). Upstairs on, on Duckworth Street. That was his line. He had his tobacco and sold it you know.

[AK: Did he lose respect in the community?]
 No, no no. He was an old-timer you know
 listen.²⁴¹

Behind these associations lay an important lesson in Jewish values: learning is as important a part of being a Jew as prayer. It benefits the individual, the family and the community. It represents both an intrinsic good and a strategy for worldly gain. By advocating education for their children, the first generation were promoting the means to prestige and social mobility, to the future and assimilation.²⁴² Rhetorically, education was a topic that set the generations in opposition. The first generation was humbled -- sometimes apologetic -- for its lack of education; the educated second generation saw this shortcoming manifest as "narrow-mindedness," a trait for which the first generation was both criticized and excused. This was expressed through contrast:

They were all, relatively small merchants. As I said...and this was caused by, you know the fact that, none of 'em, had what you would call any formal education. Oh, there might have been the odd one...But they, none of 'em, became what you would call big business people because I told you they were, very narrow-minded in their thinking and that you see; and, none of 'em ---- you know they should've been the Bowrings and the Ayres. But they weren't. They, they were just contented to stay small, and make a good living for their family.²⁴³

The dialogue continues and the first generation responds:

Well years ago, it was you know, I mean, see, everything was, different altogether years ago. There's no comparison, to what it is today. This is a, this is a heaven, to what it was years ago. People struggled. To make a living. Some were, some a bit wealthier and, some were poorer? Like, even, even today it's the same thing. But, people are, well, I tell you, years ago, the education wasn't so important. Years ago. People didn't think of educating years ago. As they, do today. Everybody started thinking that, if you're not educated you can't get anywhere. So you've got to, try to get into university? Or you try, got to try to make your twelfth grade? To be something. And, years ago, well you didn't think of that. Because you tried to get out in-, into the world, and, get going for yourself to stand on your own feet. Tried to get something to do to earn, earn a few dollars, so you could buy some clothes? And dress up a little bit and, go out for a good time? Get in with the girls and the boys? And that's it.²⁴⁴

Every generation hopes that its unconsummated dreams will be realized by the next generation -- and preferably in the superlative. An appetite for education was one such dream projected onto the second generation for vicarious accomplishment. This seems clear from the dialectics of the passages below:

What is the best thing? You, have a child. What's the best for the child. Good education, marry well. Have a prosperous life and, you know everything. It's like one of these letters you get from somebody once a year saying, Everything is beautiful. My

husband got a promotion, my daughter's a senior valedictorian and then, this one is in a play, in 'leading role' and, you go on and on and on. So every, every parent wants the best. But the ones that were here, were not, I mean I'm talking about my parents' crowd, the people they went around with -- Ohhh the cards they played. The cards they played. Maybe five nights a week. We'd go out to Seal Cove, out in the country and, they'd have a game that afternoon, and then they'd come back and have a game that night. And we grew up, playing cards. It's almost like the Chinese community gambles. This is the Jewish community... But, why I mention that is that, they didn't have, nobody that was here originally really had much of, formal education. So... I think that tends to, say while I didn't have, I would like to give my child, so... everybody had, to I mean, in those days, there was no such thing as not, everybody is for university everybody had to go to university whether you did well or not. And you know, as long as they got through, and they wiped their brow, 'Thank God we got this far.' But, most of the kids did continue. There were very few dropouts. Grade eleven didn't mean a thing, it was a big thing at that time, but, not, to Jewish people. They wanted to go on, and finish, four years after and all this stuff... But that's what, that's the way I, I think, you know. Most of 'em wanted education for their children, because they never had it themselves so, you know.²⁴⁵

...our parents only wanted two things for us. The best education that money could buy at the time. We were all sent to college and we only had, two years here the university was only a college then. So you were sent here for two and then on to Montreal or wherever. And, the other thing was to set you up either in a profession, or in business. That was the two main things in life that our parents drilled into us from the time we could walk.²⁴⁶

As the story goes, Once the younger people left for Toronto or Montreal, or elsewhere, there was no reason for them to return to Newfoundland "other than going into your family business" which "very few wanted."²⁴⁷ Water Street had been the immigrants' horizon but it was their children's given. "There was no future," they told me over and over. Their parents' achievements had taken them to the limits of their vision which left most of the children at the helm, their sights set on more distant horizons. This was one reason why they had to leave.

And, why?

Nobody seemed to object too much to moving away because you got out of, you know what can you do, what is there here. You know? Go to the big city and, become a doctor or marry a doctor, or something.²⁴⁸

This first theme of opposition, the first generation vs. the second generation, coupled with the topic of education, eventually leads to a lesson in the community's pathology: the children leave and they do not return and the community slowly starves to death for lack of regeneration. This was due, in part, to the parents' insistence that their children leave Newfoundland to be educated. Inadvertently, they set an exodus in motion which broke the chain of regeneration. For one generation, the "insularity" and "short-sightedness" of the immigrants cohered the community. Below, the change

is explained in the rhythm of opposition, "of course, it was a different time":

When the immigrants came here it was final home for them. I don't think my father, or any of his family, or any of his, contemporaries at that time, ever had any thought of leaving Newfoundland. -- They didn't even -- well of course, it was a different time you know like I was gonna say retire down to Florida anything like that you know, none of 'em had any ideas like that this was their home. As far as their children, some came back and some didn't. 249

The conflict is reduced to a generic pattern:

You see what happens, the parents come over. They make a business. Somehow. They make a living. They educate their kids. And the kids don't come back ---- they're not gonna come back. 250

The echoed cry is: "Everybody's kids are gone."

Limited educational opportunity was not the only reason that Newfoundland held no future for subsequent Jewish generations. The minority community was simply too small to perpetuate its own culture and assure the continuation of Jewish identity among the younger people. With a tradition of nonsecular education in the province, Jewish parents had to send their children to either Catholic or Protestant schools. They played with non-Jews, they dated non-Jews, and if they stayed in Newfoundland, the chances were good that they would marry non-Jews which, in Orthodox tradition,

is tantamount to death and cause for parental mourning. The situation presented a painful dilemma: intermarriage posed a threat to cultural survival; sending the children away threatened the community's longevity in Newfoundland. In most cases, it was the fear of the former that took precedence and precipitated the exodus. Many children were sent away to be educated with the idea that they would be more likely to meet and marry someone of their own faith. Below, the ramifications of that desperate fear of breaking the chain are explained by a member of the second generation:

The difficulty here, in this community with children, was, the fear of intermarriage. So, how did you overcome this, was by sending them off to school of course education wasn't as good in the old days. Memorial University when I went there in the late forties, consisted of, four hundred students. And, no degrees, were conferred. It was a, University College. And, so we all went off to Dal or McGill or, University of Toronto or, wherever and, usually, tried to make sure that you hitched, you got hooked up with somebody, while you were away because if you ever came back to go into, whatever profession you were going into, and you didn't have a wife it meant, going on a shopping spree, so to speak for a wife to Montreal which a lot of the people from here did. And, most of the time they worked out, sometimes it didn't. But, in the old days again... whoever you married that was it in your life, and there was no such thing as, you know, what can we do? separate, divorce there are very few that, I was one of the, one of the pioneers in that field. 251 [chuckles]

I asked whether there was matchmaking to which he responded by explaining the pressure on the children and the motive behind it:

...in Montreal, there was always an abundance of women, for men. 'Have I got a daughter for you.' But, I suppose, it wouldn't be done professionally. It could just be a friend would have somebody lined up for somebody, or something like that. There was, quite a bit of this going on there were, oh quite a few guys came over, after the war who were, who were single and, who, found brides, in different places in Montreal and Toronto. I always, thought it was a terrible thing, to, have to go, say I, I'd like to get married and I don't know, just go looking around. I think it's an awful thing when you, yeah it's not a normal way of finding somebody. But, the the this, fear of our parents, wanting to, make sure that we married, Jewish and I can see their I can see this. I can't, argue against that. It's just that today, things are, quite a bit different, along that field. 252

The man above went away but returned. Some left and never returned. Such is the story of this woman who was sent away at age sixteen against her will:

Well my parents felt, they told me I had to marry a Jewish, boy. There there was no question about it in their minds and I had been dating, non-Jews and, I was getting serious, with one. And they decided it was time to send me away. And break it up. My mother, later after my father had died many years, she didn't exactly apologize but she said she would have permitted that marriage but my father would not. Wouldn't hear of it... Well I think, they obviously felt that our chance for happiness would, be increased

if we married a Jew, that we would have a harder time. That's the way they felt. I guess that, they brought from the old Country with them. Yeah...like remember, Fiddler on the Roof. ---- And not too many Jewish children married outside their religion. Not too many of them. Which was pretty good considering that we were all mixed together growing up.²⁵³

I asked whether she ever had a choice:

No, I don't think I ever had a choice. [laughs]...The last time I left home to come to the States, I didn't have any choice. I went out to Kansas City and that was definitely to find a Jewish husband. At that time...No, I never wanted to leave. Never. As a matter of fact, I was so sure I would never leave Newfoundland that, that, it was a terrible shock. Having to leave.²⁵⁴

For others, the decision against intermarriage was self-imposed:

I went, with a Gentile, boy, Christian boy for three and a half years steadily. Practically seven nights a week. And that's the truth. And, who wanted to marry but I wouldn't marry him because he wasn't Jewish. Now I didn't have that great Yiddishkeit....I didn't have the Yiddishkeit but, I knew that, had I married him that in, later years perhaps, or, you know, he probably, I wouldn't, be happy, because I didn't think he would be happy. You know. And vice versa. I I just, couldn't do it...²⁵⁵

In several cases, fear of intermarriage possessed parents to move off the island rather than to send their children away alone, and entire families left.

We had quite a few Jewish families here years ago...But...every one of them went, went out as soon as their children got a little bit older you see? They were afraid of, mixing here you know? Because they didn't want to, children were, mingling, mostly with the Gentiles, 'cause there were, no Jewish, children here, very few you know? So as soon as the children would, finish, junior high, they'd send them off. Then eventually the, the parents would go too. 256

Well we left on account of the children. We had, another son and a daughter. So the daughter was eight years old. We didn't want them to grow up among the goyim there and get mixed up with marriages and all that. As you know, probably, there's about fifty or sixty percent of the Jewish population that live, in St. John's are mixed, marriage. Marriages you know? So we didn't want that to happen. So, my son, was what, he was fourteen years old. And the girl was, eight. So we came over here, just because we didn't want 'em to, bring up among them, Jewish, people. And get, more of a Jewish education you know? That's why I moved out.

[AK: It must have been a conflict then: either stay in a place that you really enjoyed, and sort of make compromises, or else move away.]

That's right. Yeah, we saw, what's happening there with the, I mean, they had no company they had to go with, the goyim like, and boys and girls you know? And, they were getting friendly with the, with them you know so you can see what's gonna happen you know? 257

Well ---- what prompted us to, move out, is on account of the children. And we're not sorry. We wanted to give the children a Jewish education. Jewish environment. 258

The reason why I came here [to Toronto]...my kids...there was too many Gentile people there, I didn't, I wanted to make a move to, get out, from St. John's.²⁵⁹

Consequently, the exodus depleted the community and its destiny seemed to be that of a stepping stone, a haven for the immigrants and a springboard for their children and grandchildren. "But, that was by choice," says one man. "The parents...wanted their kids brought up, otherwise. So, they shipped 'em out so that was why there's nobody left here." Had they not been so adamant, he reasons, "we could have maintained a nice Jewish community had we all stayed here," or returned. But once they were out, "they didn't want to come back to Newfoundland."²⁶⁰

II. Jew vs. Gentile

Intermarriage was a topic which introduces the second major thematic opposition: Jew vs. Gentile. Among the topics associated with this theme are: anti-Semitism, identity, and stereotype. The emergent message is a paradox: we are the same but different:

People just accept you for what you are. But they do know you know there is, the barrier there that we are Jewish and they are not.²⁶¹

The rhetoric is the aperture through which a dual image of this community's Jewish identity is visualized. It mirrors

self-image and windows stereotype; it reveals a community reflecting on itself and imagining its image to outsiders looking in.

In the community's earliest years, when the first peddlers were travelling around Newfoundland's tiny, isolated outposts, Jews, to most Newfoundlanders, were a strange race never before encountered. The peddlers were cultural pioneers, and their stories express their bitter-sweet experiences "around the bay."

There was not one former peddler wanting for an immediate superlative when asked about his rapport with the Newfoundlanders:

The people in the country, Newfoundlanders, are good as gold. There's not better in the world. Because I, the way I was treated, when I used to go with the pack, they wouldn't charge me for, when I stayed overnight. And they, nothing. Just just just, wouldn't 'no no no, my son, we, wouldn't take nothing.' Were good ---- good people. Real, really good people Newfoundlanders. And they're good people now. I think the best people in the world.²⁶²

Well, we used to go around. The people were very nice. Newfoundlanders are very, friendly you know? And, you could go anytime, late at night nobody'd touch you at night. And, they'll ask you you want a cup of tea, you want, everybody call you in. Very friendly.²⁶³

The goyim, the Gentiles, the neighbors, were very friendly. All over Newfoundland. The

fishermen are extremely friendly. Hospitable. They're poor people. But the little they have, they want to share. Wonderful people.²⁶⁴

Those whose candor belied that, in fact, not everyone was nice would swing back with that inevitable superlative and clear the record:

...in some places it happened, that, you knows you go over to a door and, rap the door and, and, they get saucy and they says, 'get out!' But, not very, very many, that does that you know? The country, I was mostly in the country everywhere travelling around? I found everything, perfect. There, the woman from the houses you know, the rooms, and then the wintertime is very cold. So, they always used to have, the bed warm. Used, to, put the hot [chuckles] hot water bottles in the bed, before you go to bed you know? And, I found them very very good. Better, Better some of them, to be, to be in, your own home...²⁶⁵

Everyone claimed that anti-Semitism did not exist, and examples of rapport were cited frequently:

You would not find it locally. You really wouldn't find it. My father lived here a lifetime as well and just never found any anti-Semitism...They'd open up their homes and help you...you'd hear stories like that from every one of them. That the Newfoundlanders opened up their homes and what little they had and they had very very little. Because it was a very very poor country. They were willing to share and to help them any way they could...My mother, and, another sister, Auntie Celia, came over together. Your mother sent for them and they came over. And they travelled on the

boat from Liverpool, to St. John's. And Auntie Esther had told some people that some sisters were coming over, on the boat, from Europe, because a lot of these, goyishe people, had gone, to England to buy. Buyers for the various, department stores... So they recognized these two sisters who couldn't speak, and they were so sick, they couldn't eat, and they were very helpful to them as best they could. 266

As a young fellow, I was, quite athletic-ly inclined. And, and played football, baseball, not hockey, soccer... And we used to go to various towns, and, wherever I went, oh yes, and we would be put up in houses. And I was always accepted, as a, as a Newfoundlander. And nobody said, 'Willam-sky'. What kind of a name is that? Nobody ever ---- 267

If there was explicit denial of anti-Semitism, there were also insinuations to the contrary. The tones of the passages below demonstrate how insinuation,

I don't recall overt, open anti-Semitism. I don't specifically recall it. 268

or ambiguity.

[AK: Did you find any anti-Semitism here at all?]

- No. No. I must say, no.

The best, the best people in the world. The people here are just marvelous. You don't know, just, what they feel, inside, but they never show it outwardly. I must say, very very friendly, never turned around and, called you by any name, as you do in, some parts of Canada. You know, when they say, 'sheelny', or 'bloody Jew', or something. Never heard that... We

were in business. We had a grocery store for thirty-five years. Never had any experience of any description. The greatest respect. And they say that we left a name that we could put up anywhere, thank God. We never heard, it once mentioned, 'the Jew' to us.²⁶⁹

or euphenism,

There was a lot of, there was, I didn't run into any what you call, real anti-Semitism. I think it was just a little more ignorance than anything else. There was very little anti-Semitism.²⁷⁰

[AK: Did you ever encounter any anti-semitism in Newfoundland?]

No. We didn't encounter any. They all speak nice, and they all nice and, naturally, after a time, you must realize, there is, such a thing as a jealousy. They see a little peddler, after a while, opens a big store, and it becomes a department store, and becomes, look at that, a refugee, this, stranger that came and lived with, we're born here, our parents were born here, and we're still poor people. And this is the question asked in the United States as well. You understand.²⁷¹

can convey an unofficial (off-the-record) message behind the intended official, public statement. This is particularly so when the topic is a sensitive one. In this case, the explicit message -- that anti-Semitism did not exist in Newfoundland -- was the image intended for the record; however, it was evidently important to infer ambivalence so as to address the issue realistically but without incrimination.

The former peddlers' comments and anecdotes about their encounters "around the bay" encapsulated their sense of Jewish identity in relation to that context. Their narrative focused on what it was like to be a peddler and a Jew, the latter identity being that which defined their experiences. Their point of view was self-reflection through the assumed eyes of the "Gentiles." The image thus seen was that of "the stranger," anonymous and devoid of individuality, as this remark suggests: "Anybody coming from away is Jewish."²⁷²

The consensus was that "people have no concept of what a Jew really is."²⁷³ This idea was supported by personal experience narratives. The first, a frequently cited example, was that the Newfoundlanders would often mistake the Syrians (or "Assyrians") for Jews:

[AK: Were there peddlers of other nationalities?]

There was a few Assyrians...But, they call 'em Jews anyway to them; anybody, was peddling 'oh a Jew was here.' One time I was in a place, and they kept saying 'oh a Jew was here two weeks ago.' So I went kept on going around, was going to catch up with him, find out who he was, because it was a novelty to see a Jew. Finally I caught up with him after a month or so. It was a Syrian fellow. [laughing] Oh, my.²⁷⁴

This confusion was extensive, as a member of the next generation recalls:

I was friendly with everybody there. I mean the fact that I was Jewish, I'll tell you. There were, a lot of people, I'm sure, who didn't know what a Jew was. And if, one of my friends got angry, would call me a Syrian. [laughs] That's the truth. Go on, ya Syrian...²⁷⁵

The second factor cited as reinforcing the Jew's image as "stranger" was founded in the language difference. One man recalled the Newfoundlanders' problems with his surname, Wilansky:

In the country, they couldn't say it, at all. They thought it was two names: 'William Anisky.' Some called me 'William Anisky' 'Wilcancy' and, all kind of names.²⁷⁶

There was one particularly popular anecdote which was told about a Jewish peddler's humorous but embarrassing malapropism. Each time the story was told, a new protagonist was substituted; each account was sworn to have happened. There is communality rather than individuality in the story. The ambiguity suggests that it represents an essential situation rather than reference to an actual event. Below are two examples:

My poor father, who spoke a very broken English in his early youth, would knock on your mother's door and say, 'can I sleep with you tonight?'²⁷⁷

You see, when he [my husband] came here, he didn't understand one word of English. And you can imagine, you go with no tongue... My husband one time, my husband went one time, he was going it was in the in the fall. It was dark, and it was, he was hungry, and it was cold, he was knocking on the door, to somebody to get overnight to stay overnight. And he didn't know how to speak English. So he went over, and he knocked on the door. That girl, opened the door, and he said to [her], 'Can I sleep with you?' He thought, you know, he didn't mean anything and the girl slammed the door in his face. And then an older lady came around, and he said the same thing. 'Oh, she said 'yes my son. Come on in.' You know? cause an older lady had more sense again. 278

A third source was the peculiarity of Jewish religious customs to the Newfoundlanders:

- Well I'll tell you. They, the people in the outports, they knew very little about Jewish people. And my brother used to peddle. And the older one. And, one morning, he was staying with a family there in one of the houses? And he, he went to pray and he put on his t'fillin [phylacteries worn for prayer]... He put on his t'fillin so, the man opened the door, and he saw him standing in this, with this one, with the t'fillin on, so he went back, to his, his wife and he says, 'oh, there is something wrong with, with, Mr. --, his name was Wilansky too... He says 'I think he want to take his life.' [laughs]
- He put his t'fillin on his head you know, he says 'he got ropes on his, on his head I think he's gonna commit suicide.'
- No because they didn't know... They didn't know, what this is all about. They knew very little about the Jewish religion then. In those years. I mean now it's different. But, in years back, they knew very little about Jews. 279

or simply strange habits:

I came once, I was travelling in St. Mary's Bay. You know where St. Mary's Bay? Fellow named Ricketts was his name, nice fellow, Catholic man. He gave me a room, I slept there and, cold as hell there was no heat. I was thirsty and there was a bottle, there was a, holy water I didn't know, it's a bottle of water so I drank it. He say, 'now you're a Catholic,' he say, 'you drink holy water.' I'll never forget it.²⁸⁰

There was humor inherent in the above passages: the humor of laughing at oneself in circumstances that one has surpassed. They impersonally caricature the Jewish stranger. Very few express the feelings of "the stranger," as this individual does below, who chuckles still as he confesses:

Yeah. I used, to stay say, used to travel around from place to place, so I, go into a, place probably where there's, twenty houses there. So you go to next place, you see? And always used to walk, or take the train? Or a boat. That's the way I used to travel. I, I never liked it. And I used to be ashamed, to go with the pack and I, see a nice house I used to avoid to avoid it. I used to go there [chuckles] I used to go to the poor houses. [chuckles] That way I made, a few dollars, you know? go to them but, it was a hard life. [emphatically]. But still, that's all what you could do you know?²⁸¹

Earlier, I referred to the peddlers as cultural pioneers. In this role, they were forced to confront as well as to dispel Jewish stereotypes:

I start peddling for a while and then I went to Bonavista Newfoundland. I was there nine years. And I opened a little store, I was the first Jewish man, that came in, to live in the country ---- When my oldest boy was born, he was born in twenty-seven, I used to go, fishermen, it's a fishing town. But it must have about five thousand population, come Sundays, only one street. The main street you know and everyone is on the street. And I used to come, they say, 'there are the Jews coming.' They thought a Jew got horns. They didn't ever saw a Jew, they didn't believe that a Jew could settle here. 282

As he understood it and would have me understand:

To them it was something new because they never had any, never met any Jews, especially that would settle. See? 283

They were diplomats; they peddled their culture along with their goods:

[AK: Would you sit around and talk with the people? When you stayed in the outports?] Yeah, yeah. Used to, they, come in the nighttime with, used to work till six o'clock. Then come, there and, they have supper? and then they talk they would, ask you where do you come from? and it's one thing we used to avoid, Russia. We used to say we came from Germany. You know?

[AK: Why?]

Germany is, at that time, Russia wasn't liked here, you know? And say the Russian people are, no good... So we used to say we came from Germany. Germany? OK... I

[laughing] never stayed in Germany.

[AK: Did you say that you were Jewish?]

Oh yes... I said Jewish. No, one woman, I I never forget it. I said that, they were talking about Jews you know? what they

said. 'Oh, the Jewish people, oh, no good. They terrible hard people.' So, I, I want to stop it, so I says 'look, I says 'here, you're talking to a Jew.' 'No. You're not a Jew.' She wouldn't believe it that, I'm a Jew.

[AK: What did they think a Jew was or would look like?]

They asked me. I said 'a Jew is like any body -- like an Englishman. Like the same, like you, or, somebody else.' I says, 'there's no difference. Jewish people are kind people.' I said 'they're they ---- they love one another. They, have families, you know' and, that's like the, like the same as I'm talking to you, I said to her. So believe, they believe it.²⁸⁴

I asked where this woman might have gotten those impressions:

- Well the...used to be the, the Syrians, they, they'd, they didn't take me for a Jew, but they took the Assyrians because they were dark you know? They said the Jewish people are dark. People.
- All the blond people are not Jewish.
- Not Jewish...Oh yes, the Assyrians yes, they mostly called the Assyrians, the Jews. [laughs]...[Reflectively]. I don't think they mean anything really they say, sometimes they joke you know? 'Oh, a Jew got lots of money.' And I say, 'you'd have my money and I'll have yours.' It would be different. 'He, start to laugh then. They wouldn't believe it that a Jew haan't got no money.'²⁸⁵

The "joking" to which he referred is, in fact, grounded in the stereotype that weds Jews to money. This stereotype, from the first generation's viewpoint, contributed to the exoteric misconception of Jews, and only reaffirmed the too familiar "we vs. they" -- Jew vs. Gentile -- opposition.

The "joke" was repeated to me by several elderly individuals, all of whom were European immigrants. Again the rhetoric is complex: the explicit and official message is that this was innocent joking, made and taken in fun; the tonality, however, betrays the joviality and vents the tension, disquietude, self-consciousness and defensiveness of the misunderstood stranger, as the following accounts demonstrate:

- Well, when we got in, into business, we got in with the Gentile people too, you know? And, we mixed. You know. We used to mix. We never, there was no such thing as, what you call it, segregation. You know, that you do, that you would ignore the Gentile and that. We mixed and we found them very very friendly. They used to come to us and we used to go to them. And go with the Jewish people, just as well. But, they, I'm, I must say, the Gentile people here, I never never had one to turn around, they ask you, you know, what you are, but never, any remark, of 'Jew' or anything like that. Never hear -
- Tell you a joke, what I can tell you. If you go in, say, to Bowring's, one of the [Jewish boys] goes over and asks, 'how much, you know, you got lots of money,' Bowring says to, to one of the Jewish boys, you know? So, 'you got lots of money, see? Bowring asks me if I got lots of money. So I says, 'I wish I would have yours, and mine together, we would make something.' You know? But they, he always, that's the -
- It's because you're Jewish. -
- They're all, a Jew? Got lots of money. That's the way they -
- Well, that's in every place, that's the same thing.

- 'If I had your bank book,' they'd say, 'I'd be alright.' [laughs] And, sometimes you'd say, I remember years [laughing] ago, Lawlor, Lawlor the butcher... used to come to Lawlor the butcher you know? Say, 'Oh, Mr. Lawlor, your meat, is, going up,' you know. 'Oh, what are you talking about? I wish I had your bank book.' 'Yes, Mr. Lawlor. I'll change with you anytime.' [laughs] Years ago. Yeah.
- That's the expression they had. 286

They don't like a Yid. Because a Yid had a lot of money. You got to have it. We, got to, 'how is it, how is a Jew don't have any money?' Now with the goyim, now I got a fur coat, and I mean my husband bought it when. Well, the mink coat, but I mean I didn't buy it today. It is, I have it for my whole -- And when I put that on, they she pauses as she feigns looking someone up and down. 'hmmph, you have money. You can buy me and sell me, you got lots of money, what do you say. If I had your money,' she said, 'I would go south somewhere.' Well I said 'let's go together' I said 'if you'll, pay my way I'll go with you.' I can't go like they can't go but I mean, what am I going to tell them I haven't got it. They'll give it to me? And I don't take taxis if I can walk. I wait for the bus, sometimes... ---- But that what it is, that's life I guess. 287

She argues that if Jews do have money, it is because of their concern for the future as opposed to "the goyim" who "don't care" for the future or the money. "They live today. ---- Tomorrow, they'll worry about it. You know what I mean?" 288 What she means is this:

...they're easygoing, and that's why why they said they always said that the Jewish people got lots of money. 'Why do they have lots of money? Jewish people are smarter.' It's jealousy, the whole, why do you think the whole world, why do you think the whole world is in so much trouble. Why don't we, why don't they give us, Israel. Why do they fight. Look how many, innocent people, and innocent people are dying and killing and everything else why? What for? I mean you don't know the Jewish history. All our holidays is from a history. For miracles, Purim. You know we have, we were, we supposed to all the Jews were supposed to be killed. In . . . You read about it? -- all from, from all over our country and we had to make our history -- is the Jewish people are always, put, and always killed and always, everything but now, I live here among goyim now. And let me put on my fur coat they say 'hmmph' You got lots of money. Why don't you go away on your holiday, if I got your money I would go they think I got, lots of money. A Jew got, he have lots of money. 289-

Another topic which arose in conjunction with this opposition was concern for the Jewish community's image to the "Gentile" community at large. The first generation had learned survival tactics in Eastern Europe. Survival in a "Gentile" world required that one stay unobtrusive: keep a low profile and avoid making waves; however, a Jew, by default, was inherently obtrusive. Consequently, in Newfoundland, an unobtrusive image was cultivated and public life was shunned, particularly politics:

[Bak: Were the stores gathering places for talking politics?]

No. We don't talk politics. No no. No, no Jewish people are involved, in politics here.²⁹⁰

Do you know that, no Jewish person that I know of, ever came out, in public life. That was the one thing, I've always said why was they didn't want to get involved, one side or the other. Nobody's ever ran for government. At any level. That I know of. And, I used to always ask this question, why not. They always said, if you go out, you'd have to be on one side of the fence in politics or the other and you'd make certain bad friends, and the one thing that Jewish people did not want to do in their lives, was ~~make~~ bad friends with anybody. They wanted to fit in. Which they always were accepted and fitted in....and that was one of the reasons.²⁹¹

If they personally avoided the political arena, they were proud to have hobnobbed with its gladiators, including the most illustrious (or notorious) of them all, Joey Smallwood, the "Father of Confederation":

I knew Joey Smallwood very well, the Premier of Newfoundland. He was a friend of mine. He used to come to my house; his wife. Ahh. Now he's old.²⁹²

Do you know Joey Smallwood?

AK: I know of him. I've never met him.]

OK. My father, started Joey Smallwood in business. In 1930. Or 1932...my father lent him three hundred dollars. To buy pigs. And that's how he started in business. As a pig farmer. I went to school of course with Joey's kids. One of whom, since was killed in a helicopter crash. So we know Joey very well.²⁹³

The community's concern for their image to the Gentiles was also reflected in the process of selecting a rabbi, one important criterion being:

- ...how he would be, as a representative of the community. We're always very self-conscious, about the type of man, that we would allow, to, speak on behalf of the community. That's one of our most sensitive points, it is now.
- Yes. A representative to the Gentiles.
- Right.
- A representative of the Jewish community.
- We, on the inside, were very sensitive about those things.²⁹⁴

A "good image" was synonymous with having the recognition and approval of the "Gentiles." Nearly every narrative that was intended to argue the respectability of a member of the Jewish community included the inevitable: "And all the Gentiles loved him or her." The passage below exhibits this rationale and pride:

And we were doing very good because, all the island, all Newfoundland, know my husband. And when my husband was dead already for five years they always ring, 'Can I speak with Mr. Sidel the Tailor?' You see? Because they knew 'im all.²⁹⁵

This same woman expresses equal pride that the "Gentiles" contribute to the annual Hadassah thrift shop and attend their bake sale: "And they love our cooking. You know?"²⁹⁶

The most popular symbol of the Jewish community's rapport with the "Gentiles" was the story of the partnership established between "Lawlor the butcher" and Wilansky the shochet (the ritual slaughterer). Wilansky's son tells the story of his father and Lawlor:

...he used to, because he wanted, kosher meat for himself. So Lawlor, would allow him to kill a cow, once a week...Out, they had it on Portugal Cover Road, he had a slaughterhouse. Yeah I used to go with him many times. With my father. So, and then, any of the Jewish families that wanted to eat kosher meat, could go, and take it you know. Although it wasn't much profit for Lawlor because, very few that took kosher meat. And it was a big bother, to kill the cow and then...I mean it was much easier for him. But still he was, obliging and he wanted to for the Jewish people I don't know what. He thought he was, doing a, a big mitzvah [a good deed]. Lawlor you know?... Yeah. He let 'im kill a cow every week.²⁹⁷

Another version of how the Jews came to buy meat from Lawlor, the Irish butcher, follows from the story of a near-tragic circumcision:

Miss Kahn, may I explain a story?...In the old time, the people were poor. They couldn't afford nothing. ----- Came here Mr. ²⁹⁸ Mr. He came here as a shochet, a mohel [circumciser] he was nothing...But there's no rabbi what could, check it, he say alright, or not. He came here, he said to Mr. Lawlor, "Look. Here is a few Jews and they want to have kosher. Let me, cut the throat of the cows...It will, be kosher. [his voice rising to a high pitch] The Jews will come

buy it....He gave him, the heads, the lungs, the liver, the people didn't buy it...And he was, after two years, he was only a baal tefillah [a singer who assists the rabbi]. You know what is a baal tefillah? In the shul, he davened. He started, he wanted to make a Brith Milah [circumcision ceremony]. You know what it is? Circumcise. The first Brith Milah he make on my brother's son... He, soon killed him. [laughs] It's a wonder he didn't kill him...So, from this time, everybody bought meat, at Lawlor's. 299

- ...Lawlor the butcher. I must say we dealt with him for years. Very nice. Very nice person.
- All Jews buy by Lawlor.
- Yeah. All the Jews used to buy. 300

For most of the immigrants, the Jewish and Gentile worlds were fundamentally separate. All of them insisted that they had "Gentile" friends, but their tones betrayed the subtle shades of their words: there were friends and there were friends. One man spoke of his mother's social spectrum:

I don't ever recall, growing up, and seeing my mother being, friendly with, Gentile people...As we got older, things, changed. You know. But when, we were growing up as little kids, I don't recall anything like that. 301

In another case, I asked about the social autonomy of the Jewish community:

Oh, things changed drastically, in the... going back to my parents' generation now they were, they'd just, socialize, within their own grouping. And, none of 'em, joined any, outside clubs. Oh they, may have been members of the Masonic and they'd go over there for a game of cards at night or something like that. But they, would not belong to any, social organizations or, they'd have friends in that they knew, business acquaintances or neighbors or something like that right there. But that was, basically their social life. They'd go from one home to the other, have a game of cards or something like that and that was it. Next generation came along of course it was a lot different...³⁰²

The oppositions assert that everything changed for the next generation. The question of Jewish identity, as conveyed by the second generation, is different from their parents', if not more troubled for its ambiguity. Rhetorically, they allege that "we mixed with everybody" and "we were accepted." A typical testimony follows:

We mixed with everybody. We had the... Saturday dance at Bishop Feild and ---- we went out, and, some of my friends were Jewish and others weren't but we never asked. Do you know what I mean? Nobody ever thought about it. 'Cause you were friends with whoever you, wanted to be friends with.³⁰³

...you were accepted. Everywhere. There was no barriers, none...they accepted you as a person. And if you, fitted in, fine. If you didn't, tough... All my friends would come into the house, my, dad and mother would treat them the same as if we were all Jews. Serve them Jewish, foods mind you.

You know, they either ate them or they didn't. You know what I mean? And I was brought, you know, up in, all my friends' homes, lived in the particular area right around here. And, we visited areas...in that big house over there, and he was the mayor of the city...There was never anybody ever pointed the finger...nobody would ever say ---- 'You can't come in here because you're Jewish. In Newfoundland. But you go to Montreal. And I could see it. 304

Behind the stubborn rhetoric, however, lies the conflict of identity for a chameleon generation who were raised simultaneously in two worlds: at home, in the insular Yiddishkeit of their "Old Country" parents; and at school, in the English-speaking, "Gentile" world-at-large. They learned to maneuver back and forth between the two worlds, always resident to one and alien to the other. Always, also, in both worlds were they irresolute about their identity: inside, they felt "the same yet different," and this same ambivalence characterized their conception of how the "Gentiles" regarded them:

As a matter of fact, one of my friends once asked me, 'Are you a Catholic Jew or a Protestant Jew?' You know? There was just no feeling that we were different, except, our religion and they weren't quite sure where it fit. 305

Well, I, boarded in St. John's while I was going to school, in fact; I, think if I am correct I was the first, non-Catholic, and, Jew, who attended St. Bonaventure's College. At the time, because [laughs] I remember they ribbed me quite a bit over it. 306

How did they fit? Where did they belong? The rhythm of "we vs. they" is plain but the boundaries are vague and unresolved. It is not surprising that my question, "What was it like growing up as a Jew in Newfoundland?", yielded ambivalent, sometimes contradictory, response: "It was terrible but it was great. Yes, you can say that."³⁰⁷ For the second generation, a conflict of identity lies behind the contradiction:

...it was easy to be a Newfoundlander. I found. It wasn't as easy to be a Jew. So consequently, I had to fight harder. You know, to be a Jew. That's how it was with me. And everybody else had their own way of handling it.³⁰⁸

Frequently, the conflict was expressed in the context of the central paradox: we are the same but different. Associations drawn upon to illustrate the conflict include the nature of the Newfoundland school system and implied social restrictions.

It was terrible. It was terrible. While there was no real, overt anti-Semitism that I was aware of, you were always conscious that you were different because you had different holidays. The school structure, the school system was based on, the school system was denominational...And you always had to sing the prayers in the morning you couldn't get, or if you were excused for it you were singled out and, and put aside and I, I remember feeling terribly, different, and possibly inferior, as a result of that. As we got older, it was obvious that none of

the Jewish people, belonged to any of the so-called social clubs, that were, available to the population such as it was. For instance, there was a, a very --- sort of fancy yacht club, which was, just outside, St. John's.... I think there was never, never at any time, any Jews involved in that. As members or anything else. But what that, there were other reasons, but there were other reasons for that too because the Jews were too busy trying to earn a living, to get involved and and, to have hobbies and, relaxation, activities that we consider to be normal today. 309

and the inconsistencies and contradictions of upbringing:

...every time they went to New York on a buying trip and came into contact with Jews in New York, and were told what their children were doing, they would come home and they'd go to school and they'd say, 'We don't want our children to go to, prayers in the morning.' So, we would have to stay in the classroom, for a few weeks and then it would be forgotten until the next time they went. 310

The effect on her was this:

Nobody said anything to me. No. It just was a very awkward feeling, a very --- it was a terrible feeling and I think it was very unwise. If it had been done right from the word go, okay. But to suddenly bring it up and then let it die away, and then bring it up again. It was, it was bad for us. And, I, I think I always felt slightly uneasy. All my life. There. And --- I got along very well with everybody. But I had a sense of being different.

[AK: Being different? And not really knowing why?]

No... I didn't know why. And, I was, quiet, introspective. I probably, or just day-

dreaming. But, always felt slightly, different. And I don't think they made me feel that way. Or at least they were, always very nice to me. Everybody was.³¹¹

Other contradictions include the social contradictions of childhood,

...all of my mother's close, personal friends were Jewish, but she did have, friends who, Gentile friends too, and all of my friends were Gentile. I didn't have a Jewish friend at all. So, picnics, that we went, only Jewish people went ---- Growing up, I had no identity, as far as what I was. I was just a Newfoundlander. That's all.³¹²

or the pervasiveness of the majority culture, and the self-consciousness of the minority, as revealed in one man's personal dialogue about, and resolution to, his "differentness":

...it was awfully tough, at Christmas time. You know, I found that, I found personally my own, feelings on the thing. I really always wanted to be something else. I hated being Jewish. Now I'm really happy about being Jewish 'cause I ---- Being different, has been a great thing for me, through different periods of my time. I mentioned I was, active in Kinsmen. It came out there many times when we would have, dinner meetings and, ham would be served, and I didn't have it; and, I got more respect out of that than anything else. I just don't, to this day I don't, eat ham or bacon, but I'm not kosher. I, it's just a thing I do. But, growing up here was, very difficult because, years ago it was so, the community was so much smaller and so, very much fewer

people. And our parents weren't, psychologists. They didn't help, a great deal. They just said the, we don't do this and that's all and, you know, if you tried to, appease you with having eight days of Hanukkah against one day of Christmas, it really wasn't much help. Because the lights and the, feeling and even today, I think it's just a beautiful time although it's an awfully sad I, I'm very depressed at Christmastime. I hate, I hate the whole season. Really hate it. Can't wait 'til January comes so that, get those damn trees out of there -- So, but it was really tough growing up, people in those days used to knock on your door. Kids, your friends, and say, 'Can we see your tree?' you know 'What do you mean you haven't got a tree. Don't be so foolish' you know. But, that was, I found that tough. And, I didn't enjoy being Jewish as a child as much as I really enjoy being as an adult. I really feel different, and I think, everybody, that I know, it comes up so often, that, you aren't, you are Jewish and, in a, friendly, kidding way, and stuff like that and, I really enjoy it. I must say. But I didn't, I didn't as a child. I found it, I think, I think it's so much you know, there my kids went to, well when they left here. Went to Montreal, lived in Montreal, went to school there. And, ninety percent of the class was Jewish and, you know they really went right the opposite, you know? Well we never even had ten percent here. But, I think that's great when when, you're in a community, you live in a Jewish community and in a Jewish neighborhood. When Christmastime comes, the the Christians are the, are in the minority. My family lives in St. Laurent, and, you know, the lights in the houses there are there every, twentieth house you might see a little light there at Christmastime they're all Jewish there. So I think this is great and, it gives you a much stronger, feeling. But when you are here, the only one in your class. And, you didn't go around with so, I've always gone around with non-Jewish people [laughs] you know. Except now...one of my best friends is Jewish...313

Finally, conflict was associated with the small size of the community, and parents' attempts to isolate their children in a "Jewish environment."

Well it was, difficult I'd say ---- being a Jew in, this town because, the community was so small, and, we're forced by necessity, to have, non-Jewish friends and, and that in itself, posed a certain amount of, uncomfortable situations because, most of the people the boys I grew up with were Catholic. And, they were United and ---- occasionally there were some anti-Semitic outbursts, I'd say and, like they'd break our trees or, or you know, or some insults but, for the most part though I'd say that they were friendly and, forgot the fact that, the religion didn't overshadow the relationship. That we had but -- But still, in retrospect, in looking back I'd say that, it was what was lacking was, friendship with, Jewish boys and girls. But I'd say the, growing up would be more fulfilling and, and -- Yeah, it would have been probably a, happier, childhood.

[AK: If there'd been more people around.]
Yeah. ---- As it was, I had one Jewish friend, was my age and he lived not far away. But he was the only one and, it was too concentrated, friendship because it was only him you know and, we used to ---- we were different personalities, different interests, like I liked sports and he didn't, wasn't, he was more for the books and, laboratories and things like that so.

[AK: Did your parents encourage you to just socialize with other Jewish kids?]
...they didn't, discourage, they discouraged it to a point, like I never had them in, the boys any of the boys in the house, or girls, in our house, there was, the friendship confined to the street, and the playing field and -- That's as far as it would go. There was, no thought of, inviting them in 'cause I know, unconsciously I knew my parents somehow had objections to it so it

never, the thought never came to me to invite them in, and vice versa, I was never, in, rarely, maybe, once in a blue moon in, any of their houses you know. So it was a limited relationship, in that respect. Because -- Among Jewish, friends, it's much different that way you know. You're, free to go. Come and go into one another's house, and, even with this fellow, the Jewish fellow that I had a friend well this was the thing. We used to be in each other's houses quite a lot. Well, yeah. It was more, it was a closer relationship that way. But, as I said, the interests that I had were more with the, the other boys, the non-Jewish boys [chuckles] and so, I played a lot of, ball and, sports. Got involved in sports and that. That's what it was like growing up but there was no social life at all. No going out with girls and -- this is something that was sadly lacking 'cause it ---- 'Cause, I had to, when I ---- parents, also, I mean, didn't express it openly but, felt that, it was very hard to ask a, non-Jewish girl to go out and, it never even entered my mind. So then when it came to doing it, when I went away after graduating from high school it was difficult you know, then it wasn't didn't come easy.

[AK: Were your parents extreme in that sense?]

Yeah, I would say they were. ---- Without, saying so but they, they were. I would say they were leaning towards -- the extreme.

[AK: Did it make you rebellious?]

No. I, kept everything inside you know. It was more, frustration, than anything else. Yeah. 314

III. Jew vs. Jew

In general, both generations primarily identified being Jewish in Newfoundland with being "different," although to varying degrees. While this opposition conveyed what they

were not, as they distinguished themselves, what were the positive associations with Jewish identity, and where were the continuities with or deviations from tradition? How much compromise through adaptation occurred? To what was the commitment that sustained Jewish community and tradition if not religion? This next section covers the third major theme which I refer to as "Jew vs. Jew" because of its motive to define "Jewishness" in the context of this group. The basis for the opposition lies in the inherent descriptive contradiction: Jewish but not Jewish. Again, rhetoric asserts the attitudes that distinguish, and thereby conveys the meaning. The topics associated with this theme include: religious practice and compromise, religious education, "un-Jewish Jews," and obligation to community.

The dominant topic within this theme was unquestionably that this was not a religious community. This was primarily because of their laxity with respect to observing the two most important Jewish laws: the kosher dietary rules and the Saturday Sabbath. As one individual observed: "I guess you could call it a little bit of assimilation even."³¹⁵

While "assimilation" names the appearance, it expresses neither the circumstances nor the choices that justify the appraisals made below in which "name" words, such as "cultural identity" vs. "religious identity" and "social," are the key identifications:

First of all, it's a cultural identity in this community. Not a religious identity. This community carries on and holds itself together, because, they go to synagogue on Friday night. It's a case of a gathering, of like, peoples. That's all. And, few of them go for religious reasons. But, mainly they go, that's an effort to maintain the identity of a community.³¹⁶

Well they maintained contact with each other. They were, social. The contact was social.³¹⁷

Nor do evaluations, which "name" the immigrants' rite of passage as a moulting of the past, explain the process of change:

Well I think that quite a number of Jews lost their identity anyway after they came from the Old Country. Some of the old-timers.³¹⁸

I had to listen for other channels and found them. I asked one woman, an immigrant herself, whether people left their religion behind them in the shtetl. She answered in a tone which insinuated that my question was utterly ridiculous: "They didn't leave their religion. No." Then she changed her tack and confronted me with a series of rhetorical questions which impressed that extenuating circumstances had tested practice and belief, forced compromise, and had nearly all but lost tradition in the transition; ultimately, all of these are expendable; what endures is one's inner identity, expressed below:^a

Do you think that we could eat meat from the butcher here? ---- How's that? Listen... When I came here, you think I'm gonna get, from the goysishe butcher from the ---- from the butcher from the, Gentiles meat?... Oh my God... Your mother is a religious person?... You got to keep the meat, and the milk separately. You got to keep your separate dishes. Separate everything, you had to have meat with meat, and you got to have, butter I, I can't explain... But when I came here, my sister-in-laws... Now they went and got me meat. So they went into Lawlor the butcher, I got my dishes? And got 'em all trayf [not kosher], I didn't know it was not kosher. Home, where I came from Riga, I had everything. You know? Like you would have everything, milk, and you got to fix your meat. Salt it and then, soak it and salt it before you, put it in your saucepan to, cook. But I didn't know that, and then when they got it, they got it like that, I couldn't afford to buy any other dishes or other, so I'm still using the same thing. You know. You can be good, you don't have to be religious but be good. To me, because I was never religious when I was home, my mother -- My mother wouldn't have a glass of water here, in my house. 'Cause she was a very religious person. And, in the, you get up in the morning... I used to say my, prayers in the morning and prayers at night and, prayers to go eat and prayer, look. I don't do that now. I know who I am. And I know that God will forgive me. When you know everything, and you don't do it is well, sin. I know that. But I know all-1-1-1 the Jewish tradition. I know exactly what, but I'm not doing it. I don't do it. It's just a easier life like that. 319

Yet, even as she denies practicing "Jewish tradition," she contradicts herself by unconsciously identifying her weekly Sabbath candle ritual as a symbol of who she is. The tradi-

tion is not to do but to be; it is identity embodied; it is the difference:

I used to I put on the candles even now. I put on my candles every Friday night I'm not religious now. Just know who I am. That's what I am, you know. I live among goyim. I am the only one Yiddishe here and all the goyim. And they're nice to me. This [is] St. Patrick's Day. They have a party downstairs. I made 'em some cookies they want me to make 'em cookies. And they want me to come; I don't think if I'll go down maybe I will later on I don't know. They have music and they, . . . It's their holidays. You know what I mean? --- Not mine. 320

Another argument was that "we did the best we could," using the imagery of the opposition, "then vs. now";

...there was no kosher because it was, impossible to keep kosher. Years ago, we had no freezers. We only had iceboxes. And an icebox, you get a piece of ice and, the next, day it would be gone. Melted water. [laughs] Underneath, in the, in the pan, But...we tried to import meat, from Sidney and that, but it didn't last. It was no use because, come during the winter; used to get stuck at, . . . Topsails, the trains and that. It was, terrible. People got disgusted. Then we'd get, we'd get rabbis, and shochet, and they'd, come and stay for a while, and they'd leave us, just, at the main part, when we needed them, most. Like Passover, Rosh Hashonah, Yom Kippur. They'd go elsewhere, and they'd seek, well, you couldn't blame them. They'd...seek for higher fields, for more wages, and, one thing another. There wasn't much here to keep them. Because the people weren't, that religious. So, it was very difficult to keep kosher here. Now when people got

freezers, so it's a different thing. So we import the meat from Montreal. And we have freezers full of meat. We import it two or three times a year. And, it's, no problem. It flies in by air. So you can keep kosher if you want to. So there's quite a few kosher homes here now.³²¹

The passages above would have one believe that, in the shtetl, they had no choice, whereas in the new environment, they had the freedom to interpret and adapt Judaism which resulted in a Newfoundland-Eastern European* hybrid of Conservative-Orthodoxy. This was, and remains, open to debate.

- I was -- Orthodox. We were always Orthodox.
- And the Orthodox is not much. We could be, we could be any other religion you know, any what do you call it --
- Conservative, Reform but we're Orthodox.
- The most of here would be but we always have a rabbi, he's Orthodox, so we are Orthodox people.³²²

and interpretation, as illustrated below where the separation between sacred and secular Judaism is insinuated:

They called it Orthodox, but, really it was more Conservative than Orthodox. ---- You know none of the, none of the community, it's only in the past couple years that you got couple families that became what you call Orthodox. They were all, very anxious to, lead, what became known as a Conservative life. In the synagogue of course they wanted the prayers carried on in the Orthodox manner. But not in their lifestyle.³²³

I asked about this separation of "synagogue" and "life-style," and he illustrated his point by citing the road not taken:

Well of course an Orthodox is a very religious man, right? He's not gonna work on the Sabbath. He's gonna keep a kosher home. He's not gonna eat out. Well they didn't want this... No they weren't religious people. Basically, they were not. The, I suppose the most religious person, at that time that I can remember going back to was my grandmother. When there was no rabbi here or no person that could make, a, and, you know, there was no such things as airplanes to fly it in. That woman did not have meat. For several years. The only time she would ever get a bit of meat, is if, Rabbi Kenner came over from Sydney, to do a circumcision. And then he would kill a couple of chickens for her. But outside of that she would not eat meat. Hirsch Wilansky, was still had a license to kill, as a shochet. But she would not eat the meat that he killed because he worked on Saturdays... She was a very religious, stubborn woman like the rest of the family. But that woman did not eat meat for five years. My grandmother. So she was possibly one of the most religious people, that were here at that time... She was an old lady and this is, what she brought with her from the Old Country. And this is what she stuck by. 324

The general message was that people closed their eyes to law and focused instead on the values of Judaism. The passage below proposes the idea that a "good Jew" does not necessarily have to be a religious Jew. She cites charity, one of the important Jewish mitzvahs, or obligations, and values, as a quality characterizing the people in

the community. Her argument is practical: people were forced to compromise their religion to survive which was not to say that they abandoned their identity. The choice did not receive the sympathy of religious "outsiders," however:

No. It isn't an Orthodox, no we're not, we're not religious...No. Nobody's religious. They're good people, they're very charitable people. I must, I'll I'll, I'll tell you that much, Charitable right? But we're never religious because used to have so many men. Religious men would not stay with us. They didn't have nothing in common with us. You know what I mean? They want to keep Shabbes. And, and not work and everything, we had to. We had, to have the store on Shabbes open because otherwise if we don't have it open, you don't work on Sabbath you don't work unless you, you had a different kind of business you know. 345

There was a conflict of priorities, then, between religion and culture, tradition and adaptation. The settlers interpreted their religion liberally, and defined Judaism in a practical sense, within the context of their new lives. The conflict was usually illustrated by the point that "religious men," or rabbis and religious teachers, would not abide by the ambivalence and, consequently, would not stay long in the community. Compromise for survival only reinforced their cultural isolation:

Well most of the, nobody wanted to stay there too long. Because a religious man he had no company he had nothing to do. I mean, the people that were there they were,

well not religious, we'll say. And, it was hard for them to stay because they wanted to observe all the rules and, and so they stay for a year or two and then, leave.³²⁶

Isolation, in turn, encouraged further compromise and improvisation:

...there's an interesting story, about --- cousin of mine she got married. And she had an uncle, in Grand Falls, Ernest Swersky. And Ernest's English wasn't bad but it wasn't all that good you see? And he had, quite a bit of religious training. In fact, when he retired from business he became a rabbi. Or an assistant rabbi or something. So he got the license to perform the marriage. And he came in, I wasn't here but they told us afterwards...after it was all over, instead of saying 'do you, Libby, you know, he was, 'do you accept this man to be your beloved wife? Answer yes or no.' So, you know, he performed, he performed the marriage, and this is the way it was done.³²⁷

The conflict of Jewish identity and practice also split the community.. There were "insiders" who left on account of the religious laxity. The testimony below is rhetorical in its own right, but the argument illuminates the central conflict in suggesting that compromise and mediocrity were the community's fatal flaws: "...the first settlers were not serious-minded Jews." I asked him what he meant:

I mean they were not devoted Jews. I mean, we could not have services on Saturday. We used to have services on Sunday morning. Because they wouldn't, they had to mind the

store. They were little storekeepers. They were, all poor people. Maybe at that time, there must have been sixteen or eighteen families. Well, this Hirschl-Wilansky... came there, as a shochet. And, a mohel. But, after a year or so, maybe two years, he gave that up, because they couldn't pay him. The few people that needed him, couldn't afford. And those that could afford didn't need him. And this is the same all over. It's nothing new. So I mean we like to live in a big city ourselves. I'm not, that religious but, I am affiliated with the synagogue. 328

The association made between the non-"serious-minded Jews" and economic conditions was integral to his argument:

'Twas poverty in the Old Country. Hunger, no matter how bad in Newfoundland, was, it was still better than what they were used to. But ---- that goes for some, other small communities. In Nova Scotia. And New Brunswick. With the exception of Saint John, New Brunswick. Which is perhaps, one of the oldest communities, in New Brunswick. So, Sydney Nova Scotia, had a steel plant. And coal mines. You see, Jewish people went, where there was, industry. Where people worked and got paid every week. Or every two weeks. Because the farmers, whether in Canada or United States, had no money to spend. Their needs were limited. Where the steel worker, wore out his clothes. He had to come back and buy another, pair of pants. Or overalls. or, coveralls whatever you may, call it. And they had a little money because they were paid every week. No matter how small it was. Money itself was scarce. A fisherman never saw money. Up to this day. You understand? Because, a fisherman, was supplied. The store did not sell him. Only, what was used, supplied. They supplied him, he was always in the red. 329

He moves into the argument again, striking from another angle, this time using specific examples:

As I said they were not the serious type. They were not, they were lukewarm. You understand? The foundation was, now in Sydney, Nova Scotia, where my wife was raised...the first that went there, laid a good foundation up to this day. And the same in Glace Bay which is fifteen miles from Sydney. Also, why did they settle in Glace Bay? Because it's a coal mines. The coal miners used to get paid every week or every two weeks. It's a question where do you get money? There's no use to settle in little fishing villages. Where there's no money. Fishermen don't see money. You understand! So, Glace Bay was also, a good community, the first settlers who were there probably eighty years ago. The beginning of the century. Were serious-minded. As far as Judaism. And tradition. And maintaining. One lady told me a number of years ago, that they lived in Glace Bay for nine years, and never had meat or chicken. Because there was no shochet. They lived on fish. And vegetables. So you see, St. John's didn't have that type of, dedicated, dedicated people.³³⁰

I asked if compromise -- to work on Saturdays -- was not necessary for businessmen, who would otherwise forego the best day for business:

No doubt, no doubt. Yes. But there has been an exceptional case. One man who lived in Badger. The only Jewish person. By the name of Plotsky. [spells]. P-L-O-T-S-K-Y. I don't know. He must have, he came to Newfoundland as a shochet. Him and his wife. He was probably twenty-one and she was twenty. And, maybe for five, six hundred dollars a year. A year. Wages were

paid by the year. Teachers used to get paid by the year. Four hundred and fifty, five hundred dollars a year. ---- And, so after a while they couldn't pay him, so he went out peddling and he settled in, Badger, because that was a lumbering town. The lumbermen used to come out from the woods, where they got paid for the, cutting, lumber. For the, for the paper mills. Now he was closed on Saturday. People tell me that the, lumbermen used to look up at the stars Saturday night. They knew when the stars'll come out, he'd open the store. And he still made money. At that time. Compared to the others. ... So it depends what you... There's no telling, life, play tricks. On people, who come, from very religious homes. Sometime go the other way and, some then, who don't ---- who come from what you call a, ordinary, not over-dedicated and sometime they get bugged, or bitten by something and they become, go right to the right. So you can't tell.³³¹

He answered my question with a question in the form of an anecdote. The ambiguity prompted me to ask, finally, what taking Judaism seriously does mean, and his response veered straight to the opposition:

Well a number of things. You make your own God according to your image. You make your God, according to your image. According to your understanding. To your, to your ---- mind. You picture him. Or picture him or her. I don't know. But, I don't know what you ask a question ---- depends for who. And, to my mind it's, because I feel that the Gentile world, don't want us. We're not accepted. Then why push ourself on them.³³²

As far as religious indoctrination of their children, the same liberality marks the attitude of the immigrants,

As the second generation speak, the reasons for their sense of identity become apparent. Again, the oppositions support the argument:

I wasn't given much training. Any training at all. and I think, there's a story about some of the Jews who came to Canada and the United States from the Old Country, who didn't want to bind their children to the past. And so they gave them no training like they had had. They weren't fanatic about, keeping a house kosher, and the girls didn't have to know anything about the religion at all. And, I grew up without any knowledge except, for the Passover seder, and the High Holy Days when everybody went to synagogue but other than that I didn't know anything.³³³

My parents were not, overly religious people. They were not, we did not keep a kosher home. They ---- were not that fussy. You know, they didn't say to me 'look you gotta go to Hebrew school. You gotta learn how to speak Hebrew.' They did not put that pressure on me...We, did not, have -- regularly we might have once in a while Friday night dinners. At home. We did not have this. So ---- really I was not brought up in what you would call a deeply religious, Jewish home ---- And, to look upon ---- you know you have to understand. The, thinking of...people who emigrated over from the Old Country. Compared to, people who, of the next generation. And their thinkings, were entirely different.³³⁴

One difference was that they were not intellectual. What unquestioning belief they had was grounded often in fear and fundamentalism. This they "taught" to their children by instilling in them the fears and the habits, but not the

reasons. Children were confused but did not question; parents did not offer explanation:

Nobody explained anything to me anytime...It just rubbed off like a sponge I guess. I don't know...I mean I used to remember Yom Kippur. I was afraid something was gonna pour out of the sky if I didn't stay or if I ate something oh I'd have terrible conflicts you know. 335

Whether it was to avoid burdening their children with their own pasts that most of the immigrants gave their children minimal Jewish educations, or due to other circumstances, the second generation all echo the same ideas: regret for the lack of religious education and a sense of guilt and confusion, or conflict, at the unresolved dilemma of identifying as non-religious Jews.

The passage below addresses the issue of conflict by presenting an oral picture of his parent's generation's ambivalence. In doing so, he suggests that his generation had the benefit of seeing their parents' beliefs tested which, for many, dissipated the fear and loosened the hold that religion might have had on them as children. He also draws a parallel with those immigrants whose own beliefs were tested by the environment which, consequently, influenced some of them to abandon them because they had lost their context. This is an evaluation of cultural change:

...it's like in everything else. You get religious parents but you don't actually, necessarily get religious, children. I go back to the Levitz brothers now. Like Uncle Bernard... Now Bernard for example never ate, ham. Or, bacon in his life. He never ate pork products. Nor did, my father. Nor did my mother. Except one day she was in the hospital and she told me she said, 'oh' she said, 'I think I had ham for lunch.' She said 'I don't know if I did or not but was good I'll tell you that.' [laughs] You know?... one time I can remember we had a stag party one night out to Mac Rosen's home. And, Zada says 'what am I eating?' it's good, Mac says 'ham' he got sick but when we told him it was roast beef he ate it, but it was roast beef. Actually. But now, Uncle Ernest, and Uncle Charlie. They loved their bacon and eggs. Or, ham and eggs so? They came over here and of course they were, peddling around the country. And, where you gonna go over in, Trinity Bay where they couldn't even speak to the people. Let alone ask for anything other than what they put on the plate to give them. So, they came, I can only talk for the Levitz family, they came from a very religious home. In Europe, but I guess they got over and it's like young fellas today you know they they're, out of it and, they got out of that environment and that was it. But they just ---- couldn't, something just couldn't get 'em around to eating pork. They, didn't have to have kosher meat. Not by a longshot but -- That was it. 336

I suggest that it is a case of survival; he counters that it is "a little bit of assimilation even." 337 He points out that freedom of choice and prosperity antiquated the old ideas; I extrapolate from his statement and understand that tradition lives a natural life and, conversely, dies a natural death.

But of course, you know when they were living over in Europe and in the shtetls they, they had no choice. But to eat it [kosher food].. And they were lucky to get what they got. And, I suppose you can look upon this as, as anybody, anywhere in the world today. How many people do you have, in North America that, only eat kosher meat. So? You know. 338

He tells us there is compromise everywhere -- and "Compromise" is the wail of the second generation:

Now our, our religious background, training, people my age and, oh a little bit older, a little younger, wasn't good. We had so many rabbis here and we had so many problems trying to get rabbis here and this type of thing. That we had no consistency in our education, everybody had a different method and, then there'd be a couple years without and, it was a real drag, you went to school and then you had to the cheder afterwards and you didn't want to do that. So, you know, people like me, if we know very little, it's because we never had the opportunity. Now we can function, in a, in a business meeting and the running of the synagogue much better than we can, participate in, in the service. So, sometimes we just go and sit there and, think about something else but we're there, to make a minyan or whatever. But we could contribute, in my case I have many years ago contributed...I held offices, different offices, many, many times and for many years and, worked on many committees and this type of thing. But, that doesn't mean that I could conduct the service...But, the difference between is just ability and, contrary to that, the European people who, knew prayers, how to conduct, prayers, services, might go to a meeting and not have any idea how to conduct a meeting so, you got a combination of both. So, you get a good, probably in every community you have this kind of thing. 339

Later, he comes back to this topic, reinforcing this feeling of regret:

...people of my era, I mentioned this earlier, we didn't really get much of an education. In, Hebrew and, I know there are people now who, contemporaries so to speak of mine, who can't even say, kaddish or don't say kaddish. Who don't know enough, to do that who don't, come for yahrzeit, for their parents, which is kind of, real Hebrew education, in the past, compared to other communities that always had a rabbi or had some continuity in their teaching -- I, I'm sorry about that. I would have liked, to know more, to be able to, read, faster than I read, or know more than -- ...I find it's very important -- As little as I do now, I could never forget, that what my heritage is -- the fact that I'm Jewish. -- And I want, you know, it's not that I want to forget or I don't want people to know but I'm, I'm really proud of it. And I don't know where this thing came from and I'm not Zionist at all. I have no ties with Israel, don't really contribute, nearly as much as I should. But, just thinking about the other people, who were born here, and, who lived, around the same time as I do, and they're all, the same way. They just don't have any, any formal education at all. And what they know about, services, is very little. And I, I feel that that's really, too bad.³⁴⁰

This sheds some light on the nature of the original members' regard for the "survivors," the group of Europeans who came in after the Second World War. Contrary to the limited Jewish education of the second generation in the St. John's community, the newcomers had been well-educated in Europe. They arrived at a transitional point when the

community's religious leaders were very few in number, and none of the children qualified to replace them. Thus, the group of new "survivors" regard themselves as the salvation of the community, a claim which arouses the ire of some original members; yet I saw for myself that it is the European "survivors" who conduct the religious services. If there is a message in the resentment displayed by some of the original members, perhaps it expresses a feeling of failure to maintain the continuity, a sense of loss.

Ultimately, a compromised religious background is identified by the second generation as the source of their identity conflict:

What I'm surprised at, for my own personal feeling, is that, we had little if any, Jewish, formal education, or background. I had a Bar mitzvah. I think I had, two weeks of, teaching from, I think it was my uncle taught me... You know, our, St. John's was a, a stepping stone for rabbis who would come from Europe on their way to the United States. And they would stay for six months. So there was, there were, brief periods of Hebrew, and religious school, instruction, which would be interrupted by a year or two in something else so, there was never any, continuity, and I'm surprised that most of us, have retained a strong Jewish identification.

[AK: Did it come from your home? Where did it come from?]

It must have come from -- it must have come that way.

[AK: Were your parents religious?]

I think my father was religious... He wasn't observant, but he had very very strong feelings. 341

Based upon the testimonies above, it would seem that the community would tolerate even the most liberal interpretations of Judaism. After all, intermarriage was not uncommon in the community and, while each incident was remembered as a "horrendous occurrence in the community,"³⁴² intermarriage "never drove anybody out of the community." In fact, at one time, even "the president of the synagogue was married to a non-Jew."³⁴³ The businessmen gave business priority over religious observance. Yet, there was another "we vs. they" opposition which provides insight into the meaning of "Jewish identity" to these people: Jew vs. Jew.

There were individuals who neglected their religious practice, who married outside the faith but as long as they "knew who they were," and contributed to the community, they remained "part of the 'family.'" There were also those individuals who "went away" from the community and their heritage, or "got lost," and these individuals were never forgiven. They are the bad seeds whose names were never mentioned and stories repeated to me many times, like the naming of traitors to a nation or deserters to a cause before a tribunal. In each case, the crime was pronounced: "Jewish but not Jewish." Each left in his wake a wave of resentment, of betrayal. The rhetoric insinuated and condemned in a sentence, as these examples show:

He doesn't pretend to be, he doesn't even want to, be Jewish.³⁴⁴

...as far as the Jewish life is concerned, ___ isn't considered Jewish.³⁴⁵

...course, she's not Jewish anymore.³⁴⁶

But you know, they were not Jewish.³⁴⁷

-- in an explanation:

I was the only Jew could do business with him. He wouldn't, he wouldn't have nothing of the Jewish people, he was a Jew himself.³⁴⁸

...there was a farmer who lived in Bay Bulls. An older man...The old man, he had a farm, out on the Bay Bulls, Road. Out towards Petty Harbour. And, we remember going out there one day. Old decrepit farm, he had a girl, a daughter. And we'd remark that she'd never been sent in to the Hebrew school or any-, she'd never even gone to shul or anything. I have a picture about that. I have a mental picture of him...³⁴⁹

He was Jewish. Admitted to that to the best of my knowledge. But that's all. I don't, even if I were hypnotized, I don't think I could recall him, ever at a minyan. And then again, he may have.³⁵⁰

It was just that this was, his attitude. He wasn't Orthodox. And consequently, wanted to live his own life.³⁵¹

You must remember there are many of these people who live in these outports, grew up,

with, Jewish fathers, who intermarried and got lost out, out in the outports. Or their neighbors, were Jewish. Cause if you look through the, through the, Newfoundland telephone directory, you'll be amazed how many Jewish names are there. Many of them, have become Anglicized. Over the years and years and years where they completely got lost. See?³⁵²

-- in a dialogue:

- Who did I find, when I came here? I came here to St. John's. I found, two stores. Jewish stores ----- Miller here, is a Jew, but he did, he didn't say nothing about Jews. If you mention him a Jew, he'll turn away his head you know?
- Well you didn't see him, just a minute, you didn't see him for years.
- I didn't see him but I knew him.
- And when he was, before he got married, he used to go to shul... He was a member. He was a member. And then he, intermarried, and that's it. Listen. That's all.³⁵³
- There was, Gittleston and Miller, when we came. They had a furniture store. And, he had a son, Miller. He was the famous doctor Dr. Miller... But he also became a goy.
- He married a Gentile and he became the other religion.
- Completely. In the beginning, he used to come to shul. And he was, even the president of the shul. That son the, Dr. Miller you know. The doctor is gone -- The children grow up a little and, they're all complete, goyim you know? So there was a Goldstone family. You heard of the Goldstones. He had a store the London New York and Paris. Yeah, he also, the same way.³⁵⁴

- Is the Bowrings people sometimes a Jew, was here, a Bowring?
- Eh, Bowrings, Yes. Bowring.
- They said he was a Jew. It was rumored that he was Jewish. I don't know really.
- ...They were, they were talking about that, they were Jewish people --
- But nobody knew them. Nobody knew him... No, nobody knew, it was just rumor. But nobody was sure, if he was a Jew or not.³⁵⁵

[AK: Did you ever hear that Bowring was a Jew?]

- Well, they say, that they come from Jewish. That's what everybody says but --
- Yeah, they claim that they came with a pair of t'fillin when they came first. The old man, Benjamin Bowring. Yeah, he was a, yeah.³⁵⁶

The implication of these remarks is that Jewish identity is more than individual belief and entails responsibility to the community. For example, one must earn honor by giving service or money to the community,

...there's another thing about...our religion that I don't like, is, that you've got to give an awful lot of honor, in order to get something. And, when you have a drive for money, it's always that somebody jumps up and says 'I give so much money' and then everybody claps and all this stuff, and they have award dinners, and they have testimonial dinners and they have plaques and they have certificates and they have pins and they have all this stuff. And, without this, you can't get it, now, this is the way that it has to be unfortunately.³⁵⁷

or charity to the needy;

Whenever you go into our community, you got to put your hands in the pocket and you got to you got to pay. Pay pay pay. And we got to keep up, we got the Hadassah meetings too... had to, donate... for the Youth Aliyah. You know what Youth Aliyah is? For the small and poor children in, in Israel. And we always got to give give, give give give, you know I give whatever I can. Cause it's very important to give. --
 [AK: That's Jewish custom.]
 That's it. That is culture whatever it is ...there's always something, and always, people you got to always help 'em. Send money and send, all over the world...we're all helping whatever we can. But that's the way you know.³⁵⁸

The obligation to "community," local or global, supports the metaphor for community: family.

IV. Community as Family

In the course of refusing an interview with me (to which she later agreed), an elderly woman told me emphatically over the phone that "we all have the same stories. We all have the same ideas." Others would preface a story or interrupt themselves just as they began and almost apologize: "I'm sure you've heard all these stories." Once, when I asked about family photographs, I was told:

I don't think I'd have anything that; you hadn't already seen...And looking through, Esther's, albums, would be like looking through ours and looking through my Aunt Fanny's. All the time we used to say 'oh yeah, we have that picture. We have that picture.' And, the same thing with the Swerskys...We all had --³⁵⁹

What struck me about these assertions was the attitude of conformity, of communality, by which they all claimed proprietorship of the community's documents of the past, be they ideas, stories or photographs. There was a quality of sharing, of belonging that I was meant to understand. I have interpreted this idea as the fourth theme, community as family.

"Family," like "the Old Country," is another identification with the "original" community that occurs thematically throughout the narratives. It is also conveyed in the format of opposition, "then vs. now," in accompaniment to the slogan, "it's a different world;" and it serves the same rhetorical motive: to define "us." The opposing community of the present is portrayed objectively as a group of Jews. The suggestiveness of the identification with "family," however, transforms the old community into a subjective image made up of associated qualities and values from the literal.

...the whole community was a family.
Then.³⁶⁰

Well we're all, the thing is we couldn't sort of intermarry because, we're all like brothers and sisters.³⁶¹

[AK: Were you aware of other people your age going off to the mainland to find husbands or wives and bringing them back?]

It was the thing to do in that you, who would marry one's sister...I used to take her [my wife's] sister out to dances, parties, God knows what. Walk her home because I didn't drive, I couldn't drive, too young. I wouldn't even kiss her goodnight. What, kiss your sister goodnight because, that's the way I took them, looked upon them. And to marry them, no, we'd be sent away to marry somebody.³⁶²

...when people came from the Old Country, they'd stay at our house, for quite a while...My mother and father, were like I guess, the mother and father to all the newcomers. But they, they weren't regarded as patriarchs or matriarchs. They were just, like older brother and sister I guess. That's what it was.³⁶³

to the implied, as in the examples below where "home" is used as a metaphor for the old community:

- Well we used to have good times in New-foundland because, everybody felt like home. Like, Swersky, he wouldn't ask you, if you are home he'd come over. If you are home he'd walk in.
- I used to keep an open house...Everybody used to come in. Not to, call up, just to come in.
- 'What are you doing staying home? OK we'll have a game of poker. Come in, this one. Call up Sheffman. Call up, Charlie Levitz and, you know we got seven or eight hands. [laughs]³⁶⁴

The Jewish group that we had here years ago were tremendous. They were very very close. We always had socials. We always got together. It was really really really. I'm gonna say, a home away from home. You'd really feel, you'd never have to, ring up anybody. Everybody's door was

open. You'd come in, you were made more than welcome. Today, it's a different life cause it's a different generation. All the older people, some have moved away. Some have died. You know? And there's newer ones come in? And they are different entirely. It's, not the same at all.³⁶⁵

As a matter of fact we kept boarders. All the peddlers stayed in our house. You should see what was done. Rosh Hashonah, or Yom Kippur, Pesach. When they all used to come together. Like ten or twelve boys. And they could eat. [laughs] Whatever. Momma cooked they, eat everything up you know. And it was a lot of fun. They sleep on the floor, they didn't want to go anywhere. Stay with the rabbi, with the shochet. Because they know they get Yiddishe meals you know and, it felt, like home you know.³⁶⁶

The distinguishing quality of this "family" was that "everybody was together."³⁶⁷ This meant that:

- Well all the Jews there, used to be, united you know. All the families, were very, close. Used to be close --
- During the summer, like we used to go out, in the country for a drive. We all, used to, get together in one place. A certain place like there's a place Kelligrew's, about twenty miles from St. John's. We used to get out in the field. During the summertime yes. Like pick berries or, have a picnic or --
- But, in town all the families used to be ... They used to have a lot of parties there...
- Every Sunday somebody made a big party. Invited the whole congregation.
- Invited the whole congregation. Sure. In the houses and, myself, I used to entertain so much. Not anymore.³⁶⁸

It also meant that it was a support system for its members:

Enormous, tremendous family strength, and the community strength. Everybody knew everybody else. ---- Everybody helped everybody else. But yet retained their own identities.³⁶⁹

- I stayed when I used to come to St. John's, I stayed with them. In their house and, then he proposed to me. [laughs]

- There was no other girls.

- [laughing] There was not many Jewish girls there. We got married in 1933.

[AK: Did you have a big wedding there in the shul?]

- Well it was at shul. The whole congregation was invited. His mother, had to make the wedding and she baked everything.

- ...My father was _____, he was the rabbi there.

- And, she made everything herself. Prepared everything. It was not such a thing to go out and you know. And, cater it.

- Each one, baked and cooked. I mean everyone --

- Helped out.

- All the members of the congregation you know --

- Made the wedding.

- This one made bagel, and this one, made fish and this one brought this. Yeah.

- Yeah, it was a different world.

- But everyone was invited I mean everyone was... whoever was there.

- Whoever was there, the Jewish families, were invited to the wedding.³⁷⁰

If the community bond was built on a common heritage, it was strengthened internally by external pressures. People speculated as they spoke. They needed each other more because of their isolation.

Well, the way I get it is, that it was a cohesive community. They worked together. They tried to build a community, so that they needed each other because they were very isolated. It's not like today where you climb on a plane or you drive across the island, you know, it was a big, it was a big trip to leave this island.³⁷¹

and maybe they stayed together because they were "more different" than -- less accepted, less assimilated than their "official" rhetoric would have us believe:

...the old group, we did know everybody. There was a smaller group and and, we were here and we were, we were more isolated. We wanted to be together more we had more reason to be together. Today, we're accepted more. You go to anybody and they know what a Jew is and they know that, you don't have to be afraid of them and you don't, and we know that we're not the only people with money in the world or, we're not all successful and we're all money grubbers or we're all this type of thing. And these were some of the old -- I think we banded together, out of, we needed to. We needed to band together, we needed to be close together. But today, it's a different world, you're you're more, educated. You're more exposed, to to the world. You hop on a plane and you go somewhere. You're not sitting here amongst, you know, a small group. When my folks went to Montreal it took 'em a week to get there. They'd go on the train. They'd go in groups. All the business people'd go at the same time, stay in the same hotel. It was just like being home. Times change. But they had a great life, like that...Times change and and, your thoughts change. What you, need changes. And -- a community changes and and, you can be here. Whoever heard of a Jew, being, in in, St. John's in the nineteen thirties or forties, and didn't tell anybody. Now you

can go up to, I, hear, stories on, CBS news about Dr. So and So at the university...Who heard of, you know? They're here. -- They're all over. So, its like you're living in Montreal. They're thousands, thousands of Jews -- you you just don't know 'em. Now here there are hundreds who we don't know.³⁷²

Change then, is identified with the freedom to define one's own Jewish identity, apart from a "community" -- in other words, it signalled a challenge to and freedom from tradition. In the past, isolation empowered tradition to dictate Jewish practice and identity to Jews who came to St. John's. The lack of anonymity nourished conformity; compliance was the precedent to adoption by the community-family. When the war "opened things up," the community lost its insularity. Tradition, formerly the source of the cohesion and continuity of the community, was challenged as an obstacle to progress, a drooping countenance in need of a facelift. This bred resentment toward those who came in and criticized, or later, who came to town but never "declared themselves":

Well...we know that there are people associated with the university who are of the Jewish religion. But, a lot of the, I think there are some that we don't even know who they are, they don't show themselves... There's, just a, I'd say there's a percentage of, of those, of Jewish, race, at the university who, we know about that, who, are members...But they, they tell me that, there's more, people around that we don't even know.³⁷³

The topic most often recalled as a symbol of change was the decision to build a new synagogue. It signified a crossroad in the community's life story: a shift in vision from the past to the future, and a relinquishing of childhood, leaving "home." Below, set in the context of the community's "time line" -- the war -- its significance is revealed by the accompanying associations:

...prior to the end of the war you know, it was a, an old community. You know what I mean. They were all here for, quite a number of years. And the, you did get some newer people come in and -- Couple doctors, moved in. They came here to practice and that. Some of 'em have been very, beneficial to the community, others weren't. -- Some of the, American forces stationed at Peperal were quite -- active in the community. For a while and...then a couple of 'em, married and stayed here like Mac Rosen. And Mengie Shulman. Their names probably came up. And they brought a new... perspective to the community. More of, an Americanized, if you like, where before it was very colonial. And -- the -- the people after that time, that's, of course when, the younger generation started getting a little active. Before -- that, they were very, narrow-minded in their thinking and, you know, if it weren't for these other people coming in, they'd still have the synagogue down Henry Street 'cause that was good enough for them.

[AK: Narrow-minded in what sense?]

Well they couldn't see, too far ahead you know what I mean? They were quite happy the way things were going. And, they were quite content. Yeah...There was a couple -- very progressive ones like, Louie Sweraky was a very progressive-minded person. But don't forget that Louie had a better education than a lot of these people and it gets right

back they had no formal education. when they went to school in Russia or Poland, wherever they came from, they learned the, the Talmud and they learned, arithmetic they didn't know, anything, about anything -- ten miles from their community. So, you can't blame them for that.³⁷⁴

The rhetoric accompanying mention of each of the two synagogues sets them in striking opposition as two symbols: the original Henry Street synagogue, the symbol of the first generation, of the community-as-family, of struggle and solidarity, of the past; and the new Elizabeth Avenue edifice the symbol of the second generation, of progress and change, of affluence and arrival, of the future. The passages below construct the symbol of the Henry Street synagogue out of "Old Country" materials: self-sufficiency, egalitarianism, pride in and commitment to community:

...we wanted to build the community. And that was the way, everybody, accepted it... Everybody in the community, had a sense of duty towards the community. And you acted as if you were just one family.³⁷⁵

Oh they started talking about it, just, about building. Yeah, probably in '25, '26. Start talking some more. By '31, each one gave, about three hundred dollars, five hundred dollars. And, we build a shul. --- Yup. Yeah, the lowest had to give, three hundred dollars it was a big amount, at that time you know, '30, '31. Most of 'em gave three hundred dollars. There was one, Abraham Cohen, one of the Cohens, he gave a thousand dollars. All their names is, is

there. You can find I think a list of donors, in the synagogue. I think they still have it. Yeah, you can have a look at that.³⁷⁶

And that, synagogue we built, my husband, all the members had to, pledge. My husband pledged whatever I think that time five hundred dollars. We didn't had, too much believe me we -- We tried to spare from ourself, and gave it to them. 'Cause you can't make yourself lower than anybody. You see in our congregation, I'm going to tell you. They're wonderful people. They're very very nice. And they're very charitable. But you see if you got a store, and you go for trips a big something, I got to have the same one. If you give, a hundred dollars, I got to give two hundred. 'You haven't got it? ---- You have got it,' you know? See we all got to give alike. My husband had to pay at that time, three hundred dollars a year then.³⁷⁷

Not surprisingly, it was an "adopted" outsider who precipitated the change to Elizabeth Avenue:

He was, taking an active part, in the, synagogue. He helped to build, the new shul... It was his idea. The work, he was doing all the work. Talking into them [them into it] and, everybody was satisfied with that shul. 'How many have we got? That shul's good enough.' 'No, it's, not the right place to have a shul, it's a poor street on, Henry Street you know. We have to get a-, you know where we're located now on Elizabeth Avenue?³⁷⁸

The façade of the old building reflected the face of the community, and the change was the facelift to which I referred earlier:

Well, they wanted a more, modern establishment... And, the synagogue on Henry Street just outlived its usefulness that, it just, became an old building, with the passage of time.³⁷⁹

Change was resisted by many, and the story of the controversy was repeated frequently to illustrate the tenacity of tradition:

- Well I know, before they built the synagogue on Elizabeth Avenue that there were some who were against it. But, the majority, were for it.
- There were quite a few that, didn't want it back then... They thought they were undertaking too much, for the size of the community.
- They paid the mortgage off very fast.
- Yes, but not even that. The idea of having certain, new ideas in, the shul itself. In -- the way it looks. A bit modern with the, free of life whatever. There was a whole fight over it. You wouldn't --
- Well you get any community together and you, you'll find somebody [laughs] who, disagrees with everything.
- We always used to say the Levitz' were on one side and the Wilanskys, [laughs] were on the other. [laughs]
- The older crowd like a, rabbi who could sing, and daven the real, the younger crowd like a little bit, more outgoing and, modern, guy so there was al-, there were always fights right? [laughs]³⁸⁰

I asked one of the older members why they decided to build a new shul. His present consciousness responds as he identifies the earlier conflict with that currently plaguing the community. After the appeal for progress had been won,

and the past put behind them, it became apparent that they were to be short-changed by the future. This left them with a dying past, a modern face, and an uncertain future:

Because the other one was, not good enough. Because we people, you know we, we wanted a better shul we wanted to have a dancing hall, we wanted to have a, a, for the children a school. For the school, what do you call a, a place for the school? We want to have a place for the meetings? We wanted it all and we paid it all we, because we had, quite a few members that time. Now we haven't got it. The most, a lot of members are left us you know. Some of them are gone altogether, some of them, moved out to Toronto, to, to Montreal and different places. Now, now we have you, see our shul didn't you? Now we have a beautiful shul. We have everything there. But we haven't got much, many members now. As I said, a lot of members are, gone and a lot of members are moved away...³⁸¹

The passage below expresses to me the symbolism of the story of the two synagogues. Certainly the values are clear: old is "not good enough" and new is better and beautiful. More than a comment on urban renewal, however, the observation strikes me as a metaphor for the original community:

The building is gone. You know, I saw it. Nothing there. You know, it was, they're putting on something else, they tore it, you know it was old. You know. And they're making a new building for something. And I don't know what are they doing.³⁸²

Just as she bore witness to the reality that the old building is gone, so are her memories, as a survivor, testimony to the reality that the "original" community no longer exists. Yet it lives for the very reason that she and the others are survivors of change, and the only ones who can see the oppositions. As long as they continue to remember, the past lives. The attitudes of their children reflect their allegiance to the legacy. For example, I asked whether there might be a move toward Reform Judaism in order to attract more members and the response was adamant:

No; I don't think they'd do that. ----
Because, the present membership, are not
interested in, converting to Reform...
Because, we've adhered, to the same type of
service. Right from, the very start of the,
organization...a Conservative, seating
arrangement with an Orthodox, service --
That's been maintained ever since I can
remember it. I know I wouldn't want to see
it changed, towards Reform and, I think the
other members, would feel the same way.³⁸³

They evidently do:

We are all, we're still ---- traditional.
You know. And that's the way I want it and
that we want it. And, we've never had, well
we've had very little, discussion at one
time I remember then talking
Reform, maybe that will hold the kids here
or something.³⁸⁴

He makes reference to "a radical who came in from Montreal
and had different ideas than we were brought up with":

We rejected that, immediately. 'Cause we were brought up with this and if I'm going to stay with it, I'm going all the way, if you know what I mean. And this is the way that I, the only way that I know it. And the way that I like it. You know. And this is the way we've decided that we want it.

[AK: Is there resistance to Jews that come in --]

Um hum. Um hum. If they come in thinking like us, fine. But, if they come in to try to Reform us, forget it. Simple as that. You know. We are so few, and we were brought up in this and we're gonna stay with this so long as we're here.³⁸⁵

V. Perlin: "An Associational Cluster"

Well, there wasn't too many Europeans, at that time [we came]. I mean they were there for a while you know? European yeah. But, they were there for a while and they got, a little ---- Americanized, when we first came, they become a little, far away from, there was, the Perlins, did you hear of the Perlin, family there?³⁸⁶

During the course of collecting, I was asked repeatedly, "you heard about Perlin?" I began to anticipate the inevitable round of personal stories, anecdotes and commentary associated with Israel Perlin, the ostensible founder of the Jewish community in Newfoundland. He is venerated for his status as one of the first Jewish settlers on the island, and for his education, his "wealth" and generosity, his service to the congregation, and his family background. He was the son of a well-known rabbi in Timkovets, "White"

Russia, and Perlin himself had some education in England where he had lived for several years prior to immigrating to North America. Consequently, he spoke English fluently, an ability both revered and appreciated by the newly-arrived, Yiddish-speaking "greenhorns."

The stories conflict as to whether Perlin himself began as a peddler. He was already established when the next generation of peddlers arrived on the island, and many will deny that he peddled as they did; others claim that he did, his story no less prosaic than their own. In any case, he supplied all of the incoming young men with goods to peddle, and sent them out with packs on their backs. I have been told that, within a week after arrival in St. John's, every Jewish young man would be taken down to see "Old Man Perlin" who would "fix them up" with a pack and send them off into the country.

In the classic sense, Perlin was a landsman to "the boys." He spoke with them in Yiddish, striking an immediate familial bond through their common language. Thus, legend has cast him as "father to the peddlers." In 1909, he became the honorary "President for Life" of the new Hebrew Congregation of Newfoundland, a second association affixed to him in oral tradition.

There is conflict inherent in this story, however, as the following passage illustrates:

- When we came to, Newfoundland, that time, as it, happened, we came in on Yom Kippur day. The boat came in. And my father went right to shul. To daven. And of course, Perlin happened to come from our hometown...It was called Timkovets in, Russia. And now in, in White Russia. His father Perlin's, was one of the greatest, rabbis, in --
- In Europe. In -- at home.
- Yeah. Home. He was a man with a long beard and he used to study the, Talmud, all the time you know and everybody had the greatest respect Rabbi Moishe Perlin, was, a great man. Now here we come his son, goes out Yom Kippur and jingles, money in his pocket. And walks around and, I'll say how come, what become of his son? We figure [chuckles] if his father would see him. And all of his family they all married the, goyim you know? The whole family.
- He didn't bring'em up in a Jewish way. They all got married to Christians.
- He didn't bring'em up in a Jewish way at all. They all married Christians. His, yeah his son, and daughters, all married Christians. Now their family are gone. Completely goyim there...So we could see the difference, of the family from the, the grandfather and, his son and his children what, what became of 'em you know? And everybody, I mean they weren't, religious like Yom Kippur. There in the Old Country everybody, would pray and stay, pray the whole day. There they were running around and, talking and, didn't mind the, the chazzen (cantor) or whatever you know. 387

The irony, and the agony, of the Perlin story is that his family "didn't mix with the Jews." This loss of an entire family to the community persists as an unresolved conflict, both an affront and an enigma in oral tradition.

When an idea to be expressed is intangible or subconscious, a speaker may select and assemble tangible images or associations with that idea which symbolize it, and may never refer specifically to the idea at all.³⁸⁸ Burke refers to these associations as the "invisible meanings" that surround the central idea.³⁸⁹ The interrelated "meanings" or imagery form a pattern which suggests that there is an "organizational principle" behind them. These associations "body forth" this principle which, upon analysis, enable one to identify and name its controlling ideas. "Thus," says Burke, "the imagery could be said to convey an invisible, intangible idea in terms of visible, tangible things." By noting the associations which accompany a topic, one can discover "what a certain thing means to the speaker." Burke calls the system an "associational cluster."³⁹⁰ All of the associated meanings are, in effect, "fused together in the image" as it functions in the context of a complete work.³⁹¹ The aggregate meaning of the cluster is larger than the sum of its associations. That thing at the center of the cluster, then, becomes a didactic symbol for the network of associations -- and the controlling idea.

The primary cluster, the one most extensive and persistent throughout the narratives, is that which accompanies the name of Israel Perlin. The subject was a catalyst that

seemed to necessitate comment or elaboration. In short, the story of Perlin was a mandatory lesson in the course of my education in and by this community. And the story was recalled time and again. This is not to say that each time Perlin's name arose, in the course of a dialogue, the "whole" cluster -- that is, the gamut of associations -- would be expressed. The "whole" web of associations, to which I refer as the Perlin cluster, is an aggregate of all the individual associations clinging to this topical catalyst.

As each speaker identified his perspective of Perlin, the man, to me, he asserted his attitudes towards the associated topics; the assertion of attitudes was the strategy to influence my perspective on the same topics. What was significant was the consistency of the strategy from one individual to the next. The identifications with Perlin were echoed throughout the community, the same attitudes asserted. It was evident that this topic provoked a "community voice" to speak, and it represented something larger than itself. Thus, Perlin functioned as a symbol. An exploration of the cluster enabled me to tune into the frequency of this "community voice." Consequently, the "invisible meanings" behind the symbol materialized, and the second, rhetorical motive was revealed along with the central community conflict.

Topically, the identifications with Perlin were on two levels. The "literal" identifications informed me of the man's function and status in the community and his family situation. The "symbolic" identifications were extrapolated from his "discord" with community norms and were universalized. They became exemplars of the community's conflict which unleashed the barrage of community commentary.

"In our time," said one of the former peddlers, "Perlin was the -- the biggest man there."³⁹² It is the peddlers' eye-view of Perlin that legend has preserved; the ambient quality of the legend is his stature: "...yes, everybody knew I.F. Perlin. He helped many people."³⁹³ The titles that Perlin bears inflate the image of the man and distinguish him from the rest: he was "father to the peddlers" and "President for life" of the congregation. From these two associations, the grand image of the "short little fella"³⁹⁴ was built. Below, his stature is augmented by contrasting his education and language facility with "the boys" "want for both:

Perlin had a wholesale business. And the peddlers used to go to Perlin because they could speak to him. He could speak their language. Right? And when they went, and when they went in the country, and they were peddling, didn't want to come home, to order some more merchandise, so they had self-addressed envelopes, to Perlin. And they wrote their order in Jewish, you know, and sent it to Perlin. The old man looked after

it and filled the order and mailed it out to 'em...That's how, Perlin, became the ---- I don't know what they call, like the ---- He became the father confessor. To 'em all because, they could write to him. Any problems they had they wrote to him in Jewish. They couldn't speak English. They couldn't write it. So they wrote to Old Man Perlin. You see where he comes into it now?³⁹⁵

He also "came into it" in this sense: "He was always, the president, our president":³⁹⁶

It was honor, like, honor...just, give him a little respect you know. Because he worked with the congregation for so long you know? Although none of the kids came to shul but, he himself, used to come all the time.³⁹⁷

Other than meager character description that amounted to only a few adjectives -- "educated," "intellectual," "kind," "generous," "helpful," and "different" (from the rest of the group) -- a more intimate portrait of Perlin was never painted which inferred his distance from the others:

...it may be that he gave quite a bit of money, to the building of it [the synagogue]. And so you know, earned, gratitude and respect. They always respected him even though they, they weren't very close with him.³⁹⁸

There was discord insinuated in that he was consistently "excepted":

[AK: Was there a class system in the Jewish community?]
No, except for the Perlins.³⁹⁹

...The Jewish people got by, and they made a nice living you know, and, I wouldn't say there were no millionaires but, the only one was Perlin. They were "well-to-do-family."⁴⁰⁰

To them he remained an enigma. The conflict in his story only accentuates the enigmatic quality:

Old Man Perlin was fantastic. Oh yeah. They, went to every bar mitzvah, him and her? I mean, they went to my bar mitzvah. You know and, everybody knew 'im. I mean Old Man Perlin was the president of the, president of the Jews of Newfoundland. But all his kids, everyone, of 'em, not one of 'em married in. Not one! And never, none of 'em ever associated with anybody...Don't understand it. Think it was the old lady.⁴⁰¹

The agonism at the core of the Perlin story was that his family "didn't mix" with the Jews: "I know he was highly respected but I don't think he wanted to mingle,"⁴⁰² as one woman understood the problem. Gradually, as the story was constructed, the attitudes towards Perlin became clear:

...they, intermingled. And they went to the better places...And would never ever admit, to being Jewish. They were the converts, the first, family of converts.⁴⁰³

I don't think he ever wanted a Jew in his store. Because when my father, and Dave Sax [sic], and Sam Levitz came here; he told them, to pack a bag, and get the hell out to Corner Brook and Grand Falls and Lewisport and, what not. He, he didn't want anybody around St. John's.⁴⁰⁴

Perlin was not, hospitable. She particularly. I, never knew that he invited any of, the Jewish people that lived there, for a meal. He certainly never invited any of the poor peddlers. He used to, save, the Jewish newspaper from New York for me, and I used to go to the door, and knock on the door, and he'd bring it out to the door, never invited me in. They were not too hospitable.⁴⁰⁵

Blame falls rhetorically on Perlin's wife who apparently preferred the company of the St. John's society:

I think they always were considered different. They were considered snobs... There was some resentment about their, not mingling. I know, I could hear my mother, talking about Mrs. Perlin [laughs] at her, putting on airs. And there was, yeah, there was quite a bit of bad feeling about that I think.⁴⁰⁶

In a less direct fashion, anecdotes were told to illustrate a point, the speaker often reinforcing it afterwards by asking me, "do you get my meaning?" or "do you understand what I'm saying?". For example, Mrs. Perlin's pretensions and denial of her origins were depicted as ludicrous efforts because her immigrant accent branded her "one of the family" whether she liked it or not. Language, or accent, is the immigrant's indissoluble link with the past; a family crest for those who support the chain; a brand for others who would as soon disassociate and "assimilate." At the same time, the intent was to draw a correlation between her attitude and the "loss" of the Perlin family:

All Perlin's children became goyim. One hundred percent. They had nothing whatsoever to do with the Jewish community. Nothing. ---- (The old lady, came to shul one time. They used to come to Rosh Hashonah. The old man was president for life. So she came and somebody was speaking in Jewish. And the old lady said [in exaggerated Yiddish accent] 'Yat language is dey speaking?' That's what, she was like. So their kids were brought up, nothing. 407

A second anecdote follows in a similar vein:

His wife was the one who said, 'now what is a bagel?' She looked at a bagel and said 'what is that? What is a bagel?' Cause she tried to be very fancy-shmancy. 408

Another purported preface that received critical comment was the Perlin family's claim to have come from England, as argued by this individual:

Don't mind that. That's a bit of bullshit ... There's a fella here and he was telling somebody... He says 'my parents came from England.' See. Aaron says 'sure they came from England but they came from Stinkovets first, before they' -- [laughs] you know, the old man was, they're Europeans, the same as, as my parents. You know, alright so Perlin, my father was in England for, six months, before he came here. And and, the old man Perlin might have been there for two years or three years. But they certainly, you know, didn't speak English... without an accent or anything. They had a good European, accent so don't, mind what they tell you, you know. 409

The critical commentary reaffirms the community's egalitarian precepts. It also reflects a basic cultural precept from the shtetl that an individual could not hide his or her social background because eventually his behavior would betray him. Since social class was public knowledge, delusions of grandeur were derided and condemned.⁴¹⁰ No individual was beyond rebuke, including "heroes," but the nature and extent of the rebuke varied.

As audience, I learned that I might look only as deeply into this sensitive topic as I was permitted. There was a code of propriety that served as a subtle rhetorical device to censor the topic from the discussion. This illustrated, among other things, the censorship which occurs in the creation of a selective self-image by eliminating the unfavorable features of the past. Pascal refers to this process as "opaquing," the appearance of candor when, actually, there is an omission or intentional deception.⁴¹¹ This suggests the dichotomy between what the audience may want to hear vs. what is deemed appropriate for her to hear. While people were concerned that I "get it right," that translated to "get it" as they wished to offer it. Thus, they were able to mask conflicts which blemished the past.

The example below illustrates this code of propriety in context. It represents a typical interaction between a

husband and wife; consistently, it was the wife who attempted to censor the topic by reprimanding her husband or interrupting the course of the "inappropriate" subject matter:

- Well, Mr. Perlin had a wholesale place, you know. We used to buy from, there were a few, peddlers here. I wasn't along 'twas, probably, four or five boys here. I don't know where they are now. They are al-, they are alive or, I don't know. And Mr. Perlin who had a wholesale place and we all used to buy from him, the goods, to go with the pack. And Mr. Perlin was, our president in the shul one time. And he was a nice man. But, the family, weren't much of Jewish you know. All the children -
- Why you want to talk of this?
- Just a minute now. All the children they're here, there, there's one son here, who's a, who's married to a girl from, Montreal -
- This is not concern to -
- She want to know probably.
- No, no.
- He was, he was real Jewish, but the children -
- He was a nice man.
- are, are are not, they -- they don't -- they don't mix to, mix with the Jewish. The children, and then their sons their old, the old man died you know? And his son died, and now he have, the grandchildren. Like, there's a couple of young fellas, young boys, they're not married yet I don't; one is married. [sighs] But they don't go, they don't mix with the Jewish. They were kind of, were kind of ---- how will I say ---- the ----
- That's all you have to know. They don't mix. [chuckles]
- They, they they didn't become ---- you understand any Jewish?..
- He didn't mix with the Jewish people. That's all. They didn't -

- Yeah, so they didn't mix with the Jewish none. Now the, there were a Gittleson here? A Mr. Gittleson here. But, when I...was here, he, I knew 'im for about one year. They had a, furniture store. But, I was one year here and, I didn't know 'im much you know, but they were also, you know, not much of Jewish you know. They were kind of, more of ---- how would I say it, you [his voice rises and falls] know, you know what I mean. -

- They didn't mix, with the Jewish people so what I'm, interfering isn't it?...But there's nothing to tell about Gittleson you don't have to tell because they moved out when we came you know, and, we don't know him...

[AK: Can you tell me, did Perlin sort of act as a father for the new peddlers that came over here? Did he help people along?]

- He helped us along. He made money on us. ---- We used to buy for him and he used to make good money, good -- made money, you know, how business are. He used to we used to buy from him all the, goods and he used, charge us for whatever it was. A nice man. A real nice man.

- A real gentleman.

- His wife wasn't, his wife wasn't much you know.

- Yeah wh-, why she was nice too but she, didn't mix with the Jewish at all.

- Didn't mix with the Jewish at all.

- She was a really -

- He was a bit with the Jewish you know, a little bit you know. See his son, his son married a, high class, a Mr. Crosbie you know? High people, high class people you know?

- I bet you heard about it.

- Albert, Albert you know. He married in -

- You know, you look to me like, my... niece. She looks like,

daughter you know? Isn't it? If I would see you in the street, shut the recorder. 412

There was a compromise between censorship and explication, however. It seemed that, as I became increasingly "educated," my participation in the dialogue was solicited. Periodically, an individual would skirt propriety through inference, inviting me to meet him halfway and complete the message, and thereby avoiding incrimination through explication.

In a small group such as this, solidarity of its members is paramount to its survival. Perlin's story symbolizes the community trauma. The paradox is that he is at once a hero and anti-hero, having failed to meet the expectations of the community, first, as a Jewish father and, second, as a family legacy. In a cultural tradition which stresses the importance of the home and family in the chain of cultural transmission, that Perlin failed to raise a Jewish family is incomprehensible. What's more is that every other pioneer contributed his efforts as well as his name to the community via his descendants. None of the Perlin children became affiliated with the community and, thus, Perlin left no legacy after his death. The opposition inherent in the Perlin cluster brings to mind Walter Ong's vision of oral tradition in the "old world" (the world as event):

The action of the heroic figures generated in an oral economy of narration would naturally at root consist of a battle between forces of good and evil. When so much of

the lore of a culture was retained through narrative tales or songs about great heroes, even what would otherwise be completely neutral material thus acquired a moral flavor by association with the polemic or agonía of the hero and his adversaries. The entire world thereby tended to be polarized in terms of 'good guys' and 'bad guys' and later in terms of abstract personifications of virtues and vices...⁴¹³

Roger Abrahams maintains that social conflict is reflected in the "artificially agonistic components of a work of art" that is a traditionally recognized symbol.⁴¹⁴ An illusion of resolution is played out in the performance, serving as instruction for the audience and a catharsis of sorts for the performer. There is conflict inherent in the Perlin cluster, accompanied not by resolution but by affirmation of a point of view.

The community identifies Perlin with intermarriage which embodies the central community conflict: autonomy vs. assimilation which is manifest in its concern for its survival in the future. The correlation between Perlin and this conflict is exemplified below, where the speaker "universalizes" the Perlin story. At the outset, he speculated as to what went wrong in the case of the Perlin children; consequently, he offered an extensive catalogue of community intermarriage over the years, and summarized:

So, there's quite a few...there's more mixed marriage here. That's what you should write on...Oh Jesus. A lot. A lot.⁴¹⁵

When asked if there were many converts, he replied:

No, a lot of 'em stay in...But the children, never became Jewish because their wives never converted. And -- just go away. You know, you know 'em. You meet 'em. You know who the hell they are. Maybe they're friends of yours. But, they're not into the community. And that's why our community's after goin' down so bloody much over the years...We'll be closin' up. Our congregation cannot survive. There's no way it can survive. We're losin' too many families, every year, we're losin' one or two. 416

The blame falls on intermarriage, which leads to assimilation and dissolution of a community and a culture, and rejection of the community by recent Jewish immigrants to St. John's who choose not to affiliate with them. This question of survival echoes that which has plagued Judaism throughout its history.

Thus, the Perlin cluster symbolized the purported erosive process acting upon the community. This controversial topic yielded substantially more information about the attitudes and values of the group than particulars about the man. As I listened, the "person" of Perlin receded while the symbol of Perlin served as a catalyst and rhetorical scapegoat for the venting of conflict.

Recollections of the past are not photographic, and may often be inaccurate. The distortions, however, reveal how

the mind "mirrors and makes experience. What is the relationship between truth and rhetoric in this context? Aristotle's premise that that which is believed to be true is the truth justifies the image of the past that oral tradition tenders in the present. Barbara Myerhoff wrote, with respect to "enacted beliefs," that "doing is believing."⁴¹⁷ In the process of narrating the past, recollecting is also believing. Survival is contingent upon the endurance of the past; it is the past on which the present rests, and from which the future charts its course. The enactment, a combination of the ideal and the real, is a strategy for survival.

It is difficult, if not impossible, for people to articulate the ethos which shapes their experience because much of its source lies in the subconscious and the unconscious; it must be tapped through other channels. When the recollections and reflections of members of one community are juxtaposed, patterns form which serve as clues. My intent has been to demonstrate how a rhetorical approach affords a "sidewise" view into the whole, and illumines the "invisible meanings" contained within that might otherwise be obscured. Two important meanings emerged: first, that the topic of the past turned out to be both catalyst and medium for the real issue which was the present; and second, that concern for the future was motivating a "community voice" to speak.

The conflict within this community is a struggle for continuity in the face of change. A group in conflict turns inward to reflect on itself. The consciousness of change and of potentially "losing time" (the past) prompted both generations to take account of the past. The complex of attitudes and values that texture this collection is, in fact, a reavowal of tradition -- a reaffirmation of community, and culture, and self -- at a crucial moment when the future is uncertain. Consciousness of change and of time lost, then, incite the "autobiographical impulse."⁴¹⁸ This is the primary motive behind the telling.

Having disassembled the whole, the final step is to resynthesize the parts and reevaluate the whole from the perspective of an "educated" audience.

NOTESChapter VI:

- 174 Abrahams, p. 147.
- 175 Burke, Rhetoric, p. 58
- 176 Burke, Rhetoric, p. 58
- 177 Burke, Rhetoric, p. 58
- 178 Burke, Rhetoric, p. 58
- 179 Burke, Rhetoric, p. 58
- 180 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5922.
- 181 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5899.
- 182 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5899.
- 183 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5928.
- 184 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5930.
- 185 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5915.
- 186 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5922.
- 187 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5921.
- 188 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5926.
- 189 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5926.
- 190 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5921.
- 191 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5921.
- 192 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5904.

193 In at least two families, the grandparents were brought over; nevertheless, their children were immigrants so I refer to them as first generation so as to avoid confusion.

194 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5921.

195 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5915.

196 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5922.

197 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5913.

198 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5915.

199 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5915.

200 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5915.

201 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5926.

202 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5926.

203 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5926.

204 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5918.

205 Abrahams, p. 145.

206 Burke, Rhetoric, pp. 84-5.

207 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5899.

208 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5917.

209 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5906.

210 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5930.

211 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5918.

212 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5930.

213 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5910.

214 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5919.

- 215 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5930.
- 216 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5915.
- 217 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5917.
- 218 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5929.
- 219 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5918.
- 220 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5906.
- 221 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5906.
- 222 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5918.
- 223 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5906.
- 224 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5908.
- 225 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5918.
- 226 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5906.
- 227 O'Neill, p. 820.
- 228 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5899.
- 229 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5925.
- 230 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5917.
- 231 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5915.
- 232 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5921.
- 233 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5926.
- 234 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5904.
- 235 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5920.
- 236 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5908.
- 237 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5920.
- 238 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5918.
- 239 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5917.

- 240 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5921.
- 241 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5917.
- 242 Myerhoff, p. 92.
- 243 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5930.
- 244 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5904.
- 245 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5921.
- 246 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5924.
- 247 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5924.
- 248 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5921.
- 249 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5930.
- 250 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5906.
- 251 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5921.
- 252 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5921.
- 253 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5910.
- 254 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5910.
- 255 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5926.
- 256 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5904.
- 257 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5918.
- 258 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5920.
- 259 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5917.
- 260 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5924.
- 261 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5924.
- 262 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5908.
- 263 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5918.
- 264 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5920.

- 265 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5904.
- 266 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5899.
- 267 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5899.
- 268 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5913.
- 269 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5904.
- 270 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5921.
- 271 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5920.
- 272 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5900.
- 273 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5900.
- 274 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5918.
- 275 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5926.
- 276 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5918.
- 277 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5899.
- 278 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5929.
- 279 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5918.
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- 282 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5917.
- 283 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5917.
- 284 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5904.
- 285 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5904.
- 286 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5904.
- 287 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5929.
- 288 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5929.
- 289 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5929.

290 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5908.

291 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5925.

292 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5917.

293 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5913.

294 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5900.

295 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5929.

296 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5929.

297 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5918.

298 The name he cites is wrong so I have deleted it in

order to avoid confusion.

299 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5904.

300 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5904.

301 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5913.

302 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5930.

303 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5924.

304 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5924.

305 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5910.

306 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5915.

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- 314 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5928.
- 315 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5930.
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- 317 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5910.
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- 321 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5904.
- 322 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5908.
- 323 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5930.
- 324 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5930.
- 325 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5929.
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- 327 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5930.
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- 331 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5920.
- 332 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5920.
- 333 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5910.
- 334 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5930.
- 335 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5914.
- 336 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5930.
- 337 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5930.
- 338 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5930.

- 339 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5921.
- 340 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5922.
- 341 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5913.
- 342 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5914.
- 343 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5915.
- 344 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5915.
- 345 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5921.
- 346 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5926.
- 347 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5915.
- 348 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5917.
- 349 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5913.
- 350 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5926.
- 351 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5926.
- 352 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5900.
- 353 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5905.
- 354 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5918.
- 355 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5904.
- 356 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5919.
- 357 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5921.
- 358 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5929.
- 359 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5922.
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- 364 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5919.
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- 370 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5918.
- 371 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5899.
- 372 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5922.
- 373 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5928.
- 374 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5930.
- 375 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5924.
- 376 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5918.
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- 379 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5928.
- 380 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5915.
- 381 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5908.
- 382 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5908.
- 383 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5928.
- 384 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5924.
- 385 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5924.
- 386 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5918.
- 387 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5918.
- 388 Burke, Rhetoric, pp. 85-6.

- 389 Burke, Rhetoric, p. 85.
- 390 Burke, Philosophy, pp. 30-1.
- 391 Burke, Rhetoric p. 85.
- 392 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5919.
- 393 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5915.
- 394 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5904.
- 395 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5906.
- 396 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5904.
- 397 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5918.
- 398 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5910.
- 399 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5910.
- 400 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5917.
- 401 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5906.
- 402 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5910.
- 403 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5925.
- 404 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5926.
- 405 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5920.
- 406 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5910.
- 407 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5906.
- 408 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5897.
- 409 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5906.
- 410 Rosenthal, p. 9.
- 411 Roy Pascal, Design and Truth in Autobiography
(London: Routledge: 1960), pp. 189-90.
- 412 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5908.

413 Walter Ong, "World as View and World as Event,"

Amer. Anthropologist, 71 (1969), 641-2.

414 Abrahams, p. 148.

415 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5906.

416 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5906.

417 Myerhoff, p. 32.

418 See Pascal.

CONFIGURATION

Chapter VII

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A COMMUNITY: A CONFIGURATION

The life is represented in autobiography not as something established but as a process; it is not simply the narrative of the voyage, but also the voyage itself. There must be in it a sense of discovery, and where this is wanting, and the autobiography appears as an exposition of something understood from the outset, we feel it is a failure, a partial failure at any rate. Remembering is itself a creative act, and the recording and ordering of memories even more so, but I mean here a discovery of a more fundamental sort...Without this sense of discovery, the very nature of living is distorted, for life is always an expedition, perhaps a groping, into the unknown.

Roy Pascal
Design and Truth in Autobiography

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

T.S. Eliot
"Four Quartets"

At the outset of this study, I suggested that the composite life-image of the community is analogous to a "community self," and that the reason and process by which

that "self" has been expressed is autobiographical. Rhetorical analysis revealed the construction process of that "self" in the course of communication. This was accomplished by assuming the existence of both an item and an affect in the performance situation, and asking "how."⁴¹⁹ Having demonstrated "how" by breaking down the structure of context, and considering first, the relations between the performance, item and audience, and second the thematic patterns, the next step is to reconsider the collection in its entirety in terms of why it was expressed, and what greater meaning has been discovered in the outcome.

The discussion to follow is an examination of the primary motive behind that expression of "self," and a conclusive re-view of the whole as an autobiographical process.

As a point of introduction, I emphasize that the configuration, "autobiography," is my own metaphor for this collective narrative process. Throughout, I have acknowledged my voice in the dialogue, my reflection in the product. While these communiqués were expressed with conscious, rhetorical intent, I have imposed meaning by interpreting the material, both according to my knowledge of the community and my own experience. This is the most any researcher can accomplish in the course of gathering and interpreting the lives of others. Another's metaphors are read through an outsider's eyes which, in turn, inspires new metaphors.

The mind, says James Olney, is a great shapemaker.⁴²⁰ It channels our experience into regularly recurrent forms. Call them "shapes" or "symbols" or "metaphors," they are the process by which we both grasp and communicate experience. Through them, we make relations between the unknown and the known, and thereby find meaning in that which is unfamiliar. In rhetorical terms, this is the process of "identification." Metaphors order our inner and outer worlds in this way:

...they are something known and of our making, or at least of our choosing, that we put to stand for, and so to help us understand, something unknown and not of our making...⁴²¹

To analyze them, metaphors reveal less of the world perceived than of the individual perceiving -- or, in this case, a community perceiving.⁴²²

Shared metaphors of experience bind this small group of individuals by ordering and cohering their perceptions of themselves and their environment. They represent the collective vision of a group looking out, and reflecting inward on itself. More specifically, they symbolize the process by which the community has taken account of itself and, in doing so, patterned its "life" into a coherent whole. The product, this patterned whole, is an autobiography of the community -- the image of a life, a symbol.

The singular characteristic of any autobiography is that it is a review of a life from a particular moment in time.⁴²³ It is motivated by an inner necessity which Roy Pascal calls the "autobiographical impulse." This personal pressure arises from a heightened consciousness, usually provoked by change. This might include, for example, consciousness of death or of "time lost," a vanishing past.⁴²⁴

More than memoirs, autobiography is a search for one's "inner standing."⁴²⁵ Therefore, the meaning discovered in the product, at the completion of the search, is greater than the sum of events. Autobiography is a cumulative process and, as Pascal maintains, an internal voyage of discovery. At the moment of reflection, the life is multi-layered, built of events on events.⁴²⁶ While each event may mean many things to the speaker, in autobiography, its significant meaning is that which it acquires only when viewed in the perspective of a whole life at that moment. The important thing is what the individual remembers of his past, and how he relates one experience to another and organizes them into a characteristic pattern.⁴²⁷

Accuracy is not the concern of autobiography. It is not factual history although its "correctness" may be tested through historical sources. Since memory is a function, not of the past, but of the present consciousness, inaccuracy is inevitable. The autobiographer judges and, in effect, creates the past within the framework of the present.⁴²⁸

The autobiographical process presents events that are symbolic of a personality building itself up by making images of itself, both according to its own laws and in reaction to the outside world. Through these symbols, the individual and the audience know life from a particular vantage point. The knowledge is not necessarily or primarily intellectual or scientific, but imaginal.⁴²⁹ "a sudden grasp of reality through reliving it in the imagination, an understanding of the feel of life, the feel of living."⁴³⁰

This imaginal element endows autobiography with the means to hide the truth as well as reveal it.⁴³¹ The factual truth may well be distorted in autobiography, but the individual is the sole authority and the audience must accept his treatment of events as truthful. In the words of one individual, this process is expressed below:

...you must be hearing all kinds of strange things from different, it's everybody's personality isn't it? You know, and everybody's got a different view. And, I may have told you some lies. I don't know. I believe everything I told you was the truth. But somebody else might, might argue against that type of thing. Say 'no, this is not true,'...⁴³²

Thus, autobiography may be regarded as the process by which we fictionalize or mythologize our lives, both for ourselves and for others to know us. It demonstrates that there is no

absolute truth, but many possible truths of experience because the self, and our self-perceptions, are mutable.⁴³³ Of these "transformations", Olney wrote:

That one should be transformed and different with passing time, yet be continuing and the same, is a phenomenon of obvious and singular importance for the autobiographer and the poet of personal experience. Time carries us away not only from others but from ourselves as well, and we are all continuously dying to our passing selves.⁴³⁴

In the process of drawing patterns out of the flux of events, the universal is discovered in the particular.⁴³⁵ Universality is the transformative quality of autobiography that makes our metaphors meaningful to one another. This is the ultimate achievement of autobiography. It offers a characteristic way of perceiving, organizing and understanding an individual way of feeling and expressing that one can somehow relate to oneself.⁴³⁶ Likewise, and in retrospect, this is the accomplishment of the collective life histories.

Concern for survival is one aspect of the universality of this narrative collection, linking it as a "little tradition" with the "great tradition" of Judaism, and all Jewish communities in history. There is universality also in the humanistic concern for survival, for the process of aging and searching for meaning in one's life, and in the anticipation of death.

The primary motive behind this community's reflexivity and storytelling is the "autobiographical impulse" which was stimulated by consciousness of "death." I return to the rhetoric, for a moment, to punctuate this idea.

"There was no future. And I don't believe there is a future today. For those who live there. To continue."⁴³⁷

The words of one immigrant summarily depict the present situation of the community. The next generation echo the

sentiment: "We know the community, as it was, and as it was known, is dying,"⁴³⁸ and, "We're getting close to being

extinct now."⁴³⁹ The last example typifies the image of the community at present:

It [the community] started like this and, grew and then it just ---- [he gestures with his hands to make an inverted pyramid] the branches just fell off and we're down to the single basic tree. I'd say in, ten years. Maybe five, there won't be a Jewish community here... 'Cause the others are only here for a specific reason. On a business, they came in or something. They're not gonna stay. 'Cause there's nothing here for them. As a Jewish community. Any of them that are interested in, maintaining are not gonna stay. We're not gonna be able to afford to keep the rabbi. We can barely do it now... But, I'd say, we've already had one meeting on it and in five years, we will have all gone, and then it will dwindle, for another five. And I'd say within ten years, you will not see a Jewish community in Newfoundland.⁴⁴⁰

Death, in this case, is also a metaphor for change and transition, a situation which heightens consciousness of tradition, community and the past. With "death" purportedly so imminent, the survivors of this "little tradition" find themselves in a unique relationship with the past, and confronted with unprecedented choices as to the future:

Well, you know, it would be nice, to keep, what you wanted from the past. You can't do that. You know... If you wanted to take that block, knock it down and put up a modern, highrise building, you can't have, a beautiful building, and, and say, you wanted it to look like, the old building looked, cause they looked nice. You just can't have both things. And, that's that's the problem: so -- So you gotta, you know, compromise. You got to, to, accept -- what you have. That's all you can do.⁴⁴¹

This "crossroads" situation intensifies the feeling of community, and commitment to tradition. It also reinforces each individual's sense of responsibility to the past because, from that source, each derives his present identity.

This is evidenced in the conspicuous concern for audience through print which indicated a consciousness of ephemerality, a fear of being lost to time. This urgent concern for, "getting the history," thereby leaving an imprint in time, indicated a transformation for this community, and the waning of an oral tradition.

Tradition is evolutionary, organic as opposed to static. As T.S. Eliot wrote in "Tradition and the Individual Talent":

...if the only form of tradition, of handing down, consisted in following the ways of the immediate generation before us in a blind or timid adherence to its successes, 'tradition' should positively be discouraged... Tradition is a matter of much wider significance. It cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour. It involves, in the first place, the historical sense...and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence...⁴⁴²

This "historical sense" compels one to express the perspective of one's own generation, but with the understanding that it is based upon cumulative knowledge. The sense of the timeless and the temporal, separate and together, is the crux of "traditional" consciousness. It is also what makes an individual acutely conscious of his place in time, of his own contemporaneity.⁴⁴³ This "historical sense," then, might explain the pervasiveness of "oppositions" as an expressive form throughout the narratives. It might also explain the sensitivity to a dying tradition, and the tug of conscience felt by each member in this "crisis" situation. Viewed in Eliot's terms, the present conflict unveiled in this autobiography might be regarded as a transition in this community's evolution: the symbolic passing of a "little"

Jewish tradition necessary to perpetuate the "great tradition;" thus, the motive behind the current exodus.

I recall Olney's observation: "Only with the coming of death must the self settle its accounts."⁴⁴⁴ A human life or, as in this case, a collective "community" life, has a temporal dimension which extends backward and forward. People derive meaning both from the past and in anticipation of the future. When death, "the horizon of the future," becomes visible because of age or other circumstances, a means of reconciliation to the fact is a conscious "taking account" of that life -- in other words, the creation of a monument to the self at that moment. "Through a memorial," say Langness and Frank, "a future beyond one's own corporeal demise is anticipated and met."⁴⁴⁵

Each testimony was a conscious contribution to a document intended for posterity. The product of this intensive reflection, and our collaboration, is a selective, idealized monument to the lives and life of this community, distanced from both the reality of the present and its own historical reality. The community's present situation generated an autobiography that simultaneously focuses on conflict -- the disintegrative process of intermarriage, assimilation, isolation, emigration, "outside" influence and death -- as it idealizes the past. This established a tension between two inherent oppositions: the present and the past, and change

and survival. The "old" community was created metaphorically which served two functions: first, as an exemplar, it reaffirmed the community's traditional value system; and second, as a medium for rhetorical instruction. The product of the autobiography -- that is, the whole image of a patterned life -- has a larger significance, however.

It was established earlier that rhetoric is a process of identification between a speaker and an audience or, for that matter, a speaker and himself. The intent, in either case, is to affect an audience. Rhetoric becomes poetic when its imagery transcends the conscious and the representational into the unconscious and the symbolic.⁴⁴⁶ In other words, a rhetorical image represents ideas of experience, sensation and memory, while a poetic image is non-representational, imaginal. How does one interpret this autobiographical image of "community" that seems to be a fusion of memory and imagination?

Kenneth Burke draws on William Hazlitt's usage of "ideas of the imagination" to explain such a fusion. A "poetic" image -- that is, that which stands for things that never were or never will be -- is also an "idea" of the thing.⁴⁴⁷ Using "house" as an example, Burke explains:

You can't point to the house that appears in a poem; even if the poet may have had a particular house in mind. For his word 'house' will also stand for relationships

alien to the concept of house as such. The conceptual house is a dwelling of such-and-such structure, material, dimensions, etc. The poetic house is built of identifications.⁴⁴⁸

Ideologically, each speaker has the same community in mind; however, one cannot point to the community represented in any one life history, or the collective autobiography. The idea of the "old community" is a catalyst which sets off a stream of conscious and unconscious identifications with that community. They are subjective amalgams of individual experience and perception, of fact and fiction, -- or, in Burke's terms, of concept and poetry. In the end, the "old community" and "the past" are products of those cumulative identifications; they are imaginative images; they are fictional. What is the value of the fiction then? Eliot offered one suggestion in that: "...the conscious present is an awareness of the past in a way and to an extent which the past's awareness of itself cannot show."⁴⁴⁹

Identifications are subjective, but they also form significant patterns that characterize and shape the present narrating personality. The selective image, in this case, represents how the community sees itself now and how it wants to be seen and remembered.

When a work exhibits a body of imagery or patterns, then the idea "of each individual image is to be found not in

itself, but in the artistic purpose behind the whole body of imagery.⁴⁵⁰ In folkloristic terms, this is the function behind the form; in rhetoric, the motive; in poetry, the organizing principle. These individuals have utilized the resources of poetry to express their attitudes and concerns. Pattern lays bare poetic structure, and it is there that ethos may be found.

Walter Ong, in his article "World as View and World as Event," discusses the role of the poet in the aural-oral, "old world," or "world as event."⁴⁵¹ The "old world" was characterized by an experiential, sensual and participatory life experience. The "world as View" orientation, on the other hand, is the product of an observing, print-oriented society in which life is experienced primarily through the more objective, and passive, senses of sight and hearing. Their dominance is indicative of a society in which the "self" plays a lesser role.⁴⁵² In the "world-as event,"

articulated utterances or statements about a subject cannot be 'looked up'...It is on hand only when it is being recited. And one needs to be assured that it can be retrieved by recitation on demand.⁴⁵³

The orator assumes the role of poet, then, in this world, and the poet's role

is not simply that of an entertainer. The poet is also a recaller and a repeater; if

he and others like him were not around, what knowledge the society has would simply disappear. The orator participates in the role of the poet. He must likewise deal in the commonplace, the expected, the already known, as well as in the particular issues with which individual forensic or deliberative problems engage him.⁴⁵⁴

I cite Ong's work for two reasons: first, to establish a correlation between that which he describes as an "old world" orientation and the folk aesthetic of this community; and second, to reinforce the idea of the narrated life-as-event which was discussed earlier in Methodology.

In the process of creating a life-narrative, each speaker functions as a poet, license granted to each as maker and guardian of his or her own experience. The artistry of each personality is exhibited in the delivery. Thus, each individual offers a unique mode of discourse in selecting particular topics and rendering them, to some degree, dramatically. Each life history belongs to Ong's sensory, imagistic and immediate "old world" category, lending the "poet's" insights that can only derive from the first-hand, experiential account. When these multiple dramatic presentations are juxtaposed and examined as the collective perceptions and reflections of members of a community, related intentionally to an audience, the underlying concept of that community emerges as a meaningful

pattern of themes and symbols. Collectively, the autobiography is the moment of the making of a history which is to say otherwise, a story.

The "performance" of the community's life story also serves a cathartic function. It guides the group through this crisis period by enacting the community's accepted attitudes and reaffirming its values in the context of a story. The distancing from the present reality, and from the reality of the past, enables the community to confront the situation and vent its concern by acting out, thereby articulating the conflict. Thus, the past serves as the medium by which the present consciousness can allay its concerns, order its disarray and reaffirm its identity. The significance of the "autobiography" to its "authors" is poignantly summarized below in the words of one woman:

That's it. You know? And this is the whole, the story not the whole story but you can, you can write a couple of books from it.⁴⁵⁵

I began with the premise that a community's life story is greater than a chronicle of its past. I approached the problem of "grasping" a community in this way: first, I "named" it as I perceived it initially, so as to suggest its apparent boundaries; second, I disassembled the whole by focusing on the rhetorical patterns and relationships; and

finally, I resynthesized the parts and re-evaluated the whole as a symbolic, autobiographical process. This explorative approach simulates the completion of a circle and an autobiographical "voyage of discovery."

The community's voyage has been a collective "taking account" of both the present and the past, and the rhetorical expression of its central conflict through autobiography. This self-narration is a response to the conflict concerning the community's survival. Viewed as such, it exemplifies how folklore -- in this case, the expression of traditional knowledge -- functions to purge and "resolve" conflict, if only in a performance context. At the least, it is an argument for adherence to the charted course.

NOTESChapter VII:

- 419 Abrahams, p. 146.
- 420 Olney, p. 17.
- 421 Olney, p. 30.
- 422 Olney, pp. 31-2.
- 423 Pascal, p. 3.
- 424 Pascal, pp. 56-7.
- 425 Pascal, p. 182.
- 426 Pascal, pp. 187-8.
- 427 Pascal, pp. 16-7.
- 428 Pascal, p. 19.
- 429 Pascal, pp. 187-8.
- 430 Pascal, p. 185.
- 431 Pascal, p. 63.
- 432 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5921.
- 433 Langness and Frank, pp. 153-4.
- 434 Olney, p. 29.
- 435 Olney, p. 45.
- 436 Olney, p. 37.
- 437 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5920.
- 438 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5900.

- 439 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5922.
440 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5924.
441 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5922.
442 T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent,"
in Selected Essays, 3rd ed. (1932; rpt. London: Faber,
1951), p. 14.
443 Eliot, p. 14.
444 Olney, p. 6.
445 Langness and Frank, pp. 114-5.
446 Burke, Rhetoric, p. 82.
447 Burke, Rhetoric, p. 84.
448 Burke, Rhetoric, pp. 84-5.
449 Eliot, p. 16.
450 Burke, Rhetoric, p. 89.
451 See citation above.
452 Ong, p. 639.
453 Ong, p. 639.
454 Ong, p. 639.
455 Interview, MUNFLA tape C5929.

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APPLICATION

APPENDIX

IDA SIDEL

Well listen, I'll tell you now. I came from Riga. Latvia. There where I was born. You know? We lived in Poland. My husband belonged to a little place in Poland. Cisha it's called. And, my husband came here in 1930. I came here in 1932.

We didn't come right away from Poland. First we were in Siberia, far away, far away, in Ufa or something. You know the Tartars were there. Know what Tartars are? Tatar they call it in Yiddish.

Anyway, I met my husband in there. They were running away because -- Kolchak -- it was a different government, you know. Trotsky, and all kind of the -- you know the people. They had to run away from there because there's nothing to eat, there's no bread, we can't find no bread. They came in Ufa there, and I met my husband there. I was only sixteen years old. And he was maybe -- let me see -- eighteen or well, I don't know. We got married the year after.

And my parents was far away in Russia. Vitebsk you call it. Vitebsk. We were straying all over the world like from the First World War. But then, the time got so bad in there too you couldn't be able to eat nothing there. You

were hungry oh look, we went to hell. So we came back. To Cisna. Where my husband was born. And there we stayed for a couple of years I think. Ummm, about four or five years I suppose.

After, my husband come here, and I went to my sister in Riga. And I stayed there, for a year about eighteen months I think or maybe two years almost you know. But it's a beautiful place there to live. When I came here, to Newfoundland, I came here after New Year's. New Year's night I think. We came on next morning. And, you know after Christmas you have the slush and the weather. And -- oh God. The houses look so -- like little shacks to me. I said, "My God. Look where I am." In Riga, the beautiful buildings. The streets is as clean as the table. Cleaner. And, any little bit of snow on the sidewalks it's right -- cleaned up. And in the wintertime you don't wear overshoes -- at all. You can go with little shoes like I go in the house.

In the summer we used to have a orchard, fruit orchards. Beautiful, all kind of fruit, beautiful fruit that you don't get in here. Here you got to pay for a couple of apples, a dollar. And it's not fit to eat. And it was beautiful food, beautiful stuff we had there. And then -- in the wintertime, we had a great big place -- for selling all kind of the stuff for animals you know. Hay and --

Anyway. When I came here, after two years, he sended for me -- with my two children. I had two children. Don was four and a half, and Jack was -- almost seven. Two and a half between them. Now they're all married, and they have their own children. They got the education here in University. And they went away, you know, Halifax and Dalhousie. My other boy, he's here. My other one is in Montreal.

And, we came here. And, it was a depression -- very bad here. I came in the real depression time. And there was no work, it was hard and -- we struggled an awful lot you know. I sent my children to the cheapest schools, a dollar a month and I couldn't pay the dollar a month either. And ---- that's the way it was at the time. In 1939, the Second World War started. It was still bad, but then after awhile, brightened up.

Now my husband was a tailor. We had a tailor shop on Duckworth Street. We were working there for thirty years. When my husband came here, he didn't do his tailoring. He had to go peddling. Around the bay. My husband didn't make a living then either because he's going in the country to the Newfoundland people and they were very poor. They didn't have no work and they didn't have no money. He was selling stuff. And he stayed with one of his sisters, she's dead now. Otto was here and -- Esther was here. They were only young when they came in here.

And, here we had a hard time, very hard time. We didn't know how to speak, we came from the Old Country we didn't know English at all. We didn't know one English word because in the Old Country you don't -- I know Russian, I know German, and I know Latvian. There where I was raised up with the Latvian people. You know.

And you can imagine, you go with no tongue. My husband went one time, he was going it was in the fall. It was dark, and he was hungry, and it was cold. He was knocking on the door, to somebody to get overnight -- to stay overnight. And he didn't know how to speak English. So he went over, and he knocked on the door, and he said to her, "Can I sleep with you?" He thought, you know -- he didn't mean anything and the girl slammed the door in his face. And then an older lady came around, and he said the same thing. "Oh," she said, "yes my son. Come on in." You know? 'Cause an old lady had more sense.

He was very sick too here he was eight months in a sanatorium. Because when he went in the wintertime, with the pack on his [back], then he fell. On a big ice. He was lying there for two hours before anybody picked him up. And the cold went through him and he had the arthritis there, he couldn't move his head. But he wasn't sick all the time. You know what I mean?

Oh, God, that's a long time ago you know. He must have been, when he came here, oh maybe thirty. Around there you know, young. He went [peddling] for a while. Not very long, and then he open a little tiny place, somewhere on Water Street on a corner there, and get a few jobs from the London, New York and Paris you must have heard. They're bankrupt now, they closed up. It wasn't on Water it was in a corner like. In a little lane. --- You know where Wilansky and Sons? Well inside, in the corner over there, what lane is it, I can't tell you.

Then after, we moved in -- oh we lived in a real you know side street, a little apartment oh my God, the water was frozen, it was very bad anyway.

But then we moved in on Water Street, then I had a couple of rooms upstairs. We moved in. It was like a shack and it wasn't very good. We had to paper it and everything and we worked really hard. I had two small bedrooms upstairs the third floor -- it was three-story -- and a dining room and a small little kitchen. Anyway that was good already. That was wonderful. Then my husband took the downstairs for the work.

Nobody helped him. We helped ourselves. He just, he started with just, with nothing. And we struggled there you know when we opened the tailor shop. We used to charge fifty cents for cuffing a pair of pants. Now you go

straight but years ago you had to cuff -- put a cuff on it like that you see? Look. Fifty cents. And, a man came in -- the first customer came in and I was so delighted. We have fifty cents. And that man he said, "I'm going, and coming back and I'll pick it up." I mean he picked up, he didn't have the money but he never told us that. He was working in the corner store. And I never got his fifty cents until this day. Because he didn't have anything either.

You know nobody had money. It's only what they call the business people who were on Water Street they still -- get around but the poorer people -- especially we were here just newcomers you know? Just a couple of years.

And we have two girls, and paid her five dollars a week, then. You can imagine. Five dollars a week and everything. But anyway. Then he got sick he was six, he was -- eight months, in the hospital. It was very hard. I didn't have, you wouldn't believe, I didn't have a, whatever a half a quart of milk was, whatever a pint of milk I didn't have for the children. Couldn't get anything.

And I mean the Second World War -- then, the place brightened up a little bit you know. Then we went in Confederation. You see? In 1949. When I was here, right? Yeah. All this time we struggled even then we struggled. It was very hard.

[Most of the other Jews who came here, who started out peddling, opened up stores on Water Street.]

Yes, of course they did but my husband wasn't as fussy. He wasn't a businessman, he didn't have -- the ability. He didn't have maybe the money to open it. He was just slowly and slowly -- but in the meantime he was a tailor. You see? He trained as nothing. He didn't make -- from the beginning he didn't make new clothes. Just, you know, alterations. You understand? But, my husband was a good tailor you know. Anybody come with good clothes -- you come with a suit, a hundred dollar suit. And you want to alter it, or make the shoulders into it, maybe to fit them properly, oh everybody liked his work. And then after awhile, we used to do the girls' dresses for ladies you know? All the ladies and everybody had a fitting room and, it was okay you know.

And we were doing very good because all the island, all Newfoundland, know my husband. And when my husband was dead already for five years they always ring, "Can I speak with Mr. Sidel the tailor?" You see? Because they knew 'im all. They used to send parcels to fix clothes. And wife letters and tell him what to do with everything? And, that's the way and then he sent it away and that's the way he had lots of work. And, we had our own business. It was okay you know?

And, the sign was there, they come in and -- do your work. And my husband used to put all his mind, and his strength in the work because he was very devoted to it.

But the girls -- they were running my husband left and right too. Because my husband -- he was a very quiet man, you know, like a settled one. He never raised his voice, he was a very good husband and a good father. But he was good to the girls. When we built our home on Long Pond Road, he gave the girls the upstairs what we used to live. And never charged them anything. But then they used to take advantage of him see? You know what I mean? He was a very quiet and a very good person. ----

Then I give it away to the girls. Now she got it into doing good business.

We never live in a very -- you know, throwing away money we didn't have it. We didn't go for trips like some people goes now. They used to [go] for trips and get clothes. In the States.

They used to charge then for a shirt five dollars. Friends of ours used to come -- "Mr. Sidel, will you fix me for a dollar fifty?" You see that what the Jewish people -- we didn't make a living, you know you can't make a living from our own people.

The govin, here, they're good people. You can make a good living off them. They don't care for the money that

much. They live today. Tomorrow, they'll worry about it. You know what I mean?

And anyway, that's the way -- they're easygoing, and that's why they always said that the Jewish people got lots of money. Why do they have lots of money? Jewish people are smarter. It's jealousy. Why do you think the whole world is in so much trouble? Why don't they give us Israel? Why do they fight? Look how many innocent people are dying and killing and everything else, why? What for?

I mean you don't know the Jewish history. All our holidays is from a history. For miracles. Purim. You know what Purim is? This is a history. This is miracle we have. All the Jews were supposed to be killed. You read about it? And Pesach too? Easter was coming, and we were gathering from all over our country and we had to make our bread. On the sun. That's why we got our matzoh. So the whole history is the Jewish people are always killed and always, everything.

But now, I live here among the goyim now. "How is it, how is it a Jew don't have any money?" Now with the goyim, now I got a fur coat, and I mean my husband bought it when. Well, a mink coat, but I mean I didn't buy it today. I have it for my whole -- And when I put that on, they ---- "hmmph,

you have money. You can buy me and sell me, you got lots of money." "If I had your money," she said, "I would go south somewhere." Well I said, "Let's go together," I said. "If you'll pay my way I'll go with you." I can't go like they can't go but I mean, what am I going to tell them I haven't got it. They'll give it to me?

We're not -- religious. Nobody's religious. They're good people, they're very charitable people, I'll tell you that much. Charitable right? But we're never religious.

Used to have so many men. Religious men would not stay with us. They didn't had nothing in common with us. You know what I mean? They want to keep the Shabbes, and not work and everything. We had to. We had to have the store on Shabbes open because otherwise if we don't have it open -- you don't work on Sabbath you don't work, unless you had a different kind of business you know.

Hirschl Wilansky? He was a rabbi here but he wasn't a religious man. He was a rabbi before they get one. When I came here, he was working in the store on Shabbes. He used to go to the Custom's offices. Open big boxes of goods. On Shabbes. But he wasn't the rabbi then -- but before they get a rabbi. So the rabbis -- the religious people didn't stay with us.

Do you think that we could eat meat from the butcher here? How's that? Listen -- when I came here, you think I'm gonna get from the goysishe butcher -- from the Gentiles, meat? Oh my God. We bought at Lawlor's but that's not, well that's not kosher. But when I came here, my sister-in-law Celia was alive and Esther Wilansky. Now they went and got me meat. So, they went into Lawlor the butcher. I got my dishes? And I got 'em all trayf [not kosher]. I didn't know it was not kosher. Home, where I came from Riga, I had everything. You know? Like you would have everything. You got to fix your meat. Salt it and then soak it and salt it before you put it in your saucepan to cook. But I didn't know that, and then when they got it, I couldn't afford to buy any other dishes so I'm still using the same thing.

You can be good, you don't have to be religious but be good. To me. Because I was never religious when I was home. My mother wouldn't have a glass of water here, in my house. 'Cause she was a very religious person. And, you get up in the morning, I used to say my prayers in the morning and prayers at night and prayers to go eat and prayer -- look. I don't do that now. I know who I am. And I know that God will forgive me. When you know everything, and you don't do it is well, sin, I know that. But I know all the Jewish tradition. I know exactly what, but I'm not doing it. I don't do it. It's just a easier life like

that. I put on the candles even now. I put on my candles every Friday night I'm not religious now. Just know who I am. That is what I am, you know.

I live among goyim. I am the only one Yiddishe here and all the goyim. And they're nice to me. This [is] St. Patrick's Day. They have a party downstairs. I made 'em some cookies. And they want me to come. I don't think if I'll go down maybe I will later on I don't know. It's their holiday. You know what I mean? ---- Not mine.

There're not very many left now. Some people went away, some people died out the older ones you know? And, so the community's very very small here.

And -- whenever you go into our community, you got to put your hands in the pocket and you got to pay. Pay pay pay. And we always got to give give, give give give you know I give whatever I can. 'Cause it's very important to give.

When I first came I couldn't even afford to belong to our congregation. You got to pay. And that synagogue we built -- all the members had to pledge. My husband pledged I think that time five hundred dollars. We didn't had too much believe me we tried to spare from ourselves, and gave it to them. 'Cause you can't make yourself lower than anybody.

You see in our congregation, I'm going to tell you. They're wonderful people. They're very nice. And they're very charitable. But you see if you got a store, and you go for trips, a big something, I got to have the same one. If you give a hundred dollars, I got to give two hundred. "You haven't got it? You have got it," you know? See we all got to give alike. My husband had to pay at that time, three hundred dollars a year then. Now they pay six hundred dollars a year. Because we got to keep up a rabbi. We give him a home. And -- we got a nice synagogue. -- Well I'm gonna tell you. When you come into our shul or be a member in our shul it got to cost you money. But what can we do? It's a small congregation. And, if you don't pay, well see we can't keep up the shul.

I hope to God we'll keep it up. We got to keep it 'cause it's a beautiful -- if we can't keep up the shul, you know the government will take it away. You know what I mean so we got to keep the best way we know how. We got to pay for the cemetery. If you don't, they won't bury you there.

You know the people who were there when I came, they're not here now. We mixed together. They were nice people. Yeah. But you see the way the younger girls are now. They also got children married already. But you see, they keep together, to themselves. You know my phone never rings. Only if they want something you know. "Mrs. Sidel, we're

having a bake sale, you got to bake this or that." You know? Okay? Or, "We're having a meeting." Now sometimes I get a card. Seven people is a meeting? We used to have twenty. ----

The people are nice. I got nothing against the people you know. But years ago, used to make parties for instance. You make up a bridge. I used to make a table of bridge. I had a big home. I make up a bridge? That was the good time you know? I'm not talking about the bad. And I make a poker? They used to play poker? Sometimes they play forty-five, you know? This is a Newfoundland game. Or gin. Or -- you know other games. So I used to take one week next time somebody else, and -- "You come to me, this week, I'll come to you the next week." You know what I mean? We used to go to a movie. -- Now, we don't do nothing. ---- You know?

I got a few friends. I know -- Mrs. Levitz. And my sister-in-law that's the only thing. We don't go to each other's house at all. There's no such a style anymore, you know? Before, yes. One came from Poland, another come from -- I come from Latvia, this one come from, you know, from Russia. We were all together like. And now everybody's hidden away like you don't -- see each other. There is months I don't see the people. Unless we got a meeting.

You know, then we got, from University, the other people the younger ones. Sometime they get in touch, they come to see the shul, they come in. And they get 'em in maybe to the house but nobody comes to me because I got a small little apartment. And I mean I can't have a crowd you know. But I can get 'em a nice cup of tea if they wanted one. But they don't come. And I don't bother them and -- no such thing, no more style, to "I'll call you, you call me." No such a thing. No more. That's it. Well that's life now. But that is a good life you know, and it's okay this is a nice place to live.

In 1967, my husband died. He just died suddenly and he was working the whole day. And he came home -- with a headache. And next morning, a couple hours and he's gone. He had a stroke. He was sixty-seven years old. And it's fourteen years I had yahrzeit [anniversary of a death]. You know what yahrzeit is don't you?

When my husband died, I tried to keep the shop together, and the girls. Work together of course you know. But, they put me right through the wall. Get a half dozen girls to work for us, and then, when the week was coming to an end, I didn't have nothing for myself I had to pay out the money. So it wasn't paying me see? Then I wanted to sell.

We built a home on Long Pond Road then. We paid off two mortgages. That's why we worked so hard. And when the house was all ready, we lived there for a nice while. And -- then my husband was going to retire then. We didn't have too much money but we could make out you know the children are married. -- And so he got to die. So he died, that's it. He didn't had to but that's the way it just goes, life. That's life I suppose, you know. And I'm still missing him, more than ever because I'm here alone. -- That's it. You know? And this is the whole, not the whole story but you can, you can write a couple of books from it.

CYRIL BANIKHIN

My father, his name was Froim Banikhin. And he was born in Gaisen Pdolsky Guberny. That's in the Ukrainian area. It's in the Ukraine. Russia. Now he was born October 20th, 1888. And he died in St. John's on May 30th, 1970. He was eighty-two years old.

He emigrated to Canada in 1907. I think Saint John, New Brunswick. Yes. I believe Saint John, New Brunswick. He was partners there with an individual who came from the same region as my father did. And his name was Mayer, who later went to the States and became Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. They ran a sort of nickelodeon there or something or -- a movie thing. Silent movies. Then they split up and Dad went his way and Mayer went his way.

Interesting though these types. Gershwin is a relative of my father. They were called "Gershwin" when they first came over. George Gershwin, Ira Gershwin and, you know. Jewish people always seem to dig up these relatives from somewhere [laughs] you know. But they came from (the same region around Gaisen.

[Dad] came to Newfoundland in 1917. And he brought his mother and brother and sister to Newfoundland in 1925. And that was the end of it. All our people were wiped out.

His mother's name was Clara Monastersky then. And she died in St. John's, in 1927. Seventy-two years of age. And she was born in Russia, in 1854. She died two years before I was born. I was born in 1929. I wasn't told anything about her, you know. My sister remembers her. Very faintly. I think Grandmother was very religious. So I don't know. Perhaps that had an influence on her youngest son, David.

And what can I tell you about him. He was born in Russia, in 1900. Now the brother, Dave Banikhin, he moved into the interior of Newfoundland and started a dry goods business there. Deer Lake. And, gradually, the business expanded into Stephenville and -- Anyway, he lived in central Newfoundland for approximately thirty-five years. And he died in Montreal in 1961. And he had four children, two girls, and two boys. And they've all moved away. He was more religious than my father. He was the youngest. He was the baby of the family and -- I think he was more inclined that way. So, that was his story.

And his sister moved immediately to Montreal. So she had no history really in Newfoundland.

My mother died in Halifax. In September of 1980. And she was born in Montreal. On January 5th, 1895. And, her mother's name was Heft. Her maiden name was Lusher. There wasn't a close relationship with my mother and her family.

They came from the States. But they were a religious grouping.

Well first of all, my father came to Newfoundland because primarily he was a shipowner. He had three ocean-going steamers. You see when he first immigrated to Canada, he went to work in the Northwest Territories with CP Railways. As a foreman. When they were constructing the northern lines. Because he could speak seven or eight European languages. He'd worked all through Europe. Before coming to Canada. And, there was a lot of immigrant workers on the line and of course they needed these types who could speak the language to boss them around.

Then he went into the fur trade. In the Northwest Territories. And, somehow or other, he got into other types of business and he moved into Montreal where he met my mother. My mother's mother came from New York City. And, her father -- was Polish, I believe. Anyway, he married in Montreal. And, he got into the shipping business somehow. And that's how he wound up in Newfoundland.

And he later became a fish merchant. He was in the hide and metal business. He was a manufacturer. He owned a tannery here. At one point. And it gradually grew into a fairly large fish firm. And he had, at one point, about eighteen establishments spread around the province, around

the island, and in Labrador. Herring fishery was his primary business. He pioneered the Scottish herring fishery in Labrador in the thirties. He was quite a world trader and he was into various things. But that's why he came to Newfoundland.

Now, you say what is it like as a Jew, growing up in Newfoundland? May I ask you, are you Jewish yourself or not? [Yes, but not practicing.] You are. Well okay. No. I was not either. But I ask this because you'd have a feel for what I'm about to say.

I didn't know what it was to be a Jew to grow up in Newfoundland. There were no -- animosities. There were no -- racial feelings here. That I could discern as a youngster. I didn't know what it was to be a Jew until I got much older. ---- If you know what I mean.

We weren't closely associated with the Jewish community. My father was a Reform Jew. And on the whole, the people here were mostly Polish -- Jews. Polish extraction. And very religious types and, we weren't that way. So, I didn't have an association with the Jewish community as such. Not that we were above it or different but -- we just didn't. That's all. I don't know what the history was with my father and the Jewish community. You know, and -- God knows what may have transacted in those days. Right or

wrong I think, some of the people, some of the types, felt they were a little, like a cut above -- others perhaps? Intellectually and philosophically and whatever. My father was -- a great thinker. And there was no two ways about that. A very great thinker.

[Was he friendly with Perlin?]

Oh yes. They were very close. Very close indeed. In fact I remember being dragged down there when I was about four or five, six, years of age, and shoved in the corner in the office and the two of them, sat to, and talked for hours and hours and hours. And, I remember, as an impatient child sitting there. All that time. But, they were very very close friends indeed. Oh, my father and old man Perlin were great friends. Were so for years and years. ---- Now I don't remember other Jewish people being there. Just my father. And, me being dragged there and shoved in the corner and -- that sort of thing.


There were many I suppose of my -- type around. I don't know. Dr. Miller he died recently. He's one I can think of like that. [You mean sort of peripheral characters?] Yeah, yeah. Albert Perlin was a peripheral character. And ---- you probably know something of his background. So Albert was much the same way. I'm not putting myself in Albert's class mind you. [laughs] Don't get me wrong. He was a brilliant man, Albert. ---- But I guess that's because of his father again. His father's leanings.

But --- I suppose at times, I might have been a little conscious of the fact that I was Jewish, growing up in St. John's, but not to any great extent.

I remember, a close friend of mine, as a kid, Doug Wilansky. I think he's a doctor in Montreal now. Well, Doug was my childhood friend. You know. In my age group. Yeah, I remember that on Saturday, his mother would give me the money to take Doug to the movies. Which wasn't exactly right either. We shouldn't have been going to the movies.

Well I don't think it meant that much to us as kids. We just didn't give a damn you know, we just went on our -- whatever the folks wanted, whatever his parents wanted, that's what they got. And whatever my parents wanted, that's what they got. Unfortunately, you know, this is what happens. See Doug went his way and I went my way, and we never discussed these things. Afterwards you know. In those days, who discussed feelings, you know. You did what you did, and that was it. ---- But I was never really conscious of the fact of being something different. Or being outside, or -- Never. It wasn't like Montreal or New York City or Toronto you know.

My mother grew up in Montreal which was a different situation. 'Cause her father was Polish. Oh yes. Very religious. Very Orthodox. She went right along with my father. ---- And I don't know why my father wasn't. He

spoke and wrote Hebrew, Yiddish. He spoke as I say, six or seven, or whatever, European languages. And why he ~~wasn't~~ religious I don't know. ---- He was more a humanist I think. Very much a humanist in fact. ---- Of a philosophical persuasion if you know what I mean. I could tell you some stories. A very interesting story in fact. 

Some years ago, when I became Deputy Minister of Labour, I got a call from the Secretary of Cabinet who at that time was doing some research for the Premier. The Premier was interested in the fact that International Pulp and Paper wanted to buy Labrador from the Commission of Government way back in the 1930's. And he wanted the Secretary of Cabinet to do some research into that. He wanted to know why did they have these interests.

And I think at the time they offered a fabulous sum to the Commission of Government to buy Labrador. And they almost sold Labrador. Because, in those times, things were economically difficult. And the government was on the verge of bankruptcy. And, the thirties were hard times everywhere. And, Labrador wasn't considered very valuable. So -- this is an interesting side thing, you know?

So, Dad had a lot of experience with Labrador because he had sold pit props to Germany. Now, these are timbers they use in mines. In the coal mines, or, whatever. In iron

mines in Germany. And, the wood there was just the right size for that so --

They had a lot of dealings with German sea captains. And they brought in some ore samples from the Grand Falls region which was later to become the Churchill Falls. In the Lake Melville area. They were sailing right up to the very end of the Lake Melville area. And they had a lot of contact with the natives and so forth and prospectors and what not. And they brought some of these ore samples in to my father. And Dad took these samples into the States with him. For assay. And they were very very rich in ore.

But they said to my father at the time, "Why? ---- Why do we want to go into the hinterland to look for that kind of mineral when we have the Great Mesabi Range?" If I remember correctly, the open pit mining in the States. "We can get all the ore we want, you know, for comparatively little. Nothing as to what it would cost to go into Labrador to get it."

But that was before the world war, and before all this metal went to the bottom of the sea. Tanks and God knows what. And wastage and before women started using canned goods in their houses. So, ore wasn't in great demand, as it was in later years.

So my father knew quite a bit about the Labrador region and about the power potential and so forth. So -- he was a

great friend of one of the Commission of Government, Sir John Hope Simpson. We lost our Responsible Government and the British government set up a Commission of Government. And they sent out Commissioners from England. So we had a number of English Commissioners, a number of local Commissioners and so forth governing our country.

And one day talking in his office, Sir John said to my father, he said, "Mr. Banikhin," he says, ---- "the Jews of Newfoundland must think terribly of me. They must hate me." And Dad was rather surprised and he said, "Sir John, what do you mean?" He said, "Oh," he says, "the Jewish people," he said, "must think very ill of me." He says, "Look. For all I know, Sir John, they don't even know you exist." You know. And, he said, "Well I was co-author of the White Paper on Palestine, which forbade the Jewish people from immigrating into Palestine." He says, "We did it at the time," he says. "We thought we were right because we --" And he was a very high, English civil servant at the time and he was very much involved in the Foreign Office affairs in Palestine and so forth. For the British government. And he said that, "Well, we thought that the land couldn't hold anymore people. It was just desert and, we figured, we'd have a catastrophe on our hands if we let the Jewish immigrants go there because of their religious philosophy. You know, everybody wants to go there and," he

said, "we'd have a terrible influx of people and we wouldn't be able to -- the country couldn't stand it. So we thought we were doing the right thing." So he says, "Sir John," he says, "I don't think the Jewish people here realized -- or, they don't realize certainly they don't realize your connection, with Palestine."

So, Dad gave this a lot of thought. Anyway, Dad was a very -- far-seeing man and, a great thinker as I said before. So he came up with a proposition to the Commission of Government. He said, "Look," he says that, "war clouds," he says, "the clouds are darkening. Over Europe. Now," he says -- this was in the thirties -- this was 1932 or '33, and he says, "there's going to be a great catastrophe." And, he says, "Right now, Jewish people are being precluded from -- different things. They're being excluded. They're being -- suppressed. And," he says, "I think that the time will come when there will be -- mayhem. Now," he says, "we have ---- people there of all walks," he says. "We have professional people. We have doctors, we have lawyers, we have engineers, we have architects, we have carpenters. You name it, the Jewish people have it. And they have no place to go, as you pointed out where Palestine was concerned." This is a letter to Sir John. And ---- then he described Labrador.

Now I don't know if you know the history of suggestions that have been made concerning the emigration of the Jewish people. To get them out of Europe and a lot of far-seeing people wanted to get them to various places in the world, but the Jewish people just wouldn't go. They wanted Palestine or nothing. You know. But there were places set aside for them by the British government and so on, but that was an insult to the Jewish people. And, understandably so.

But Dad pointed out to the Commission of Government, he says, "We have a vast country there of huge wealth. Timber resources and power resources, the water resources of the Grand Falls," he says, "is just unbelievable."

Now, Dad knew these things long before the idea of Churchill Falls ever came to life. Now you know about Churchill Falls, the great power -- thing there. And, the great iron ore mines there now. The greatest in the world. And, so he said, "You know, the mineral wealth there is tremendous." Says, "Why not turn that over to the Jewish people. Don't give it to the Jewish people. But let the Jewish people come in there and let them develop it. You won't need to finance them. They'll have their own finances." So Sir John thought that this was a great idea. And my father said, "Look. There'll be countless lives saved. If you do this."

So, this is how, in the research, that the Secretary to the Cabinet came back to me. He said, "Cyril, I found these letters." And he said, "This was finally sent to Ten Downing Street." And, the British government liked the idea. So they said, "Well, what should we do? Yes, this is a great idea. Tremendous idea." So they came back, to the government of Newfoundland and said, "Proceed." So they came back to my father and said, "Okay. How shall we proceed?"

So he thought well the best thing we should do is go speak to the Zionist organizations in New York City, the headquarters for the raising of funds and for getting the Jewish people into Palestine and all this sort of stuff. So, one of the Commissioners or one of the high officials -- I don't know who it was, I was very young at the time. Very young indeed. I was only four years old. But I remember the talk around the house in later years as to what transpired, -- And, they went to New York. To see what they could do. To garner some interest in it. ---- And they were gonna kill my father. They were gonna throw him overboard. They accused him of being a traitor to the Jewish people and all -- to think that he would suggest such a thing. 'Cause all these people were making a living from this, from the Zionist movement in New York and -- no. They weren't gonna deviate from this at all.

So, my father came back a very disheartened and discouraged man. And he just forgot the whole issue.

But that's the kind of person he was. So I just thought I'd throw that in for what it was worth. So, there is foresight for you. Imagination. And, my father said at the time, in his communication with the Commission of Government, that the British were gonna have all kinds of problems in Palestine. At that time. With the Arabs. And with -- God knows sort of thing. 'Cause his father had served in the Russian army, fighting the Turkish, the Ottoman Empire. And so he knew a bit of the history of the region. But he predicted all this. He predicted what would happen. And sure enough, he predicted what would happen to the Jewish people in Europe.

And, what a glorious thing that would have been for the Jewish people. And look what they would have done. Look what they did to a desert. What would they have done in Labrador?

[Did he ever propose that to the Jewish community in Newfoundland?]

I don't know. I don't know. Maybe this is why he wasn't so close to them anymore. Maybe this was the falling out he may have had. I don't know.

I think, more than anything else, he'd seen so much suffering where he came from. Pogroms and -- God knows what. I remember my Uncle David speaking about that sort of thing before they came over. Dad was here first as you know and then when he made well, he sent the money over and brought his -- rest of his family over but they had suffered quite a bit and, Grandfather had been killed in one of the pogroms. ---- So, it wasn't a very peaceful area they came from, as you probably well know. And I suppose that was really part of his -- lifestyle he was going to -- make it different. For himself and for his children. Especially for his children.

I remember him telling me that his mother was very upset when she heard that he was going to Canada, going to immigrate to Canada, and she said he'd become a goy and -- whether she was right I don't know. He told me that. Years and years and years ago. ---- One of the very few discussions we had about that sort of thing.

And I wound up marrying a Gentile girl and I'm quite happy and -- not that I turned against my heritage in any way. Just the way it was. Very conscious of the fact that I was Jewish, of my Jewish heritage. Not conscious of the fact that I was Jewish -- streetwise, that way. But of my heritage 'cause my father was very strong on that. We're

Kohens. The name, Banikhin, is Hebrew. [Pronounces as "Ben-i-kohen."] "Ben-i-kohen," which means "son of a priest." So, we're of the priestly tribes. [laughs] Whatever. But, you know, very conscious of my heritage that way. And, other than that, no.

A That's why I asked if you were Jewish 'cause you'd understand -- what I'm -- saying. I can't speak Yiddish. Or Hebrew. I never had that exposure. -- I feel awfully guilty for it. At times. -- I do. At times. I wish I had -- I don't know. I just -- feel sort of left out of things. ---- When I'm mixing with Jewish people, I'd like to be able to ---- I feel like an outsider looking in. At times. -- But I don't deny the fact that I'm Jewish. Don't deny it in any way. You know. I'm very proud of the fact.

It's funny, there's a sort of -- peculiar type of isolation you know? Like my wife is a beautiful Jewish cook. She's learned everything from my mother. You know, the borscht, the knedlich ---- and the mandel bread. She makes it all she does, it. So it's funny. It's like The Egg and I sort of situation you know? But I feel Jewish. Through a sense of heritage if you like but -- it's hard to explain. [laughs]

I often wonder why the heck Dad came here. Although he loved Newfoundland. He really did love this part of the

world because he had to get the freedom he wanted. Freedom of expression. Freedom of doing what he wanted to do. ---- And I suppose after his travels and what he had seen, this was an ideal place. To live. The climate is not all that bad you know, it's moderate. The winters aren't all that cold. And the summers aren't all that hot, you know. And if you travel a little bit, you can get out and come back and -- So, it is an ideal place to live if you want to look at it from that point of view. But as a kid growing up here I couldn't get out of here fast enough.

I did all my schooling here. Locally. But I did travel. Quite a bit. 'Cause I joined my father's business as a youngster and, you know, we were marketing all over the world. So ----

But I stayed here. My roots are here. I'm a Newfoundlander. That's it. We have four children, and all of our children are living in Calgary. They're all doing well. But they all left Newfoundland.

There's been a complete turnover of Jewish people here. You know. Different names entirely. They appear on the scene and suddenly disappear. I imagine it's always been the same, and -- it will always be the same here, until we become more sophisticated perhaps and become larger and the oil thing gets off here. Then, things'll change.

I suppose we're a microcosm of what you'll find anywhere in North America. Even where you come from. I don't think we're so terribly different.



