

A HERITAGE PORTRAYED: NATIONALIST
THEATRE IN NEWFOUNDLAND,
1972-1982

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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A HERITAGE PORTRAYED: NATIONALIST THEATRE

IN NEWFOUNDLAND, 1972 - 1982

by



Janice Ann Drodge, B.A.

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

Memorial University of Newfoundland

August 1982

St. John's

Newfoundland

ABSTRACT

This thesis concerns the ethnic and nationalist dimensions of alternate theatre in Newfoundland. More specifically, it deals with the strategies by which elements of nationalism and ethnicity (or ethnic identity) are incorporated and transmitted via the medium of theatre.

The analysis focuses on three St. John's-based theatre companies, namely; The Mummers Troupe, Codco, and Rising Tide Theatre, and covers the time period from 1972 to the present. These groups have been among the most visible and active "conveyors" of ethnic and nationalist sentiments in Newfoundland, to an audience that frequently includes a mainland in addition to a significant local contingent.

The development of nationalist theatre is examined within the context of the wider "cultural renaissance" commencing in the 1960's, and which resulted in a renewal of emphasis on indigenous and traditional forms of cultural expression such as music, crafts and literature. The socio-economic and cultural roots of both phenomena are investigated in historic and contemporary terms. It is concluded that nationalist theatre evolved in response and in reaction to the perceived loss of cultural pride and identity, and the erosion of traditional values and forms following Newfoundland's union with Canada in 1949.

As it is the nature of theatre to not only provide entertainment, but to also reflect a society's face to itself in a very immediate and compelling way, it represents a type of artistic expression particularly suited to the above form of inquiry. This is all the more so when the dramatic works themselves convey perspectives and themes indigenous and often unique to their own society and time. In Newfoundland theatre, this is demonstrated in both the dominant and recurring themes found within the plays of the Mummers Troupe, Codco, and Rising Tide Theatre, and in the stated motivations and philosophies of the actors themselves..

The identity expressed in nationalist theatre is described as an ethnic one and nationalism is interpreted as a response to threatened identity as well as a means by which to re-assert the "sense of peoplehood" or "uniqueness" that distinguishes Newfoundlanders from other Canadians.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the many individuals who contributed towards the completion of this thesis. I am especially indebted to those members of the Mummers Troupe, Codco, and Rising Tide Theatre who gave so freely of their time and ideas, and to the other members of the local artistic community whose willing assistance and suggestions proved invaluable to the research. A special thanks to the Resource Centre for the Arts and the LSPU Hall for providing me with both the place and the opportunity for much of my fieldwork.

Sincerest appreciation is extended to my supervisor, Dr. Gordon Inglis, for the unrelenting patience and encouragement displayed throughout all stages of the work. I would also like to express my gratitude to those other instructors and graduate students in the Department of Anthropology for their continuing support and helpful criticism, and to Valerie Ryan for typing the final manuscript.

To my husband, Glenn, my appreciation for his unflinching encouragement and understanding, cannot adequately be expressed. Finally, to my parents, whose enduring faith in me, as a student and otherwise, sustained me throughout. To them, this thesis is dedicated.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE CULTURAL RENAISSANCE

During the 1970's Newfoundland experienced what has been labeled by at least one observer as, a "cultural renaissance" (Gwyn 1976). The term refers to a rather diverse profusion of cultural and social phenomena signalling a renewed interest in, and re-discovery of, many aspects of the province's cultural heritage. This "New Culture Movement" (House 1978) has its visible beginnings in the late 1960's - although its roots extend back considerably further than this - and continues in various forms to the present day under the "direction" of a large and varied body of people, both native and non-native to Newfoundland.¹ The "re-discovery" of and re-emphasis on numerous aspects of Newfoundland's traditional cultural heritage and character has been widely adopted by all manner of individuals, from politicians to poets; from academics to artists.

The renaissance is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon and finds expression as well in the activities of scholars and the various intellectual concerns they represent. The Sociology and Anthropology Departments, Memorial University Extension Services, and the Department of Folklore at Memorial University have all been actively engaged in projects and research concerning the particular

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and traditional nature of Newfoundland society, most especially during the last decade. In addition, this growing emphasis on Newfoundland's culture and history, together with the related concern for the province's social and economic destiny in the face of contemporary developments within these sectors, has resulted in an increasing awareness among its people concerning who they are and what directions they perceive for Newfoundland in the future. These concerns are reflected in the current nationalist rhetoric of the province's politicians and leaders, as well as in the separatist and anti-confederate sentiments that appear to be shared by a great many of the general populace itself. Sentiments such as these are especially prominent in the provincial government's negotiations with Ottawa over offshore oil and gas development and in the continuing debate with Quebec regarding the issue of hydro-electric power in Labrador - two examples where a "Newfoundland first" attitude has become increasingly popular with respect to the control and ownership of these resources.

The arts have provided perhaps the most visible showcase for the creation and display of indigenous energies and talents, and the literature, music, crafts, painting, and theatre of the last decade or so, have been particularly influenced by the resurgence of interest in the province's past and the present realities which mirror

it. In fact, we have witnessed a great "efflorescence" in the arts in Newfoundland, in terms of both variety and the number of individuals involved in their creative as well as promotional aspects.

A "pro-Newfoundland" attitude is evident in the comparatively recent popularity of writings by local authors, poets and humourists such as Harold Horwood, Al Pittman, Ray Guy, Ted Russell, Al Clouston, and even the "Newfie Joke Book" series by Bob Tulk. The emergence of local publishing companies such as Breakwater Books and Jespersen Press--both of which publish a variety of materials from school texts and novels to books of poetry and recipe collections, all having strong folkloric content and character--is another indication of the popularity and demand for works of Newfoundland origin and orientation. One of the major areas wherein this "new ethnicity" has found expression is the visual and performing arts, which increasingly have focused on the Newfoundland cultural experience as a source of inspiration and creative expression. Accordingly we have painters such as sea and landscape artist, Gerald Squires, and David Blackwood (best known for his series on the historic seal hunt), and musical groups such as Figgy Duff and the Wonderful Grand Band (who combine elements of traditional, folk, and rock music in their repertoires); all of which are dedicated to the preservation and contemporary depiction of selected

elements of the province's cultural heritage through their different artistic media. The proliferation of folk festivals, crafts fairs, and theatrical festivals throughout Newfoundland during the last few years also attests to the widespread renewal of interest in the region's indigenous cultural character and the popularity of activities celebrating that heritage.

As diverse as these various expressions of the cultural renaissance may be--from the arts to politics, from nostalgia to nationalist fervor--they are all traceable to the same basic roots and have in fact been inspired by the same processes of modernization, industrialization, and urbanization affecting other developing areas of the world. This is especially true for Newfoundland since confederation with Canada in 1949, when these processes were initiated and accelerated at extremely rapid rates in comparison to previous social and economic developments.

In many respects Newfoundland is comparable to "third world" countries in terms of its long history of dominance and exploitation in the hands of a colonial power. Even at present many aspects of its cultural and economic fate continue to be overwhelmingly controlled by non-indigenous sources. The cultural renaissance reflects a desire on the part of many Newfoundlanders to preserve and enhance a cultural identity and dignity felt to be eroded

and threatened by such outside forces - most significantly in the form of mainland Canadian and American influences.

In this way it mirrors similar ethnic and cultural "revival" movements occurring in other parts of the world throughout the last century. Hence the Newfoundland example is certainly not a unique or isolated occurrence; nonetheless its specific form and internal dynamics do reflect a unique set of circumstances peculiar to the province's historical and cultural character.

Despite the many important political and social changes that have occurred since Newfoundland's union with Canada however, it remains clear that, in strictly economic terms, relatively little has changed since 1949. Much of the province's contemporary socio-economic status continues to be overwhelmingly controlled and influenced by the greater North American model. It is only fairly recently in fact, that pleas for more self-determination in Newfoundland's political and economic spheres and for more locally-directed development of its natural resources have been expressed in any widespread or powerful manner. This "dependency syndrome" - as Newfoundland's economic relationship with Ottawa has frequently been called - along with the associated wholesale adoption of Mainland styles and values after Confederation, resulted for many years in a decline and stagnation in the more locally relevant forms of economic management and growth as well as in the more indigenous

forms of cultural expression. With reference to the latter process, a particularly sensitive comment has been made by local poet and writer Al Bittman regarding his personal experience of the period prior to and following the cultural renaissance:

...Those were sad years [i.e., the 1940's and 1950's]. Sad because so many Newfoundlanders had such negative opinions of themselves. They thought too often and with too much conviction that they were an inferior people exiled by history to live inferior lives on an ugly rock in the Atlantic ocean. They rejected their own music, their dances, their speech, their occupations, their customs, their history and their heritage. It is only in recent years that the trend has reversed itself. Today, you are more likely to encounter a young Newfoundlander proclaiming his origins with arrogant assurance than you are to encounter any of the apologetic attitudes so prevalent such a short time ago. The gospel in Newfoundland now is the gospel of pride and patriotism. This is perhaps more apparent in the arts than anywhere else... (1979:7)

The renaissance is not always perceived with such reverence or seriousness however, and the transformation alluded to above does contain some rather comic aspects--stemming in large part from the many contradictions and extremes inherent in all such movements. Indeed, it is difficult to comprehend the logic of a phenomenon that has even non-native Newfoundlanders vying for legitimacy as born-and-bred "haymen"² and sporting proof of their outport loyalties by adopting the styles and mannerisms of rural Newfoundland--whether this entails eating "fish and

brewis" or drinking "Dominion Beer" for example.³ One of the most wry commentaries on the effects of the cultural renaissance has been made by Ray Guy, a well known local journalist and writer of political and social satire whose insight into some of the more extreme manifestations of the current "pro-Newfoundland" movement is not only humorous, but brilliantly accurate at times as well.

...There's been a violent swing of the pendulum here from abject grovelling to aggressive strutting...A frantic search was mounted for any remaining bits and scraps of "Pure Newfoundlandia" Fiddlers and storytellers and primitive artists and even plain old salts of the earth were declared national treasures...Young professionals who'd been boarding-schooled and universitied abroad suddenly lapsed back into the broadest and most incomprehensible of outport accents and wore fishermen's sweaters to the best urban cocktail parties (1980:128).

The preceeding is included to illustrate some of the more extreme expressions the movement has fostered, and also to suggest the nature of the change in attitudes and behavior on the part of many Newfoundlanders which resulted with the renewal of interest and pride in pre-confederation and indigenous styles. Whereas, just prior to, and for a decade following Confederation it seemed that Newfoundlanders were doing their utmost to shed all traces of their centuries-old heritage in the rush to "catch up" to and emulate the mainland ideal of progress and sophistication; this trend has been significantly interrupted by the growing numbers

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of the population who have begun to doubt and question openly the appropriateness of such a model for Newfoundland. The failure of several projects initiated by the Provincial government after Confederation in an attempt to bring economic and social prosperity to Newfoundland, became a favourite target for those questioning the logic of such attempts at modernization--many of which are based on mainland models of development and took little account of the history, peculiarities, and special needs of this region (cf. Alexander 1974, Canning 1974). Perhaps the most infamous of all these schemes was the Resettlement Program (introduced in the 1960's), which resulted in the eventual abandonment of over 500 outport communities when the inhabitants were relocated to what were termed urban "growth centres."⁴ This endeavor--perhaps more so than any other single undertaking of the Smallwood administration--resulted in a considerable amount of criticism and opposition from a great many politicians, social scientists, writers and artists in later years. According to Gwyn (1976), it was the needless destruction of much of Newfoundland's heritage through this program, and the feelings of "frustration," "loss" and "betrayal" that resulted on the part of many Newfoundlanders, that lead to the occurrence of a cultural renaissance in this province. Doubtless the cultural renaissance, and the change in attitudes it encouraged was aided in no small part by the strong sense of regional distinctiveness and the powerful attachment Newfoundlanders

have historically shared for their province; an identity fostered by geography and history and one which appears-- somewhat paradoxically--to be stronger today, thirty years after Confederation, than at any time in the past.

In much of the Newfoundland response to federal provincial relations, there is an underlying sense of "we" and "they." While apparently content, even eager, to submerge themselves in the greater entity of Canada for the resulting economic benefits, there exists simultaneously a marked inability on the part of most Newfoundlanders to perceive themselves as integral parts of Canada in any real emotional sense. (O'Brien 1979:284)

The cultural renaissance would seem to be the outcome of a rather diverse set of political, social, and economic circumstances; most particularly those changes which occurred in Newfoundland since Confederation. Its manifestations are likewise varied, however it is my intention to focus specifically on one limited aspect of the phenomenon; namely, local theatre. The remainder of this thesis is concerned with Newfoundland theatre of the style exemplifying the cultural renaissance--i.e., a pro-Newfoundland or nationalist ideology, and a commitment to that which is indigenous and/or unique to Newfoundland as a source of dramatic portrayal. The theatre companies examined within this context are the Mummerys Troupe (established in 1972), Codco (established in 1973) and the Rising Tide Theatre Company (established in 1978). My objective is to show the relationship between the contemporary

sociocultural reality of Newfoundland and the growth of professional theatre in St. John's: an occurrence that was both a response to and a result of, the renaissance, as well as in many ways, a director and moulder of it.

Alternate Theatre in St. John's

Having felt the economic benefits of the link with Canada for a quarter of a century, the feeling is afoot that we have paid too heavy a price culturally for our full bellies. That feeling will probably have little effect in slowing down the relentless purge of the province towards the pleasures of the North American way of life; but it is nonetheless there, nibbling at the consciences of politicians, unsettling writers and artists, and to some degree unnerving the whole population. (O'Flaherty 1974:28).

It is crucial that we as Newfoundlanders accept ourselves and our heritage, and take pride in these things before we are swept up completely in the blandness of North American life. The theatre must take a certain responsibility in this respect -- it has to if it wants to be relevant at all. (Member, Mummers Troupe: July 1980).

One of the most significant dimensions of the cultural renaissance was the development of several professional theatre companies in St. John's. Like many other aspects of the artistic efflorescence in Newfoundland, this was also largely a phenomenon of urban, "middle class" origins, but one which drew heavily on rural inspirations and sympathies for much of its creative impetus. These

companies, and the drama they produced mirrored the concerns for Newfoundland's heritage and distinct culture that were accentuated by the artistic renaissance and the nationalist or "pro-Newfoundland" ideology that accompanied it. They have relied strongly on the rural and traditional character of this province and its people as their main sources of dramatic inspiration and expression. The dedication to that which is unique and/or indigenous to Newfoundland continues in the contemporary productions of these companies.

Generally speaking then, the productions of theatre companies such as the Mummers Troupe, Codco, and Rising Tide reflect a concern and sympathetic attitude towards what is perceived as representing the province's indigenous outport heritage. It would be misleading to assume however, that aspects of the province's urban character are ignored entirely, as each of these companies has dealt with, in various productions, topics and situations found only in the larger centres like St. John's. Even so, the emphasis is invariably on the intrinsic, older and "working class" nature of the urban sectors - features that for the most part were "transferred" or carried from the outports anyway, or have a historic or special character of their own.⁵ Significantly, it is the more obviously cosmopolitan aspects-- i.e. those which have been borrowed and adopted from other Twentieth-century models elsewhere in the industrial world-- of the province's towns and cities that are the

favourite targets of criticism and mockery in the plays of these companies.

With the establishment of the Mummers Troupe in 1972, we see for the first time in Newfoundland a theatre company devoted exclusively to the presentation of real events, characters and situations from the province's history in a dramatic format. The repertoire of the Mummers, and later of Codco and Rising Tide as well, consists almost entirely of shows built around the history and culture of Newfoundland. These companies have been the first to explore critically and in depth many of the largely ignored, forgotten, or little known areas of Newfoundland's heritage, and have succeeded in creating both highly entertaining and relevant dramas about them. This represents their most original theatrical achievement, and the one which accounts largely for their popular appeal and continued success over the years. Of particular significance as well, is the fact that the productions of these three companies reflect, in various ways, the nationalist mood of the cultural renaissance and are intended to evoke feelings of pride and a heightened appreciation of the cultural heritage from the audiences present. A local review of a Rising Tide play illustrates these last points especially well.

The concept of theatre that Rising Tide represents is an extremely important one...because they are holding a mirror up to ourselves. They are attempting to reproduce on stage, through the creative medium of the theatre, Newfoundland's culture and heritage - its past, present, and future. This can be very effective, both in informing people in an entertaining way and in motivating people to action. A group such as Rising Tide offers us an opportunity to see ourselves. They offer us material that is familiar and topical. It is something we can identify with, and in that identification, see our intrinsic worth (The Newfoundland Herald: Nov. 6, 1979).

Before proceeding further it is necessary to offer some explanatory comments regarding the nature of "alternate theatre." My use of the term is due to two specific reasons. Firstly it is a label suggestive of a change in direction and style from previous theatrical developments in St. John's and implies an original and innovative dramatic venture. Secondly, the expression "alternate"--within the context of the arts in particular--connotes a kind of activity which is perceived of as "radical," "political" or even "leftist" in its orientation. With varying degrees of applicability, these terms describe the type of theatre that I will be dealing with here.

In the area of theatrical technique or method, the Mimmers Troupe, Codco, and Rising Tide have been innovators as well. Due to their commitment to locally meaningful and indigenous material, they have abstained completely from the common theatrical tradition of exclusively performing

"established" or scripted plays so popular with most other professional theatre companies here and elsewhere. This choice necessitated the development of collectively conceived and written dramas, which rely greatly on extensive research, improvisation, and the original contributions of all company members in the creation of a final product for staging. Hence the scripts of such productions are usually not permanently recorded at all, as the technique of collective collaboration allows for numerous changes and revisions in any specific play throughout both its creative and performance stages. Because of these factors, the productions of one company are rarely performed by any other group.

This technique has distinguished groups like Codco, the Mummers and Rising Tide from other professional theatre companies over the years and earned them the reputation of being "collectives." Recently however, two of the companies concerned have performed scripted plays written by Newfoundland playwrights,⁶ a trend which reflects the growing availability of good local scripts as much as anything else (another outgrowth of the cultural renaissance). Even so, the companies have continued to make their own modifications in the scripted format in an effort to enact an original production of the chosen play. Furthermore, the nature of the drama itself has remained essentially unchanged from that of the collective format in terms of

subject and tone. In any event, all three companies have continued--or expressed a desire to - produce plays collectively, without straying from their mandate to create plays "which speak directly" to a Newfoundland audience.

I really can't see us doing Shakespeare for example - not in any serious way at least. We would have to approach it satirically or introduce a local version to make it more meaningful to this audience. That was his [i.e. Shakespeare's] intent after all, when he wrote for his audience and his time... There's already too much of this 'high art' crap around anyway. (Member, Codco)

There's always a challenge in doing someone else's [i.e. a scripted] work, and I hope we'll continue to promote our own playwrights in this way. But I feel confident the collective thing will be carried on for a long time yet. I mean, there you are really a part of the creative process and there's no limit to the subject material you can tackle in doing an original play. (Member, Rising Tide)

Another theatrical "product" of the cultural renaissance which has not been mentioned thus far, is the company known as Sheila's Brush--a troupe comprised of former members of the Newfoundland Travelling Theatre Company and the musical group Figgy Duff. Although not dealt with in detail in this thesis, companies such as Sheila's Brush reflect in many ways the nationalist mood of the theatrical revival in this province and are expressions of ethnicity in their own right. Theatrically, Sheila's Brush is committed to performing plays combining elements of song, dance and theatre which are based largely

on the seasonal rituals and folkloric tales of Newfoundland's past (personal communication, Member). Several of their plays have been directed towards children such as Jaxxmas and Jack Meets the Cat, both of which have been performed in the schools. One of their recent productions was A Midsummer's Nightmare (loosely based on the Shakespearean original of A Midsummer Night's Dream). In this play the company collaborated with several members of Codco to depict a futuristic scenerio of Newfoundland many years hence, when the colonization and exploitation of the province by American commercial interests reaches extreme proportions in the wake of the anticipated oil boom. This was perhaps their most politically pointed production and represents quite a departure from their usual repertoire.

Considered as a group however, the Mummers Troupe, Codco and Rising Tide theatre companies, represents the most visible and active component of the theatrical revival in Newfoundland. These companies have much in common with one another inasmuch as the alternate genre of local theatre is described. However, they also exhibit some very important distinctive qualities as well which are especially significant with respect to the expression of ethnic and nationalist sentiments through the medium of drama. A more detailed account of each company and the features which distinguish them follows in the next chapter.

FOOTNOTES

1. Overton (1979) refers to this group of people as the "new middle class" or the "new petit bourgeoisie" in his Marxist-oriented analysis of the class basis of neonationalism in Newfoundland. His account however, neglects the important contribution and role of "outside agitators" (the so-called 'CFA' or 'Come-from-Away' element) who exercise a considerable influence on the arts and particularly those areas associated with indigenous and traditional forms. Hence their influence too on the growing expression of nationalist and "ethnic" sentiments should not be underestimated. House (1978) for example has noted:

"It seems that only by becoming aware of the larger international picture can one come to appreciate the fact that Newfoundland has a distinct cultural heritage...It is no accident then, that what I have called the new culture movement has had its main impetus from Newfoundlanders who have travelled extensively, have learned about other societies and cultures, and have returned to "discover" something unique and valuable in their own heritage. In this they have been aided by "new" Newfoundlanders, people who have come here from outside the province and have discovered a way of life that they appreciate and hope to see preserved." (p. 211)

2. "Bayman" is a local colloquialism which refers to the inhabitants of the outports or bays of Newfoundland (the rural areas). It has both positive and negative connotations depending on the context in which it is used. In the sense employed here it denotes a "purer" and "truer" form of Newfoundlander--the familiar type conjured up by images of the "hardy fishermen" or the "quaint rural folk" for example.
3. "Fish and brewis" is a local dish made from a mixture of salt cod, hard bread soaked in water ('brewis'), with or without the addition of onions and fried salt pork ('scrunchions'). It is considered by many urbanites to be the most representative of all the province's "ethnic" dishes.

3. "Dominion Beer" is a locally brewed ale which, mainly due to its advertising and promotion through the local media, has strong associations with "tradition" and rural Newfoundland.

For a similar commentary on the above see also, O'Flaherty (1974).

4. For an extended account and critique of the Resettlement Program in Newfoundland see Iverson, Noel and D. Ralph Matthews. Communities in Decline: An Examination of Household Resettlement in Newfoundland. St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1968. Also Matthews, D. Ralph, There's no Better Place than Here: Social Change in Three Newfoundland Communities. Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1976.

5. It is generally acknowledged for example, that most inhabitants of St. John's can readily trace their origins or immediate ancestry to the 'bay.' This would seem to be even truer for the newer urban centres. Thus much of the character of the urban sector owes its existence to the rural areas. See for example, Laba, (1978) in which he proposes that much of the identity of the 'townie' (i.e., inhabitant of St. John's) rests on the alternate identity as a 'bayman' and that

underlying the derisive quality of the townie's folklore in dealing with the bayman, there is a covert but decisive acknowledgement that the roots and predominant character of Newfoundland society are based in the rural, outport culture. (p. 16)

6. In November 1980, for example, the Mummers Troupe performed Al Pittman's West Moon. In December 1980 Rising Tide performed Tom Cahill's As Loved our Fathers, followed in January 1981 by Gordon Pinsent's John and the Missus.

CHAPTER TWO

THE THEATRE COMPANIES

Background

Prior to 1972 there had been several amateur and semi-professional theatrical groups based in St. John's and active primarily in the 1950's and 60's. Among these were the St. John's Players, The Memorial University Little Theatre Group, and the London Theatre Company (a local version of the London-based original which was organized in St. John's by several former members of that company). For the most part the productions of these companies showed the pervasive influence of British and American styles in theatre, with the primary emphasis on established, scripted productions of Shakespeare, Broadway musicals, English comedy and romantic drama.¹

One notable earlier exception to this general trend is to be found in the songs, poems and theatrical parodies of the late Johnny Burke (1851-1930) or "The Bard of Prescott Street"; the title by which he is most well-known locally. Burke gained considerable local distinction as the composer of such songs as "The Kelligrews Soiree" and "Trinity Cake," and published dozens of similar ballads and poems throughout his life, many of which satirized the social conventions and events of the day.

He also managed for a short time, a small theatre house wherein he produced several of his comic operas and plays, the best known of which was The Topsail Geisha--a parody of a popular British musical of the time, The Geisha. As a "community poet and social commentator," Burke was unequalled in his day both for his appeal to the common man and for his prolific writing ability (cf. Higgins 1970; Mercer 1974). Significantly, it was the Mummers Troupe that brought Burke once again to public awareness when they created a play in 1977 based on the life and times of one of the city's most colourful historic figures. This play was suitably titled The Bard of Prescott Street.

Another theatre group which was founded in 1972--but not incorporated until 1975--and which has been sporadically active since that time, goes by the name of the Newfoundland Travelling Theatre Company. This company was originally under the directorship of Dudley Cox, a university professor and amateur actor, but has had a transient membership over the years. As its name suggests, this company was particularly oriented towards touring the province with its productions, and was also perhaps the first to experiment regularly with different styles in dramatic expression and presentation, such as improvisation and performing in such non-theatrical settings as shopping centres and streets.

The Newfoundland Travelling Theatre had a quite varied repertoire for the time, ranging from performances of plays by Bertolt Brecht and Neil Simon, to ones written by local playwrights such as Tom Cahill and Michael Cook. The company deserves special mention as well, due to the fact that many of the individuals associated with it went on to form or join other theatre companies in the province after the original membership disbanded. The influence of the Newfoundland Travelling Theatre on later theatrical endeavors was pointed out to me by several informants and appears to have been quite significant.

My first involvement with touring and serious theatre was with Dudley Cox and the Newfoundland Travelling Theatre. That was a very important step for me as well as for a great many other aspiring actors at that time. From that experience we gained the courage necessary to continue with theatre here as a lot of people seemed to be very supportive of local drama and our efforts to expand. (Member, Mummers Troupe).

Although companies such as the Newfoundland Travelling Theatre and the St. John's Players periodically performed plays of special local interest and origin, it wasn't until the formation of the Mummers that a theatre company devoted itself exclusively to "the exploration of traditional Newfoundland performance forms and the production of new indigenous Newfoundland theatre material."²

The Mummers Troupe

The first of the "alternate" theatre companies to form was the Mummers Troupe, established in 1972 under the direction of Christopher Brookes. Initially the company was organized as a collective with a fairly stable membership, but is now more accurately described as an "agency" or "name" which hires actors on a freelance basis for each individual production. The Mummers Troupe is presently administered by two full-time members; Chris Brookes (Artistic Director) and Rhonda Payne (Associate Artistic Director).

Brookes, a well known local director/playwright and sometimes actor, had returned to Newfoundland in 1971 after studying theatre at Michigan and Yale in the United States and serving for a time as lecturer in dramatic arts at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia. In addition to these endeavors he had also worked with the Neptune Theatre of Halifax as well as with Toronto's Theatre Passe Muraille, an experience which was to prove especially significant with respect to the introduction of experimental theatre in this province.³ His original intentions upon returning to Newfoundland were far from theatrical, however:

I was homesick really. I wanted only to live in the country, fish and raise chickens. At that time I had no idea

regarding the potential of professional theatre in this province, nor did I quite know how to integrate my political leanings with theatre. I found it impossible--and still do--to separate the two.

Nonetheless, soon after settling in Newfoundland, he continued pursuing his theatrical interests by periodically performing a Punch and Judy puppet show in St. John's and in various places around the island. At this time Brookes also became involved with Memorial University Extension Services, who were then experimenting with various forms of community development and awareness-oriented programs in the more isolated parts of the island.⁴ The approach, with its emphasis on combining aspects of the media and the arts in community development efforts, was to prove especially influential to Brookes. This experience, combined with his personal encounter with rural Newfoundland's people and problems while touring his puppet show in 1971, helped to solidify his growing commitment to develop a theatre company reflecting and relevant to the Newfoundland experience.

I wanted to create a theatre company wherein you could earn a living and one which would also be a vehicle for community and regional development. Above all, I wanted theatre to be useful and to appeal to a much broader range of people than it traditionally did. I never had much use for this "art for art's sake" concept...

With the establishment of the Mummers Troupe, we also have the beginnings of the first locally-based, full-time professional theatre company in Newfoundland, and as well, the first to look exclusively to indigenous issues and concerns as sources for dramatic expression. Also commencing with this development, we witness the growing popular usage of such terms as "political," "radical," "socially-committed," and "relevant" in descriptions of the activities of the Mummers Troupe and those companies that were soon to follow the Mummers' lead.⁵

A strong emphasis on touring--especially the remoter parts of the province that had no previous exposure to live theatre--became an intrinsic part of the Mummers' philosophy, although financial restrictions in later years have made this increasingly difficult. Moreover, it was the techniques of collective creation and improvisation employed in the formation of their shows that marked the real turning point that local theatre was to follow from that time onwards. Working collectively and without relying on written scripts necessarily made improvisation the basis of play production by the Mummers Troupe and later by the companies that followed. Actors and directors alike drew on their own experiences and those of others, in their depictions of local characters and events on the stage.

The result was a kind of drama that actors and audience together could identify with in a profoundly personal way, since quite often it was real persons and real situations that became incorporated into a play's format-- things which were familiar to the experience or knowledge of all Newfoundlanders.

I think a very important style or method of creating theatre was developed by the Mummers. For the first time we were doing our own material, and not just following someone else's script or ideas. We all had an input into the show and what resulted was a unique creation, and perhaps our finest achievement in many ways. (Former Member, Mummers).

Seldom were scripts written down until after a play's completion, if at all. This loose, rather unstructured format was particularly appropriate to the Mummers' style of theatre as it allowed for continuous changes in each production, dependent to a large degree on audience response to a performance.

You changed your show, depending on what worked and what didn't, so audience reaction is extremely important to us. Sometimes people would even shout at us while we were performing, and often they would stay behind after a show to make comments or offer suggestions. You just had to deal with that. (Member, Mummers).

This technique also made for a virtually unlimited choice in subject material as "anything could be the basis of a

play."

The first project of the Mummers Troupe--and incidentally the one from which the company got its name--was a revival of the traditional mummers Christmas play, a folk drama having its origins in Europe in the Middle Ages, and a custom that had been transmitted verbally through several generations of Newfoundlanders of English and Irish descent, especially in the rural areas of the province.⁶ At the time of this revival however, the play itself had not been performed at all for about sixty years and was perhaps destined to be forgotten forever had not the Mummers Troupe brought an updated version of it to the attention of Newfoundlanders (urbanites in particular) once more by performing the play at various house parties and nightclubs around the province during the Christmas of 1972. The Mummers have continued the annual Christmas presentation of the play since that time.

We wanted to do the mummers play because it's the only example of traditional theatre we have in Newfoundland. I felt it important to show people that Newfoundland history was exciting and entertaining as well; something that could be enjoyed by even a contemporary audience, and not something to be shoved away and forgotten in the museums and archives. (Member, Mummers Troupe).

The philosophy of "theatre of and for the people" as expressed above, remained evident in subsequent Mummers' productions. Their next play for example, called Newfoundland Night or The Newfoundland History Show, was created primarily,

to present a picture of our history from the common man's point of view--not the academic's or the historian's as it had previously been interpreted. We felt it important that people see themselves in a different and very positive light--through the theatre--and in that experience find a sense of pride and satisfaction in themselves and their heritage....The people are, after all, the source and inspiration for our artistic creations; theatre belongs to them. Therefore it must reflect their reality and be relevant to them. (Member, Mummers Troupe).

Subsequent shows reflected the troupe's commitment to "explore indigenous Newfoundland material through theatrical means" and typically dealt with little-known or forgotten aspects of the province's history and the concerns and problems faced by the smaller communities around the island and in Labrador. In Buchans, a Mining Town for example, the Mummers explored the various aspects of life in a one-industry town and the difficulties involved when the company concerned (ASARCO Mines) threatened to close down its operations in that community. Another play, Gros Mourn, dealt with the relocation of fishing communities and the feelings of the residents concerned when a new national

park development was initiated on the province's west coast.⁷ East End Story depicted the character of life in old St. John's, an area undergoing rapid change and commercialization at the hands of big business. Dying Hard, a play based on Elliott Leyton's book of the same name (Leyton 1975), concerned the fate of St. Lawrence fluorspar miners and their struggles with silicosis. More recent productions have dealt with the impending oil boom in Newfoundland and its projected consequences (Some Slick), as well as the on-going seal hunt controversy. The Mummerns' They Club Seals, don't They?, which toured nationally in 1978, offered a Newfoundland perspective on the sealing issue, and was designed to counteract some of the negative propaganda aimed at the province from abroad due to its participation in the annual seal hunt off the north-east coast of the island.

In 1976 the Mummerns Troupe, under the aegis of the Resource Foundation for the Arts (a non-profit, charitable organization dedicated to the preservation and encouragement of the arts in Newfoundland), purchased the LSPU Hall situated on Victoria Street in downtown St. John's. Through the aid of various grants and public support the building was converted to a theatrical facility and base "camp" for the operations of the Mummerns Troupe. The LSPU Hall was originally built as a union centre for the Longshoreman's Protective Union (LSPU) who

still maintain a small administrative office on the premises, but since its purchase by the Mummers the building has functioned mainly as an alternate artistic and community centre. In 1978-79 a debate arose in the artistic community concerning the ownership and control of the LSPU Hall and the rights of other individuals and theatre groups to its facilities and the resources of the RFA. After lengthy and frequently heated negotiations, a referendum was held whereby the RFA was made open to public membership, a new constitution imposed, and the name changed to Resource Centre for the Arts (RCA). At present the LSPU Hall is administered by the RCA which consists of an elected board of directors and a general membership of approximately two hundred and fifty individuals, representing many aspects of the local community. The Mummers Troupe have since set up permanent office space in another location, while continuing to share rehearsal and performance privileges at the LSPU Hall with other performing arts groups.⁸

One of the Mummers Troupe's most recent productions, Makin' Time with the Yanks, has signalled somewhat of a departure from earlier politically-toned endeavors. Makin' Time represents their most non-political effort thus far and consists of a humorous and nostalgic look at the social climate of St. John's in the 1940's when large numbers of American servicemen were stationed here during the second

world war. This particular play was very successful in terms of audience attendance, playing to full houses for the duration of its two-week run at the LSPU Hall and then held over for two additional nights at the 1,400-seat St. John's Arts and Culture Centre where both performances sold out as well. Local reviews of Makin' Time were extremely favourable and reflected the enthusiasm many of the older members of the audience felt for this dramatized version of a previously unexplored facet of local history. A more recent (October 1981) undertaking of the Mummers Troupe was a revival of an earlier production, Stars in the Sky Morning, a dramatic portrayal of the lives of women on Newfoundland's northwest coast.

The foregoing represents only a partial account of the more than twenty productions of the Mummers Troupe since its inception in 1972, but serves to illustrate the genre of theatre they have chosen to pursue. (A more extensive list of Mummers' productions is found in Appendix A.)

Codco

In 1973, another Newfoundland-based and inspired theatre company was formed which was to closely resemble the Mummers Troupe in many respects, but which also proved itself unique in certain others. This company was known as Codco, and was created when a group of young

Newfoundlanders--with various degrees of acting experience and training--were given a three hundred dollar grant from Toronto's Theatre Passe Muraille to "do a show about Newfoundland."

I guess we hung around Theatre Passe Muraille so much, and seemed so eager to get into theatre, that eventually Paul Thompson [director of TPM] gave us the money to create our own show. That's how Codco started. (Member, Codco).

The resulting production was the very popular Cod on a Stick, a play in which the actors highlighted and satirized some of the common mainland Canadian stereotypes about Newfoundlanders and Newfoundland, as well as some of the province's own depictions of its people--particularly in the media and in tourist promotion.

A lot of their [i.e., 'non-Newfoundlanders'] ideas about us were really strange--unbelievable almost. And we certainly weren't helping much with our own portrayals of the 'hardy, sea-sprayed fisherfolk' of 'Canada's Happy Province' for example. So we thought, what better way to show up these images for what they really were--ridiculous mainly--than to make fun of them on stage? (Member, Codco).

Cod on a Stick played in Toronto in December of 1973, creating quite a sensation in the theatrical circles of that city and receiving rave reviews in the press as a result. The company returned to Newfoundland in February 1974 when an expanded version of the show opened in the

Basement Theatre of the Arts and Culture Centre in St. John's. This performance met with similar positive response from local theatre goers.⁹

The membership of Codco, unlike that of the Mummers, remained remarkably stable throughout the company's productive life and consisted of seven actor-members and a general business manager. All came from predominantly middle-class St. John's backgrounds and had known each other long before the formation of Codco through various involvements in high school drama, the Memorial University Drama Society, and productions of the Newfoundland Travelling Theatre.

It was in the area of technique, or method of production, that Codco most resembled the Mummers Troupe. Like the Mummers, the creation of plays was done on a collective basis, although Codco had no fixed director.

We were truly a collective--there was no director or writer as such. We'd just get together and decide to do a show and everyone would contribute his ideas and skills. The finished product was really a conglomeration of sketches we all developed in rehearsal. (Member, Codco).

The "finished product" was in itself quite distinct from the more plot-oriented plays of the Mummers Troupe. Codco placed a high emphasis on the popular skit format and cabaret-style of theatre in their productions. A typical show consisted of a series of skits--sometimes thematically

quite unrelated to one another.

Like other "collectives," the members of Codco relied almost entirely on improvisation in the creation of their shows, but tended to draw more heavily and regularly on their personal experiences of living and growing up in an urban, Irish-Catholic dominated environment. Thus their productions were, in a very real sense, more "localized" and confined to a narrower range of characters and situations than those of the Mummers Troupe, who attempt to depict a much wider picture of Newfoundland life on the stage. Perhaps the major distinction that can be made between these two companies, however, lies in the general aim or "intent" of their theatrical efforts. While the Mummers can be described as overtly serious and political with subtle comic undertones, Codco is best described as overtly satirical and humorous, with almost accidental political undertones. The titles of Codco's shows, for example, illustrate well the genre of theatre pursued by that company. Laugh your Guts out with Total Strangers and Would you like to Smell my Pocket Crumbs? represent two cases in point. Codco's style of theatre has been compared to English farce and the antics of troupes such as Second City and Monty Python's Flying Circus (e.g., Anderson 1976:8; Gwyn 1976:43); their productions typically consist of caricatures of Newfoundland life and Newfoundlanders, designed to satirize

these things rather than to suggest any real social or political panaceas.

We were irreverent and perhaps irrelevant at the same time. We never intended to be political or to preach a serious message--we wanted to make people laugh. When we did make a statement of some sort, it was rather subtle and obtuse. The humorous aspect was always the most important to us. We should be able to laugh at life and at ourselves--there's enough seriousness in the world. (Member, Codco).

A newspaper review of the time supports this self-analysis which also recognizing the underlying political impact of their theatrics.

Please don't assume that these folks (i.e., Codco) are heavy-handed or preachy. That approach is left to politicians and journalists. After all, most human beings would rather open their minds to change through the medium of a funny story than a boring black and white editorial anyday. It's simply more entertaining. Codco's humour is not always pointed anyway, sometimes it's just playful nonsense for the sheer Halibut! (Pulliam 1976:2)¹⁰

With the exception of one production, these descriptions apply to a large extent to all of Codco's shows. That exception, What do You want to See the Harbour for?, was their most politically-inclined play; one in which the company dealt with the perceived destruction of old St. John's as a result of a cross-town arterial road

project and the further development and commercialization of the downtown area.

This is not to suggest that Codco's plays--even at their most seemingly irrelevant--lacked any sense of social commitment or responsibility, however. In fact, it would appear that the choice of subject matter for their productions was in many cases motivated by a strong awareness of the social reality and a deep understanding of its many vagaries and flaws. Topics ranging from homosexuality and religious bigotry to the proverbial "happiness" of Newfoundlanders were all sources of dramatic inspiration for the company. Thus, while the tone of Codco's theatrics was overtly humorous and benign, its underlying messages were often quite pointed attacks on some of the social norms and stereotypes of society.

In the theatre--as in other forms of art--satire can be a very effective means of expressing dissatisfaction with the social order and pointing out its contradictory and unjust qualities. Thus, while overtly "making fun" of the "bayman" for example, Codco were at the same time subtly criticizing the ignorance and misunderstanding that underlies the creation of such stereotypes in the first place. Satire was by far their most powerful tool.

Like the Mimmers Troupe, Codco gained wide recognition for their unique theatrical style, successfully touring nationally with several of their shows and in

addition preparing two collections of sketches which were produced by CBC television in Toronto in 1974. Codco gained something of an international reputation as well, when in 1975 they were chosen along with the Neptune Theatre of Halifax, to represent Canada at the American Bicentennial Festival in Philadelphia, and in 1976 when they performed at an international theatre festival in England.

In total, Codco produced eight shows from 1973 to 1976 when the company disbanded to allow its members the opportunity to pursue individual interests in the theatre and elsewhere. In 1979 the company regrouped to produce the cabaret show White Niggers of Bond Street/WNOBS which enjoyed a successful run in St. John's. Although Codco still exists as a legal entity, the members themselves have become involved in a number of other projects since that time, many of which exhibit a strong continuity with past endeavors. Many of the characters and scenes created in various Codco plays have become popularized in several recent local productions of the CBC. In 1978-79 the "Root Cellar" series featured characters created and performed by two of Codco's former members, Greg Malone and Mary Walsh. The producer of that series was Kevin O'Connell who in 1979 went on to produce "Up at Ours", which was aired nationally from September to January of 1980-81.

This show, which concerns the various residents and the

everyday affairs of a St. John's boarding house on Brazil Square, again features Mary Walsh as one of the central characters, along with other well known local actors--many formerly of Codco and the Mummers Troupe as well. A third series, "WGB--Wonderful Grand Band," produced by Jack Kellum of the CBC, features the musical talents of the very popular traditional-rock group known as the Wonderful Grand Band, combined with the comedic antics of two of Codco's former members--Greg Malone and Tommy Sexton. Much of the essence of Codco's popularity and humorous style can be seen in this series which began local airing in September 1980 and is scheduled for an additional season in 1981-82. The WGB has toured nationally as well and has a large and loyal local following through appearances in various night clubs and in the Arts and Culture Centres, all of which draw capacity crowds.¹¹

In addition to these endeavors in local television, several of the members of Codco have been involved in film productions of the Newfoundland Independent Filmmakers Co-op (NIFCO). The major one of these has been an ongoing production of the full length feature ("Newfoundland's first epic film"), entitled "The Adventures of Faustus Bidgood."¹² This film features Codco's Andy Jones in the lead role, accompanied by a huge cast of actors of which Codco members comprise a significant portion. NIFCO has also produced several shorter films featuring Codco

members such as "Dolly Cake" and "Cod Pieces," many of which are quite similar in style and content to earlier Codco stage productions.

Despite their rather extensive involvement in these other entertainment-oriented activities, many Codco members have remained quite active in local theatre also. They have frequently appeared in plays of other companies as well as in productions of the Resource Centre for the Arts at the LSPU Hall.¹³ Recently three of them collaborated on a collection of sketches entitled Barely Dead and Hardly Missed (May 1981). This was a humorous and satirical production which followed the unique style of theatre created by Codco, one of Newfoundland's most original theatre companies.

Rising Tide Theatre

In 1978 an additional theatre company was formed in St. John's when several members of the Mummers Troupe left that group to create the Rising Tide Theatre Company. Rising Tide is presently headed by two artistic directors--Donna Butt and David Ross--while the individual actors for each show are hired on a production-by-production basis.

Donna Butt had been involved with various productions of the Mummers Troupe since joining that company in 1973. Although she had had little theatrical experience prior to this, she soon became one of the major forces

behind the Mummers' political style of theatre. In her own words; "My interests were always much more political than theatrical." She was responsible as well for much of the preparatory research necessary for the company's detailed and accurate dramatizations of social and historical events, and in the course of her years with the Mummers she emerged as a strong actress in her own right. During this period she had the opportunity also to perform two shows on the mainland, one with the Centaur Theatre of Montreal and the other with Toronto's Theatre Passe Muraille. With the formation of Rising Tide Theatre, she has added directing to her now well established acting and writing talents.

Rising Tide's other artistic director, David Ross, came to Newfoundland from British Columbia in 1976. He had been performing Michael Cook's one-man show Quiller at the time and was encouraged by that playwright to visit this province. Ross was immediately impressed by the amount and variety of theatrical activity he witnessed in St. John's and decided to remain there indefinitely. Since then he has been involved with many aspects of the local arts scene in addition to his participation with the theatre. He acted in several of the Mummers' productions before forming Rising Tide with Donna Butt in 1978, and has become well known locally through appearances in various radio and television commercials, guest appearances on "Up

at Ours," and as the character of conductor Jack Foley on CBC Radio's "Newfie Bullet" series.

The reasons given for the breakup of the original Mummers Troupe, and the subsequent formation of Rising Tide, are many as well as varied, but essentially concern two basic factors: personality conflicts among certain members of the Mummers, and the inevitable problems associated with any collective effort when its participants hold differing opinions regarding the nature and goal of their work. To the casual observer, theatre companies such as the Mummers Troupe, Codco and Rising Tide, may appear essentially alike in terms of the kind of local-interest drama they produce. On the part of the individuals concerned, however, there are important and often potentially divisive practical and philosophical distinctions by which such companies distinguish themselves and their plays from one another. According to one of my informants:

I left the Mummers because it was becoming harder and harder for us to work together as a unified group. As an actor, I felt that it was important to be involved in as many diverse types of drama as possible. The problem was that Brookes was more concerned with his own ideas and politics than with our potential as actors. We thought it better for all concerned if we split and formed our own company where we could have more control over the things we wanted to pursue. (Member, Rising Tide).

Another member of Rising Tide described the situation as follows;

We wanted more variety in the style and content of our shows. It is important to be socially and politically concerned--this is as true for the theatre as in anything else in life--but you must be sensitive to your audiences' needs as well. Most of them expect to be able to relax and laugh a little when they come to a show anyway. Therefore we [i.e., Rising Tide] have tended to keep the comic aspects in the forefront of our productions.

Accordingly, Rising Tide was formed both as a solution to the escalating personal conflicts among the members of the Mummers Troupe, and as a means by which those dissatisfied with the Mummers' genre of theatre could experiment with different dramatic styles and methods. Related to these two reasons is the implication stated above that Rising Tide was established as a response to an anticipated audience "need" for a lighter form of entertainment in the theatre.

Interestingly, and in keeping with this desire for change, Rising Tide has been the first of the theatre companies dealt with here to depart from the strictly Newfoundland fare of the past few years to do a production of Arthur Miller's The Price in April 1981. The reason for this change in theatrical direction was again expressed

in terms of a desire to "broaden the theatrical horizons" of both actors and audience.

The time is right now to attempt some different kinds of drama. Our audience is much more theatrically aware than they were, say five years ago. We feel a demand for more variety in subject and in style. Hopefully we can meet that challenge.
(Member, Rising Tide)

Likewise, while the earlier productions of Rising Tide were all collectively conceived and created, several recent shows have been based on scripted sources; three of them by local playwrights dealing with local subject matter.

While the Mummers have been described as representing the most politically-serious of the province's theatre companies, and Codco the most satirical; Rising Tide's brand of drama falls somewhere between these two different--but not necessarily opposite--extremes. At times they have tended towards both styles, but thus far have not adopted either in any consistent format, which makes them rather difficult to "label" in any accurate way. Nonetheless, I would maintain that Rising Tide, since its inception, has followed pretty much the pattern of socially aware and documentary theatre as developed by the Mummers in the majority of their productions, including those based on scripted sources.

The first production of Rising Tide was a theatrical examination of the history of the railway in Newfoundland.

This was a particularly "timely" show which coincided with the provincial government's plans to curtail the services of the railway pending the findings of the Sullivan Commission in 1978. Daddy, what's a Train? toured successfully both on the island and in Labrador and a filmed version of the play was aired nationally on CBC's "Canadian Express" series in the summer of 1980. Other productions of the company have dealt with the anticipated results of the oil boom in the province (Filthy Rich and Easy) and the Quebec/Labrador boundary dispute (Somewhere Over the Border). Both of these plays have addressed important political and social issues from an essentially humorous perspective. One of Rising Tide's shows, I was a Teenage Lovedoll represented quite a departure from their previous productions up to that point. This play took a nostalgic and very light-hearted look at Newfoundland's experience of the music and trends of the 60's and 70's, and can best be described as pure comic entertainment with marginal political relevancy. Since Lovedoll Rising Tide has turned to a more serious vein with their recent productions of Tom Cahill's As Loved Our Fathers and Gordon Pinsent's John and the Missus.

More recently Rising Tide has moved from the strictly Newfoundland-oriented format with productions of two of Arthur Miller's plays, The Price and The Crucible

in April of 1981 and 1982 respectively. In July 1981 the company created a sequel to the very popular Lovedoll show, entitled I Was a Teenage Lovedoll Part Two. This play continued where the original production left off, with a comic look at the music and fads of the 80's as reflected in Newfoundland's youth. In October 1981 Rising Tide produced the highly acclaimed Joey, which, as its title suggests, was a theatrical portrayal of Joseph Smallwood and the great impact he had on Newfoundland during his tenure as premier of the province. Thus Rising Tide's productions have exhibited a wider variety of subjects and styles than those of either the Mummers Troupe or Codco.

We have continued to concentrate on comic and dramatic portrayals of local, historical situations. You have to be meaningful and close to the people that patronize you. At the same time, because we are artists, we have to be able to experiment and change direction in order to grow. I think a good audience expects this of you.
(Member, Rising Tide)

Some comparisons

Someone who didn't like us once called us 'an anarchist, agitprop, political-warfare-type theatre!... personally I thought it was a perfect description. (Member, Mummers Troupe)

There's a point when politics takes over and art goes right out the window...you have to avoid preaching to your audience at all costs. (Member, Rising Tide Theatre)

criticism is much easier to take
when you're laughing... (Member,
Codco)

The Mummers Troupe, Codco, and Rising Tide theatre companies show basic similarities in the subject matter of their plays and the dramatic techniques and methods employed in creating them. There are important differences as well however; one looks for these in the stated "philosophies" of each company as expressed by their individual members, as well as in the actual nature of the productions themselves. The plays of these three companies incorporate a significant range in the tone (or mood) and treatment afforded to the material chosen--ranging from the almost reverential glorification of some of the Mummers' productions, to the outright absurdity and mockery of certain Codco skits--and are evidence of the versatility with which subjects of local origin or interest have been treated in the theatre.

It remains difficult to label these companies in a manner which accurately and consistently reflects the variety of drama each has chosen to pursue, since each has experimented with various styles. In addition, the Mummers Troupe and Rising Tide have changed in character and membership over the years, which makes it a challenging task indeed to draw close-cut or definite distinctions between them. For example, I have described the Mummers as political, yet they have performed some very non-political

shows such as their annual Christmas Play and the recent Makin' Time with the Yanks, (which incidently was directed by Mary Walsh, of Codco fame). Likewise Codco, despite their comic-oriented and often nonsensical approach, have undertaken some rather politically inclined projects and have made some strong social commentary in others.¹⁴

Rising Tide--perhaps the most versatile of the companies--has "run the gamut" from the serious to the absurd in its productions; from the earliest Daddy, what's a Train? (a politically toned play), to the more recent Lovedoll plays--productions in many ways reminiscent of typical Codco performances. The actors themselves are well aware of the changes their companies have undergone, and of the occasional inconsistencies between how they perceive themselves (or what they would like their companies to be), and what they have actually been able to accomplish in the theatre. This ambivalence was frequently reflected in their discussions with me.

sure you should be political--whatever that means--but this is an art form after all that we are pursuing here. You just can't label it as one type or another. (Member, Rising Tide)

You must have something valid to say to your audience; they should be inspired in some way. But you must entertain them as well. It's a fine line to balance between sometimes. (Member, Mummers Troupe)

However, for purposes of comparison it is necessary to set up some criteria by which to distinguish these companies from one another. I have done this on the basis of the general kind of dramatic format adopted by each. The quotations at the beginning of this section are in themselves quite revealing of the concept or "vision" of theatre held by the various members of each company; many comparisons could be drawn on the basis of these statements.

The Mummers Troupe have decidedly the most political/serious focus of the three companies, although an argument could be made that they have been much less so in recent productions. Nevertheless, they remain more inclined to tackle subject matter of an overtly political nature. Their recent production of Al Pittman's West Moon was one which contained some rather strong and emotional attacks on the government's resettlement policy of the 1950's. Over the years, Mummers' productions have covered quite varied facets of Newfoundland's history and culture, both past and contemporary; in this respect they had been perhaps the most "educational" of the province's theatre groups. The company has remained committed to the goal of creating greater public awareness and pride in the Newfoundland cultural heritage, and their productions aim to instill new meaning and dignity in their subjects in a manner unlike that accomplished by any other medium. The Mummers

have placed strong emphasis on research and documentation (through written and oral sources) for the accuracy of their dramas and because of this created unique interpretations of little known, or forgotten aspects of the province's history. Many of their plays have a historical or community profile-oriented basis.

Of the three companies in question, the Mummers Troupe have been perhaps the most "proselytizing" in that several of their productions have aimed at spreading a specific message or ideological position to a wider audience. In 1976 they toured the country with The Price of Fish, a play sponsored by Oxfam which depicted the "third world" character of Newfoundland with respect to the rest of Canada. In 1978 the provincial government sponsored the Mummers' national tour of They Club Seals don't They? as part of an effort to provide a Newfoundland perspective on the seal hunt and to counteract the negative propaganda surrounding the hunt controversy (cf. Lamson 1979:9).

In conclusion, it can generally be said that a significant "moral lesson" quality underlies the majority of Mummers' productions, and that they have shown the greatest adherence to the philosophy of "relevance" to the social context that inspired them. For these reasons, the Mummers Troupe have sometimes been criticized for being "too serious," "too political" and even "too romantic"

in their portrayals of indigenous characters and situations on the stage.¹⁵ In any event, the Mummers, more than any other group, have inspired interest and growth in professional theatre in this province, and the precedents set by them in creating a distinctly Newfoundland "school" of theatre have, and will continue to have, a permanent impact on the nature and quality of drama produced here.

Codco has been the most consistent--in terms of style and personnel--of the three companies, nonetheless the nature of their theatrics is somewhat difficult to convey in print. One has to experience a Codco production to fully understand the distinctive quality of the drama they represent. While comparisons to the English comedy of Monty Python's Flying Circus are appropriate, they are so only in terms of style, revealing little of the highly local flavour of much of Codco's productions. What made this company unique was their ability to create entertaining theatrical productions out of the common and familiar around us. Codco built whole skits out of the seemingly trivial and unimportant, and in doing so created some very vivid and accurate portrayals of Newfoundland and Newfoundlanders that audiences related to in a very personal way. Above all, it was Codco's ability to discover the vitality and humour of ordinary things, along with their penchant for satirizing some of society's most treasured institutions (the Roman

Catholic Church, the Media and the Arts were particularly favourite targets), that set them apart from other theatre groups. Of the three companies, they were--and still are it seems--the one most committed to "making people laugh at themselves and society" (Member, Codco). Their productions reflect this aim, often going to ludicrous extremes to achieve it, however as I noted earlier Codco plays are certainly not lacking in political or social commentary entirely. Because of their overtly humorous focus, they were able to tackle subject matter that was often of a highly sensitive or controversial nature, while at the same time subtly making some very critical or pointed statements about such issues, a strategy that prompted one reviewer to describe them as,

not so much a satirical troupe as a demolition team setting deadly charges beneath the foundations of church, state and motherhood. ...The seven members of Codco... deliver the most distinctive humour available in this country right now. It is neither subtle nor sophisticated stuff, for their material is too black and deadly for such civility and finesse. (John Fraser, The Globe and Mail; Toronto. January 26, 1976.)

Codco's choice of subject matter, and the often facetious and irreverent manner in which they treated it-- i.e., the troupe frequently used strong sexual imagery, vernacular or "crude" expressions, and "sacrilegious" language in their plays--at times made their productions

prey to criticism from theatre critics and the public in general because of their uncompromising theatrical style.¹⁶ Nevertheless, it was precisely this unique style that accounted largely for the continuing popularity of Codco over the years; a popularity evident both in this province, and on the mainland where they performed many of their plays.

Doubtless the pressures involved in producing consistently original and humorous plays with a strong local character contributed largely to the breakup of the original company in 1976. However, as noted previously, several of Codco's members remain quite active in local theatre.¹⁷ The most recent stage production by three of them was titled Barely Dead and Hardly Missed and included parodies of television announcers, the news, and commercials for feminine protection, along with the inevitable assaults on senility, sickness, and death and spoofs of the artistic community and its critics. One segment of Barely Dead consisted of a sharp parody of Donna Butt (of Rising Tide Theatre); in a certain sense this particular skit satirized the whole development of alternate theatre in Newfoundland, mocking not only the theatre groups concerned, but its patrons and innovators as well. Judging from the audience response to this show, Codco's unique performance style and ability to make fun of everything and everyone, remains as popular as ever.

The Rising Tide Theatre company has been the most experimental of the three groups, and for this reason is even harder to label than the Mummers or Codco, however it is perhaps in its versatility that the uniqueness of Rising Tide lies. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, Rising Tide was the first to produce scripted plays on a relatively large scale, and also the first to undertake production of a non-Newfoundland based play (Arthur Miller's The Price). Since the formation of the company in 1978 they have produced documentaries, "musicals," and one-man shows in a manner consistent with their desire to pursue "as wide a variety of forms as possible" (Member, Rising Tide). Less politically inclined than the Mummers, Rising Tide has typically treated the subject matter of their plays in a lighter, more humorous manner--though not to the extent of some of Codco's farce. Of the informants interviewed, the members of Rising Tide expressed most consistently the need for a theatre group to provide entertainment and to anticipate and be responsive to audience expectations. Similarly, they most often referred to the theatre in terms of an art form above all else, as opposed to "a means for making political or social statement." Thus, it has been typical of Rising Tide thus far to create or produce dramas reflecting a mixture of the sublime and the ridiculous, the serious and the comical; they make little attempt to either moralize

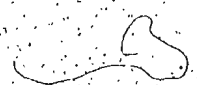
or make strong statements in their plays in any overt manner, although the "message" is usually there. It might be said that the genre of theatre adopted by Rising Tide represents a "compromise" between the styles of the Mummers and Codeo, or at least a balance between them.

We prefer to highlight real-life situations and events on the stage in a manner that is both relevant and entertaining. If someone comes away from a performance feeling he has learned about or understood something more than before--good. If he has only been entertained, then I don't think we have failed entirely either... (Member, Rising Tide)

FOOTNOTES

1. See for example Soper (1949). For an account of the history of amateur theatre in St. John's see in O'Neil (1975), pp. 213-70.
2. This quote appears on an early program card of a Mummers' play as well as on several "advertisements" for the Resource Foundation for the Arts in an attempt to attract publicity and financial support for the (then) young company.
3. Theatre Passe Muraille has a long-standing reputation as an experimental and innovative leader in the dramatic arts in this country. It has been called "the Grand-daddy of improvisational theatre in Canada" for example. Many of the individuals associated with local theatre of the alternate genre have had varying degrees of acting experience with Theatre Passe Muraille in the past.
4. For further information see publications of Memorial University Extension Services; e.g., "The Extension Service and its use of Film and Videotape in Community Development" (n.d.), and also, a report on the "Cinema as Catalyst" seminar (March 1972), both published by Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's and available from Extension Services.
5. In reading through the limited material available on theatre in St. John's--consisting mainly of newspaper and magazine reviews of specific plays and biographical sketches of the actors--I was able to distinguish over twenty of such terms. In addition, my informants typically employed a variety of the same in relating accounts of their personal involvement with, or opinions regarding, the theatre.
6. For the most extensive account of the custom of mumming (or mummering) see Halpert, H. and Story, G. (eds.), Christmas Mumming in Newfoundland: Essays in Anthropology, Folklore and History. 1969, University of Toronto Press: Toronto. For examples of scripts for the traditional mummers play, see in above volume pp. 186-207.
7. For a detailed personal description of the process of documentary drama and its potential impact in reference to Gros Mourn, see Brookes, C., (1974). This article also expounds the author's views regarding "useful" theatre in general.

8. The initial purchase of the LSPU Hall by the Mummers Troupe and its conversion to a theatrical facility has proven a very significant step in the development and encouragement of the performing arts in the St. John's area. Since its inception as an artistic and community centre, the LSPU Hall has maintained--indeed capitalized on--a reputation of catering to artistic activity of the alternate genre. The Hall continues to be the preferred setting for the majority of the performances of all three companies discussed in this thesis. Situated in the Heritage Conservation Area of Downtown St. John's, the building has considerable cultural and historic value in its own right. Thus it is well suited to the genre of theatre emerging from the cultural renaissance.
9. For examples of Toronto reviews see; The Toronto Star, December 10, 1973, November 5, 1974, and January 23, 1976; The Globe and Mail, November 16, 1974, January 26, 1976, and October 7, 1976; and The Varsity, October 15, 1976. For local reviews see, The Evening Telegram (St. John's), August 16, 1974, March 17, 1975, and December 1, 1975; The Muse, October 4, 1974, and The Newfoundland Herald, January 1, 1975.
10. References to fish and puns on the company's name are rampant in the press reviews of the early and mid-seventies. For example: "Fishing for Laughs, Crowd Takes the Bait." (Philadelphia Daily News, October 29, 1975); "A Dory Load of Fishy Fun." (The Toronto Star, November (?), 1974.)
11. For additional information on the popularity and success of the Wonderful Grand Band, in national as well as local terms see, Atlantic Insight (April 1982), pp. 20-24.
12. See Moores, David., "Faustus Bidgood: Still Hanging on after Four Years and a Quarter Million Dollars." Showtime. Vol. 1 (1981), St. John's: Resource Centre for the Arts, p. 11.
13. The RCA frequently sponsors its own productions in addition to those of theatre groups such as the Mummers Troupe, Codco, and Rising Tide. Last year for example, the RCA sponsored two productions featuring actors from these as well as other companies, namely: Loot (April 1980), a local adaptation of Joe Orton's English comedy, and Terras de Bacalhau (August 1980), a collective creation directed by Mary Walsh which explored dramatically some of the many facets of the Portuguese presence in St. John's.

14. I have previously made note of Codco's What do you want to see the Harbour for? More recently (September 1981), the company has produced We're no Match for No One, a play which undoubtedly represents their most serious dramatic effort to date. This production, based on Elliott Leyton's The Myth of Delinquency (Leyton 1979), entails a portrayal of juvenile delinquents, their families and the crimes they commit, while at the same time offering some insight and understanding into this much debated social issue. However, I would maintain that We're No Match was a Codco production in only a limited and technical sense, in that it was directed by Mary Walsh (of that company), but included a cast composed of a variety of actors who had appeared in the productions of other companies as well, and not the "regulars" one usually associates with a Codco play.
 15. Such comments are valid only in a very relative sense however, as Rising Tide on the other hand have been accused of being "not political enough" and Codco for being "irrelevant" and "silly".
 16. Typical examples of this kind of adverse commentary include: "an irreverent, almost sacrilegious black comedy..." (The Muse (St. John's), October 4, 1974), "one of their most risqué presentations...a little less gross and it would have been a more entertaining show." (The Newfoundland Herald, September 12, 1979), and "...sometimes they border on offensiveness." (The Philadelphia Inquirer, October 30, 1975.)
 17. It is worth noting that one of Codco's former members, Robert Joy, has since pursued a successful acting career in the United States performing both on Broadway and in Hollywood, where he recently appeared in such movies as Ragtime and Atlantic City.
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CHAPTER THREE

"A RACE APART"¹ (ETHNIC IDENTITY IN NEWFOUNDLAND)

An ethnic group may be defined as a group of individuals "with a shared sense of peoplehood" based on presumed shared sociocultural experience and/or similar physical characteristics. Such groups may be viewed by their members and/or outsiders as religious, racial, national, linguistic and/or geographical. Thus what ethnic group members have in common is their ethnicity, or sense of peoplehood, which represents a part of their collective experience. (Dashefsky 1976:3)²

There exists a popular and widely shared belief in the distinctiveness of Newfoundland and of the character or "soul" of the Newfoundlander (Poole 1978). The social, cultural, and even the psychological uniqueness of the inhabitants of this province appears to be perceived and accepted by all manner of people, from politicians and performers, to callers on the local open-line radio shows and 'mainlanders' who tell 'Newfie' jokes. One does not have to survey very much of the literature of or about Newfoundland and Newfoundlanders to be impressed with the prevalence of this notion of distinctiveness.

Here the traveller finds himself among a new race of people--the hardy fisher folk, quaint in their manners, having their own ways of looking at things, entirely unaffected by the conventionalities and fashions of the outside world; primitive in their modes of living, kindly and friendly. Travellers will find such archaic people abundantly interesting and worthy of careful study. (Harvey 1897:147)

This hard and dangerous shore has produced one of the toughest, most courageous breeds of men to be found anywhere....They [i.e., non-Newfoundlanders, tourists, etc.] found in the island a strange, insular breed of humans who had somehow managed to survive there for almost half a millennium and to develop into a people with unique qualities. (Horwood 1969: 81, 8)

Such sentiments are a standard ingredient of the popular literature about the province and its people (e.g., England 1924; Guy 1975, 1976; Gwyn 1968; Horwood 1966; Moyles 1975; O'Flaherty 1979; Perlin 1959; Smallwood 1973; and Smith 1952), as well as being an integral ideological focus of publications of the provincial Department of Tourism (cf. Overton 1979b).

Similar themes also appear in much of the scholarly and research-oriented literature of Newfoundland. Contemporary social scientists and philosophers have frequently commented on the particular character or special

quality of Newfoundland society, culture and personality, or upon the prevailing belief in and commitment to that ideology of uniqueness.

the isolation of Newfoundland facilitated the development of a distinctive style of life and thus an identity with Newfoundland... Racial consciousness exists in Newfoundland and develops the feeling in Newfoundlanders of being a distinctive group of people. (Calhoun 1970:90, 101)

The distinctiveness of a society's culture is a good indication of its viability and "social health." According to this criterion, Newfoundland has had in the past, and continues to have a unique way of life special to its own people. (House 1978:119)

[Newfoundland's] remoteness is not only geographic but cultural as well. The Newfy joke is proof of that... We Newfoundlanders, over the centuries of oppression and lucklessness, have developed a definite, recognizable cultural personality. (Jackson 1979:7)

Indeed, the success of the Anthropology and Sociology Departments, the Institute of Social and Economic Research, and the Folklore Department here at Memorial University rests, at least in part, upon the attraction for social scientists and folklorists of a distinctive society and culture.

The perceptions of Newfoundland's distinctiveness have some objective basis. Culturally, historically, and

even linguistically, Newfoundland occupies a distinctive position in the Canadian context--a position in many ways comparable only to that occupied by the province of Quebec (cf. Warburton 1976:101-108). In other parts of Canada, the notion of "ethnicity" applies to certain segments of the society--to immigrants and their descendants, to Native peoples, and those of different religious or racial origins, and so on (eg. Breton 1964; Brettell 1977; Briggs 1971; Elliott 1979; Isajiw 1977; and Porter 1965, 1975). Labels such as "Canadian" or "Albertan" are terms indicative not of ethnicity, but of citizenship or region of birth or residence. On the other hand, the designation "Newfoundlander" like the term "Quebecois," is more of an ethnic label.³ It transcends the internal diversities of origin, dialect, religion, and the like, merging them into a common and distinctive identification. This appears to be so both in the objective and subjective senses; i.e., Newfoundlanders see themselves as unique and "separate" from the rest of Canada,⁴ and Canadians and other non-Newfoundlanders tend to perceive the people of this province as distinct.

Anthropological Approaches to Ethnicity

Handelman (1977:187) distinguishes two contemporary approaches or "trends" in anthropological studies of ethnicity and ethnic groups. One of these focuses on the

social-structural or organizational context of ethnicity and characteristically employs concepts of ethnic boundaries, cultural, political, and economic divisions in complex societies, and the societal factors such as class, caste, occupation, education, and nationality which underly the formation of ethnically distinct groups (e.g., Barth 1969; Breton 1964; Cohen 1974; Goldenberg 1977; and Porter 1965). The other approach, and the one I have chosen to adopt in this thesis employs an analysis of the cognitive or intellectual dimensions (the so-called "identity" aspect) of ethnicity and ethnic group awareness. Here the focus is upon perceptions of "us" and "them," on the nature of the dichotomy implied in such cognitive categorizations, and on the "situational selection of interpersonal characteristics that display ethnic membership" (Handelman, op. cit). Representatives of this approach include Berreman (1973), Dashefsky (1975, 1976), Epstein (1978), Handelman (1977), Isaacs (1975), Moerman (1965), Nagata (1974), and Salamone and Swanson (1979).

At one level Handelman's distinction is a rather artificial one. It should not imply that all writers on the subject of ethnicity can be classified as strictly representative of one or the other approach--in many instances the definitions complement each other. Furthermore, the literature on ethnicity and ethnic groups is not only vast and complex, but originates from many

disciplines; for purposes of simplification and clarity most writers outline their own particular theoretical orientation prior to their discussion of the subject or aspect thereof. Typically the approach followed falls into one of the broad categories defined by Handelman--the social-structural or the cognitive.

If Newfoundlanders, like Quebecois, have an ethnic identity within Canada, it may also be observed that, in some contexts at least, Newfoundlanders, like the Quebecois, are perceived as a denigrated minority group.⁵ Thus the phenomenon of Newfoundland ethnicity may be interpreted from the social-structural perspective as well. There are several factors which indicate the appropriateness of this parallel. Firstly there are the obvious facts of Newfoundland's economic dependence on the federal government. The region has the highest rate of unemployment, the highest cost of living, and the greatest provincial debt of any province in Canada. There is the factor of Newfoundland's social, political, and even geographical "marginality" within the federal power structure, a position in many respects comparable to that of a colonized and politically dominated people, having relatively weak control over their own resources and economic destiny. This has begun to change in recent years, but the effects of centuries of "colonization" by and dependence upon various outsiders--firstly in the

form of British exploitation and administration, the combined American and Canadian presence and influence throughout the second World War, the continuing exposure to North American mainstream lifestyles and values following Confederation, and more recently, the dominance of non-Newfoundlanders⁶ in the economic and social sectors--has had tremendous and far-reaching effects on the present status of the province and the perceptions of its people. The circumstances of Newfoundland's entry into Canada in 1949 are themselves reminiscent of a large-scale "migration" of a socially and economically deprived population into a larger, wealthier, political unit. Therefore, it is appropriate to maintain that Newfoundland and Newfoundlanders occupy a minority position within Canada--a position characterized by traits indicative not only of marginal social and economic status, but of a stigmatized one as well. In addition, Newfoundlanders exhibit some of the attributes of a deprived minority/ethnic category even within their own province in that many of the major institutions of the society--for example the media, university, and the various divisions of the federal and provincial governments--represent the central North American majority and ideal. The above are all attributes of the structural definition of ethnicity outlined by Handelman (1977), but have significant implications for a cognitive or subjective perspective as well. Related to the cultural and political

influences, has been the subsequent erosion and de-valuation of indigenous styles and traditions in favour of "imported" ones. Coterminous with the above factors is the previously mentioned cultural, linguistic, and historical uniqueness of Newfoundland; a uniqueness manifested in the phenomenon of the "Newfie" joke and the stereotype of the "Newf," and in the somewhat romantic and obscure perceptions of the province held by other Canadians and North Americans.

It is on the basis of a well-defined and shared identity as Newfoundlanders that I describe Newfoundlanders as an ethnic group. The "cognitive dimension of ethnicity" as outlined by Handelman~~x~~ is elaborated upon by Epstein (1978) who maintains that an essential aspect of any understanding of ethnic phenomena entails a recognition of the importance of the we-they distinction that lies at the very basis of all group distinctions or boundaries. He refers to this distinction as the "dual aspect of ethnicity" (xi-xv). Following Epstein, mine is a subjective approach which places primary emphasis on the concept of identity as the focus for an interpretation of ethnicity. Certainly, and in retrospect to the preceeding pages, such an approach would seem particularly appropriate to the Newfoundland experience, especially when we consider that a fundamental awareness of "us" and "them" pervades virtually all aspects of the province's relationship to the wider Canadian context, politically, economically, and culturally

speaking. Indeed, this perception seems to lie at the heart of many Newfoundlanders' identity as Newfoundlanders first, and Canadians a somewhat distant second. It has already been established that Newfoundlanders have a strong sense of identity (the "we" or "us" in this scheme). It should also be noted that there exists by necessity, a strong sense of "they" which has arisen through contrast and comparison with the Canadian sociocultural milieu. In fact, it may be argued that the greater exposure, contact, and resulting political and economic friction between these two entities in recent years, helps to explain the ever-strengthening sense of ethnic identity evident in this province--especially during the last decade.

Now as differences between cultures lessen, so can cultural self-consciousness heighten. This happens through emblematic concentration on one or another cultural difference.... Put another way, where majority institutions reduce cultural diversity...minority persons may insist upon ethnic distance and there may be a renewal of ethnicity. (Paine 1980:2).

Various writers have observed that one means of coping with a stigmatized identity or deprived social status, is to selectively emphasize certain elements of that identity, while de-emphasizing others (e.g. Berreman 1973; and Goffman 1963). This has been noted among ethnic minorities in other areas--the Black Power movement of

the 1960's in the United States, and the increasing emphasis on Native Indian rights both there and in our own country in recent years, are but two examples of this widespread phenomenon.

A crucial dimension of Newfoundland's ethnic character lies in its inhabitants' own depiction and "presentation" of themselves (Goffman 1959, 1963); a presentation in which many have chosen to stress and express pride in just those elements that have traditionally marked them as different from the rest of Canada. These elements of Newfoundland character and identity find their most visible expression in such spheres as the media, the arts, politics, issues of economic and educational concern (where a "pro-Newfoundland" ideology manifests itself in an emphasis on locally-directed and relevant development and the importance of Newfoundland content in the school curriculum), and so forth. Individually, these "vehicles" of "Newfoundlandism" naturally reflect the specific concerns and biases of individuals and different organizations regarding what each perceives as representative of Newfoundland culture and character. Collectively however, we see an attempt by people from many segments of the society to define and give meaning to the circumstance of being a Newfoundlander in contemporary terms. It is in these spheres that one finds the present-day expressions and manipulations of

Newfoundland identity--an identity traditionally fashioned by the particular historic, geographical, and cultural heritage of this province, and one which has increasingly become imbued with strong ethnic and nationalist overtones in its more recent expressions.

The theatre--especially that exemplified in the productions of the Mummers Troupe, Codco, and Rising Tide--has been perhaps the most "vocal" and influential medium for the contemporary expression of Newfoundland identity. Moreover, it is an ethnic identity which is being expressed and promoted in the repertoires of these companies. Even Codco, with their parodies of Newfoundland themes and the ostensibly self-mocking attitude of many of their productions, are not saying "we're not ethnics"; rather they are proclaiming that, "we're more ethnic than the stereotypes can possibly express."

Nationalism in Newfoundland

Like "ethnicity," "nationalism" evokes multiple meanings and definitions depending upon the context in which it is used, and the persuasion of the writer employing the term (e.g., Hobsbaum 1972; Shafer 1972; Smith 1976; Snyder 1964; Symmons-Symonolewicz 1968; and Wirth 1936). In the Newfoundland literature "nationalism" appears frequently in conjunction with descriptions of the loyalty, patriotism, and identity of Newfoundlanders (Calhoun 1970; Fowler 1979;

and Matthews 1973), and has come to be most recently associated with the province's political and economic position in relationship to Ottawa (c.f., Plaskin 1979). The problem of origins; historical, cultural and otherwise, has been addressed elsewhere (Calhoun op. cit.; Matthews op. cit.; and Overton 1979). My focus lies with the expression of such feeling, specifically within the theatre of the type I have described in Chapters One and Two.⁷

In the social science literature there are numerous usages of nationalism, and it is frequently prefaced with such terms as "political," "cultural," "ethnic," "military," "economic," "territorial" and "linguistic"--to mention but a few.⁸ However it is generally conceived of and discussed under two main categories--political nationalism and cultural nationalism, and implies as its base, a sense of nation or of "peoplehood." This perception is in turn based on such real and perceived cultural qualities and distinctions as language or dialect, mode of living, customs and traditions, material culture, and so forth, which combine to distinguish that nation or cultural entity from all other social units with which comparisons and contrasts are made. With respect to Newfoundland, the most immediately significant of such units would of course be the Canadian mainland, but by extension we may also include the rest of North America or even the entire world. It

might be said at this point that this phenomenon has previously been defined under the term "ethnicity" and indeed, the two have much in common both conceptually and "in practice" in social life. However, in this context an important distinction is made.

I have defined ethnicity in Newfoundland on the basis of identity; more specifically, a shared, distinct identity or sense of peoplehood which sets Newfoundlanders apart from other Canadians and North Americans and accounts for the "we-they" dichotomy discussed earlier. Thus we may consider ethnicity to be the "passive" or "given" component of the dualistic relationship between social sentiment and its expression in social life. Following this logic, I will define nationalism as the "expressive" aspect of this relationship, since it is more closely associated with social consciousness and political rhetoric concerning such issues as economic progress and autonomy, cultural integrity, and in some cases, political independence or separation. Therefore, while nationalism is at one level expressive of the distinctive and unique character of Newfoundland, it is more importantly expressive of the discrepancies and inequalities in economic and social status, and moreover, the sense of inferiority or marginality that grew out of the province's failure to catch up with and emulate the mainland which is consistently portrayed and perceived by many as

"superior." A useful definition of this type of nationalism is provided by Plamenatz (1973:23-24):

...nationalism...is the desire to preserve or enhance a people's national or cultural identity when that identity is threatened, or the desire to transform or even create it where it is felt to be inadequate or lacking.

Following Plamenatz then, I am adopting the perspective that nationalism emerges as a significant social force when there is a pervasive feeling that one's culture or way of life has been threatened and undermined by outside-originating political, economic and social forces (see also Symmons-Symonolewicz 1968:45). The need to preserve or re-define that culture, and its associated identity, becomes of paramount importance. This kind of "reactive" nationalism is only possible where there exists a strong and widely shared sense of cultural distinctiveness on the part of those expressing it.⁹ In Newfoundland, this perception of separateness is greatly enhanced by the very real social and economic inconsistencies that distinguish the province from other areas of Canada. The perception therefore does not rest solely on some abstract notions of uniqueness and patriotic pride; it is one fashioned directly from the realization that much of the cultural loss following Confederation has been the direct consequence of the material gain resulting from union with Canada. Even for those Newfoundlanders who would oppose such nostalgic

longings in favor of creating a modern, cosmopolitan society, there is the underlying realization that Newfoundland has not managed, despite years of trying, to "measure up" to the upper Canadian model of prosperity and sophistication, and a certain resentment exists because of this fact. Both realizations find expression in activities as diverse as theatre and songwriting, to the speeches of our political leaders, to a public debate at the LSPU Hall where the participants addressed the question, "Should Newfoundland leave Confederation?"¹⁰

In this sense then, nationalist sentiments arise in situations where comparisons and contrasts between one society and another (or others) make possible an awareness of such social and economic diversity. This awareness assumes special significance when the society in question shares the same fundamental ideals and perceptions of progress with that with which it compares its own achievements, failures, and potentialities (Plamenatz; op. cit.). Again, this has certainly been the case of Newfoundland vis-a-vis the rest of Canada.

Nationalism, as distinct from mere national consciousness, arises when peoples are aware not only of cultural diversity, but of cultural change, and share some idea of progress which moves them to compare their own achievements and capacities with those of others. (Ibid.; 24)

It is important to note that nationalism, as an ideological position, a social movement, and an expressive vehicle for social dissatisfaction, entails a certain basic ambivalence in its "adoption" or proclamation by a society or group within that society. On the one hand, the members of a particular society feel frustrated at their perceived failure to compete successfully and on an equal scale with the "superior" society, which the former aspires to imitate and become more like as time passes. On the other hand, the "inferior" society, in asserting its claim to cultural distinctiveness and independence, must also in the same process reject certain of the outside ways and values which it sees as having been forcefully or unfairly imposed upon itself. The basic contradiction lies in the fact that it is quite often these same values and habits that were adopted in the initial effort to catch up with the dominant society in the first place. Thus the claim to a distinctive identity and the desire to be recognized as a unique and viable cultural unit quite often finds itself in conflict with the desire to progress within the larger political and economic context. A related phenomenon is the alternate rejecting/accepting of ancestral or traditional values by the society striving to enhance its cultural integrity. This occurs as those elements are variously perceived--by different individuals--as both obstacles to cultural

and economic progress and things to be cherished and preserved forever because they are also indicators of cultural distinctiveness (cf., Geertz 1973, 234-54, 255-77; Plamenatz 1973, 34).

In Newfoundland, this conflict is particularly visible with regards to the issue of downtown "development" versus "preservation" in St. John's. A continuous debate exists between dissenting groups of individuals whose conceptions of progress and valued identity rest on quite divergent orientations. Likewise, with respect to local theatre there are many--both directly and indirectly involved--who strongly oppose the genre of theatre described here as alternate, maintaining that more appropriate theatrical pursuits exist within the sphere of established and internationally recognized drama. They reject what they perceive as the parochial artistic activity exemplified by groups such as The Mimmers Troupe, Codco, and Rising Tide.

The question that confronts us here is that, given this aspect of choice in the selection and manipulation of "appropriate" nationalist or ethnic symbols by such groups; what is the nature of the symbols chosen, and what factors come into play in the selection of "representative" symbols (cf. Paine 1980)? The factors involved in the selection of symbols by the alternate theatre companies have been previously outlined and will be more closely examined in the next chapter from the perspective of the actors involved

as well as through an examination of the salient features of the plays themselves. The following section deals more directly with the specific strategies involved in the transmission and manipulation of ethnic and nationalist sentiments in the theatre.

Strategies

Anthropologists and other social scientists have traditionally recognized and studied the relationship between forms of public ceremony or ritual and social consciousness (e.g., Geertz 1959, 1972; Manning 1973a & b; Peacock 1968; and Turner 1967, 1974). It is generally acknowledged for example that;

Although performed and appreciated for the sake of enjoyment, aesthetic action may convey meanings and motivations that have important social consequences. (Manning 1973b:19).

In this context "aesthetic action" includes the whole range of activities commonly associated with music, dance, theatre, and ceremony--in essence all forms of public performance or display ostensibly regarded as entertainment. One of the important implications of this relationship is the way in which group or cultural identity is influenced, managed, and perpetuated through such action. In his research among the black population of Bermuda, Manning (1973a) has demonstrated the effectiveness of night club entertainment as an identity

transmitting and reinforcing mechanism to the black audiences at whom it is directed. He maintains that the nature of club entertainment--with its strong emphasis on symbolic and "tonal" referents to "blackness"--is intrinsically capable of conveying strong messages of racial-cultural identity and pride, in addition to its more obvious aesthetic function (op. cit., p. 149-182). In this same sense I have argued that indigenous theatre enhances ethnic identity in Newfoundland as its patrons are similarly presented with a multitude of cultural and ideological messages during the course of a production by Codco, Rising Tide, or the Mummers Troupe. Among the most prevalent of these messages are, as I have noted, those which can be interpreted as having strong nationalist and ethnic overtones due to their emphasis on elements of Newfoundland culture and identity and the positive attitude displayed towards these things. How then is theatre capable of relaying such messages to its audience in a way that enhances the latter's identification with them?

At the most basic level this is possible due to the nature of art itself,¹¹ particularly that which is generally perceived of as entertainment. Being also a form of communication, art is capable of conveying symbols and messages that would be inappropriate or suspect in other contexts.¹² Much is condoned under the label of "art" because such phenomena are perceived as being "outside" of the realm of

empirical reality; effectively apart from the conventions and pragmatics of everyday social action, and therefore not a direct threat to it. It is no wonder then that within the sphere of art we find a fertile repository for the ferment and expression of numerous political or ideological positions, many of which oppose or challenge the established social order. The analogy comparing nationalist theatre with political campaigning has frequently been made (e.g., Hunt 1974; 12). Conversely it is generally acknowledged that a successful politician quite often displays many of the qualities of a successful entertainer as well. Nationalist drama, like the political rallies it so often emulates, strives to persuade and invoke the sympathies of its audiences (Hunt: op. cit.). However, because theatre is above all, a medium of entertainment, the messages and symbols it contains can effect an audience in a covert, but frequently quite dynamic way; and in a manner quite distinct from that attempted through political or religious oration.

If we widen our picture of the social role of symbols to include the subliminal ways in which symbols influence behavior (by inducing empathy and imitation)... we easily see the social role of art. One might even argue that art works a powerful influence on society precisely because its modes of influence are undercover. By being unsuspected, artistic influences might be more powerful than the religious ones that everybody is aware of (and therefore on guard against). (Peacock 1968:244).

Regardless of how "political" a theatre company might strive or claim to be, and however low a priority it may place on "mere entertainment"; its popular appeal and continuing success for any extended period of time depends greatly upon its ability to provide amusement to its patrons (a factor well recognized by most of my informants). Theatre-goers come to a play expecting to be diverted, not instructed or persuaded, therefore it is incumbent on the actors and directors concerned to anticipate and meet this need. This expectation has important ramifications for the audience as well, who because they are "unprepared for an ideological message," may in effect be, "more receptive to one than an audience such as a religious congregation [or spectators at a political rally] which expects a message and is therefore ready to question and criticize it" (Manning 1973b:13). Thus if theatre wishes to convince, it must do so by being entertaining.

Aiding in the communicative process of entertainment is the immediacy and intimacy of the theatrical performance, a feature remarked on by several of my informants;

In the case of live theatre there's a much stronger connection between audience and performer. I mean, I can go to a show and if I don't like it, I can always boo or throw rotten tomatoes, or something. I can react immediately and quite effectively in a personal way to a situation, on a one-to-one basis with the actors. That's why we often get a lot of reaction--positive and negative--from audiences during and after the performance of a play. (Member, Mummer's Troupe).

Through the medium of live theatre, both past and contemporary events and characters are portrayed in a very immediate and directly observable way; hence these things may also appear more "real" to the audience present, thus ensuring an identification with them.

People like to see something of themselves on the stage. Live theatre has the unique ability of bringing to life the history and culture of a region in a way very different from that achieved through other media. There's a real closeness, a "feedback" between audience and performer that you just can't duplicate elsewhere. (Member, Rising Tide Theatre).

The successful communication of a political or satirical message through the theatre is assured if empathy exists, or is created, between the audience and the performers. At the very least, the success of any play (insofar as it provides entertainment) greatly depends on the ability of the actors/writers concerned to bring the audience into some sort of conformity or harmony with the characters and situations presented. Without this fundamental alliance, a play would have failed its most basic purpose, thereby preventing any "deeper" goals from being realized as well. Perhaps the most obvious strategy to ensure that such empathy does exist, is the creation or performance of plays that are meaningful to the audiences attending. The nature of the plays produced by companies such as Codco, The Mummers, and Rising

Tide, is in fact oriented towards relevance in the Newfoundland context, (as I have previously noted). Indeed, their plays are much less radical/leftist or intellectual exercises than they are entertaining vignettes of persons and situations familiar to a local audience. In addition, empathy between performers and spectators is further enhanced by the fact that the plays are the products of original, indigenous creation, rather than a "prepackaged" medium imported from elsewhere. Newfoundland plays as performed by these groups have the authentic quality of being truly representative of the region, and as such have an appeal of a very different order than that of Shakespearean or Broadway plays for example. The above points are well illustrated by Peacock in his study of the unique dramatic forms ("Ludruk") found in Java, wherein he notes that;

...a performance's content varies less to support political factions with which the performing troupe is affiliated than to match the sentiments and social experience of the spectators at hand... Since Ludruk participants themselves create Ludruk, one would expect that they would find it easier to empathize with Ludruk than if it were a canned medium made and marketed by aliens. (Peacock 1968:241).

In addition to those strategies aimed at maintaining the relevance and authenticity of local productions, we cannot underestimate the important role of comedy in encouraging empathy between audience and performers and, an identification

with the dramatic symbols and messages presented. In this context Manning has noted;

The mood of comedy would also seem to increase the appeal of the racial-cultural symbols... by making expressions of racial identification seem like fun, laughter can replace trepidation and thereby ease the encounter with racial-cultural awareness. (Manning 1973a:162).

A similar argument could be applied to the expression of Newfoundland identity (or ethnicity) in the theatre, especially when that expression is conveyed in satire and humour. This observation is particularly appropriate to the productions of Codco, where comedy often constituted their primary political "tool" due to its ability to break down the psychological barriers and defences often separating performers from audiences when the subject matter concerned is of a sensitive or controversial nature. At the time of Codco's early plays it was not generally popular or "fashionable" to flaunt one's heritage as a Newfoundlander. Hence their ability to confront this reality, in turn exploiting the very elements which traditionally invoked negative feelings and a stigma upon it (e.g., outport life, accents, "Newfie" jokes, etc.), and to do so in a way that generated laughter, was probably one of their most effective nationalist strategies. A typical newspaper review of the time described the company as "The Newfie Joke that Bites Back" (Globe and Mail, January 26, 1976); another praised the

group for their ability to "turn the Newfie Joke Around" (Halifax Life, October 20, 1976). Comments such as these are suggestive of the company's impact on mainland audience perceptions of Newfoundland, which in turn greatly influence Newfoundlanders' perceptions of themselves. Comedy's potential for enhancing the appeal and impact of drama is acknowledged in the following observation;

Satire causes us to question and criticize the accepted norms of society. I think people respond best to humour which causes them to think without necessarily being aware they are doing so...When you are laughing you tend to be more receptive to new ideas and messages than if you are sitting there straight-faced and serious. Through laughter we also learn to accept ourselves because we see the genuine humour in life. This is something we all share. (Member, Codco).

A perspective not considered to this point, but one which has special relevance to this discussion of strategies, entails an application of Cohen's model of "myth management" as it relates to the "pursuit of valued identity" (Cohen 1975). His study and analysis of the strategies of political legitimacy in "Focaltown," Newfoundland, concerns the means by which members of opposing political factors (i.e., parties) vie for legitimacy--and therefore leadership and acceptance--in that community. Thus he is primarily concerned with activity

oriented towards quite pragmatic ends. However in his conclusions, Cohen makes the interesting suggestion that the politics of legitimacy are very similar to the "social presentation of identity" (cf. Goffman 1959; 1961). Moreover, as he is concerned with politics as an "ubiquitous dimension of social interaction" rather than as an "institutionally or functionally discrete activity" (Cohen:129), his correlation between political legitimacy and valued identity is particularly compelling. This comparison has important implications for my contention that a valued identity is sought and manifested through local theatre--which is political insofar as it is nationalistic. The strategies involved are in many ways akin to one of the forms of myth management with which he deals. One he defines as the strategy of "cultural substitution" which;

...declares the irrelevance of the past and the need to replace it by structures and values drawn from 'modern' societies elsewhere (p. 15).

The other style he defines as "cultural extension," a strategy whereby legitimacy (or valued identity) is sought in;

...rooting the present in the past and, in so doing, legitimating the present by investing it with the values which have become sacralized by their very historical or traditional nature (p. 15).

It is this second style with which I am concerned here. Theatre groups such as Codco, the Mummers Troupe and Rising Tide are engaged in myth management insofar as an effort is made (conscious and unconscious) to validate and legitimise theatrical images and interpretations of Newfoundland by basing these images heavily on myths of cultural extension. The portraits of Newfoundland history and culture, as presented in the theatre, are based strongly on indigenous values and motifs rather than imported or borrowed ones; thus the pursuit of valued identity and its subsequent transmission on the stage is rooted in a systematic adherence to indigenous and traditional forms, and the myths, themes and images associated with them. The contemporary expression given to Newfoundland identity and ethnicity in the theatre reflects this commitment.

However, some caution is necessary here. It would be an oversimplification of the process of myth management in nationalist theatre to suggest that its creative impetus and direction rests solely on any form of blind adherence to "tradition" or "folklore" simply for its own sake, or that myths of cultural extension are the only thematic elements incorporated in the production of local plays. Indeed, the individuals involved with the Mummers Troupe, Codco, and Rising Tide are much more sophisticated about their goals and aspirations than is indicated by the simple suggestion that they are primarily concerned with pristine and romantic

portrayals of Newfoundland's past and contemporary culture. Many of the techniques and styles employed in local theatre are borrowed or adapted from those characteristic of theatre everywhere in the Western Industrial world. Also, many of the ideologies woven into the political message of nationalist theatre in Newfoundland are the products of exposure to and familiarity with the wider intellectual climate surrounding society and the arts.¹³ Thus, while the content of local productions is decidedly of indigenous origin and character, its presentation and interpretation often depends significantly on such introjected "cosmopolitan" features as these. What is unique about the plays of these companies is the way in which these universal and indigenous elements have been combined in the creation of an artistic genre which is, in the final analysis, distinctly Newfoundlands.' As House has suggested in looking at the various agents of the "new culture movement" in this province;

What distinguishes these people as an artistic movement is the way in which they have combined modern, sophisticated techniques and methods (originating from cosmopolitan culture) with local content and issues....In the process [elements of indigenous culture and history] are preserved from extinction, and are reinvigorated in a new form. Such groups suggest that it is possible to be both cosmopolitan and distinctly Newfoundland. That, I think, is their originality. And it may also be their wider message. (House 1978:212-213).

Therefore the strategy adopted by nationalist theatre is not a simple one, but rather a combination of many techniques, styles and ideologies, of which myths of cultural extension compose an integral part.

Cohen further describes cultural extension as an "assertive strategy" which seeks to deal with a stigmatized identity by stressing "as positive values those elements of identity which others have stigmatized" (Cohen:129). Again, this has certainly been one of the "tactics" adopted by the theatre companies in their efforts to "give a new meaning and dignity to the Newfoundland cultural experience and the status of being a Newfoundlander" (Member, Rising Tide). In concluding his comparison between the pursuits of political legitimacy and valued identity, Cohen contends that:

...the pursuits of legitimacy and of valued identity are alike in other respects as well: theoretically and substantively. They are firstly, both strategic activities. The two styles of myth management...called into being by the trauma of socio-cultural change, have their counterparts in the presentation of identities which have been thrown into crisis by social circumstances. (op. cit., p. 129).

The way in which social and cultural change have given rise to a renewed expression of positive identity in Newfoundland has been discussed above. Had there been no challenge or threat to Newfoundland's traditional culture and the identity

associated with it, there would not likely have been a response which sought to re-emphasize that identity in the compelling and pervasive way that it did.

In this section I have described nationalist theatre as a symbolic and strategic phenomenon, and have discussed some of the implications of this description. It must be emphasized however, that theatre is a complex and multi-dimensional feature of social life, and one that is open to many interpretations. The complexity of this art form frequently entails vague and even contradictory aspects as well--its impact is often contrary to the desired aims of its participants and critics. Thus, in the local context one hears critiques accusing groups such as Codco, The Mummers, and Rising Tide of "romantic daymanism," "enhancing the Newfie stereotype" or even "making fun of us," in addition to the more favourably disposed comments about their productions. Thus even those who profess to dislike the style of the productions of these groups, are nevertheless affected by their theatrics in some way.

In acknowledging art (theatre) as a powerful communicative and persuasive force within society, it must also be understood that its impact and role are quite unpredictable at times; subject to numerous influences and circumstances. Nonetheless, it is obvious that a distinctive and unique form of Newfoundland drama has emerged over the past decade which has been one of the most visible and

influential "outlets" for the expression of Newfoundland identity thus far. That audiences emphathize and identify with the productions of companies like the Mummers Troupe, Codco, and Rising Tide is shown by the continued success and patronage of these groups over the years (quite often the same people form the core of audience members at succeeding productions of one or all three companies, although it is significant as well that a broader and more diverse audience appears to be attending now). It is evident also in the enthusiasm with which spectators respond to specific performances. Standing ovations were quite common in earlier years,¹⁴ but positive reaction continues to be displayed openly in the form of spontaneous applause and periodic unrestrained laughter at recent productions of all three companies, and in the continuing predominance of favourable reviews by local as well as national critics in newspapers and periodicals. All of these factors indicate that Newfoundland drama has become a well entrenched and accepted theatrical form in its own right, and one that is not likely to lose its appeal in the foreseeable future.

FOOTNOTES

1. The chapter heading is a slogan popularized by the publications of the provincial Department of Tourism in attempting to depict the uniqueness and originality of Newfoundland and its people to a greater North American audience of prospective visitors to the island.
2. There are innumerable definitions of "ethnicity" and "ethnic group" in the relevant sociological and anthropological literature (see Isajiw 1974). To add to the confusion, many authors do not define the terms at all, implying them to be self-explanatory concepts. "Ethnicity" and "ethnic group" seem to be context-specific terms--i.e., their meaning varies with the problem or topic studied, and is highly subject to the personal interpretation of the writer, depending on his/her interests and academic background. For my purposes I have found this definition by Dashefsky to be most appropriate.
3. Likewise, the vernacular forms of these terms, "Newfie" and "Frog" are labels all the more suggestive of ethnic stereotypes, and imply distinctions and qualities commonly invoked to highlight differences among people in a much more value-laden manner.
4. This perception or sentiment of "separateness" gained particular--albeit limited--"visibility" when a public debate was held at the LSPU Hall in the summer of 1980 which addressed the issue, "Should Newfoundland Leave Confederation?" This event was well attended and drew enthusiastic and sometimes heated commentary from participants as well as audience present. It is interesting to note that this debate was scheduled (intentionally) on July 1--Dominion Day--a federal holiday formally created in celebration of the unity of Canada.
5. Much of the literature on ethnic groups and minorities makes little distinction between the two (e.g., Glass 1962; and Glazer and Moynihan 1963). Generally speaking however, a "minority" usually refers to a "disadvantaged" group, i.e., a group having lesser political and economic power in relation to a more powerful majority, while an "ethnic group" infers a culturally distinct entity. The terms are not mutually exclusive however, as minorities are very often ethnic groups and vice-versa.

6. Non-Newfoundlanders--especially those individuals having considerable social and economic status--are frequently referred to locally as "CFA's," an abbreviation of the descriptive title "come-from-away." The term is freely applied, however, to any non-native who has chosen or been obliged to, settle in Newfoundland--whether temporarily or permanently. In popular usage the label has essentially negative connotations; its underlying message is "you are not one of us."
7. I am well aware of course that it is impossible to disassociate entirely any consideration of nationalist phenomena from their underlying sources or origins. The distinction I make is one of emphasis; my intent is to look at nationalism from the perspective of its social and cultural manifestations in local theatre.
8. In addition anthropologists have frequently employed such terms as "nativistic" (Linton 1943), "revitalization" (Wallace 1956), and "transformative" (Aberle 1966) in reference to movements of ethnic resistance or revival among groups of native peoples, inhabitants of the Third World, or Oceania for example. According to Symmons (1966, 1968) and others (e.g., Cohen 1961; Keesing 1946), such movements may be considered as variants or "primitive manifestations" (Symmons 1968:37) of nationalism in general, and by implication share many basic historical, etioloical, and characteristic features.
9. In his discussion of 'Fourth world ethnicity', Paine (1980) expresses very similar sentiments regarding the sources of what he terms 'reactive ethnicity' among the Lapps of Norway. He defines these sources as; a sense of stigmatized identity, a rebirth, or renewed sense of brotherhood ('fraternity'), and the various pressures resulting from the 'Norwegianization' of the Lappish population in Norway in recent years (p. 28-29). The parallels of his model with the recent expressions of ethnic and nationalist sentiment in Newfoundland, are obvious.
10. Due to its strong emphasis on experimental and original enterprises, the LSPU Hall has acquired a reputation of catering to the more "avant-garde" element of the local artistic community. Thus it seems a fitting setting for the ferment and expression of such "radical" and nationalistic sentiments.

11. Many of the ideas expressed in these pages have been influenced by Manning's study of black entertainment in Bermuda (Manning 1973a & b) and Peacock's analysis of the Ludruk Drama of Java (Peacock 1968). Both represent case studies of phenomena very similar in character and function to nationalist theatre in Newfoundland, and both attempt to outline the relationship between aesthetic action and the wider social milieu which surrounds it.
12. Thus it is acceptable for the characters of a Codco play to engage in sacrilegious or overt sexual dialogue, or to make condemning remarks about 'baymen' or 'townies.' Likewise the Mummers are able to make scathing critiques of government policies and bureaucratic decisions through the speeches of their characters and the action of their plays in a manner that would be received quite differently outside of the theatre.
13. Chris Brookes for example, admits to being strongly influenced by the experimental theatre styles of the United States that were prominent in the late sixties such as street and guerrilla theatre. Many of the actors with all three companies have given much credit to Toronto's Theatre Passe Muraille for inducing them to adopt a similar style in their presentation of theatre in Newfoundland. In addition the political flavour of many local productions reflects the quasi-Marxist and socialist oriented philosophies of several of the actors--a commitment manifested in the widespread support of the NDP among the artistic community in general.
14. One actor suggested to me that the relative scarcity of standing ovations in recent years might be due to the fact that audiences are now more accustomed to the level of theatrical excellence and the professional quality of local productions, and are thus much more demanding and critical in their expectations and opinions of them.

CHAPTER FOUR

ACTORS, PLAYS AND THEMES

The Actors

But if a rich native language, combined with a fiery imagination are powerful ingredients of national drama, so too is an awareness--conscious or subconscious--of national roots. (Hunt 1974:7).

Unlike many performing arts companies, we don't believe in mounting replica productions of the latest British, American or Canadian plays for local audiences. We believe Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to be a unique people with a unique identity, deserving of a unique theatre. (The Mummers Troupe 1979).

The historical existence of a distinct Newfoundland identity is a widely accepted and documented phenomenon (see preceeding Chapter). That which is defined and presented in local theatre represents, in some respects, but a contemporary expression of an identity which owes its ultimate existence to certain basic and irrefutable geographical, historical, and cultural factors. However--and herein lies the important difference--it is one which has been more directly influenced and called into being by comparatively recent forces following Confederation which resulted, among other things, in the devaluation and stigmatization of traditional Newfoundland

culture and the identity associated with it. Thus this newly articulated or "neo-nationalist" identity is more of a reaction to stimuli which are perceived as essentially negative by certain individuals within the population; among them those who comprise the theatre companies to which I refer. Apart from being a response to such stimuli, this style of theatre attempts to "remedy" its negative effects in some way as well.

With these points in mind, it is my intention now to explore some of the aspects of alternate theatre using the personal observations of the individual actors involved. My primary concern is, of course, with those ideas and motives most clearly suggestive of nationalist orientations,¹

Up until fairly recently a lot of what went on here was concerned with imitating and following the mainland while subsequently ignoring our own, or downgrading it entirely. One area I felt we could attempt some changes was in the theatre--here was certainly a place for us to pursue and develop our own styles, depicting ourselves and our region in a way that only we could. There's such an artificiality about the way in which Toronto or Los Angeles portrays most regions; even Michael Cook's early plays had a distinctive "Toronto flavour" about them. The only way we could hope to overcome this was in looking more closely at ourselves, using our own eyes and experiences in creating plays about and for ourselves.
(Member, Mummers Troupe).

That theatre was in many ways a reaction in the same sense

that nationalist sentiments frequently are, is also expressed quite well by a member of Codco in the following passage:

I guess you could say that Codco was a "reaction" of sorts--by that I mean we were reacting to the ideas and stereotypes held by many non-Newfoundlanders as well as Newfoundlanders about this province. We had all had various negative experiences on the mainland...this very definitely influenced the type of company that Codco was. And a lot of it was our own fault...I'm referring to things like the 'Harry Hibbs syndrome,' the tourist brochures and so on. I guess we got fed up with being portrayed and thought of as quaint, picturesque, ethnic types. At that time (early 1970's) many Newfoundlanders felt very insecure about themselves and their culture, partly because they half-believed those Newfie jokes themselves. We wanted to show just how ridiculous they really were. (Member, Codco).

From a somewhat more "practical" orientation, the development of nationalist drama can be seen as a response also to the need felt by many for a distinctively Newfoundland style of drama, simply because none existed. However, even this motivation was rooted in a recognition of the feelings of inferiority and threatened cultural identity which were aggravated by the widescale adoption of mainland styles and attitudes in the two decades following Confederation.

To be truly representative of a region, theatre must portray the people and unique character of that region and that just wasn't happening here. Up until groups like ourselves came along; well you practically had to have an English accent to get into any of the amateur companies... They were mainly into Broadway plays, musicals, that kind of stuff, which is ok to a point but we really needed to develop our own style of drama. (Member, Rising Tide).

I think Newfoundlanders were really in danger of forgetting who they were and what their culture was all about, at least we were certainly doing everything we could to eliminate those things that made us unique in the mad rush to become like the rest of Canada. As a result we lost a lot of our own sense of worth. One of the finest accomplishments of any theatre company would be to increase a people's awareness and pride in themselves and their history. I think groups like ourselves have achieved this in many respects through the creation of distinctive and original plays... we have looked to ourselves for inspiration and found much to be proud of in the process. (Member, Mimmers Troupe).

The preceding statements by members from the three theatre companies illustrate well what Lee (1973) has referred to as "the ultimate criterion of nationality," namely, "a sense of separate identity" (cited in Watson 1979:20). Both writers were speaking in reference to the Irish dramatic movement of the turn of the century; however the parallels with

the development of nationalist theatre in Newfoundland are many and obvious.² Moreover, these passages illustrate that, as regards the stated motives and goals of the individuals concerned, a conscious and well articulated desire existed on their part to "preserve or enhance a people's national or cultural identity," thus a philosophical basis for nationalist theatre is quite evident as well (Plamenatz 1973:23-24).

In the years immediately following Confederation Newfoundland tried very hard to progress materially and catch up with the rest of Canada; large-scale schemes for social and economic development were initiated by the Smallwood government to facilitate this desire. The present generation appears to be the most critical of those choices made for the sake of progress following the province's union with Canada, and many of these criticisms have found expression in the literature, music, and theatre of contemporary Newfoundland. Much of this activity attempts to re-instate a sense of confidence and pride in a heritage long associated with "backwardness" or cultural "unsophistication." These sentiments are clearly evident in the statements expressed above by the members of the Mimmers Troupe, Codco, and Rising Tide.

For those involved in local theatre, the desire to preserve Newfoundland's distinct cultural identity arose from a recognition of the widespread cultural loss associated

with Confederation and the province's rapid "entry" into the twentieth century. Significantly, those individuals most active in nationalist theatre have all been born after Confederation and as such, have benefited in many ways from the greater economic and social prosperity ensured by that event. Thus it seems that a certain level of security, as well as the passage of time, are both requisite to the questioning of such material progress and the examining of the cultural losses accompanying it. However, as the majority of these artists are of urban and middle class--in addition to post-Confederation--origin, they are not in themselves truly representative of that heritage with which they identify, and from which they draw their dramatic inspiration. Consequently, in creating their theatrical portrayals of Newfoundland and Newfoundlanders, the members of the Mummerys Troupe, Codco, and Rising Tide have had to simultaneously reach back into Newfoundland's past, and reach out into areas not their own. Thus, what is presented on the stage is, at its most basic level, a selective interpretation of that reality (i.e., the region and its people) it endeavors to represent.

Any art form which attempts, or claims to "speak for" the people and culture of a specific region must draw much of its inspiration from the peculiarities and unique qualities of that region. Its creative impetus must reflect, and be inspired by, the special character of that area if it is to be

truly distinctive. This is as true of the theatre as it is for the visual, literary, musical, and other performing arts. Nationalist theatre is intrinsically parochial.

In times of acute national consciousness the theatre is the form of literature which makes the most direct impact on the people, becoming at times a means for propaganda but ultimately the means by which the deeper life of the people is expressed. (O'Driscoll 1971:12).

As a medium for nationalist expression, theatre has the potential of being a very powerful and effective force as well. Drama entails the blending of a multitude of diverse cultural elements; some artistic, some not, but all of which contribute to the overall effect of a specific performance upon its audience. Coalesced together on the stage are aspects of the folklore, mythology, music, dance, history, language, and even material culture of a region in a manner presented ostensibly as entertainment but which, because of this combination, extends far beyond this objective.

...For the theatre in art is the equivalent of the market place in life. At the point of renaissance-- a meeting point of the mythic and the scientific, the tribal and the commercial, a point where the past is re-evaluated and rediscovered in the light of changing values and iconoclastic discoveries, something vital and new is created. (O'Driscoll: op. cit.).

By its very nature, theatre is a synthesizing and selective depiction of a people, a time, and a place; and despite often strenuous claims to the contrary, it is not life, but rather a carefully chosen and designed fragment of it. O'Driscoll's analogy of the theatre being to art what the marketplace is to life, is an especially appropriate one. Both the marketplace and the theatre entail the coming together of numerous diverse elements, the summation of which represents a complex yet unified segment of social reality; but one which is limited by its own intrinsic character, objectives and constraints, so that this segment can represent but a special portion of that reality.

The relationship between drama and the wider social milieu is based primarily upon the ability of the former to reflect or highlight aspects of the latter in a manner that is above all else, entertaining. Theatre largely achieves this objective through the concentration on special emblematic themes and symbols that are recognizable and meaningful to its audiences. Herein lies much of theatre's strength as a persuasive force within society.

I have described the theatre of the Mummers Troupe, Codco, and Rising Tide as nationalist in character, despite the differences in style between these companies and their plays. Certain fundamental similarities exist which support my contention that theirs is essentially nationalist drama. In light of my discussion of the selective nature of

drama, the two-part question posed here asks; what aspects of the culture and heritage of Newfoundland are chosen by these companies to be incorporated into a theatrical format, and secondly, what is it about these aspects that makes them nationalist in character?

Plays and Themes

Every movement requires a clear-cut, well-articulated system of beliefs and practices and a set of myths and symbols. In nationalism, the 'mythopoeic' function is especially vital, since the doctrines embraced by nationalists are notoriously vague and even self-contradictory. Such themes, motifs, or 'myths' endow nationalism with its power and attraction--myths of 'auto-emancipation,' solidarity, ethnic 'authenticity' and self-determination. (Smith 1976:8).

It is often difficult in any art form to differentiate between the aesthetic component and the political message which is always present...For many artists in Newfoundland it is the old Newfoundland. (CBC Radio; Review of Mummies' West Moon, October 1980).

To understand what the plays of theatre companies such as Codco, The Mummies, and Rising Tide have "said" about this province and its people, one necessarily must begin by looking at the nature of the plays themselves, and particularly at the persistent and recurring themes contained within them. In this respect there is a--not altogether surprising--degree of continuity evident in the productions.

of all three groups. This thematic similarity is greatly explained in accounting for the basic sources of the motifs and images so prevalent in these productions. Not coincidentally, these are also the elements frequently incorporated in non-artistic national expressions (e.g., politics), particularly those associated with such emotional issues as patriotism, national pride and "independence" where it is to the advantage of those expounding on them that such themes have widespread and deep cultural meaning.

Further to my discussion of Newfoundland identity in the previous chapter, it should again be emphasized that there exists, in association with that identity, a vast and widely embraced body of folkloric and mythological images and concepts expressive of the distinctive nature of Newfoundland and Newfoundlanders. This popular and highly valued "resource" consists of many well known ideas and clichés concerning the character of Newfoundland's people (e.g., "happy," "friendly," "honest," "independent," etc.), aspects of its culture (e.g., "tradition-oriented," "unpretentious," "original," "in harmony with nature," etc.), and even the environment itself (e.g., "unspoiled," "tranquil," "healthy," etc.), (cf. Overton, 1979b). In addition, the cultural renaissance with its associated emphasis on the folklore, traditions, art and material culture of the province has, in recent years, added greatly to the store of knowledge concerning the special nature of

Newfoundland's culture and heritage. Such activity, especially that perpetuated in the name of "folklore"³ has generated many of its own precepts and images of "traditional" Newfoundland, quite apart from its more scholarly-oriented and ethnographic pursuits and findings. It should be mentioned that all of the aforementioned contain many elements of truth in addition to their more obvious fictitious or mythic aspects, therefore the term "stereotype" would seem to be the most appropriate here. What is particularly significant however, is the manner in which these stereotypes have been so widely accepted and popularized over the years so that their genuine "truth value" is largely irrelevant or inconsequential to their actual function.

By far the majority of the folkloric constructs and stereotypes concerning this province are associated with the sea and that cultural heritage which has been so decisively shaped by it. The preoccupation with that which is marine-oriented and traditional has engendered a whole complex of ideas and images expressive of the quintessential or "real" Newfoundland (Overton 1979b),⁴ and has frequently been the basis on which quasi-political and nostalgic positions have been adopted in support of the old, pre-Confederation, outport culture which many feel has been irreparably corrupted since the province's entry into the Canadian mainstream in 1949. Thus the symbols of the past and the concern with that which is distinctly characteristic of

Newfoundland, continue to be strong forces behind present expressions of ethnicity in the theatre.

This resource of ideas and stereotypes has proven a rich and popular source for many contemporary portrayals of Newfoundland, and forms a basic ideological component of activities as diverse as commercial advertising of local products and tourist promotion (wherein the appeal to tradition and cultural uniqueness is especially strong), to local political rhetoric where it is frequently employed to bolster loyalty, patriotic zeal, or to highlight economic and social differences between this province and the mainland. Such cultural and ideological themes and motifs appear continually in enterprises such as these, reflecting pervasive and deeply entrenched feelings; therefore it is not surprising that they should also find expression in artistic endeavors such as music and theatre as well. (Indeed this is readily apparent to anyone visiting a local folk festival or viewing a play by one of the indigenous theatre troupes). Thus we should not expect that such themes as those found in nationalist theatre should be at all unique to that activity. In fact, a large part of their appeal (and hence the appeal of nationalist theatre in general), rests on the fact of their immediate recognizability by an audience that identifies deeply with them--either positively or negatively. This point is especially brought out in the following observation by a local writer on a Codco production:

When Codco presents a skit in which Newfoundlanders are given friendliness vouchers instead of money so that tourism will thrive, our response is immediate and unpremeditated: there is a shock of recognition. (Fowler 1978:17).

In this segment of What do you want to see the Harbour For?, Codco have satirized the Department of Tourism and the stereotype (which that department was greatly responsible for promoting) of "Canada's Happy Province." In doing so they have also made a subtle statement regarding the treatment of Newfoundlanders in general by agents of the government bureaucracy and the inappropriateness of many political and economic policies. This is what Fowler so immediately recognized. Of the three companies, Codco was most concerned with satirizing and creating parodies around popular Newfoundland stereotypes such as this and as such they exhibit the most critical acceptance of those thematic images traditionally invoked to highlight the "quaintness" and rural "roots" of Newfoundland culture. Hence Codco was especially fond of satirizing such promoters of cultural stereotypes as the provincial Department of Tourism, commercials advertising "Dominion Beer," the CBC and National Film Board, as well as other artists and theatre people. However all three companies rely heavily on the use of various stereotypic elements for much of their political and humorous impact, in addition to enhancing the appeal of their productions to local audiences. Hence the

frequent use of local dialect and expressions, local mannerisms and dress, and the preponderance of the outport kitchen setting in the plays of these groups.

Time and spatial constraints do not allow a full account of the thematic and stereotypic content of each play produced by the Mummers Troupe, Codco, and Rising Tide.⁵ Instead a more general outline is provided which, together with the description of indigenous theatre provided in preceeding chapters, should present a sufficient guide to the nature of the productions of these groups.

Most often the setting for a play is working class and rural. There are exceptions of course; notably in more recent plays by Rising Tide and the Mummers Troupe where the trend has been to allot urban types ('townies') equal time. Codco's plays were always more urban oriented, albeit even their major characters were closely tied to the 'bay' through recent migration to the city or by family ties. Nonetheless the dramatic emphasis is decidedly weighted in favour of the rural sector; its people and their concerns are the primary focus.

The capital city itself (St. John's), when represented, is usually depicted by its older, downtown, inner-city (and hence more "traditional") character. The suburbs and the newer, more cosmopolitan features of the city in particular, are the favourite targets for criticism and scorn on the part of the characters of the plays. Derogatory references to

the Avalon Mall, the Arterial Road, and numerous similar large-scale commercial ventures, are quite common.

Criticism of this sort is quite often incorporated into a plot bemoaning the loss of the older indigenous features of the city in favour of modern, "imported" ones (e.g., East End Story, Das Capital).

In virtually all productions the 'bayman/townie' contrast plays an important role, based on the larger rural/urban comparison which prevades so much of the Newfoundland sociocultural reality, both past and present. This dichotomy frequently serves as a primary basis of conflict and humorous dialogue for all three companies, either as a subtle undercurrent woven throughout the plot of the play (as in most Mummers' productions), or as an overt basis for political and satirical comment (as in many Codco productions). Even when it appears to have been ignored entirely, one cannot fully appreciate the special "flavour" of an indigenous theatrical production without first understanding the pervasiveness of this distinction--in real as well as psychological terms--between urban and rural, and the implications it holds for the inhabitants of these different sectors. Thus much of the political focus of the Mummers' community oriented dramas (e.g., Buchans, Gros Mourn, Dying Hard, etc.), relies heavily on the social and economic contrasts between these areas and the urban sector for much of their dramatic impact. The problems of these communities

are highlighted primarily by outlining the discrepancies and incongruities implicit in the relationship between them and forces originating in the urban domain.

The heroic characters of the plays are typically representative of working class, rural backgrounds. Many are unemployed (a theatrical reaction to economic realities in Newfoundland), or are engaged in seasonal occupations such as fishing, logging, mining, and construction work. There is a recognizable emphasis on activities associated with the procurement and production of raw resources and therefore, "close-to-the-land" and "earthy" imagery is prevalent. Other working class occupations are popular as well, and characters playing these roles include small-time businessmen, corner store proprietors, boarding house owners, and taxi drivers. Almost without exception, such characters are portrayed and treated in a positive and sympathetic manner within the theoretical format. On the other hand, professionals, politicians, bureaucrats, and officials in any authoritative capacity (e.g., social workers, academics, civil servants, etc.), are the favored targets of criticism and mockery, providing varying degrees of conflict to the other characters of the plays. For the most part, it is the doings and misdoings of these representatives of the elite or ruling class, that receive the most critical treatment on the stage; usually it is their actions and interests (or the interests of the agencies they represent), that create the problems and frustrations experienced by

the working class, "morally upright" heroes in the plays. This is evident for example in the Mummers' Gros Mourn wherein the logic of rural planning and development is severely questioned from the perspective of the local populace of a small community, and the federal and provincial powers responsible are critically evaluated. This trend appears as well as in the Mummers' and Rising Tide's critiques of big business and government mediation in present oil and gas developments in the province (Some Slick and Filthy Rich and Easy). As usual, the future of the ordinary Newfoundlander is of primary concern in these and other productions. In the Mummers' play it is flatly proclaimed that "the big oil vulture will devour our culture"; this statement being a direct attack on the morality and motives of the oil conglomerates in addition to being a plea to nationalist sentiment. It is apparent also in Codco's satires on the views and conventions of the socially prominent and powerful, and particularly in the company's lampoons of such esteemed cultural institutions as the arts, media, the medical profession and organized religion.

The preceeding are but a sampling of the many examples available to illustrate the genre of characters and subjects that comprise the "villianous" components of the productions of these companies. These individuals along with the agencies they represent, are implicated at the root

of many of Newfoundland's social and economic ills, especially in those productions concerning specific communities and social issues which includes the majority of Mummers' plays and a significant portion of Rising Tide's. Even when the objective is purely satire, as with Codco, the targets are mostly those commonly associated with middle and upper class interests and conventions. Even satires of 'baymen' and outport life are based on those stereotypes and ideas created and perpetuated by that social element. Running throughout all the plays of Codco, Rising Tide and the Mummers Troupe, is an implicit message praising that which is perceived as representing Newfoundland's "genuine" cultural heritage, while alternately denigrating and questioning that emanating from "outside" and/or modernizing influences. In this way, local theatre forms a dramatic and highly visible "counterpoint" to those forces leading (whether deliberately or not) to the deterioration and subsequent devaluation of the original "way of life" and the identity so intimately connected to it.

I have previously stressed the significance of the relationship between Newfoundland identity and the cultural and geographical isolation of this island, and have maintained that one cannot (except for analytic purposes) separate the expression of ethnic identity from that which is perceived as representing Newfoundland culture--i.e., a reference to its traditional, rural/outport, and indigenous features.

Nationalism, as a response to threatened identity, is an overt, often political manifestation of ethnicity; an expression of sympathetic support for that which underlies that identity, and a plea for greater acceptance and pride in it. Thus theatre's emphasis on the rural, traditional, and that which is unique to Newfoundland's cultural heritage, considered together with the expressed goal (on the part of the actors concerned) of restoring or creating a dignity and confidence in these things, is undoubtedly a nationalist activity in the sense that the concept is employed here.

The plays created and performed by groups such as the Mummers Troupe, Codco, and Rising Tide, represent not only the theatrical side of the artistic and cultural renaissance in Newfoundland during the last decade, but also one that is decidedly nationalist with respect to its origins, character and goals. The genre of theatre--in all its varied manifestations--adopted by these companies is indicative of a wider desire, on the part of Newfoundland society in general, to define an identity expressive of both cultural distinctiveness and pride. Nationalist theatre represents the artistic and creative component of the trend towards introspection, self-reflection, and heightened cultural awareness that characterizes so many movements of ethnic or nationalist revival around the world. It is a reaction to those outside-originating forces associated with modernization and change, and one that is oriented towards defining a more

positive identity as well. Even as these forces threatened to erode that identity entirely, they have acted also to create a climate in Newfoundland conducive to the re-awakening of interest in and a re-emphasis on, cultural distinctiveness and ethnicity.

FOOTNOTES

1. See Appendix B for a complete list of questions addressed to my informants in anticipation of these concerns.
2. The "Irish renaissance" (Fallis 1977) of the turn of the century represents a close parallel with the Newfoundland cultural revival of the past decade--the former highlighted by the emergence of nationalist theatre under the direction of such figures as W.B. Yeats, J.M. Synge and Lady Gregory. In both cases we have the growth of powerful nationalist and artistic movements arising from confrontation with a more powerful colonial neighbour--albeit Ireland's experience with England (as opposed to Newfoundland's with Canada) has been much more politically antagonistic and violent; the relationship between these two entities is decidedly more complex. Nonetheless, both areas have been witness to a variety of sentiments and activities associated with the search for an identity (much of it through the theatre) as a response to the erosion of traditional identity in the wake of political and social change.
3. Many folklorists have written on the strong relationship between folkloric elements and nationalism in societies--especially in those undergoing rapid social and cultural change. They point out, for example, that the emergence of folklore as a distinct academic discipline is frequently associated with strong currents of ethnic and nationalist revival, wherein interest in folklore often becomes the justification as well as the driving force behind such movements (see Dorson 1978; Dundes 1977). Therefore it is no coincidence that the growth and success of the Folklore Department at Memorial University was so closely affiliated--in time and in empathy--with the wider cultural renaissance and emergence of nationalist sentiments in the province.
4. For an interesting analysis of this phenomenon see Overton (1979), "The Real Newfoundland" The Image of Newfoundland in Tourist Promotion." In this paper the author describes the process whereby rural Newfoundland has come to signify the "real" Newfoundland, and why the symbolic complex of the outport has--despite its obvious contradictory, stereotypic, and false qualities--retained its appeal and strong "truth value" to urbanites in particular over the decades.

5. Refer to Appendix A for a list of the productions of each company; most including additional descriptions and comments by actors or reviewers regarding specific plays.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

A healthy nation is as unconscious of its nationality as a healthy man of his bones. But if you break a nation's nationality it will think of nothing else but getting it set again. (G.B. Shaw, in Fallis 1977:165).

The emergence of a distinct genre of ethnic/nationalist theatre in Newfoundland has been interpreted largely within the context of the above statement. Shaw was of course speaking in reference to his own native nationalist theatre, but the parallel with Newfoundland's theatrical "awakening" is appropriate. I have described the theatrical style of the Mummers Troupe, Codco, and Rising Tide as a reactive response to the deterioration of a specific cultural heritage, and to the perceived threat to identity and cultural pride caused by profound social change. More than a mere reaction however, theatre in Newfoundland has been described as a phenomenon devoted to re-asserting the ethnic character of the region which gave rise to it. Furthermore, the flourishing of ethnic theatre during the past decade has not been interpreted from the perspective of an isolated or separate occurrence, but rather as an integral part of a much wider movement--the cultural renaissance--the consequences of which can be perceived in virtually all aspects of the contemporary cultural milieu. To this end, it has been demonstrated (see

Chapter One) that the historical and intellectual "roots" of both alternate theatre and the cultural renaissance, are in effect, indistinguishable.

Throughout this thesis I have deliberately employed the concepts of ethnicity and nationalism in a somewhat interchangeable manner; inasmuch as these concepts apply to the theatre, they are both interdependent and mutually enhancing perspectives of analysis. The nationalism of theatre companies such as the Mummers Troupe, Codco, and Rising Tide is expressed through the ethnic character of their productions. What they are proclaiming, above all else, is that Newfoundland possesses a unique and rich cultural heritage, worthy--indeed demanding--of dramatic exploration and presentation. It was the recognition of this heritage--primarily locally, but on a national scale as well--that comprised the prime motivating philosophy underlying the activities of the alternate theatre companies.

In celebrating Newfoundland's cultural heritage via the medium of theatre, these companies have consequently promoted the ethnicity of the region (i.e., that sense of peoplehood or uniqueness referred to in Chapter Three), and in doing so have given overt expression to those sentiments of cultural pride and identity so profoundly entrenched in that heritage. Thus in returning to the original definition of nationalism in Chapter Three as, "the desire to preserve or enhance a people's national or cultural identity"

(Plamenatz, op. cit.), it is maintained that this then, is the nationalism of alternate theatre. It is not the only form of nationalist expression evident in Newfoundland at present however, nor is the ethnic identity promoted by the alternate theatre groups one that is embraced by all Newfoundlanders.

It bears repeating that the portrayals of Newfoundland culture and the identity associated with its indigenous, outport features via the theatrical productions of the Mimmers Troupe, Codco, and Rising Tide, are not interpretations which are universally valued or accepted by all Newfoundlanders. In many respects, such a traditionalist-oriented identity is a phenomenon or "luxury" of a predominantly middle-class, urbanite element of the population who possess both the financial and "intellectual" resources to "want to be like baymen" or "return to their rural roots." To individuals directly engaged in the pragmatics of survival in an economically depressed environment, as are most working-class and rural dwellers in Newfoundland, this ideological return to the past is quite incomprehensible as it represents, or may appear to represent, a regression rather than a progressive move towards social and economic security. Thus an essentially negative, or at best neutral response to ethnic theatre is understandably apparent among this segment of the population. Likewise there are a significant number of individuals directly involved in local theatre who reject

the genre of drama described as ethnic, maintaining that at best; it proves self-limiting and redundant through time, while at worst, it enhances the more negative stereotypes about the province. The foregoing is not meant to suggest that either of the above groups are any less nationalist or lacking a Newfoundland identity in any respect, but rather that the expression of that identity often rests on quite divergent interpretations, ranging from those associated with the meaning of art (or theatre) in general, to the much more vague perceptions underlying the nature of identity itself. It is not my purpose here to analyze the nature of such perceptions, but rather to point out the existence of various points of view with respect to the theatre, Newfoundland identity, and its expression.

Significantly, the ethnic identity implicit in the philosophy of alternate theatre, is one which is widely embraced by individuals from outside of the province--the so-called "CFA" or "come-from-away" element--who perceive it as stemming from a unique heritage which they feel should be cherished and preserved. Quite frequently it is the non-native segment of the population who become the most vociferous proponents of traditional and indigenous elements of Newfoundland culture. Notably is is these individuals also (and here I would include as well the younger generation of Newfoundlanders born since Confederation), who have not experienced the stigma of a Newfoundland heritage. Prior to

the "enlightenment" of the cultural renaissance, the pressure to become more like mainland Canada was particularly compelling in Newfoundland, and any strong identification with the past (among the young especially) was likely to be perceived as backward or eccentric. For the present generation of artists and the 'CEA' element, the dilemma of adopting a positive identity from this past was never as ideologically conflicting a process. This factor is succinctly expressed by one non-native actor in the following:

I know there are those who don't really like our brand of theatre; they may feel threatened or insulted by it...Newfoundlanders are very sensitive in this respect. Personally those feelings of colonialism and inferiority were never a conflict for me, so perhaps I haven't been able to relate to them in the same way that Newfoundlanders have....But I still maintain that one of the most important tasks of the theatre is to increase a people's pride and awareness in their own heritage, and there is so much here to be proud of... (Member, Rising Tide).

Indeed the significance of the role played by "newcomers" in promoting the indigenous character of a region has been widely recognized by social scientists. A particularly applicable analogy is found in Sinclair and Westhues' analysis of a conflict between "pro-development" and "anti-development" factions in a rural Ontario town during the early 1970's (Sinclair and Westhues 1974). In

this case it was the newcomer element that formed a committee opposing the development of a modern apartment complex, and appearing in many other respects in favour of preserving the traditional character of the community in question. The influence of such outside-originating pressure groups is perceived by Sinclair and Westhues as a common occurrence throughout North America in general where "refugees from urban life" (Ibid., p. 60) settle in comparatively under-developed area and seek to preserve its unique and traditional character--in essence those elements that have been destroyed or seriously transformed in their own highly urbanized environments. With some modification to the local context, such is the case with 'CFA' promotion of the Newfoundland heritage, which manifests itself in ways from the very subtle (e.g., drinking local brews or patronizing indigenous arts and crafts) to the more extreme, such as the syndrome of the "professional Newfoundlander." The label is a facetious reference to those non-native and (usually) urban-dwelling Newfoundlanders who go to great lengths to be perceived as "real" Newfoundlanders--expressing this identity through mannerisms in speech, dress, taste in music, and so forth--and therefore strongly identify with that which is traditional or rural in character.

Such an identity is likely to be rejected by those individuals whose interests lie not so much in cultural or artistic pursuits, as in more commercially oriented enterprises

wherein economic success ensures high social status--and therefore a valued identity as well. The underlying rationale for "economic" nationalism is quite distinct from that associated with the cultural form. However, both are reflective of socio-cultural change and the search for a valued identity. A strong desire to emulate and "keep up" with the mainland persists in Newfoundland to balance this "return to our roots" philosophy implicit in cultural nationalism. An appropriate parallel to this situation is also examined in Sinclair and Westhues (Ibid.) within the context of the conflict between "materialists" and "intellectuals" vis-a-vis the issue of community development. Although the authors themselves do not employ these terms--preferring the more objective "pro-development" and "anti-development" instead--the choice of "materialist" and "intellectual" by the newspaper media in the community of study, and their recognition among the local population, is significant and suggestive of economically motivated as opposed to artistically oriented expression of community pride and identity.

In Newfoundland, we have agencies such as The St. John's Heritage Foundation--an organization dedicated to the preservation of the historic architecture and character of St. John's--frequently in conflict with prominent entrepreneurs and city council over the contentious issue of downtown planning and development. Again, a significant

portion of the individuals active in groups such as this, are non-native Newfoundlanders. General public interest in the issue is widespread too and forms a favourite topic of debate on the local open-line radio shows and in the printed media for example, where pro and anti-development factions are as evident here as in the community of Sinclair and Westhues' research.

Economic nationalism manifests itself in pride in being able to compete successfully with mainland Canada; the implicit ideology being that Newfoundland is equal to any other participant in the modern, industrial world. Such a status is exhibited by the more visible indicators of social and economic progress such as high-rise buildings, super-highways, modern commercial and business developments, and so forth. A contradiction is not necessarily inherent between this form of nationalism and the sense of a unique Newfoundland identity referred to earlier, however. It is but a different expression of that identity, asserting itself in different, but appropriate ways. Advocates of economic nationalism will characteristically take pride in the province's ability to adapt the cosmopolitan features of the North American mainstream to the Newfoundland context, while at the same time maintaining--indeed vigorously defending--a measure of cultural and psychological distance from the rest of Canada. A similar argument can be applied to those proponents of established or non-Newfoundland oriented theatre;

their pursuit of these artistic forms is not indicative of their being any less nationalist or lacking in Newfoundland identity, but rather as a means of asserting that the province possesses the talent and resources to successfully perform drama of an internationally acclaimed calibre. Indeed the latter kind of production is often much more critically reviewed, having well recognized standards of presentation and interpretation established already, unlike the more innovative nature of alternate local theatre.

Both economic and cultural nationalism may be interpreted as reactions to cultural loss. At a very basic level of explanation, economic nationalism seeks to replace what has been lost with modern indicators of cultural status and valued identity, while cultural nationalism seeks to regain what has been lost through a re-emphasis on the traditional, outport, pre-Confederation heritage and the identity associated with it. However, neither are mutually exclusive phenomena. Economic nationalism does not imply a total rejection of the traditional cultural heritage--in fact it may be valued highly. Nor does cultural nationalism necessitate a complete renunciation of all that is modern or not indigenous to Newfoundland. Many of the techniques and political philosophies of local theatre companies of the alternate genre are the direct or indirect results of outside influences and experiences with theatre on an international scale. Insofar as both modes of nationalism are ultimately

expressive of cultural integrity and pride, they are quite compatible.

A certain degree of vagueness or ambiguity is inherent in both economic and cultural nationalism. This is because both entail mixed feelings and often quite contradictory attitudes towards Newfoundland culture and the identity associated with it. The ethnic identity expressed in nationalist theatre reflects a rather ambivalent attitude towards traditional Newfoundland culture for example; this is revealed in the many contradictory elements frequently interwoven in dramatized portrayals of Newfoundland and Newfoundlanders. Depending on the nature of a specific play or, as is more often the case, the company performing it, there are themes of independence, self-sufficiency, and cultural "purity" coinciding with messages of exploitation, dependence, and demoralization, yet both interpretations are perceived as representing the pre-Confederation reality. The historical realities of economic exploitation and social deprivation are conveniently overlooked or played down in the more pristine portrayals of Newfoundland, while they may be of primary emphasis in plays dedicated to making adverse social or political commentary. In one play the Mummers Troupe may portray the outport Newfoundlander as an industrious, God-fearing, and honest "salt of the earth" type, while Codco's depiction would likely be that of a lazy, ignorant, morally deficient individual. Both portrayals are essentially stereotypes (and widely

accepted ones as well), and both contain certain elements of truth; the embracement of one does not necessarily demand the rejection of the other. Both depictions are accepted and legitimate components of local drama. This ambivalence is often reflected in critical reaction to the plays of the Mummers Troupe, Codco, and Rising Tide. In one production for example, Rising Tide was highly praised for one actor's portrayal of "the perfect bayman, tied to his local 'groc.' and 'conf.'¹ and his Charlie Pride records [which] is hilarious from beginning to end" (CBC Radio Noon, June 11, 1980). A few months later the same reviewer censured that company for depicting the heroine of another play as "a caricature...a stereotype...a bayman stepin-fetchit...and not the image of the woman from the bay to send to the often all too ignorant mainland" (CBC Radio Noon, February 27, 1981). Such reactions are common and typify the ambiguity with which all peoples alternately perceive themselves and their cultures, both in ideological and expressive terms.

The seemingly contradictory features of nationalist theatre in Newfoundland are characteristic of nationalist movements in general, wherein the drive to be unique, and to be perceived by others as so, finds itself in conflict with how to define that uniqueness. The ethnic identity expressed in local theatre represents one interpretation of the quality and character of Newfoundland culture and the "sense of peoplehood" that distinguishes and separates Newfoundlanders

from other Canadians.

The Theatre--Present and Future Trends

It's not enough to create a show just because it happens to be about Newfoundland. That may have worked in the past but I think we have to go beyond that now. Audiences have shown us that they accept and appreciate locally-oriented theatre, so there is room now to expand in other directions. (Member, Rising Tide).

You can't continue the same old trend developed years ago if you want to remain inventive. There was a time and a place for the "Newfoundland thing" but theatre must avoid the trap of falling into the formula of using the same characters and subjects over and over. (Former Member, Mummers Troupe).

Contemporary developments in local theatre indicate that Newfoundland drama has indeed entered into yet another stage of introspection and re-evaluation as suggested by the above. In many ways this transformation mirrors the initial bursting of theatrical activity occurring with the cultural renaissance in the early 1970's, however the present variation is of course characterized by quite different ideals and motivations than those which spawned the original flourishing of locally-oriented theatre. The present change in directions is reflected not only in the more diverse nature of the productions undertaken by the Mummers Troupe, Codco,

and Rising Tide companies and in the increasing involvement of their members in other theatrically related activities, (The turn to scripted and established plays and the participation of actors in television and radio as well as in the productions of other companies has been noted in Chapter Two);² but also in the emergence and growing popularity of other theatre companies such as Theatre Newfoundland and Labrador, Sheilagh's Brush, Rare Vintage, and Solo Theatre. The repertoires of these groups include everything from Shakespeare and Newfoundland folklore, to Victorian music hall, Broadway shows, and English and American comedies and dramatic plays--in fact the whole range of theatrical material encompassed in the works of the prominent North American and European playwrights of the last century.³

Theatre-goers in St. John's have the opportunity now to choose from a much greater variety of productions and styles than was available a few years ago. Indeed it appears as if a second theatrical revival has occurred in the province since the beginning of this decade. In many respects this development has been greatly influenced by the alternate theatrical style pioneered by groups such as the Mummers Troupe, Codco, and Rising Tide. The nature of present dramatic activity has evolved largely because of the firm establishment of indigenous drama by them in the first place. Having laid a solid artistic foundation upon which to build,

these and other companies are now in a position to experiment and expand in other theatrical directions. With respect to the alternate groups, this is a change dictated as much by necessity as by choice. The emergence of a more sophisticated and discriminating theatre audience--in turn largely the result of the lively theatrical climate sustained by the cultural renaissance--has resulted in subtle but significant public pressure with regard to both the quality and diversity of local theatre. This is a demand which all local theatre companies must endeavor to meet; the alternate groups, by expanding their repertoires accordingly, the newer companies by offering a more cosmopolitan mixture of styles and productions. Finally a great deal of the impetus for change within the alternate genre has come from the actors themselves, who voice concerns regarding the prudence of continuing the Newfoundland-oriented format to the exclusion of other forms:

just because a particular style has been successful in the past is not always sufficient reason to continue that style and not experiment with others. This is especially true for art where I think there is a real danger of stagnation if one is not willing to diversify and to reach a broader audience. People will no doubt continue to expect and appreciate Newfoundland plays, and we will continue to meet that demand, but at the same time we must be willing to be flexible and adapt to other demands as well...
(Member, Rising Tide).

Despite the changes that have occurred in the wider

theatrical climate and in the repertoires of the Mummers Troupe, Codco,⁴ and Rising Tide, an emphasis on a Newfoundland--oriented format continues to be a primary one on the productions of these companies. All three groups continue to create and perform material of specific local origin and interest. The creative styles of improvisation and collective creation and the predominance of local subject matter remain the distinguishing trademarks of these companies. It would be quite premature to predict the demise of either of these strategies; rather it seems reasonable to assume that the alternate genre of theatre will remain central in the dramatic offerings of these companies as well as popular among their audiences for some time to come.

One of Rising Tide's most recent productions, Joey (a play based upon the life and times of former premier Joseph R. Smallwood), enjoyed a highly acclaimed performance in Toronto, in addition to its well received provincial tour. In June 1982 Joey was filmed by CBC Television in St. John's for national airing in the 1982-83 season. The play was conceived and performed following closely in the style of documentary historical drama pioneered by the Mummers Troupe in the early seventies. That company's popular production, Makin Time with the Yanks, recently opened for a second and equally successful run in the province. It is interesting to note that the most recent undertaking by Mummer's director Chris Brookes, is the direction of the CBC Radio soap opera

"Oil in the Family" here in St. John's. This is a topical and rather controversial program dealing with contemporary social and political issues in the province⁵--an experiment quite compatible with the Mummers' earlier commitment to "relevant" and "useful" theatre. Members of Codco continue to be active in local theatre and related areas. Andy Jones recently played the lead roles in Rare Vintage's production of A Christmas Carol (a musical stage version of Dickens' work), and in the Resource Centre for the Arts-sponsored production of Shakespeare's The Tempest. The latter--also referred to as The Newfoundland Tempest--represents a particularly interesting departure for local theatre in that it blends the traditional version with a Newfoundland historical and cultural setting in an effort to inject renewed relevance into Shakespeare's original. Another former member of Codco, Mary Walsh, presently plays the lead role in CBC's popular television series Up at Ours, now in its second season, in addition to various acting and directing pursuits. She recently directed the Mummers' play Makin' Time with the Yanks, acting in the second revival of that show, in addition to directing the earlier Terras de Bacalhau (a Resource Centre for the Arts production), which also had a successful run on the mainland in addition to its local tour. The other members of Codco still active locally, Greg Malone and Tommy Sexton, continue to perform with the Wonderful Grand Band, providing the comical acting element of that combination musical/theatrical group in its live as

well as televised performances on CBC's WGB, also in its second season. This team's repertoire is quite vast, however the major emphasis is clearly on local settings and topics including a well known cast of characters representing the ordinary to the locally and even internationally prominent. As in former Codco productions, parodies of social norms and institutions such as the church, the arts and the media continue to dominate topically and the popular skit format remains the favourite vehicle of dramatic expression in their performances.

Thus the continuing development and performance of plays and theatrically-related material reflecting the various historical and contemporary facets of Newfoundland culture seems inevitable given the unquestionable and widespread popularity of that genre--a popularity evident among not only Newfoundlanders, but other Canadians as well. Newfoundland theatre is likely to remain a solidly entrenched regional form, however it will no doubt become increasingly "balanced" with the more universally performed varieties outlined previously.

In addition to these obvious changes in the variety of local theatre, a more subtle transformation has occurred within the productions of the Mummies Troupe and Rising Tide companies. The history and form of alternate theatre since the earliest productions of the Mummies has been characterized by a gradual shift from the initial mood of parochialism and

pro-Newfoundland fervor, to the more "relaxed" tone evident in the current performances of these companies. The Mummers Troupe have shown perhaps the greatest variation in this respect, in going from the very critical and politically-toned West Moon to the relative levity of Makin' Time for example.

Indeed the new attitude evident in the theatre suggests that both groups have become much more comfortable with their own ethnicity so as not to express it in a self-conscious or exaggerated fashion anymore. Less prominent also is the theatrical romanticism of Newfoundland culture of the sort described by one actor as "superficial" and "simplistic"; a style epitomized in the term "romantic baymanism"--a phrase increasingly employed by those critical of the tendency to praise and glorify all that is traditional or unique to Newfoundland. What has emerged instead is a more self-critical and introspective style in those productions of the Mummers Troupe and Rising Tide that remain politically pointed. Increasingly these plays have focused upon what is "out of order in our own house" or "Newfoundland's own form of home-grown imperialism" (Member, Mummers Troupe). Rising Tide's recent production of Joey is an example of this latter trend.

There was a time I think when you could create almost any kind of play about Newfoundland and it would get standing ovations... This is understandable but dangerous, I mean there's not very much sophistication in the attitude that Newfoundland is the greatest while Canada is the enemy, is there? We must be more realistic than that. (Member, Rising Tide).

Codco however, was always much more wary of any theatrical approach seeking to "praise Newfoundland and damn the Mainland" in any one-dimensional manner (Member, Codco). Their plays typically envinced a kind of cynical and self-mocking attitude towards romantic portrayals of Newfoundland and Newfoundlanders, a style that remains prevalent in the contemporary projects of that company and its members. The change in approach evident in the present productions of the Mummers Troupe and Rising Tide, concurs with the widespread feeling of "confidence and pride" emerging largely out of the creative and social impact of the cultural renaissance which in turn has lessened much of the pressure on the arts to join the pro-Newfoundland "bandwagon" of the 1970's. This in itself has made way for renewed evaluation of the theatrical styles developed then.

The tide has definitely turned in that we have moved from a general feeling of insecurity and inferiority about ourselves to a mood of confidence and pride. The arts have contributed tremendously in bringing about this change, but sometimes I wonder if the pendulum has not perhaps swung too far? (Member, Mummers Troupe).

In reference to minority or nativistic nationalist movements Symmons-Symonolewicz notes that one of the important consequences of the "achievement of stability" by any such movement is that which involves "at least a minimal recognition of the national identity and sentiments which a given

movement represents" (1968:45-46). Within the local context it appears that the recognition--on the part of actors and audiences alike--of the ethnic dimension of Newfoundland culture and identity, has played a major role in the successes of the Mummerys Troupe, Codco, and Rising Tide. Indeed the nationalist phase of local theatre appears to have "peaked" insofar as its potential for creating greater awareness and pride in the cultural heritage has been reached to an extent surpassing the expectations of even the actors themselves. Nonetheless this accomplishment has not been accepted blindly and without question on their part.

If all one has to do now to create a successful play is to do just anything about Newfoundland and speak with a Newfoundland accent, well that's a sad state of affairs. There has to be some depth to our theatre rather than letting it become a pat on the back for Newfoundland motherhood...that's a rather simplistic use of nationalism really. (Member, Mummerys Troupe).

The above is expressive of the type of re-evaluation companies like the Mummerys Troupe and Rising Tide Theatre have been subjecting themselves to recently. The "simplistic" nationalism of the seventies is no longer so patently central to the inspiration and production of plays about Newfoundland due to the establishment of a solid artistic and ideological framework within which sentiments of national pride and identity have found both expression and support. In addition, the banner

of nationalism, in the form of a "Newfoundland--first" attitude has increasingly become adopted by provincial politicians, especially in their exchanges with the federal government; thus adding considerable weight and visibility to the often more subtle nationalism of the arts in Newfoundland.

Evident too, is a gradual shift from the overtly political style of theatre which characterized the earlier productions of the Mummers Troupe and later, Rising Tide; associated with this change has been the loss of a certain degree of idealism as well.

we were very idealistic in the beginning--out to change the world and all that--but even radicals must make compromises in order to live. I regret we haven't accomplished much in the way of long-term change or development of the kind hinted at in some of our plays, but life is full of contradictions. It's the same with theatre. (Member, Mummers Troupe).

Who can solve the problems of the world in an hour and a half on the stage? Although it may seem that we strive for this at times, it just doesn't work that way. People see you to be entertained; rarely if ever, do they leave a show with the intent of bringing about change or reform in society. (Member, Rising Tide).

The preceeding is included not to diminish the accomplishments of the alternate theatre companies in any

respect, nor to suggest that they have significantly compromised their artistic principles in developing as they have. Rather, the implication of the above is that alternate theatre has reached a sort of "plateau" or stage of maturity, from which the next logical stage of re-evaluation and experimentation has now begun. Having developed a solid regional theatre tradition, it is necessary now for groups like the Mummers Troupe, Codco, and Rising Tide, to carry on that tradition, but to do so in a way that allows for different styles and different presentations.

if we don't remain inventive and open to fresh approaches from time to time, then we are defeating both ourselves as actors, as well as the nature of theatre and art itself... Theatre can't stagnate, no more than the society around it can. Imagination and creativity are the central facets of the dramatic process--one play can be interpreted in as many ways as there are companies to perform it. As actors we must be willing to face the challenge of performing as wide a range of material as possible. (Member, Rising Tide).

Alternate theatre has contributed significantly to raising the level of artistic and cultural awareness in Newfoundland. The Mummers Troupe, Codco, and Rising Tide theatre companies have demonstrated by their efforts over the last ten years that the rich and unique heritage of this province can be successfully transformed into a vibrant and distinctively ethnic theatrical tradition--a tradition comparable to that found anywhere in the world.

There now exists a rich body of indigenous drama equal or superior to anything else in Canada or the United States... This, I feel is our greatest accomplishment. Most important of all is that we have looked to ourselves for inspiration, and found much to be proud of in the process. (Member, Mummers Troupe).

FOOTNOTES

1. 'Groc.' and 'Conf.' is a frequently employed local abbreviation for Grocery and Confectionary, the term by which most corner neighbourhood and small outport general stores are commonly referred.
2. It should be noted that pragmatic considerations play a significant role in this respect as well. In order to make a substantial living at all, those who choose to work as professional actors in this province must be willing to "freelance" their talents as mentioned on a regular basis; such is the nature of artistic funding in general.
3. Some examples indicating the variety of theatrical productions that have been presented in the province throughout the past year include those of Theatre Newfoundland and Labrador--a Stephenville-based company having perhaps the widest repertoire of any group in the province--among these such classics as Hedda Gabler, Oliver!, The Miracle Worker, The Taming of the Shrew, Godspell, and an original production based on the writings of local humourist Ted Russell titled Tales from Pigeon Inlet; in addition Rare Vintage have presented such works as A Christmas Carol and Cabaret, while Solo Theatre have offered P.S. Your Cat is Dead and The Owl and the Pussycat.
4. It has been noted previously that Codco, while still recognized as a legal entity, has not been active in the past few years as a company as such, therefore changes in this instance refer to those made by individual members of that company. In addition, as the unique style and character of Codco continues to be perpetuated in the activities of its members, there is justification in the contemporary use of the company name.
5. See also Atlantic Insight, (June 1982), "Can Michael and Linda and Ches find happiness?" p. 20.

APPENDIX A

Major Productions

The following is not intended to be a complete listing and description of all the productions of the Mimmers Troupe, Codco, and Rising Tide; nor of all theatrical endeavors that may have participated in either as individuals, or collectively--as in co-productions with other theatre groups, productions of the Resource Centre for the Arts and the LSPU Hall Lunchtime Theatre series, or in radio and television. This listing represents the major, well-known productions of each company for which information was available at the time of writing, and/or which I was able to view personally throughout the period of research. Unless otherwise indicated, the plays are the collective creations of the company performing them. Subtitles, where used, are given in parentheses.

The Mummers Troupe

1. Traditional Mummers Christmas Play (December 1972)

An adaptation of the only known folk drama indigenous to Newfoundland. The play itself is associated with the old custom of 'mumming' (or 'janneying') practiced in the outports wherein the participants disguise themselves and visit the various households in the community performing and playing pranks in exchange for refreshments from their hosts throughout the Christmas season. The main characters of the play include King George, the Turkish Knight, Doctor Hennesey, Beelzelbub, Father Christmas and his wooden horse, Old Ball; the drama centres around a rhyming exchange between them that has changed very little in format since the origin of the play many centuries ago. The Mummers play has been performed annually by the Mummers Troupe at Christmas time since the formation of the company in 1972. In keeping with tradition, the group has frequently performed the play in private homes and in such other impromptu settings as shopping areas, schools, and nightclubs around the city, often to the surprise of the persons gathered in these places.

2. Newfoundland Night (The Newfoundland History Show)
(July-August 1973)

A theatrical version of Newfoundland's history from pre-discovery days to the present, containing elements of slapstick comedy, puppetry, dance, rock music, and satire. Newfoundland Night was created by the Mummers Troupe to "interpret history not from the viewpoint of aristocratic heroes, but from the point of view of the ordinary Newfoundland fisherman" (Member, Mummers Troupe). This was the first production of the company to tour widely over the island, performing in such relatively isolated areas as Change Islands and the South coast, which previously had no exposure to live theatre.

3. Gros Mourn (August 1973)

A theatrical documentation of the national park development on the province's west coast which focused upon the perspectives of the communities and residents concerned. Gros Mourn was created by the Mummers Troupe in response to requests from the people encountered while touring that area with Newfoundland Night. The strong feelings expressed by residents regarding the effects the park would have upon their lives and communities prompted the company to portray their dilemma theatrically.

"Gros Mourn was perhaps our most politically successful or "useful" show in that it prompted the people of the area to unite in a public demonstration to protest and opening of the park." (Member, Mummers Troupe)

Even though ultimately successful in the above regard, this play served to illustrate the potential of theatre in affecting public awareness and action about an issue its members feel strongly about.

4. Buchans, a Mining Town (Company Town) (1974)

A community drama based in the town of Buchans in central Newfoundland. This play focused on the role of the major industry in that town--ASARCO Mines--and the problems faced by the residents due to the threatened closure of the mine. Buchans also highlighted the hardships and struggles of a small community caught up in the battle against union troubles, economic and political strife and industrial disease.

"a portrait of a community owned by a multi-national corporation and organized by an international union, as told by the 2,500 people who make this dusty mining town their home" (note on program cover for play).

5. East End Story (1975)

A theatrical depiction of the unique character of east-end (downtown) St. John's, its features and occupants; e.g., the traffic cop at Prescott Street, the Portuguese sailors, the vagrants and winos, the corner stores and their proprietors, the many taverns of the area, and such well known landmarks as Bailey's Newsstand--all of which combine to imbue the region with a quality all of its own. The play

is a subtle plea for the preservation of the downtown area despite increasing modernizing and cosmopolitan influences.

6. Dying Hard (The Story of St. Lawrence) (1975)

A somber adaptation of Elliott Leyton's book of the same name (Leyton 1975). This play focused on the tragedy of the miners of St. Lawrence afflicted with silicosis from working in the flourspar mines, and the effects felt by their families and the community in general because of the disease. Dying Hard takes a very critical look at agencies of the government such as the Workmen's Compensation Board and the Department of Social Services, which, although organized to provide assistance to unemployed and disabled workers, frequently provide greater hardships and frustrations than the disease itself due to the impersonal and bureaucratic nature of their structures and policies.

"Dying Hard was undoubtedly our most serious show--it was a very intense experience for all of us. The subject matter was grim and there was little room for humour in that production because we felt we had to portray the outrage and frustration felt by the victims of silicosis. They suffered--not only from the disease itself which was bad enough--but also because of the failure of government policies to come to terms with the problem of industrial disease." (Member, Mummers Troupe)

7. I.W.A.: The Newfoundland Loggers Strike (November 1975)

This plays tells the story of the infamous 1959 strike of the Newfoundland local of the International Woodworkers of America (I.W.A.)--regarded by many historians to be the province's most important and violent strike ever. The story focuses on the situation of the loggers and their families, with criticism aimed at the businessmen and politicians involved on the other side of the conflict. The role played by Joseph Smallwood (then Premier) in breaking the strike and undermining the power of the union--an action he is still bitterly remembered for by many of the participants and sympathizers concerned--is especially highlighted in the production

"...a story vital to Newfoundland Labour history and yet neglected by historians, has come to light in an old union hall in St. John's."
(Evening Telegram, November 6, 1975)

8. (What's that got to do with) the Price of Fish? (1976)

The Price of Fish was the first of the Mummers' productions to tour nationally. This play entailed a politically-inclined depiction of Newfoundland as "Canada's Third World," highlighting the economic and social woes of the province caused by "attacks of foreign capital on natural resources, invasions of mainland Trojan horses bearing welfare gifts, transplants to Toronto, and many more unhealthy assaults on the New-found-land" (from Program cover

for play). The Price of Fish was sponsored by Oxfam.

9. Irregular Entertainment (1976)

A humorous look at "everything you ever wanted to know about bingo and its patrons, and a lot you didn't" (Member, Mummers Troupe). This play focused on one of Newfoundland's most popular forms of social gathering and entertainment, "the bingo," in which it seems that economic motives (i.e., the lure of the grand prize or "jackpot") are secondary to the recreational and social aspects of the game for its regular patrons.

10. The Bard of Prescott Street (September 1977)

A portrait of the life and times of one of Newfoundland's most well-known and popular balladeers, Johnny Burke. This play consists of a series of humorous and musical vignettes depicting the songs and theatrical parodies of Burke--the 'Bard of Prescott Street'--who is perhaps best remembered for writing "The Kelligrews Soiree."

11. Weather Permitting/Silakepat Kissiane (Glimpses of the Northern Labrador Coast) (November 1977)

An enlightening portrayal of the lifestyle and problems of the people of northern Labrador, an area traditionally ignored by the rest of Newfoundland except for exploitative purposes. The title of the play is evocative of the fatalistic attitude that prevails among the residents of the area, whose

lives are governed in many respects by the harsh and unpredictable climate of coastal Labrador. Transportation to and from settlements and hunting grounds, and the arrivals of passenger and freight planes and boats, are all determined on the basis of "weather permitting." The political content of this play focuses on the destruction of the traditional culture and the unenlightened treatment of the region by agents of the Newfoundland government. The play takes a satirical twist when, near the end, a group of disgruntled Labradorians lays claim to the entire Avalon Peninsula, destroying everything therein--including "Andrew Crosbie's traditional trapping grounds"--and otherwise upsetting the cultural fabric of St. John's. Laments Crosbie, upon seeing the destruction of the downtown commercial district: "I've trapped customers there for many years, my father trapped customers there before me. My brother trapped customers there before he went into politics..." Weather Permitting ends with a plea from the Labrador Inuit Association addressed at other Newfoundlanders and Canadians in general, urging them to respect and become more aware of the region they have traditionally regarded as a resource to exploit, while ignoring the consequences of their activities on the people and culture of Labrador.

12. They Club Seals, Don't They? (March 1978)

This was perhaps the most controversial of the Mummers' productions--due to the nature of its subject matter--and received widespread acclaim as well as criticism on its national tour to present "the Newfoundland side of the sealing debate." By the spring of 1978 the issue had become what many felt to be an "annual seal circus, complete with movie stars, media people, journalists, do-gooders, and cynical opportunists" (Member, Mummers Troupe). The Troupe's primary motive in doing the play was to attempt to counteract the imbalance in the attention given to the hunt as a result of the influence of such "heavy-weights" as the international press. The company chose to focus instead on the plight of the Newfoundland fisherman, often forgotten in the heated debates over ecology, economy and the humaneness of the seal hunt. They Club Seals, was sponsored by the Provincial Government and received the most extensive media coverage of all the Mummers' productions. The show included an elaborate press and program kit--with drawings by the Canadian political cartoonist Aislin--no doubt in anticipation of the reaction the play would receive on its national tour. One of the most unfavorable reviews came from Gina Mallet of the Toronto Star, whose comments included the following:

All the Mummers could come up with was ridicule, often tasteless, of the anti-seal crusade, and a patronizing and sentimental attitude towards the Newfie fisherfolk who were portrayed as Rousseau-esque rustics. (Quoted in The Nfld. Herald, March 8, 1978.)

On the other hand, Jamie Portman (then Canada's national theatre critic), is quoted in the Evening Telegram in praising the production as "a powerful antidote to the poisonous mass hysteria being mounted annually against the Newfoundland Seal Hunt" (Evening Telegram, March 25, 1978).

13. Stars in the Sky Morning (September 1978)

A play about Newfoundland women inspired by the words and lives of the women of the north-west coast of the island. The cast of Stars in the Sky Morning consists of only two actors, who portray a variety of female characters depicting the joys and satisfactions, frustrations and hardships, of life on the coast.

...people everywhere should have an opportunity to see a true picture of one aspect of Newfoundland life, but I think Newfoundlanders--especially those from the outports would get even more out of it--a strong sense of identification and yes, pride in a culture that in many ways seemed to thrive on hardship. (Evening Telegram, October 4, 1978).

14. Some Slick (A Musical Fantasy of Offshore Oil) (February 1979)

A future-oriented depiction of the anticipated "boom and--bust" occurring in the wake of offshore oil and gas development in Newfoundland. Some Slick focuses on the predicted social and cultural costs of oil exploration and economic prosperity to the province and critically evaluates the respective roles played by the oil companies, the

adventurers and entrepreneurs, the federal and provincial governments and the individual Newfoundlanders involved in the exploration and development of offshore oil. Environmental and labour problems are highlighted as well, and the future of the ordinary Newfoundland fisherman and the destruction of the traditional culture and economy represent the primary concerns of the play. The general thrust of Some Slick is summarized in the musicale finale to the show, which paints a rather cynical picture of the consequences of oil and gas exploitation unless Newfoundlanders prepare themselves in advance for the changes to come.

It's a mistake, it's been shown
the oilmen haven't know what they talk about.
They don't talk to us squarely
they won't deal with us fairly
it's all round-about.
They'll try to force us
to give up our resources, some quick,
The big oil vulture will devour our culture
some slick.

Well there's no way around it
as soon as they've found it
they'll be movin' in.
It means money--we could use it
but if we abuse it we'll be done in.
Let 'em know how you feel
cause it's so damn unreal to be some slick.
We've got to take care
we've got to beware
some slick...

(c. The Mummers Troupe, 1979).

15. Just a Postal (April 1980)

Just a Postal represents one of the Mummers Troupe's most experimental and unique plays to date. This production

entails an impressionistic portrayal of the nostalgic postcard series created by Newfoundland lithograph artist, Frank LaPointe. Included in the play are elements of music, dance and mime, interspersed with narration and a visual presentation (slides projected on a screen behind the performers), to depict the various scenes and events from the postcard series. In retrospect, Just a Postal was one of the company's least successful productions, both in terms of audience and critical response. This was primarily due to that play's departure from the Mummers' established style of plot-oriented and documentary drama.

16. The Christian Brothers (September 1980)

This play represents another experimental venture for the Mummers Troupe, but one which was quite favourably received in comparison to Just a Postal however. The Christian Brothers is a one-man show which featured Chris Brookes in the role of a Roman Catholic Christian Brother--a prominent figure in the denominational school system of Newfoundland. Although based on an original script by Australian playwright Ron Blair, the play was modified only slightly to fit the local context and highlights a day in the life of an Irish Christian Brother--a teacher in an all-boys school. The play's lively monologue is rich in religious and sexual imagery, and represents an imaginary exchange between the priest and his students; the former a rather eccentric figure

who finds it hard to cope with the real world and secular pleasures. The Christian Brothers was praised highly by one local reviewer who nonetheless felt it necessary to include in his comments that it is "not a play for overly-sensitive Roman Catholics or anyone who doesn't like a rather cynical review of religion" (CBC Radio Noon, September 24, 1980).

17. West Moon (October-November 1980)

This was the Mummers Troupe's second production of a scripted work; West Moon was written by Newfoundland author Al Pittman. A politically-toned play created around a supernatural theme, West Moon features a series of dramatic monologues and exchanges among the "occupants" of 'St. Kevin's' graveyard on All Soul's Night (or Halloween)--the one night of the year when, according to local folklore, the dead are given voices and the opportunity to express themselves for a brief time. In essence the play represents a lament for the communities abandoned and destroyed in the aftermath of resettlement in the 1960's; the central concern being what becomes of the dead when the living no longer remain to remember them. In West Moon the question is symbolic of not only the souls of dead individuals, but of the dead (or dying) outposts as well. The play was a serious and emotionally-charged production which received rather mixed reactions critically.

There is no question in West Moon as to the absolute evil of resettlement. Any positive factors, such as improved opportunities in education or health care, are very quickly passed over...this I think is where the conflict between aesthetics and politics arises. (CBC Radio Noon, November 1, 1980).

West Moon left one with an all-pervading feeling of ultimate loneliness. If that was the playwright's message, then it was masterfully communicated. (Newfoundland TV Topics, November 22, 1980).

18. Makin' Time with the Yanks (March 1981)

This play was directed by Mary Walsh--a member of Codco--and the influence of her theatrical background is evident in the style of this production. Makin' Time represents quite a departure from the serious/political focus of earlier Mummings' efforts in the theatre, but one which was highly acclaimed by local critics and audiences alike. The play consists of a series of sketches depicting the relationship between the American servicemen stationed in St. John's during World War II, and the local population. The social and economic impact of this "friendly invasion" are portrayed in an essentially humorous and nostalgic manner, although Makin' Time does have its serious moments, when the realities of the war occasionally intrude to overshadow the frivolity and economic prosperity of that period. The plot of Makin' Time with the Yanks revolves around the romantic entanglements

of three 'Yanks' and their Newfoundland girlfriends, set within the context of social life in war-time St. John's.

...as a nostalgic tribute to the war period, Makin' Time is a complete success...The show is memorable for its re-creation of the song and dance of the period alone...A polished piece of musical theatre. (The Newfoundland Herald, March 21, 1981).

Codco

1. Cod on a Stick (December 1973)

A production loosely conceived and based on the concept that Newfoundland culture was being promoted and "sold" as a cheap, mass-produced commodity--hence the analogy, a "cod on a stick." Cod on a Stick was created and performed in the comic-revue format that was to be adopted in all subsequent Codco productions. The show entails a series of skits and satirical vignettes depicting chosen aspects of outport life as experienced by a "typical" Newfoundland family. Many scenes parody the pervading "quaintness" and "Rousseau-esque" quality of life "in da cove" with the main characters engaged in such animated dialogues as the Purity Biscuits sponsored "Newfoundland Hospitality Contest"--the first prize being a trip to Toronto for fourteen--if they can successfully answer such hospitality-testing questions as, how long does it take to get visitors into your kitchen, and

how long does it take to make them a cup of tea? Cod on a Stick's primary focus is its parodies of the more popular Newfoundland stereotypes, among them that of "Canada's Happy Province."

...pain, struggle, hardship and poverty are wonderful things for happiness--good for the soul they are. I'm a wonderfully happy person, wretchedly happy...They got sweet nothing up in Labrador, they must be fanatically happy. Intangible happiness I calls it, not the kind you can actually touch, like food or clothing... (Codco 1973).

Codco's subtle--but biting--nationalist undertones were recognized in this production both locally and on the mainland. Newfoundland journalist and creative writer Ray Guy described the play as "one of the best anti-1949 weapons around" (The Evening Telegram, February 16, 1974), while an earlier review in the Toronto Star praised the company highly and described Cod on a Stick as;


...a vigorously delightful program, jammed with hilarity...with a trick of turning Newfie jokes on their ear and keeping them spinning. Cod on a Stick isn't simply a wonderful instant mosaic of the 10th province, but a witty, backward-glancing commentary on the other nine as well. (The Toronto Star, December 10, 1973).

2. Sickness, Death and Beyond the Grave (September-October 1974)

Codco's second production was named, according to one member, for "the three great themes which facinate all people,

especially Newfoundlanders." The subject matter of Sickness, Death and Beyond the Grave ranges widely from religious fanaticism, mental instability and physical deformity, to spoofs of television commercials and other artists, a trip to the Vatican, and a gossip session among the corpses in Caul's Funeral Home in St. John's. One of the highlights of the show is a satirical version of a Theatre Passe Muraille-style documentary drama, wherein Torontonians discover the "real" Newfoundland and proclaim assuredly that "there ain't a person in Newfoundland who can't split a fish, eh?"

Sickness, Death and Beyond the Grave included such diverse sketches as a rock opera about a lad from Pouch Cove who goes to Toronto to make it big, and a scene depicting the accidental murder of an old woman in the hospital when well-meaning relatives substitute a jar of moose soup for her intravenous bottle. The darker side of Codco's humour is evident in this production as noted by one reviewer when the play opened in Toronto; "the satire of Codco reflects a vision of life seen as basic tragedy that you really can't do anything but laugh at." (The Globe and Mail, November 16, 1974).



3. What do you want to see the Harbour for? (Das Capital)
(March 1975)

Das Capital represents Codco's most overtly political production to date; its theme being the development and modernization of downtown St. John's. The eventual deterioration of the old city core is predicted in the wake of such developments as the Cross-town and Harbour Arterial roads, and commercial complexes such as Atlantic Place (a multilevel business and shopping facility), along with various other highways and high-rises. Das Capital includes a series of different skits reminiscent of those found in previous Codco productions; among them the Newfoundland soap opera, "House of Budgell," a fiery sermon on sex and sin by "Father Dinn" and a spoof of CBC television's folksy-maritime shows called "All Around the Nostril." The future of the tourist trade in the province is portrayed rather cynically with the distribution of friendliness vouchers to the citizens of St. John's, and a visit to a posh city restaurant where all the dishes on the menu--French labels notwithstanding--are fish. The play also contains a satirical mock-up of several prominent local political figures such as the Mayor and Premier, the latter who assures the interviewer that a bright future lies ahead for the province when "there will be hundreds of jobs for thousands of Newfoundlanders."

The comic and political elements of Das Capital are observed in the following:

...a concise, closely observed, compelling and very funny show that ~~not only explodes some of our most cherished myths and fallacies, but~~ highlights the frustration, absurdity and political indifference that are such a happy feature of life in the capital city as it is bulldozed into the 20th century. (Evening Telegram, March 17, 1975).

4. Would you like to smell my Pocket Crumbs? (October 1975)

Apart from its successful local and mainland performances, this production was also performed at the American Bi-centennial Festival in Philadelphia under the alternate title, Somewhere on the Hungry Coast of Newfoundland. The American reviews of Pocket Crumbs were as equally enthusiastic as the responses in St. John's and Toronto. This show contains some of the most absurd humour ever created or performed by Codco, with sketches devoted to such topics as a two-headed doctor, a demented clergyman, the saga of "Morton the child-molester," and a parody of a "Mutual of Omaha" special where an expedition discovers a strange tribe of nomadic nuns roaming in the wilds of Newfoundland.

...a series of skits...hovering between sanity and insanity, sheer comic entertainment. (The Philadelphia Inquirer, October 30, 1975).

a fast-paced, zany act that is sure to offend and delight... irreverent, irrational, and irresistibly insane. (Philadelphia Daily News, October 29, 1975).

A rather indepth profile of both the company and its productions was given by John Fraser in the Globe and Mail when Pocket Crumbs opened in Toronto. Fraser, a highly respected theatre critic, described Codco as "the Newfie joke that bites back" and examines the import of their theatrics in the following;

The flavour and texture of all the skits are directly hinged to the Newfoundland experience... Indeed Codco's strength lies in the fact that it is the product of the strongest and most culturally-secure English-speaking bailiwick in Canada. Newfoundland may be the butt of derisive jokes, but Newfoundlanders have always enjoyed the last laugh because they knew exactly from whence they came. Since they are some distance, geographically and spiritually, from our presiding stridencies and pretensions, they can prick our consciences and vanities as no one else can. (Globe and Mail, January 16, 1976).

5. Festering Forefathers and Running Sons (November 1975)

This production consisted of a half-hour collection of sketches from earlier Codco productions, and was prepared for CBC Television in Toronto for airing in the Fall-Winter 1975 season.

6. Laugh your Guts Out with Total Strangers (September/October 1976)

Laugh your Guts Out was Codco's last stage production before the company disbanded for a two-year period, enabling its members to pursue theatrical interests elsewhere. Like the preceding Festering Forefathers, this show is comprised of a collection of the more popular sketches selected from the company's earlier productions. Unlike Codco's first four shows, however, Laugh your Guts Out was not performed in Newfoundland but only on the mainland, where by this time the group had a well established and enthusiastic following.

No other company currently available in the city, including Theatre Passe Muraille...seems to be as firmly "rooted to the land." Codco's language is neither English nor American but something that could only come from Newfoundland...The recurrent themes, such as the loss of cod fishing to Russian trawlers and oil spills, the poor standard of living, the acute unemployment problem, and the very special character of the people, force one to consider the distinctive nature of this culture. It cannot be imitated. It is Newfoundland down to the jokes that it inspires. (The Varsity (Toronto), October 15, 1976).

When Codco arrives, it's open season on sacred cows, be they the local or mainland government, the church, or even the CBC. Pick your favourite backward or repressive institution and chances are, Codco has the needle to suit the balloon. (Halifax Life, October 27, 1976).

7. Who Said Anything about Tea? (March 1978)

Who Said Anything about Tea? was a comparatively short production performed in St. John's, and briefly on the mainland when four of Codco's members re-grouped to create a show based on new material. The play consisted of the usual Codco fare of satirical sketches on the arts, media, religion, and Newfoundland stereotypes, along with some additional theatrical commentary on feminism and the growing artistic movement in the province.

8. White Niggers of Bond Street/WNOBS (The Waning Moon Cafe) (September 1979)

WNOBS was the last production by Codco as a group effort. The cabaret-style show was performed in various taverns around St. John's where it was received quite favourably; however, its opening at the city's Arts and Culture Centre was met with rather mixed reaction from audiences and critics alike.

The play contained segments from earlier Codco productions ("brought back by popular demand"), with additional scenes featuring a raving sermon by a sexually repressed priest, a skit on a pair of transvestite Nazis living in Newfoundland, a wake scene in which old age, death, and funerals are lampooned, and a parody of CBC television's local "COMEALIVE" series, wherein folksingers and various other promoters of Newfoundland talent -- most especially "imported" ones -- are the subjects of some rather cutting satire.

WNOBS was considered by local critics to be one of Codco's "most risqué performances" primarily due to the show's many repeated references to "sexual and other bodily functions." (The Newfoundland Herald, September 12, 1979).

9. Barely Dead and Hardly Missed (April 1981)

Barely Dead was the creation of three of Codco's members and was produced for the LSPU Hall's "Late Night Cabaret"; a shorter version of the show was performed as part of the Hall's Lunchtime Theatre Series in the spring of 1981. Following closely in the style of earlier group collaborations, Barely Dead included the inevitable parodies on religion, sickness, death, and "Newfie" stereotypes, in addition to satirical sketches on television commercials, news announcers, and other artists and actors--in particular the LSPU Hall and its patrons. Consistent with their commitment to "make fun of anything and anybody." (Member, Codco), Barely Dead and Hardly Missed contained several scenes (burlesquing Newfoundland theatre and its supporters, thereby making fun of those very elements responsible for the continuing popularity of groups like Codco, the Mummers Troupe and Rising Tide Theatre over the years. Audience as well as critical response to Barely Dead was quite enthusiastic and attests to the enduring appeal of Codco's unique brand of theatre and their perennial ability to "wring every bit of laughter from life's very ordinary

happenings." (The Evening Telegram, April 28, 1981).

Rising Tide Theatre

1. Daddy, what's a Train? (Nar'a Gauge) (November 1978)

This was the first production of the Rising Tide group, and one which brought considerable local and national recognition to the (then) young company, through its tour throughout the province and its presentation on CBC television's "Canadian Express" series in the summer of 1979. The focus of Daddy, what's a Train? is a historical and contemporary examination of the Newfoundland railway. In counterbalance to the more economically-motivated studies and commissions sponsored by the provincial government to investigate the feasibility of maintaining and upgrading the railway system, this show portrays the human and social aspects of the issue. The primary emphasis of Daddy, what's a Train? is on the effect the railway had, and continues to have, on the lives of those individuals and on the character of their communities situated along its path.

The important role the railway has played in the history and culture of this province is often neglected by writers and historians...even the general public seemed to know very little about the human side of the railway. Theatrically we tried to remedy this situation a little, and judging from the response to the Train Show, I think we accomplished a great deal in this respect. (Member, Rising Tide).

2. Filthy Rich and Easy (The Future Show) (October 1979)

Rising Tide's second play coincided with the Mummers Troupe's production of Some Slick; like the latter it entailed a futuristic portrayal of Newfoundland in the aftermath of an oil boom. Primarily due to the timing of this production however, Filthy Rich received rather mixed reviews locally, as it was inevitably compared to the more critically acclaimed Some Slick.

I think we made a slight tactical blunder with Filthy Rich and Easy. Some Slick was playing at the same time, and in retrospect I think the Mummers did a better job of handling the oil situation than we did. We aimed to depict some of the probable results of oil development rather than concentrate on the situation itself, but people got our show confused with Some Slick, which is understandable I guess, but unfortunate for us as comparisons were made. (Member, Rising Tide).

The tone of Filthy Rich and Easy is decidedly more cynical and extreme than the Mummers' depiction of Newfoundland's fate however, with scenes in the former predicting that by 2029 Newfoundlanders will be reduced to selling pieces of "the rock" as souvenirs and creating 'bayman' and 'townie' clones in order to counteract the escalating erosion and watering down of Newfoundland culture by mainland and multinational influences. The province's future is portrayed as a gloomy replication of past economic history, marred by

labour strife and oil spills, at the centre of which the eternally "poor but happy" outport family continues to perservere.

3. I was a Teenage Lovedoll (March 1980)

Lovedoll is best described as a comic and nostalgic musical-revue, which at the time represented quite a departure from the usual political/documentary fare of either Rising Tide or the Mummers Troupe. The production entails a light-hearted and fast-paced examination of the music and morality of the 50's, 60's and 70's as experienced in the local context. The main action of the play revolves around the adventures of a cast of local characters and "types" as they progress from the greasers and bobby-soxers of the rock-and-roll 50's, through the folk and psychedelic movements of the 60's and 70's, and into "the Age of Aquarius." Not what one would term a "serious" play, Lovedoll was created by the company more "for the sheer fun of it" than as a medium for deep social and political commentary. (Member, Rising Tide).

I was a Teenage Lovedoll is not for the faint of heart, the straight-laced, or those of tender ears. The music is good, but loud, and the dialogue is raunchy and to some might be offensive. (Newfoundland TV Topics, April 5, 1980).

...the show will have a special appeal to a certain age group, around thirty, who shared a growing up which seems to have been exactly marked by a series of rock-and-roll songs, and rock-and-roll lifestyles. Rising Tide has done a good job of recalling the fun we had but also the essential absurdity of those of us who lived far from the fringes but worshipped the American rock-and-roll heart. (CBC Radio Noon, March 20, 1980).

4. Somewhere Over the Border (Ou vont tomber les larmes, mon amour?) (June 1980)

A dramatic and humorous portrayal of the Quebec/Labrador boundary dispute; this production mixed political and social commentary with an overriding mood of joviality in an effort to impart some compassionate insight into this rather contentious issue. The setting for Somewhere Over the Border is a trapper's cabin in a remote part of Labrador which is simultaneously visited by a Newfoundlander from the island part of the province, and two Quebecois. The Newfoundlander--an unemployed fish plant worker from Bonavista Bay--goes to Labrador in the tradition of making money to bring back to Newfoundland; while the Quebecois--one a rather unbalanced "urban-romantic" type, the other a very self-assured individual who has decided to spend his vacation in "Quebec"--have come as tourists to seek refuge and renewal in the wilds of Labrador. The confrontation that ensues is both inevitable as well as very funny.

In Somewhere Over the Border, the political and geographical entities involved are depicted symbolically in

the love/hate triangle relationship that exists between Alice (the trapper's daughter, representing Labrador), Harry (Newfoundland), and Francois (Quebec). The exchanges between the main characters are humorous as well as pointedly evocative of the controversy surrounding the issue of Labrador ownership on the one level, but on a deeper one, regarding "differences or boundaries between people in general due to linguistic and cultural differences." (Member, *Rising Tide*). The central conflict of the play is summarized in the following:

...will Harry win Labrador's lovely Alice and bring her home to the fish plant in Bonavista, or will Francois sweep her off her feet to Montreal where the power of Churchill Falls lights the buildings of the Quebecois? ...don't miss Somewhere Over the Border. It promises to be more fun, more folly, and more feasible than Churchill Falls itself. (The Newfoundland Herald, June 14, 1980).

5. As Loved our Fathers (November-December 1980)

The title for this play is borrowed from a verse in the "Ode to Newfoundland," the province's official anthem. As Loved our Fathers was written by Newfoundland playwright Tom Cahill, and was *Rising Tide*'s first production of a full-length, scripted work. The play centres on one family's joys and sorrows in the 1949 campaign for Confederation and the vote which followed, making Newfoundland the tenth province of Canada, thereby surrendering its status as an

independent nation forever. However tenuous this status, it was one that held strong and deeply meaningful associations for many Newfoundlanders; this is the dramatic focus of As Loved our Fathers. Differences of opinion and heated confrontations split the family into two factions, one supporting, the other against, the proposed union with Canada. Scenes depicting family arguments, political debates, the role of the Protestant and Roman Catholic churches in influencing the vote, and "before and after" vignettes portraying economic gains and cultural loss are interspersed throughout the play to give a balanced treatment to both sides of the issue.

An interesting feature of As Loved our Fathers was the provision of a ballot on the play program on which audience members could vote for either Responsible Government or union with Canada during the intermission. At the performance I attended, the vote (very narrowly) favoured Confederation.

History can be dull, tedious and oppressive, or as fresh and crisp as today. As Loved our Fathers by Tom Cahill is the lively story of Newfoundland's entry into Confederation focused into all the fury and strife, good as well as bad humours and heartbreakings of a Newfoundland family kitchen...An exciting, fast-paced, well directed and entertaining production by a top-line cast who know their Newfoundland and their Newfoundlanders.
(The Evening Telegram, November 29, 1980).

6. John and the Missus (January 1981)

Rising Tide's sixth major production, which featured actors from Theatre Newfoundland and Labrador in addition to those regularly associated with Rising Tide, was again based on a scripted work--this time by actor/playwright Gordon Pinsent. Like As Loved our Fathers, John and the Missus is a family-oriented drama focusing upon a particular issue. In this play the issue faced by John Munn and his family is whether to remain in their ancestral home of Tilt Cove--a mining community which seems doomed to economic and social decay--or to move elsewhere in hope of a brighter future. The central conflict of the play revolves around the inner struggles and torments of the miner John, who must choose between his birthplace and his "missus," both of which he dearly loves. Critical reaction to John and the Missus was rather mixed; while praising the calibre of the acting and directing, comments were essentially negative with regard to the script or play itself. One local critic for example made reference to the "cloying" sentimentality" and the "overworked symbolism" of Pinsent's work while maintaining that "the director and cast have laboured mightily but fail to salvage this ill-conceived script." (The Newfoundland Herald, January 24, 1981).

Gordon Pinsent has been living on the mainland too long. I think he is out of touch... This play could have been written by a fellow from Toronto, it just isn't us... (The Evening Telegram, January 16, 1971).

7. The Romeo Kuchmir Story/Theresa's Creed (February 1981)

Continuing with the scripted format of the two previous productions, Rising Tide presented this pair of one-person shows written by Canadian playwrights in February of 1981. The combination of the two plays together in one show was an innovative and appropriate one. Both plays-- despite the entirely different characters portrayed in each-- are thematically quite similar. The Romeo Kuchmir Story and Theresa's Creed feature characters who recall the events of their lives with a mixture of humour and pathos as each struggles to come to terms with their present existence.

The Romeo Kuchmir Story, based on the novel Night Desk by George Ryga, featured David Ross in the role of Romeo Kuchmir, an ex-boxer and hustler from the prairies. Although a "down and out" type and somewhat of a loser, Kuchmir is a character that possesses great inner strength and a reserve of humour which enables him to reflect on his lot on life with considerable depth. The monologue of the play takes place as Kuchmir finds himself filling in for a no-show comedian at a friend's bar. He spends the evening telling stories to the audience in the bar/theatre, reliving the triumphs and failures of his life, exaggerating the good and glossing over the bad.

Raised in the shadow of a Calgary poolhall, and ex-boxer, wrestler, and promoter, Kuchmir is as tough as the Prairie winters that spawned him, but with a tenderness only the truly strong can afford. He's a man who's seen it all, done it all, and likes to talk about it. (The Newfoundland Herald, February 21, 1981).

Theresa's Creed, written by Michael Cook, is the highly acclaimed one-woman show that brought Donna Butt theatrical recognition on several earlier occasions; once when the play premiered in Montreal in 1977, and later when Rising Tide presented the show in the interim between Daddy, what's a Train? and Filthy Rich and Easy. This production of Cook's play again featured Donna Butt in the role of Theresa Moriarity. Theresa's Creed tells us the story of a widowed outport woman struggling to exist on welfare with ten children to raise. The monologue is delivered with Theresa in her kitchen at her wringer washer doing her morning's wash. Between working and the occasional break for a cup of tea or a cigarette, she reflects on her lot in life--both past and present--with a mixture of joy and sorrow as she remembers the good times as well as the bad.

In the privacy of her kitchen, Theresa struggles to define her own existence. She opens a door to her most treasured moments, both funny and sad, in doing so strikes a chord in all of us. This woman who has survived a lifetime in an isolated outport, speaks of truths that transcend time, age, and place. (Ibid.)

8. The Price (April 1981)

The Price was Rising Tide's first production of a non-Newfoundland oriented play and is one of American playwright Arthur Miller's best known works. The play tells the story of two estranged brothers; one a successful doctor, the other an unfulfilled police officer, who meet again after a separation of sixteen years to dispose of their deceased father's furniture. The Price highlights the lifelong conflict between Victor and Walter, as well as the insecurities and personal failures of each as circumstances beyond their control force them to confront themselves and each other. With the aid of Victor's wife Ester, and an ancient furniture dealer named Gregory Solomon, the brothers attempt to come to terms with one another after a lifetime of rivalry and mistrust. The Price was well received locally and the company highly praised for "breaking new theatrical ground" with Miller's work.

In a season which has already been notable for its variety of presentations and its experimentation, we greet yet another successful landmark. Rising Tide Theatre, pursuing its new policy of offering established, scripted plays, opened Wednesday night at the LSPU Hall with Arthur Miller's The Price. The production was beautifully presented, exquisitely set and performed with a sensitivity and devotion to the play itself that provided first class theatre... This is a production for audiences to enjoy in all its laughter, sadness and wisdom. If it is Rising Tide's salute to the

established theatre and scripted plays, we look forward to several hundred more salvoes." (The Evening Telegram, April 18, 1981)

9. I was a Teenage Lovedoll Part Two (June 1981)

Lovedoll Two takes up where the first Lovedoll left off, featuring the same cast of characters and the skit-musical style of its predecessor. Audience and critical response was as enthusiastic as for the original production, albeit the much more risqué tone of Lovedoll Two did not go entirely unnoticed and was offensive to some (personal communication; Member, Rising Tide).

Several of the opening scenes of Lovedoll Two were repeats of those from the first Lovedoll and served to re-introduce the audience to the rock-and-roll setting of the 1950's as experienced by the youth of St. John's. The story revolves around the continuing saga of "Hedley" and "Bern," an unlikely pair of 'townies' whose very contrast to one another serves as the basis for much of the play's humour. Bern is the cool, slick-talking, greaser of the leather-jacketed, tight-jeaned variety; Hedley portrays the pimply-faced and polyester-shirted wimp. Both share a passion for girls and music, which they pursue with varying degrees of success throughout the play. Through a curious twist of events, both characters find themselves magically transported into the future--1981--where they have to cope with a new brand of music and women. Strangely enough, they

wind up as managers for an aspiring punk-rock band, which subsequently goes "on tour" around the bay to the community of "Two Cheeks Cove." The predictable clash between urban and rural climaxes the comic element of Lovedoll Two as townies confront baymen, punk music competes with country and western, and animosities arise despite the band leader's warning to the group; "For God's sakes boys, don't tell them we're from St. John's--they hate anyone from St. John's. I told them we were from Carbonear."

10. Joey (September 1981)

A collectively conceived and created play, Joey was described by Canadian playwright Rick Salutin (who collaborated with Rising Tide in writing the show), as a

"tale of the interaction between an individual of extraordinary power and a society which also had a real character and personality of its own, and how they influenced each other, and in a way, created each other...
(The Newfoundland Herald, September 5, 1981)

Joey is a "reactive retrospection" (Member, Rising Tide) on the man who was hero to many and hated by some, and how his actions helped determine the course of Newfoundland history. The show consists of a series of vignettes depicting Smallwood in both his strong as well as weak moments, his allies and foes, and the character of the province before and after Confederation. Indeed, perhaps the most important

era of Newfoundland history is examined in this production which mixes humour and political commentary to give a balanced presentation of the man and the times. In Act One the story of Smallwood's early career as a journalist and his rise to politics is outlined, culminating with the triumphant entry of Newfoundland into Confederation in 1949. Act Two follows his long career as Premier of the province, highlighting the economic ups and down, the many social changes, and the changing political climate that lead to Smallwood's eventual defeat in 1971. On both its provincial and national tours, Joey was well received and attended by many prominent politicians, among them Smallwood himself, who is reputed to have described the play as "the best and most important show ever written about Newfoundland." (Member, Rising Tide).

11. The Crucible (April 1982)

Described as a "gripping drama of witchcraft and devil possession" (The Evening Telegram, April 20, 1982), The Crucible was Rising Tide's second production of a dramatic work by playwright Arthur Miller. The story is set on Salem, Massachusetts, in the year 1692, when the quiet Puritan town finds itself in the grip of terror and suspicion after a mysterious illness begins to afflict certain members of that community. No one can offer any explanation until witchcraft is determined to be at blame

for the strange happenings which threaten the sancity and tranquility of the entire community. In this production, the members of Rising Tide were joined by actors from the Rare Vintage Theatre company, as well as by local musician Don Wherry, and dancer/choreographer Gail Innes, in collaboration with one another to produce a unique rendition of Miller's work.

APPENDIX B

Fieldwork

The fieldwork for this thesis was conducted in St. John's, Newfoundland from May through September of 1980. During this time I interviewed approximately twenty individuals associated--in the past and/or at present--with the Mummers Troupe, Codco, and Rising Tide theatre companies. In addition I spoke with other members of the local artistic community in general as well as with several persons affiliated with radio, television, and newspapers whose involvement with the local theatrical scene as critics, writers, and producers, influences as well as reflects wider local and national perceptions of Newfoundland theatre.

Prior to and throughout the period of active research, I endeavored to view as many of the productions of the three companies as possible. Out of the approximately 38 plays considered for this thesis (dating from 1972 to the present), I have personally seen 30. In addition, theatre reviews by both local and mainland Canadian critics were collected from various newspapers and periodicals covering that period. Scripts were available for only a few of the collective productions of the Mummers Troupe, and for those plays based on previously written works that were performed by the Mummers or by Rising Tide. Tapes of several Codco performances were

made available to me through the assistance of Andy Jones (a member of that company), but as of this writing are not publicly accessible in either taped or written form.

Interviews were deliberately informal and unstructured due to the rather subjective nature of much of the data and to the often spontaneous character of conducting research within the artistic community. During the course of specific interviews however, a number of key questions formed the basis of my exchanges with the actors and directors involved, and it soon became apparent that certain basic concerns and ideas were dominant among those interviewed. These issues later helped in outlining the content of this thesis and are listed below in the form of questions directed at my informants for this reason.

Interview Questions

1. When, where and why did you become involved with theatre in Newfoundland?
2. Do you intend to remain in the theatre (or related area) on a full-time, professional basis? Why or why not?
3. How did the company with which you are involved originate?
4. How does this company compare with/differ from the others which are active locally?
5. In your opinion, what is the significance of creating and performing Newfoundland-oriented plays to the exception of other forms of drama; i.e., why not Shakespeare or Brecht for example?
6. What factors influence the choice of subject material for the productions of the Mummers Troupe, (Codco, or Rising Tide)?

7. How are individual shows conceived and created? What are the roles of the various persons involved (e.g., actors, directors, theatre technicians, etc.)?
8. What are your feelings regarding scripted versus collectively created productions? Why has the latter been the more popular form during the last few years?
9. What is your reaction to the criticism that theatre companies such as yours are "making fun of Newfoundlanders" and adding to the negative stereotype of this province?
10. What are your feelings regarding the stereotype itself and the image of Newfoundland promoted by such agents as the tourism and advertising industries, and the arts?
11. What may be the sources of causes of the "Newfie" stereotype? What are its negative and positive attributes?
12. What role should the theatre play in affecting the positive and negative perceptions of Newfoundland and Newfoundlanders in terms of both;
 - "native" perceptions, as well as,
 - attitudes and opinions held by outsiders?
13. In your opinion, how important is "Politics" in drama? What is "political theatre"? How important is "entertainment" as opposed to "pure art"? Are these compatible elements of theatre? Why or why not?
14. How has the theatre changed since your initial involvement? Why has there been a noticeable shift from the purely Newfoundland format, along with a greater emphasis on scripted works?
15. What directions would you like to see your company take in the future? What about the future of local theatre in general?

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