

# Vernacular Song, Cultural Identity, and Nationalism in Newfoundland, 1920-1955

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## Abstract

Although a force in Newfoundland politics and culture, nationalist sentiment was not strong enough in 1948 to prevent confederation with Canada. The absence among many Newfoundlanders of a strong sense of belonging to an independent country was the underlying reason for Smallwood's referendum victory. Most islanders were descendants of immigrants from either Ireland or the English West Country. Nowadays, they view themselves as Newfoundlanders first and foremost, but it took centuries for that common identity to be forged. How can we gauge when that change from old (European) to new (Newfoundland) identity took place in the outport communities? Vernacular song texts provide one valuable source of evidence. Three collections of Newfoundland songs—Gerald Doyle's *The Old Time Songs and Poetry of Newfoundland*, Elisabeth Greenleaf's *Ballads and Sea Songs from Newfoundland*, and Maud Karpeles' *Folk Songs from Newfoundland*—illuminate the degree to which by the late 1920s a Newfoundland song-culture had replaced earlier cultural traditions. These songs suggest that the island was still a cultural mosaic: some outports were completely Irish, others were English, and in a few ethnically-mixed communities, including St. John's, there was an emergent, home-grown, patriotic song-culture. Cultural nationalism was still a minority tradition in the Newfoundland of 1930.

Just as the separatist movement in Québec seems to be waning, the call for an independent Newfoundland appears once more to be finding resonance among sections of the province's population. Television images of Canadian flags burning in Newfoundland and former Premier Roger Grimes' insistent demand to renegotiate Confederation in order to regain control of the fishery may serve as a reminder of the strength of separatist sentiment. Newfoundland singer-songwriter Ron Hynes, the recipient of an honorary doctorate from Memorial University, has captured this spirit of rebellion and desire for independence in a more poetic but equally uncompromising manner in the last verse of his 1998 song "The Final Breath":

This could be the final breath,  
This is life and death,  
This is hard rock and water,  
Out here between wind and flame,  
Between tears and elation,  
Lies a secret nation.<sup>1</sup>

Hynes' message is that Newfoundland has one last chance to take charge of its own destiny. This sentiment may represent only a minority view, but evidently not every Newfoundlander is reconciled to a future as merely an inhabitant of a Canadian province. It is timely to re-examine the history of Newfoundland nationalism and its cultural roots, and to explore this nationalism's relationship to the island's folk music.

Early settlers in Newfoundland included Acadians with French roots and immigrants from Scotland, but it is known — thanks to the work of

John Mannion and Gordon Handcock, among others — that the English-speaking regions of south-east Ireland and the counties of south-west England together provided a very high percentage of immigrants.<sup>2</sup> According to Mannion, by 1836 Irish men and women comprised roughly half of the total population of the island.<sup>3</sup> The vast majority of the rest were immigrants from the English West Country.<sup>4</sup> Most descendants of those immigrants now see themselves as first and foremost Newfoundlanders (rather than as English, Irish, or even Canadian) but the forging of that common identity took centuries. That the settlers on the island saw themselves as British or Irish before they thought of themselves as Newfoundlanders seems plausible.

How can we gauge when the change from old (European) to new (Newfoundland) identity took place in a given outport community? Various indicators can be used as a gauge of ethnic or national identity, including, of course, an individual's reported self-identification with a group or community. Other indicators are aspects of material culture such as furniture, dress codes, and culinary practices, and such less-tangible cultural indicators as language, customs, folk-tales, dance, and music. But when we are dealing with the past, this kind of information is not always readily available, and it may in any case be ambiguous in nature. For certain historical and geographical situations, it is useful to supplement traditional pieces of evidence with evidence that is less conventional.

The aim of this article is to employ vernacular song texts — which are fairly readily available — as indicators of the degree to which the two main immigrant cultures in Newfoundland had merged by

the early twentieth century. The term “vernacular song” is used here to mean a song that has survived longer than its initial spell of popularity, and has entered oral tradition, thereby demonstrating its appeal to more than one generation.<sup>5</sup> Such songs vary in character: some are traditional (in the case of Newfoundland, anonymous songs that were brought by immigrants from their original homeland), some have new words set to traditional tunes, some are broadside ballads (the authors of which are usually although not always unknown), some are the work of (known) singer-songwriters, and some are texts set to music by a composer other than the writer.<sup>6</sup> To become a vernacular song, a composition must not only possess a good tune (a “vital melody,” to use Frank Kidson’s phrase),<sup>7</sup> but also have words that strike a chord in the hearts and minds of listeners.<sup>8</sup> Because they have stood the test of time, vernacular songs can tell us something about the beliefs, values, and opinions of those who were drawn to them sufficiently to keep them current for generations.

Although extensive research in Newfoundland newspapers and periodicals might provide much more evidence than is currently available about popular song on the island before the twentieth century, such research still remains to be carried out. Notwithstanding the use of the date 1842 in the title of Paul Mercer’s invaluable compilation *Newfoundland Songs and Ballads in Print 1842-1974: A Title and First-Line Index*,<sup>9</sup> an examination of its contents quickly reveals that very few of the listed items pre-date 1894, the presumed date of the earliest songster ascribed to John Burke.<sup>10</sup> Burke was one of two prolific songwriter/collectors who published a series of songsters during the first decades of the twentieth century, the other being James Murphy.<sup>11</sup> Although their motives were at least in part commercial, both men appear to have had a genuine interest in, and love for, the material they published, and it might not be too much of an exaggeration to call them Newfoundland’s first folklorists.

This title has also been suggested for Gerald S. Doyle, the compiler of *The Old Time Songs and Poetry of Newfoundland*.<sup>12</sup> Initially published in 1927, this songster drew heavily upon the work of Burke and Murphy. The first edition lacked tunes, but in 1940 Doyle produced a larger second edition, in which melodies were provided for most of the items. By then, Newfoundland had been visited by other song collectors, one American and one English. The American folklorist was Elisabeth Greenleaf, who was assisted on one of her collecting trips by another American, Grace Mansfield.<sup>13</sup> The fruits of their work were published in 1933 in *Ballads and Sea Songs of Newfoundland*.<sup>14</sup> The English folklorist was

Maud Karpeles, who was already renowned for her work of collecting in the South Appalachians with her mentor, Cecil Sharp. The most complete published collection of the songs Karpeles found in Newfoundland is the 1971 edition of *Folk Songs from Newfoundland*.<sup>15</sup>

When we put the contents of the Burke, Mercer, and Doyle songsters together with the hundreds of songs collected by Greenleaf, Mansfield, and Karpeles, we possess a combined pool of close to five hundred items.<sup>16</sup> What does this body of evidence tell us about the cultural allegiances of the songwriters and/or singers with whom they were associated, and of the communities to which the singers belonged? To what extent does it cast light on the history of nationalist sentiment in Newfoundland? Can it help explain why Newfoundland, which had twice previously shied away from confederation with Canada (in the late 1860s and the 1900s), narrowly, but only very narrowly, opted to join Canada in 1949, and why that decision is still regretted by a significant minority of Newfoundlanders? In attempting to answer these questions, firstly, the nationalist tradition in Newfoundland song will be discussed briefly, followed by an examination of the information on cultural allegiances in Newfoundland outpost communities that can be deduced from the fieldwork of Greenleaf and Karpeles.

### **Nationalism in Contemporary Newfoundland Song**

As the ongoing debate between separatists and federalists in Québec demonstrates, two kinds of nationalism are sometimes distinguished by the terms “soft” and “hard.” Soft nationalists take pride in the distinctiveness of their cultural traditions and fight hard to preserve their uniqueness from the dangers of assimilation into a nearby dominant culture. Hard nationalists believe that this struggle cannot be won without the added achievement of national self-determination, which in their view requires the establishment of an independent, sovereign state.

One example of the recent resurgence of “hard” Newfoundland nationalism can be found in a compact disc titled *We Will Remain*, issued in 1998 on the Singsong label, based in St. John’s.<sup>17</sup> In his liner notes, executive producer Steve Delaney explains the motivation behind the project as follows:

I wanted to own an album that brought together the music and song that proclaimed the nation of Newfoundland. I wanted to play this album and feel my heart beat a little prouder in my chest, anger race through my blood, sorrow for what has been lost, and hope for what might yet be regained. I found that others shared this desire...

Given the context of today's Canada, some may view this work as expressing a separatist viewpoint. Others may dismiss the notion of the nation of Newfoundland as fool-hardy, romantic nostalgia. I leave you to draw your own conclusions. . .<sup>18</sup>

The reader's conclusions are clearly intended to be that the idea of an independent Newfoundland is *not* romantic nostalgia, but rather a vision to be promoted and fought for.

*We Will Remain* opens with a new arrangement of what is billed as "The National Anthem," namely, Sir Cavendish Boyle's poem "Ode to Newfoundland," and it includes a performance of Archbishop Howley's patriotic song "Flag of Newfoundland." Among the more historical items are versions of the 1869 "Anti-Confederation Song" and Mark Walker's "The 'Antis' of Plate Cove," written at about the same time.<sup>19</sup> From the time of the 1909 Confederation debate come the anonymous "Song of Freedom (To My Countrymen)" and Mary Anne Nash's "Tribute to Bond (and his Trusty Placentia Crew)."<sup>20</sup> More modern songs include "'49" by Jason Whelan (a song suggesting that the official result of the first referendum vote in 1949 was fraudulent), "Republican Song" by Sean McCann and Bob Hallett (a self-proclaimed "call for revolution"), and "Come All Ye" by Dave Benson, which ends with the striking couplet: "Don't put your faith in leaders and their platitudes and lies./ The big black dog must growl, the bear must rise".<sup>21</sup> The following excerpts from the lyrics of "Whispering Wave," written by nationalist singer-songwriter Jim Payne (also well-known for his vigorous defence of the seal-hunt) summarise the sentiment running through most of the political songs on the album:

Desperately these people fled to seek their  
independence,  
Communities were built to last, a home for their  
descendants.  
Their dreams have never come to pass; some say  
we were cheated.  
Bloodied often but unbowed, 'til we were self-  
defeated.  
  
The hardships that our parents knew have they all  
been for naught?  
The years they laboured in hope and prayer have  
they nothing lasting wrought?  
Their brave resolve we did disdain, dishonour on  
their memory,  
Betrayed their birthright left in trust, gone for all  
eternity.  
  
Like them we cling to cliff and cove, toil on earth  
and ocean,

But our service to foreign masters makes  
mockery of their devotion.  
Five hundred years on the whispering wave,  
sceptical, sombre and shaken,  
Don't let it take five hundred more to get back  
what was taken.<sup>22</sup>

Although ten are on *We Will Remain*, songs expressing Newfoundland separatist sentiment are not easy to find elsewhere on commercial recordings. On the other hand, many dozens, if not hundreds, of modern songs in the folk, pop, or rock idioms express a pride in, and love for, "the Rock" and its inhabitants. There is scarcely a prominent Newfoundland musician, from Omer Blondahl (for whom the island was only an adopted home) to the members of the folk-rock band Great Big Sea, who has not recorded at least one paean to the homeland.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, patriotism in Newfoundland song is a phenomenon with a history that stretches back for at least one hundred and fifty years.

### Politics and Song in Newfoundland, 1948-1955

Newfoundland joined Canada in March 1949 in the wake of two referenda held in June and July of the previous year. The result of the second referendum is well known: 85% of Newfoundlanders voted, and a slim majority chose confederation with Canada. The official tally was 78,323 votes to 71,334.<sup>24</sup> The defeated alternative, "responsible government," was a code word for independence, the solution favoured by most Newfoundland nationalists. The nationalist cause lost, but only narrowly, by a mere seven thousand votes. And the loss was unexpected: Joey Smallwood (the leader of the campaign for union with Canada) was the underdog in the contest. The main reason why at the time few politicians outside of Smallwood's inner circle really believed that "responsible government" would be rejected was that nationalism was clearly a major force in Newfoundland politics and culture by the late 1940s.

Vernacular song was one indicator of this. Even a casual observer of the island's musical culture would have expected to see a strong sense of national pride expressed in the referendum. Undoubtedly, by the mid-twentieth century, a canon of "soft" nationalist songs was becoming well known throughout much of the island, due in no small measure to the efforts of Gerald S. Doyle, a nationalist and a Catholic with Irish roots. A large majority of the forty-eight songs contained in the third edition (1955) of Doyle's *Old-Time Songs and Poetry of Newfoundland* are home-grown favourites that express aspects of the island's daily life.<sup>25</sup> A few examples are "Badger Drive," "I'se the B'y," "Kelligrew's Soirée," "Let Me Fish Off Cape St.

Mary's," "Lukey's Boat," "The Ryans and the Pittmans," "Squid Jiggin' Ground," "Star of Logy Bay," "Tickle Cove Pond," and "Trinity Cake." Significantly, Doyle also inserted in his collection "The Flag of Newfoundland," "Ode to Newfoundland," and the "Anti-Confederation Song," with its strident nationalist lyrics, including the well-known stanza:

Hurrah for our own native isle, Newfoundland,  
Not a stranger shall hold one inch of its strand,  
Her face turns to Britain, her back to the Gulf,  
Come near at your peril Canadian wolf.<sup>26</sup>

Although they sometimes used tunes borrowed from older English, Irish or Scottish songs, the lyrics of these songs were unique expressions of Newfoundland culture, and their popularity suggests that by this time there was widespread identification with the activities described and the attitudes and values expressed in them. These lyrics included a strong sense of independence from Britain and hostility towards union with Canada. Such songs reflected elements of a national culture, and by 1955 they represented a fairly late stage in the emergence of a national identity. The overt nationalism of the Doyle songsters has been analyzed in detail by Neil Rosenberg, so it will suffice to quote Rosenberg's unassailable conclusions:

[S]everal important principles which emerge when examining the changes from edition to edition of the [Doyle] songbook can be suggested here. First and foremost, it seems clear that in each edition songs and poems from and about the Newfoundland past, particularly in its relatively poor and often politically disadvantaged outports, were used to construct a vision of the nation which reflected contemporary political events. Second, my admittedly tentative analyses indicate that Doyle's vision was shaped by his own involvement in a number of overlapping spheres. He was by birth and sentiment a Bonavista Bay man, and consequently thought of the fisheries as the economic heart of the country. . . Even his view of the fisheries was conservative, mediated we can guess by a suspicion of unions that was grounded in part in the local Catholic perspective. He was also suspicious of confederation with Canada, and believed that only things local and native could truly reflect the culture of the people. Independence was for him the central metaphor. . .<sup>27</sup>

However, the sense of national cultural identity that Doyle fostered through his songsters was still not quite strong enough in 1948 to find expression in political independence. One can be a "soft" nationalist in song without believing in the need for a

sovereign state. This, of course, was as true in the past as it is in the present, and the existence of nationalist songs in many outport communities of Newfoundland was apparently not a strong predictor of support for independence. The second referendum result signaled that while a sizeable minority of islanders saw themselves as members of a viable, independent nation state, over 50% of voters did *not* share – or were not willing to implement – that national vision. Why they voted against independence is debatable, but five factors certainly played a part. These factors were: the energy and effectiveness of Smallwood's campaign; the recognition of the potential benefits of the Canadian social security system; the lack of confidence in the politicians heading the independence movement; the fear of assimilation by the USA; and the failure of previous attempts to go it alone. However, there may have been another underlying, and psychologically more powerful, reason: the absence among many Newfoundlanders of a sense of belonging to an independent country.

The first referendum, held in June 1948, had offered three options to voters: continued colonial status, independence, or confederation. The result was interesting. The independence vote had been only slightly less (69,400) than on the second referendum, but the forces opposed to independence were split: 64,066 in favour of confederation, and a sizeable 22,311 in favour of the status quo of remaining a British colony. In retrospect, the latter seems a surprisingly large figure. It suggests that at least 15% of Newfoundland's population remained firmly attached to being a component of the United Kingdom.<sup>28</sup> Certain communities or regions, including Bonavista South, Fogo, Grand Falls, St. John's, Trinity North, and Twillingate, each contained over a thousand voters who preferred colonial status. Since the return to Government by Commission in 1934 had not produced a strikingly successful solution to Newfoundland's political and economic problems, voters favouring a continuation of that system presumably did so primarily because of the strong historical and cultural ties that were still felt with the United Kingdom.

The result of the referendum in June 1948 thus suggests that other cultural traditions rivaled Newfoundland nationalism. A growing sense of affinity was evident with Canada, or at least with the Canadian Maritimes. The strength of this affinity was debatable, but nevertheless it existed, and Smallwood was able to capitalize on it. And if British cultural roots were so strong, a parallel question arises: to what extent did the descendants of settlers from Catholic Ireland still see themselves as Irish rather than as Newfoundlanders? They would have been

unlikely to vote in sizeable numbers for colonial status, but many of them appear to have seen becoming Canadian as at least as compatible with their perceived Irishness as the nationalist alternative. Indeed, Smallwood's victory seems to have been due in part to the Irish, as well as the English, vote.

### The Earlier Nationalist Song Tradition

The sense of cultural identity with Britain or Ireland presumably existed to an even greater extent in the 1920s. To some degree, the Newfoundland of the interwar period was still a patchwork of isolated immigrant communities with little contact with, or sense of allegiance to, the political and economic elites in St. John's. But to what degree? Had this isolation and separateness already begun to break down in a significant way? Or, to put it another way, to what extent had settlers of diverse backgrounds come together as Newfoundlanders? Was there already a strong sense of Newfoundland national identity by 1930? The answer seems to be that although nationalist sentiment existed in certain outports and enjoyed a long pedigree, it was nonetheless only a minority current.

The ebb and flow in the development of an indigenous Newfoundland song tradition provides one perspective on these questions. The phenomenon of nationalism in popular song had likely begun as early as 1869, when the anti-Confederation campaign found expression in the anonymous, but apparently very popular, "Anti-Confederation Song," quoted earlier.<sup>29</sup> Another example was Mark Walker's "The 'Antis' of Plate Cove," which included the following lines:

Our fathers came here to get freedom their sons  
will not barter away;  
Then hurrah for the 'Antis' of Plate Cove, the  
'Athens' of Bonavist Bay.  
CHORUS: Hurrah for the 'Antis' of Plate Cove,  
a real little patriot band,  
Who used their exertions November to down the  
Confederate clan.<sup>30</sup>

This tradition of patriotic song gathered momentum in the early years of the twentieth century. Sir Cavendish Boyle's beautiful "Ode to Newfoundland," although written as a poem, was quickly set to music. In 1900, John Burke collaborated with George T. Oliver on compiling *The People's Songster*. . . *Containing Some of the Most Recent Songs of the Day*,<sup>31</sup> and the next year he joined forces with James Murphy to issue *The Duke of York Songster and Christmas Advertiser*.<sup>32</sup> Then, in 1902, Murphy issued *Songs and Ballads of Newfoundland*, which included a song that would

become a rallying cry for Newfoundland nationalists, "The Flag of Newfoundland."<sup>33</sup> However, like so many other patriotic songs, its message was ambiguous. It could be read as a paean to self-reliance and independence, or merely as an expression of pride in the island and its successful blend of immigrant cultures:

The pink the rose of England shows, the green St.  
Patrick's emblem bright,  
While in between the spotless sheen of Andrew's  
cross displays the white.  
Then hail the pink, the white, the green, our  
patriot flag long may it stand,  
Our sire-lands their emblems twine to form the  
flag of Newfoundland.

Whate'er become our ocean bride, that nestles  
'midst Atlantic's foam,  
Still far and wide we'll raise with pride, our  
native flag o'er hearth and  
home.  
Should e'er the hand of Fate demand some future  
change in our career,  
We ne'er will yield on flood or field the flag we  
honour and revere.

#### CHORUS:

Fling out the flag o'er creek and crag, pink, white  
and green, so fair, so grand.  
Long may it sway o'er bight and bay, around the  
shores of Newfoundland.<sup>34</sup>

*Songs and Ballads of Newfoundland* was the first of eight songsters edited solely by Murphy between 1902 and 1925. The others were *Songs of Our Land* (1904), *Murphy's Sealers' Song Book* (1905), *Coronation Song Book of Newfoundland* (1911), *Old Songs of Newfoundland* (1912), *Songs of Newfoundland by Various Authors* (1917), *Songs Their Fathers Sung* (1923), and *Songs Sung by Old-Time Sealers of Many Years Ago* (1925).<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile, Burke had issued *Burke's Newfoundland Ballads* in 1912, while his swansong, *Burke's Popular Songs*, appeared in 1929.<sup>36</sup> By then he had also published *The Allies Patriotic War Songster* (1917), *Burke's Xmas Songster* (1920), and *The Irish Songster* (1922).<sup>37</sup> Doyle effectively took over where Burke and Murphy left off. As we have seen, the first edition of Doyle's *The Old Time Songs and Poetry of Newfoundland* appeared in 1927, and tunes (and more songs) were added to the second edition in 1940.<sup>38</sup> Almost all these songsters contained primarily "home-grown" songs, and they reflected a strong sense of cultural independence.

However, a comparison of Doyle's first edition with his third reveals that several of the best-loved songs mentioned earlier were not yet available to him in 1927, such as "I'se the B'y," "Lukey's Boat," and

“Let Me Fish Off Cape St. Mary’s.” Significantly, too, the “Anti-Confederation Song” was missing from the first edition, deliberately excluded as too strident. Certain items that Doyle did select, such as “The Banks of Newfoundland” and “The Blooming Bright Star of Bell[e] Isle,” were in fact not indigenous songs.<sup>39</sup> The tradition of local songwriting was already well in evidence in 1927, but it was far from full-grown, and it was less overtly nationalist than it would become later.

In examining Newfoundland’s corpus of political song, distinguishing between “singer-songwriter” songs and traditional songs with rewritten lyrics may be useful. Arguably, the latter are to a degree more anonymous in character and may reflect group consciousness and sentiment more than the former. Most early nationalist songs in Newfoundland were composed by individuals whose names are known. Only a relatively few songs, such as “The Ryans and the Pittmans” and “The Blooming Bright Star of Bel[le] Isle,” made use of traditional melodies. These facts – if true – suggest that the nationalist cause had not yet become part of the collective consciousness of the outport communities. The creators of nationalist songs may have been vocal representatives of what was as yet only a minority current in Island politics.

The corpus of island-written Newfoundland songs would continue to grow during the following decades, but clearly in publishing their collections of “national” songs, Burke, Murphy and Doyle were consciously attempting to replace – or at least to complement – older songs and singing traditions that already had a place in Newfoundland’s cultural life. These editors chose not to print hundreds of other items sung in the outports. The nationalist songsters consequently provided a homogenized and distorted picture of Newfoundland vernacular song. They – perhaps deliberately – obscured its diversity and its ethnic roots. Yet, the nationalist songs so beloved of Doyle and those who treasured his songsters were not the only vernacular songs current in Newfoundland coastal and rural communities in the interwar decades. A community’s songs reveal its cultural soul, and that soul was fragmented. The island in the 1920s was in fact a complicated cultural mosaic, whose pattern still largely reflected the geographical origins of its various and varied settler communities.

## Two Folksong Collectors

A fruitful way of exploring the ethnic and cultural mosaic of interwar Newfoundland is to examine the field notebooks, song transcripts, and other manuscripts of two women who spent considerable time and energy collecting ballads and other

folksongs in Newfoundland between 1920 and 1930. Their findings tell us much about the way certain Newfoundlanders saw themselves. They also reveal that Newfoundland song traditions were indeed considerably more diverse than that reflected in the nationalist songsters. Since the two collectors visited only a few dozen of the hundreds of outports and hamlets that make up rural Newfoundland, it would be too much to claim that their reports provided a comprehensive picture of the island’s singing traditions in the 1920s. Their aural snapshots of some representative communities, however, are interesting and informative.

Elisabeth Bristol was an American, an education student at Vassar College.<sup>40</sup> In 1920 and 1921, as a member of the Grenfell Mission, she spent two summers teaching in the western Newfoundland outport of Sally’s Cove. While there, she visited a few of the neighbouring communities on the shores of Bonne Bay, including Rocky Harbour, and collected some of the local songs. By 1929, she had married and, after changing her name to Elisabeth Greenleaf, she returned to Newfoundland with the express purpose of collecting more folksongs. Accompanied by Vassar music student Grace Yarrow, whose job was to note the tunes, she traveled by coastal steamer from St. John’s to Flower’s Cove on the Northern Peninsula. The two women collected songs from sailors and passengers on the mail boats, and from various outports on the way, including Fogo, Twillingate, Fortune Harbour, La Scie, Fleur de Lys, and Sandy Cove. As mentioned earlier, the fruits of their efforts were published in 1933 as *Ballads and Sea Songs of Newfoundland*. It contains 185 songs plus some dance tunes, although twenty of the items were noted by other collectors.<sup>41</sup>

The book, however, is more than a collection of songs. Greenleaf’s extended introduction includes a fairly detailed account of everyday life in the outports with which she was most familiar, especially her “home” community of Sally’s Cove. What was life like in Sally’s Cove? This is an abbreviated version of Greenleaf’s description of living patterns in the hamlet she knew best:

In Sally’s Cove the men earn money by fishing in spring and summer and by working in the lumber camps in winter. They do some hunting and trapping and help with the berry-picking. They harvest enough hay to keep a few animals over the winter, – principally cows, horses, and sheep, – and they bring in wood to keep the little wood-stoves glowing through the cold months. They build their own houses and barns, make their own boats and occasionally furniture, work on the roads, – with little apparent result, – and fashion snowshoes, which they call “raqets,” fishing

gear, and lobster traps. They get a small catch of codfish in the spring and of herring in the fall, but lobstering is the chief fishery. Each family has its own cannery, a mere unpainted wooden shed with fireplace and kettle, a workbench for packing the cans, and a patent sealer for closing them. . . Women contribute greatly to the support of the family. They milk the cows and do the gardening, with some help from the men in the heavy spading. Plots are too small in Newfoundland to make plows efficient. They shear the sheep and spin the woolen yarn and knit it into "inside clothes," Guernseys (which we call Jerseys), stockings, or mittens. They make quilts for beds and hooked mats to cover the floors, and some of the designs are really beautiful. They also help the men with the haying, berry-picking, and lobster canning.<sup>42</sup>

Greenleaf collected songs in sixteen outpost communities, while Maud Karpeles visited over forty. Karpeles was an experienced British folklorist, the secretary, disciple, collaborator, and "adopted daughter" of the prominent Edwardian collector Cecil Sharp.<sup>43</sup> With Sharp, she had spent several summers collecting in the Southern Appalachians during World War I, and since Sharp's death she had trained herself to capture both melodies and words in her idiosyncratic form of shorthand.<sup>44</sup> Her expedition to Newfoundland was made primarily to fulfill a promise she had made to the dying Sharp: that she would carry out by herself the song-hunting expedition that they had planned together but which Sharp's declining health had made impossible as a joint venture. During Karpeles' two collecting trips on the island, in 1929 she focused on Trinity Bay, Bonavista Bay, the Bonavista Peninsula, Notre Dame Bay, and Conception Bay. Outposts and other communities that she visited included Fortune Harbour, King's Cove, Trinity, Harbour Grace, North River, Clarke's Beach, and Conception Harbour. In 1930, she returned to explore Placentia Bay, the Burin Peninsula, Fortune Bay, Hermitage Bay, and the Avalon Peninsula. On this occasion, the outposts she visited included Ferryland, Trepassey, Riverhead, Placentia, Beaubois, Burin, Rencontre, Belleoram, and Hermitage.<sup>45</sup>

Karpeles was much more selective than Greenleaf in the types of songs she transcribed, yet her overall experience closely paralleled that of her American counterpart. Both collectors found a mixture of Child ballads, broadside ballads, English folk lyrics, Irish folksongs, and songs composed in Newfoundland.<sup>46</sup> They also found that although many communities were ethnically and culturally mixed, other outposts were clearly the product of either Irish or English immigration, and had remained culturally quite distinct. The outposts were home to

English singing traditions, to Irish singing traditions, and, in some cases but not in all, to a newer, home-grown Newfoundland tradition. In each case, the songs reflected the broader culture of the community.

### **Greenleaf and the Outposts of the Northern Shore**

With the possible exception of its economic dependence on lobster rather than cod, Sally's Cove was a fairly typical Newfoundland outpost. What kinds of songs were common in such an isolated coastal community during the 1920s? A book would be required to examine all the outposts visited by Karpeles and Greenleaf and all the songs that they found there, but a few soundings will reveal the cultural patterns that they discovered. To provide a wide geographical range, I have selected Hermitage Bay, East Placentia Bay, Blackhead Bay, Notre Dame Bay, Fleur de Lys, and Bonne Bay.

Greenleaf's "home" community of Sally's Cove was of mixed English and Irish descent, but the dominant culture was that of Northern Irish Protestantism. "Orangemen's Day" was a time of celebration, when the whole community participated in a fair, an auction (to raise money for the local school), and an evening of country dancing. The first song that Greenleaf heard there in 1920 was "The Fisherman of Newfoundland, or the Good Ship *Jubilee*" and the first she collected in 1921 was the newly composed "The Wreck of the Steamship *Ethie*," a song about a dramatic shipwreck and rescue that had recently occurred on the coast nearby.<sup>47</sup> These were examples of home-grown Newfoundland songs, but Greenleaf perceived the village culture to be predominantly Irish, and the performance traditions of "chin-music" and ballad singing that she described bear out this judgment. The following is her portrait of one of the best local singers:

Mr. Endacott, whom I called "Uncle Dan" was a noted singer of ballads. When urged to sing, he would arise, remove his stubby pipe, spit into the little glowing wood-stove, and protest that he "had the cold" and couldn't sing anyway. This is the conventional way to begin. He would then try out his pitch and mumble a few lines, but finally break out in some tune at once wild and monotonous. He sang usually lying on the floor, with his eyes closed, head leaning to the wall. The ending was also conventional. His voice would rise with the action of the song, but suddenly he would break off, open his eyes and finish the last line in a speaking voice or mumble. This, I learned, was the signal for applause.<sup>48</sup>

Although the performance style and dance music were Irish, many of the other songs prevalent in this community were English. They included (among

others) “The Beggarman,” “Bold Wolfe,” “Down Where the Tide Was Flowing,” “The Yorkshire Bite,” “Nancy from London,” “Thomas and Nancy,” and “Waterloo.” This is Greenleaf’s account of another group of her informants:

Another family in the village was very fond of singing and had a store of fine songs. They were John Charles Roberts, his wife, Aunt Polly, two boys and a girl, beside the baby and an eldest son away in Canada. They could all “turn a tune” and had fine clear voices and a streak of artistic genius, which was incongruous with their miserable house with worn out dirty floor and wretched plank bunks for beds. They were cousins to the Endacotts, but with entirely different standards of conduct, cleanliness and duty in life. The children, however, were full of talent and lovable and in a different home and environment would prove worthy additions to society. Maud Roberts, the 15 year old girl, sung me some of the most interesting songs I heard. [O]ne which still gives me a thrill. . . is called “Young Barbour”, and contains references to “the west Counteree”, lords, etc., which show that it has been carried orally from old England to this far-off Newfoundland village.<sup>49</sup>

“Young Barbour” was a variant of the Child ballad “Willie o’ Winsbury,” while “The Beggarman” was a variant of another, “Hind Horn.” Traditional British ballad singing of this kind was common in the area, and the local singers’ repertoire was extensive. When she returned to Newfoundland in 1929, Greenleaf found that Maud Roberts, who had married and moved to nearby Bonne Bay, knew six Child ballads, including “Barbara Allen,” “Lady Margaret,” and “Lord Robert” (a variant of “Earl Brand”). Others were found in the nearby communities of Rocky Harbour and Glenburnie.

In the end, Greenleaf collected no less than seventeen Child ballads, including several rarely found in North America. She also noted dozens of broadside ballads and folk lyrics that had originated in England. Clearly, the culture of the group of outports on Bonne Bay and along the western shore of what is now Gros Morne National Park was predominantly British. On the basis of the songs collected by Greenleaf further up the coast in such outports as Flower’s Cove and Sandy Cove, the same was true of the communities facing Labrador across the Strait of Belle Isle. The evidence of Newfoundland nationalism and of a sense of a national cultural identity was as yet still outweighed by the cultural legacy of the United Kingdom.

Apart from an occasional Scottish settlement, the outports on the north coast were mainly either English or Irish. The Irish outports usually contained

Catholics from southern Ireland, not Protestants from Ulster. Fortune Harbour and Fleur de Lys were among the ports of call of the coastal steamers *S.S. Clyde* and *S.S. Sagona*, and in both places local singing traditions flourished. Fortune Harbour was almost exclusively Irish Catholic. It was one of Greenleaf’s favourite places, and she left an enthusiastic account of her time there:

Folksong in Newfoundland owes a great debt to the people of Irish descent. They have a genius for music and learn not only the Irish songs, but any other lovely airs they hear, and they render them most sweetly. I am inclined to credit the Irish with a large share in keeping the Newfoundland folk-music so melodious. In Fortune Harbour we found a rich harvest of Irish songs expressing the Irish passions of love of nature, love of Ireland, and love between a young man and a maiden. The villagers are of Irish descent, ninety-nine and a half percent Roman Catholic. Every member of the Lahey family was musical, and they were all good dancers. In the quadrille the men filled out the measures with intricate step-dancing and the women swung on their arms as light as thistledown, though one was a sweet-faced grandmother with white hair. Newfoundlanders love to hear the ballads, and a crowd always gather for our evening sessions. Our last night in Fortune Harbour we went to the home of a noted singer, Mr. James Day. The kitchen was full when we arrived, and more and more kept coming in until every inch of wall-space was occupied. We had a glorious session, which ended only at midnight after four hours of steady concentration.<sup>50</sup>

Greenleaf collected more songs in Fortune Harbour than in any other Newfoundland community that she visited. A large proportion of the songs were Irish. Three of her most prolific informants were Patrick Lahey, his wife, and Patrick Mooney. The very titles of some of their songs reveal their source: “Erin’s Isle,” “I Once Loved a Girl in Kilkenny,” “Kelly the Pirate,” “The Mantle of Green,” “Mary Neal,” “The Ould Plaid Shawl,” “The Quay of Dundocken,” and “Willy Reilly.” Even some of the English broadsides that had made their way to the community were known in Irish versions; for example, “The Bonny Bunch of Roses” and the story of a famous prize fight, “John Morrissey and the Black.” Only a few of the Fortune Harbour songs, such as “The Fogo Merchants,” “The Schooner *Mary Ann*,” and “The Spirit Song of George’s Bank,” were local compositions. This was a community that was still Irish to the core. It was an isolated outport to which fundamental change – and a strong sense of identity with the rest of Newfoundland – had yet to come.



Fleur de Lys, on the other hand, was an example of a mixed English and Irish community, as Greenleaf's reminiscence of it reveals:

A group of small boys in Fleur de Lys entered into negotiations to find out if the rumor was true that we were paying money for songs. When we emphatically negatived the report, young Dennis Walsh sang us a song himself, just to show that there was no hard feeling about pay or no pay, and rendered "As I roved out fair London City," a type of song rarely sung to us by adults. When his mother protested, he defended himself, saying "'Tis not a blackguard song, but an ould comical song." The whole Walsh family were singers. The eighteen-year-old sister Agatha sang "Greenwood Siding," the words of which I had heard years before. Mr. Walsh sang us "The Plains of Waterloo," one of the most beautiful melodies we heard. People are usually proud of the good singers of a village and will mention them and their particular songs. Having heard in this way about Stephen John Lewis and his song "The Spanish Captain," we walked around the head of the harbor one evening to ask him to sing it. His voice, though worn with use, was true and powerful, and the music carried over the calm harbor and echoed back from the cliffs. . .

Another of the good singers of Fleur de Lys was Mr. John Noftall. He was an elderly man who lived with his wife on a hill back from the water. . . Mr. Noftall was one of the old school of ballad-singers and put in a variety of slides, trills, grace notes, unexpected accents, and other variations, all of which add greatly to the effectiveness of rendition but reduce the music writer to despair. Miss Yarrow rallied to the task, and her record of "The Maid of Newfoundland" is, I believe, as close a representation of this old ballad style as can be made. Then at last it came Sunday, and we heard Pat Lewis sing, of whom Stephen John Lewis had said, "He's the best in this place. No dance is worth going to unless he's there!" He did not know the words of many songs, but others recited them, and Pat, in a very soft sweet Irish tenor, gave us the tunes. Some of our loveliest melodies will be found under his name.<sup>51</sup>

Greenleaf and Mansfield collected twenty-six songs in Fleur de Lys. The rollicking "Jack Was Every Inch a Sailor" was adapted from an American popular song of the 1880s. Many of the other songs were Irish, including "The Blooming Bright Star of Belle Isle," "Burke's Dream," "Erin's Green Shore," "Paddy and the Whale," "That Dear Old Land," and "The Waterford Boys." Others again were of English origin, for example "Fair Flowers of Helio," "The Franklin Expedition," "Green Bushes," "Johnson; or, The Three Riders," "The Plains of Waterloo," "Tarry Sailor," and "Young Barbour." And a handful of them were more recently composed Newfoundland

songs, such as "George's Bank," "Captain William Jackman, A Newfoundland Hero," "The *Greenland* Disaster," and "The Maid of Newfoundland." The best local singers performed in a traditional style, and they sang mainly songs from the Old Country (whether England or Ireland), but they had added Newfoundland songs to their repertoire. This was an immigrant community still firmly rooted in the past, although signs indicated that it was beginning to evolve a new identity.

### **Karpeles and the Outports of the Bonavista Peninsula and Hermitage Bay**

Fortune Harbour was the only place in Newfoundland where the 1929 Vassar College expedition crossed paths with Maud Karpeles' first attempt to explore the Newfoundland heritage of English folksong in the fall of the same year. A lone female in a strange land, Karpeles was an intrepid and remarkably efficient songhunter, but her approach was different from Greenleaf's. Greenleaf was deliberately indiscriminate; she was happy to note anything her sources provided, which meant that her collection was varied in character, with many local Newfoundland songs as well as Irish and English items. Karpeles, in contrast, was primarily interested in old British songs, although she included English-language material from communities of predominantly Irish origins.

Neither Karpeles' field notes nor the scope of her collection reveal much about the indigenous Newfoundland song tradition. We know that she heard many songs about local shipwrecks and perhaps some of the patriotic repertoire gathered by Doyle, but she usually did not bother to note such items. She did collect some Newfoundland songs; indeed she was the first to transcribe one of the most famous and beautiful of them all, "She's Like the Swallow." In the main, however, Karpeles' focus was on traditional song, especially ballads, and she succeeded in tracking down many old British folksongs. Thirty of them were published in 1934 (some of them arranged by Ralph Vaughan Williams) under the title *Folk Songs from Newfoundland*,<sup>52</sup> and eighty-nine appeared in 1971 in the different publication with the same title mentioned earlier.<sup>53</sup> Her entire collection, which is housed at MUNFLA (the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore Archives), numbers well over a hundred different items, with scores of variants from different locations.<sup>54</sup>

Greenleaf and Karpeles never met, but when Karpeles discovered that Notre Dame Bay had already been covered by her American counterparts, she decided to concentrate instead on Trinity Bay and

Conception Bay. Before doing so, she spent some time on the Bonavista Peninsula (Gerald S. Doyle's home territory), staying for about ten days at King's Cove, a village that struck her as very British and Protestant. On several occasions, she visited the nearby community of Stock Cove, which was evidently Irish and Catholic. Located on Blackhead Bay, the two outports were only a few miles apart but they were culturally quite distinct, the products of different waves of immigration from different homelands.

Irish music played an important role in everyday life at Stock Cove. Karpeles observed a fondness for quadrilles and step-dancing, as well as singing. She had hoped to collect country dances in addition to songs in Newfoundland, and she loved the Irish dances that she found at Stock Cove. She decided, however, that the dances were too different from English country dance styles to be adapted for use by the English Folk Dance Society. Yet, Stock Cove was not a Gaelic-speaking community. The many songs that Karpeles collected there were mainly Irish variants of traditional Anglo-Scottish ballads and folk lyrics. They included "The Maid on the Shore," "The Brown Girl," "Sweet William's Ghost," "The Cruel Mother," "The Outlandish Knight," and "The Bonny Labouring Boy." Some obvious Irish material included "Young Reilly," "Johnny Doyle," "The Rose of Britain's Isle," and "The Croppy Boy."

No Irish songs were to be found in King's Cove or other nearby British communities of Broad Cove and Openhall. In King's Cove, Karpeles collected such Child ballads as "Lord Bateman" and "The Bonny Banks of Virgie-o," and such other English broadsides and folk-lyrics as "Nancy of London," "The New Mown Hay," "Three Gypsies," and "Jack in London City." She declined the opportunity to note Protestant hymns, although she did write down the words of one religious ballad, "Judgement Day." Nowhere in her notes about these communities on the Bonavista Peninsula does Karpeles mention any cultural traits or songs unique to the island. She clearly perceived King's Cove and Stock Cove as colonial villages that had been settled by either Protestant British or Catholic Irish immigrants and that had retained their original cultures to a high degree.<sup>55</sup>

Karpeles' follow-up expedition in 1930 took her to some remote South Coast communities that could be reached only by boat. Some of these communities had been populated by settlers from the south-west of England, in particular from the counties of Devon and Dorset.<sup>56</sup> At Hermitage, her principal informants were Thomas Sims, Myrtle Parsons, John Parsons, and William Ball. Their repertoires included "The Cruel Mother," "Sweet William's Ghost," "Lord

Bateman," "The Three Butchers," "The Discharged Drummer," and "The Nightingale." These songs were familiar to such English folklorists as Sabine Baring-Gould (who specialized in Devonian song) and Henry Hammond (who collected in Dorset). Across the water at Gaultois, on Hermitage Bay, Mrs. Wilson Northcott sang "The Gypsy Laddie," "Lovely Jimmy," and "The Tree in the Wood." At the isolated outport community on Pass Island, Karpeles collected from Mrs. Alice Sims local versions of "Farewell Nancy," "The Bailiff's Daughter of Islington," and "The False Bride." The hamlet of Grole proved an even more fruitful source of old English songs. Karpeles noted "The Cuckoo," "Henry Martin," "The Golden Vanity," and "The Merchant's Daughter" from Joseph Jackman, and "The Brown Girl," "The Green Wedding," "Little Musgrave," and another version of "The Discharged Drummer" from George Taylor. These singers performed only songs that could be traced back to the United Kingdom, and the versions that she obtained had a close affinity with variants common in Devon, Dorset, and Somerset.<sup>57</sup> Apparently, this remote corner of southern Newfoundland was still substantially English in its cultural characteristics; certainly the cultural legacy of the English West Country was well represented in its song tradition.

Karpeles' discoveries on the Bonavista Peninsula and around the shores of Hermitage Bay demonstrate that both English and Irish cultures were alive and well in particularly isolated outport communities. In other localities, such as Belleoram and Rencontre East on Belle Bay, the Burin Peninsula, the South Shore of the Avalon Peninsula, and the west coast of Conception Bay, she found a greater mixing of Irish and British culture. A typical example is the east coast of Placentia Bay. Karpeles visited the communities of Placentia, Flinn, Ship's Cove, Gooseberry Cove, and Dunville. Some of her informants, who included Michael Carroll, Margaret Flinn, Patrick Hunt, and Mrs. J.J. Doyle, appear to have been of Irish stock; however, "Sligo Shore" was the only song that she noted with an overtly Irish connection. The other songs were an assortment of different kinds of English folksongs. The ubiquitous "Sweet William's Ghost" was a Child ballad, as was "The Gypsy Laddie." "The Constant Farmer's Son" and "The Drummer Boy" were derived from common English broadside ballads. "The Maid from the Shore," although popular in Nova Scotia, was probably of English origin, while "Streams of Lovely Nancy" was likely from Cornwall, although it was found elsewhere in south-west England.<sup>58</sup> One particularly beautiful song, however, "She's Like the Swallow" (sung by John Hunt at Dunville), was probably a Newfoundland creation.<sup>59</sup>

## Conclusion

Evidence of Newfoundland nationalism was hardly abundant in Greenleaf's and Karpeles' song-harvest in the outports during 1929-30, but it did exist, as the subtitle to "Captain William Jackman," one of the songs that Greenleaf collected in *Fleur de Lys*, suggests. The phrase "A Newfoundland Hero" conveys patriotic pride in the island and its hardy and self-sufficient inhabitants. This sentiment of "soft" nationalism is also evident in a variety of other songs printed in *Ballads and Sea Songs from Newfoundland*. As an example, we may quote three stanzas from "The Roving Newfoundlanders," sung by Thomas Endacott at Sally's Cove in 1929:

As I was setting in my homestead one day while  
all alone,  
I was thinking of my countrymen and where they  
had to roam,  
From England to America, Australia and Japan,  
Where'er you go you'll surely find a man from  
Newfoundland.

They sailed the Mediterranean, I've heard the  
clergy tell,  
They went out into Egypt, from that to Jacob's  
Well,  
They've fished the Northern and Grand Banks  
from every hole  
and knap,  
They are the tyrants of the sea, they fished the  
Flemish Cap.

And now my song is ended, I think I have done  
well,  
My birthplace and my station, I'm trying for to  
tell.  
I've spoke of every nation, I've freely won my  
race,  
I am a Newfoundlander belongs to Harbour  
Grace.<sup>60</sup>

A similar pride in the homeland and its brave sons and daughters can be found in (among others) "The Crowd of Bold Sharemen," "Come All Ye Jolly Ice-Hunters," "Change Islands Song," "The Wreck of the Steamship *Ethie*," "The Fishermen of Newfoundland," "The Bird Rocks," "The Maid of Newfoundland" (in which the lovely girl can easily be interpreted as a symbol of the island), and even "Lukey's Boat." On the other hand, several of the local songs printed in the last part of Greenleaf's book were noticeably obtained from Gerald Doyle rather than collected in the outports. That is true, for example, of "All Around Green Island Shore," "The Outharbor Planter," and "Jack Hinks." A few songs, such as "The Badger Drive," "The Star of Logy Bay," and "The Blooming Bright Star of Belle Isle,"

were popularised by Doyle before Greenleaf collected them. Importantly, however, Greenleaf's field-work suggests that Doyle's songster had not yet made great inroads into the singing communities along the northern and western shores of the island.

The almost complete absence in Greenleaf's collection – not to mention Karpeles' – of 'hard' nationalist songs is striking. No anti-confederation songs, or other songs for that matter attack the Canadian "wolf". No songs urge Newfoundlanders to fight for freedom from British tyranny. Indeed, finding a single song collected in the field before 1948 that might count as an expression of 'hard' nationalism is difficult. At least during the decade from 1920 to 1930, Newfoundlanders, in the over fifty outports visited by either Greenleaf or Karpeles, do not seem to have had the cause of an independent Newfoundland on their mind. If they did, they do not seem to have talked, let alone sung about it, to strangers.

The one partial exception to this generalization might be the island's capital city. St. John's was something of a cultural melting pot, and it appears to have been the locale in which nationalism was most readily apparent. There, in 1929, Greenleaf and Mansfield came across an interesting example of the 'Newfoundlandization' of English folksong. "Spanish Ladies" was a sea-song that functioned as an *aide-memoire* for navigation in the English Channel, and it was sometimes also used as a shanty. In Newfoundland, its tune had been borrowed for "The Ryans and the Pittmans" and its lusty chorus had become "We'll rant and we'll roar like true Newfoundlanders" instead of "like true British sailors."<sup>61</sup> The national spirit was evidently alive and, one suspects, growing apace in St. John's. To generalize from the capital city to the island as a whole may not be legitimate, as between the wars, the heart and soul of Newfoundland was to be found not in St. John's but in hundreds of tiny coastal settlements.

Karpeles and Greenleaf found a vibrant cultural mosaic among the various outports that they visited. Some communities were culturally almost completely Irish, some were almost completely English, and others reflected a mixture of immigrants from several parts of the British Isles. Greenleaf is a more reliable guide than Karpeles for the relative quantities of Anglo-Scottish, Irish, and Newfoundland-composed songs in the outport communities. According to her evidence, the degree of 'Newfoundlandization' that had already occurred in these communities seemed to have varied considerably. In some places, she found a significant number of popular songs that had been written quite recently and that expressed aspects of the Newfoundland experience that obviously

resonated with the singers and their audiences. In other places, such songs were few or non-existent. Presumably this reflected both the cultural homogeneity of the original settlers and the degree of isolation of the particular community. Yet, it must be emphasised that Greenleaf's experience in the coastal villages along the northern Newfoundland coast essentially paralleled that of Karpeles on the south coast. Each collector found community after community in which it was immediately evident whence the original settlers had come. The song-cultures of those immigrants' homelands were still dominant.

In conclusion, it would seem that the process of blending different immigrant cultures into a Newfoundland national culture was underway on the island in the 1920s; it did, however, still have a long way to go. Karpeles' collecting no doubt underestimates the extent to which a national song culture had emerged in St. John's and certain outports, but it clearly demonstrates that living English and Irish song cultures continued to flourish in the Newfoundland of 1929-30. Greenleaf's collecting reinforces the fact that the cultural identity of many outports was still fundamentally Irish or British rather than Canadian or Newfoundland. A home-grown tradition *was* already in existence, but the legacy of English and Irish song was still vibrant – and dominant – in outports on the western, northern, and southern coasts of the island.

Considering that so many outport communities still felt such a strong attachment to Ireland, it is hardly surprising that in 1948 they voted strongly against remaining a British colony; nor is it remarkable that outports populated mainly from the South-West of England voted to keep their ties with the motherland. A minority of Newfoundlanders were already expressing patriotism in song, but theirs was predominantly a 'soft' nationalism that did not necessarily translate into a firm commitment to an independent nation-state. This nationalism was not as widespread as it would become later. This combination of enduring affection for the European homeland and sporadic Newfoundland patriotism accurately reflected the abiding cultural allegiances of most outport communities, allegiances that were in turn reflected in the voting patterns of the 1948 referenda. The interwar era was thus a time of transition for Newfoundland song, Newfoundland culture, and Newfoundland politics. A Newfoundland national identity was in gestation but it had yet to be born. Had Canada not taken advantage of a brief window of opportunity before that embryonic sense of national identity developed further, Newfoundland might never have become one of its Atlantic provinces.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Ron Hynes, "The Final Breath," on *We Will Remain: Patriotic Songs of Newfoundland* (St. John's, Nfld: Singsong, 1998). Singsong SS 9803 (compact disc). There is no general editor of this compilation CD, but it was produced by Jason Whelan, the liner notes were written by Steve Delaney and Paul Delaney, and Steve Delaney appears to have been the originator of the project. *We Will Remain* was reviewed in *Canadian Folk Music Bulletin*, 33:1 (March 1999), 35. Ron Hynes' "The Final Breath" is also on his own CD, *Face to the Gale* (Mississauga, Ont: EMI, 1997). Artisan Music 72438 36187 2 9 (compact disc).
- <sup>2</sup> Gordon W. Handcock, "*So Longe as There Comes Noe Women*": *Origins of English Settlement in Newfoundland* (St. John's, Nfld: Breakwater, 1989), passim. John J. Mannion, *Irish Settlements in Eastern Canada: A Study of Cultural Transfer and Adaptation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 15-30. Other relevant studies include Bruce S. Elliott, *Irish Migrants in the Canadas: A New Approach* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), Grant C. Head, *Eighteenth Century Newfoundland: A Geographer's Perspective* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1976), Cecil J. Houston & William J. Smyth, *Irish Emigration and Canadian Settlement: Patterns, Links, and Letters* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), John J. Mannion, ed., *The Peopling of Newfoundland: Essays in Historical Geography* (St. John's: Institute of Social & Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1977), and Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).
- <sup>3</sup> John J. Mannion, "The Irish Migrations to Newfoundland," lecture delivered to the Newfoundland Historical Society, 23 October 1973, p. 2; quoted in Terry McDonald, "Where Have All the (English) Folk Songs Gone? Newfoundland's Rejection of Its Dorset Inheritance," *British Journal of Canadian Studies* 14, no. 2 (1999): 181.
- <sup>4</sup> The Newfoundland tourist industry seems to be at pains to sweep this fact under the carpet. See the previously cited article by McDonald.
- <sup>5</sup> The term may seem awkward to some ears, since "vernacular" refers to common, everyday speech; and while it can be claimed that the language of song is poetic, elevated speech, it is the best term we have available. For other examples of its use in this manner, see: Archie Green, "Vernacular Music: A Naming Compass," *The Musical Quarterly* 77, no. 1 (1993): 35-46; and Peter Narvaez, "Newfoundland Vernacular Song," in *Popular Music: Style and Identity*, ed. Will Straw, with Gary Kennedy (Montreal: Centre for Research on Canadian Cultural Industries and Institutions, 1995), 215-219.
- <sup>6</sup> Terminology in this area is difficult, since agreement on how to use such words as "folksong" and "traditional song" is lacking. The term "folksong" was initially coined to refer to anonymous compositions collected

from rural oral tradition, and is still used that way by some writers. This usage was cogently if controversially justified by Cecil Sharp in *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions* (Taunton: Barnicott & Pearce, 1907), and was subsequently endorsed by the International Folk Music Council. By the late 1960s, however, the term had been expanded to include industrial song, the case for which was argued convincingly by A. L. Lloyd in *Folk Song in England* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1967). It was also widely employed to embrace the work of such singer-songwriters as Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Ewan MacColl, and their many disciples. Nowadays, in Ireland particularly, it is often used to refer *only* to a song composed by a singer-songwriter employing a traditional style. The term “traditional song” is then employed to denote an anonymous tune and text that has been transmitted through oral tradition. However, there are examples of “traditional” songs for which the text has a known poet; as well, some singer-songwriter songs have become “traditional” when the identity of the composer/poet has become obscured and the song has been passed on by oral/aural transmission. For an Irish perspective on these issues and a discussion of the role of ballad-makers and song-makers in traditional music, see Hugh Shields, *Narrative Singing in Ireland: Lays, Ballads, Come-All-Yes, and Other Songs* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1993).

<sup>7</sup> Frank Kidson, “The Vitality of Melody,” *Proceedings of the Musical Association* 34 (1907-08): 81-95.

<sup>8</sup> If the melody is appealing but the words are not, then new words will quickly be composed to replace the old. If the words appeal but the tune is boring, singers quickly adopt a different but suitable melody from their existing tune repertoire.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Mercer, *Newfoundland Songs and Ballads in Print, 1842-1974: A Title and First-Line Index* (St. John's, Nfld: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1979).

<sup>10</sup> John Burke, *The St. John's Advertiser and Fishermen's Guide: A Racy Little Song and Joke Book* (St. John's: The Prescott Street Auction Mart, 1894). The ascription of this anonymous booklet to Burke is very plausible since many of the songs were his compositions, he lived on Prescott St., and he ran an auction mart at his house. The dating is less sure, being based on a pencilled annotation on the single extant copy.

<sup>11</sup> On Burke, see Paul Mercer, ed., *The Ballads of Johnny Burke: A Short Anthology* (St. John's, Nfld.: Newfoundland Historical Society, 1974).

<sup>12</sup> Gerald S. Doyle, ed., *Old-Time Songs and Poetry of Newfoundland* (St. John's, Nfld.: Gerald S. Doyle Ltd, 1927).

<sup>13</sup> These are their married names, which were used for publication purposes. Actually, each of the collectors was unmarried when she first visited Newfoundland. Elisabeth's maiden name was Bristol and Grace's was Yarrow.

<sup>14</sup> Elisabeth Bristol Greenleaf and Grace Yarrow Mansfield, eds., *Ballads and Sea Songs from Newfoundland* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1933; reprint, Hatboro, Pa.: Folklore Associates, 1968).

<sup>15</sup> Maud Karpeles, ed., *Folk Songs from Newfoundland* (London: Faber & Faber, 1971).

<sup>16</sup> This is a rough estimate, and the number is necessarily approximate. For one thing, there is considerable overlap in contents between the various songsters, so one cannot simply aggregate the items listed by Mercer. Some of the songsters are rare, and the sole extant items are not easily accessible. Moreover, both Greenleaf and Karpeles quite frequently collected multiple variants of a given song, not all of which they printed in their published collections.

<sup>17</sup> *We Will Remain*. See note 1.

<sup>18</sup> Steve Delaney, liner notes to *We Will Remain*.

<sup>19</sup> This is the same song as that quoted later from Gerald S. Doyle's *Old-Time Songs and Poetry of Newfoundland*, third edition, St. John's, Nfld.: Doyle, 1955. It is sung on *We Will Remain* by Arthur O'Brien. “The ‘Antis’ of Plate Cove” is sung by Fergus O'Byrne.

<sup>20</sup> Sir Robert Bond was the Liberal Prime Minister of Newfoundland from 1900 to 1909, and was admired by his followers for his forthright and dogged defence of Newfoundland's fishery against both British and American governments. “Tribute to Bond” is sung on *We Will Remain* by Jason Whelan. “Song of Freedom” is sung by Fergus O'Byrne.

<sup>21</sup> Dave Benson, “Come All Ye”, sung on *We Will Remain* by Tommy Nemeć.

<sup>22</sup> Jim Payne, “The Whispering Wave,” sung on *We Will Remain* by the author.

<sup>23</sup> Other popular Newfoundland performers whose songs about their native province find an audience elsewhere in Canada include Figgy Duff, The Ennis Sisters, The Irish Descendants, The Mercers, Middle Tickle, Rawlins Cross, Hugh Scott, and, of course, Ron Hynes.

<sup>24</sup> Pamela M. Hodgson and Genevieve Lehr, “Confederation,” in Joseph R. Smallwood and Robert D. W. Pitt, eds. *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, vol. 1, 497-502 (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1981; reprint St. John's: Smallwood Heritage Foundation, 1991).

<sup>25</sup> Doyle, *Old-Time Songs*, third ed., St. John's, Nfld: Doyle, 1955.

<sup>26</sup> Doyle, *Old-Time Songs*, third ed. (1955), 55.

<sup>27</sup> Neil V. Rosenberg, “The Gerald S. Doyle Songsters and the Politics of Newfoundland Folksong,” *Canadian Folklore Canadian* 13, no. 1 (1991): 56.

<sup>28</sup> Bertram G. Riggs, “Elections,” in Joseph R. Smallwood and Robert D. W. Pitt, eds. *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, vol. 1, 679-749 (St. John's, Nfld: Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1981).

<sup>29</sup> The work of Paul Mercer might seem to facilitate pushing the investigation back another quarter of a century, but Mercer's entries from nineteenth-century sources are few. *Prima facie*, the initial debate about the merits and disadvantages of joining in a confederation with other Canadian colonies stimulated the first wave of Newfoundland patriotic song-making.

<sup>30</sup> Doyle, *Old-Time Songs*, unpaginated.

<sup>31</sup> John Burke and George T. Oliver, eds., *The People's Songster, Buyers Guide, And Gems of Poetry And*

- Prose, Containing Some Of The Most Recent Songs of the Day* (St. John's: Oliver & Burke, 1900).
- <sup>32</sup> John Burke and James Murphy, eds., *The Duke of York Songster and Christmas Advertiser* (St. John's: Burke & Murphy, 1901).
- <sup>33</sup> James Murphy, ed., *Songs and Ballads of Newfoundland: Ancient and Modern* (St. John's, Nfld: James Murphy, 1902), 53.
- <sup>34</sup> Archbishop Howley and Sister Josephine, "The Flag of Newfoundland," in Murphy, ed., *Songs and Ballads*, 53.
- <sup>35</sup> James Murphy, ed.: *Songs of Our Land* (St. John's, Nfld: James Murphy, 1904); *Murphy's Sealers' Song Book* (St. John's, Nfld: James Murphy, 1905); *Coronation Song Book of Newfoundland* (St. John's, Nfld: James Murphy, 1911); *Old Songs of Newfoundland* (St. John's, Nfld: James Murphy, 1912); *Songs of Newfoundland by Various Authors* (St. John's, Nfld: James Murphy, 1917); *Songs Their Fathers Sung. For Fishermen. Old Time Ditties* (St. John's, Nfld: James Murphy, 1923); and *Songs Sung by Old-Time Sealers of Many Years Ago* (St. John's, Nfld: James Murphy, 1925).
- <sup>36</sup> *Burke's Newfoundland Ballads* (St. John's: John Burke, 1912) and *Burke's Popular Songs, December, 1929* (St. John's, Nfld: Long Brothers, 1929). An undated fragment of what appears to be an earlier edition of this latter work also exists.
- <sup>37</sup> John Burke, ed., *The Allies Patriotic War Songster* (St. John's: John Burke, 1917). *Burke's Xmas Songster, 1920*. (St. John's: John Burke, 1920). *The Irish Songster* (St. John's: John Burke, 1922). See also White, Burke, ed. *Burke's Ballads, compiled by John White* (St. John's: John White, 1960), and Paul Mercer, ed., *The Ballads of Johnny Burke: A Short Anthology* (St. John's, Nfld: Newfoundland Historical Society, 1974).
- <sup>38</sup> Doyle, *Old-Time Songs*, first edition, 1927; second edition, 1940.
- <sup>39</sup> John Moulden, "The Blooming Bright Star of Belle Isle: American Native or Irish Immigrant?," *Canadian Folk Music Journal* 14 (1986): 3-9. This article convincingly demonstrates the Irish origin of the song. However, Doyle may have thought that the song was about Bell Island in Conception Bay. The fact that he omitted the final "e" of "Belle" suggests that he was at least deliberately adapting the song to his home setting. "The Banks of Newfoundland" was an English broadside ballad, and it was also collected in Nova Scotia by Helen Creighton. See Helen Creighton, ed., *Songs and Ballads from Nova Scotia* (Toronto: Dent, 1933), 221-22.
- <sup>40</sup> Isabelle Peere, "Elisabeth Greenleaf: An Appraisal," *Canadian Folk Music Journal* 13 (1985): 20-31.
- <sup>41</sup> Greenleaf and Mansfield, *Ballads and Sea Songs*.
- <sup>42</sup> Greenleaf and Mansfield, *Ballads and Sea Songs*, xxi-xxii.
- <sup>43</sup> The term "adopted daughter," which was not literally true, was Sharp's, but accepted by Karpeles in her (unpublished) draft autobiography.
- <sup>44</sup> E. David Gregory and Rosaleen Gregory, "Before Newfoundland: Maud Karpeles in Canada," *Canadian Folk Music/Bulletin de musique folklorique canadienne* 37, no. 1 (2003): 1-12.
- <sup>45</sup> E. David Gregory, "Maud Karpeles, Newfoundland, and the Crisis of the Folk Song Revival, 1924-1935," *Newfoundland Studies* 16, no. 2 (2000): 151-165.
- <sup>46</sup> "Child ballads" is a shorthand term for the 305 clusters of ballad texts printed in Francis James Child's seminal collection of traditional folk ballads, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 10 parts in 5 volumes (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1882-1898; reprint, New York: Dover, 1965).
- <sup>47</sup> In 1920-21 Elisabeth was as yet unmarried, but I have used the surname Greenleaf rather than her maiden name Bristol to avoid confusion, and because she employed her married name when she published her collection of Newfoundland songs.
- <sup>48</sup> Elisabeth Greenleaf, Folder 3, item 5, Greenleaf Papers, 82-189-3, Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore Archives (MUNFLA).
- <sup>49</sup> Greenleaf, Folder 3, item 3, Greenleaf Papers, 82-189-3, MUNFLA.
- <sup>50</sup> Greenleaf and Mansfield, *Ballads and Sea Songs*, xxxii-xxxiii.
- <sup>51</sup> Greenleaf and Mansfield, *Ballads and Sea Songs*, xxxi-xxxii.
- <sup>52</sup> Maud Karpeles, ed., *Folk Songs from Newfoundland, with Pianoforte Accompaniments*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934).
- <sup>53</sup> Maud Karpeles, ed., *Folk Songs from Newfoundland* (London: Faber & Faber, 1971).
- <sup>54</sup> Maud Karpeles, Maud Karpeles Collection, 78-003, MUNFLA.
- <sup>55</sup> Maud Karpeles, "Field Diary # 1 (July 20<sup>th</sup> – October 29<sup>th</sup>, 1929)," Karpeles Collection, 78-003, MUNFLA.
- <sup>56</sup> E.R. Seary, *Family Names of the Island of Newfoundland* (St. John's, Nfld.: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1977). See also Handcock, "So Longe as There Comes Noe Women".
- <sup>57</sup> Maud Karpeles, "Field Diary # 2 (June 30-August 6, 1930)," Karpeles Collection, 78-003, MUNFLA.
- <sup>58</sup> "Streams of Lovely Nancy" was an English-language song, not a song in the Cornish language, and must therefore be counted as English rather than Celtic.
- <sup>59</sup> Maud Karpeles, "Field Diary # 2 (June 30-August 6, 1930)," Karpeles Collection, 78-003, MUNFLA.
- <sup>60</sup> Greenleaf and Mansfield, *Ballads and Sea Songs*, 370-371.
- <sup>61</sup> Elisabeth Greenleaf, "Newfoundland Days," Folder # 7, item 1, Greenleaf Papers, 82-189-3, MUNFLA.