

THE NEWFOUNDLAND DIASPORA

by

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ABSTRACT

For over a century there has been a large ongoing migration from Newfoundland to other parts of Canada and the US. Between 1971 and 1998 alone, net out-migration amounted to 20% of the province's population. This exodus has become a significant part of Newfoundland culture. While many literary critics, writers, and sociologists have referred to Newfoundland out-migration as a "diaspora," few have examined the theoretical implications of applying this emotionally charged term to a predominantly white, economically motivated, inter-provincial movement. My dissertation addresses these issues, ultimately arguing that "diaspora" is an appropriate and helpful term to describe Newfoundland out-migration and its literature, because it connotes the painful displacement of a group that continues to identify with each other and with the homeland. I argue that considering Newfoundland a "diaspora" also provides a useful contribution to theoretical work on diaspora, because it reveals the ways in which labour movements and intra-national migrations can be meaningfully considered diasporic. It also rejects the Canadian tendency to conflate diaspora with racialized subjectivities, a tendency that problematically posits racialized Others as always from elsewhere, and that threatens to refigure experiences of racism as a problem of integration rather than of systemic, institutionalized racism.

I examine several important literary works of the Newfoundland diaspora, including the poetry of E.J. Pratt and Carl Leggo, the drama of David French, the fiction of Donna Morrissey and Wayne Johnston, and the memoirs of Helen M. Buss/ Margaret Clarke and David Macfarlane. These works also become the sites of a broader inquiry into several theoretical flashpoints, including diasporic authenticity, nostalgia, nationalism, race and whiteness, and

ethnicity. I show that diasporic Newfoundlanders' identifications involve a complex, self-reflexive, postmodern negotiation between the sometimes contradictory conditions of white privilege, cultural marginalization, and national and regional appropriations. Through these negotiations they both construct imagined literary communities, and problematize Newfoundland's place within Canadian culture and a globalized world.

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*In memory of
Fraser Noseworthy,
1922-2008*

Introduction: The Newfoundland Diaspora

Hines, in his sermon/column, forever likened Newfoundlanders to the Jews, pointing out parallels between them. There was a ‘diaspora’ of Newfoundlanders, he said, scattered like the Jews throughout the world. He saw himself as their minister, preaching to his flock from his columns, most of which began with epigraphs from the Book of Exodus.

-Wayne Johnston, *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*

I dredge these silted beds
but there is nothing left –
the sea is torn, bone-seeded.
even my lanky brother has gone
west to the mountains.

The winter beach is strewn
blue with mussels sucked dry.
I have abandoned my home.
-Carol Hobbs, “Trawl”

In 1978 my parents, newly married, left their home province of Newfoundland for Alberta. They expected to return in a few years. Two children and three decades later, they have not returned to Newfoundland to live. I grew up in Edmonton with my parents referring to Newfoundland as “home,” eating Newfoundland meals, hearing traditional songs, and using Newfoundland expressions without realizing my friends didn’t understand me. Growing up I did not consider myself an Albertan, even though I had never lived anywhere else. I constructed my identity out of my Newfoundland heritage. My grandparents were always 5000 kilometres away, but I had cousins to play with – many of my parents’ siblings were also compelled to leave.

My family’s is a common story, and an old one – Newfoundland’s economic hardships have propelled a continuous stream of out-migration not only since Confederation with Canada

in 1949, but for well over a century. David Alexander argues that Newfoundland's primary economy, its fishery, simply could not sustain its labour force, even as early as the late nineteenth century ("Economy" 29). For some, seasonal work in other places was the solution, but for many, seasonal migration led to permanent settlement elsewhere (Crawley 42). Ron Crawley shows how industrial Cape Breton drew thousands of Newfoundlanders between 1890 and 1914, in "one of the most dramatic movements of people in Newfoundland history" (27). At this time the Canadian government also actively recruited Newfoundlanders to the western provinces (Crawley 43). Before Confederation the U.S. was an even bigger draw; in 1915 there were already 13,269 Newfoundlanders living in Massachusetts alone. Employment was not the only reason to move; during WWII thousands of Newfoundland women married American servicemen and moved to the States. Following Confederation, Newfoundlanders tended to migrate to Canada rather than the US, most drawn to urban Ontario in search of work (Bella 3). According to Wayne Johnston, by 1963 it was estimated that there were two million expatriate Newfoundlanders and their descendants living in Canada or the US – four times the population of the province (*Baltimore's* 49).

Out-migration was further boosted by the collapse of the fishery and the cod moratorium in 1992. Between 1971 and 1998 the net loss to out-migration amounted to 100,000 people, about 20% of the province's population (Bella 1). And the exodus continues to grow. As the final report of the Newfoundland government's Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada (2003) reflects, "[t]he 10 per cent decline in this province's population between 1991 - 2001 due to massive out-migration is a shocking indicator that something has gone seriously wrong in the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador" (35). While the 2008

provincial budget forecasts a change in the province's economic fortunes, the unemployment rate remains the highest in the country, at 13%.

While many Canadian provinces, particularly other Atlantic provinces, have experienced out-migration for similar reasons,¹ Newfoundland stands out for its sheer numbers. Between the 1996 and 2001 censuses, 47,100 people moved out of Newfoundland and Labrador, creating a net out-migration of 31,100 people. While Newfoundland and Labrador has shown a net loss in every census since 1981,² this was the largest net loss in two decades, representing 6.1% of the population aged five years and over (Statistics Canada). This was by far the highest net out-migration rate among the provinces.³ The 2006 census data shows that Newfoundland and Labrador's population has continued to drop, though not as sharply, with a total population loss of 1.5% since 2001 (Statistics Canada). As of 2003, Newfoundland's expatriate community was estimated at a total of 220,000 (Royal Commission i) – a staggering number considering that the province's population at that time was a mere 512,500.

Out-migration has not been limited to former fishermen or young blue-collar labourers. Professionals and artists have also left; as Leslie Bella found in her study *Newfoundlanders: Home and Away* (2002), many alumni of Memorial University have migrated, citing the search

¹ See Gary Burrill's oral history collection *Away* (1992) for accounts of out-migration from the Maritimes. Burrill's exclusion of Newfoundland from his study emphasizes Newfoundland's distinction from the Maritime provinces (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and PEI). As Margaret Conrad notes, many people confuse the Maritimes with Atlantic Canada, lumping in Newfoundland and Labrador as a Maritime province despite the fact that "Canada's tenth province differs substantially from its Maritime cousins" (161). Similarly, Janice Kulyk Keefer excludes Newfoundland and Labrador from her study of Maritime literature, *Under Eastern Eyes*, on the grounds that to "slap on Newfoundland" at the tail of the Maritimes would mean that "the rich and resilient particularity of the tag-along province would be betrayed" (4). I hope that the character of that particularity will become clear throughout this study.

² While the 1981 census recorded a brief positive net migration, the pattern of population loss actually goes back much further. The Royal Commission reports a loss in net migration every year but four, going back to 1951 (36).

³ The second highest rate was less than half Newfoundland's; Saskatchewan lost 2.7% of its population aged five and over.

for work as the number one reason. Many Newfoundlanders also leave in search of better education (Bella 8). Aging parents have followed their children to their new hometowns in Toronto or Fort McMurray in a “second wave” of out-migration (Royal Commission 39). While not every Newfoundlander’s reasons for leaving are the same, together they have formed a culture of out-migration, in which leaving is often expected or considered inevitable, and in which return is a powerful but often unfulfilled dream. Together, these migrants constitute a Newfoundland diaspora.

By connecting these migrants in one “diaspora” I do not mean to elide class or other differences, but rather to point to a cultural experience with many common resonances and implications. The purpose of this study is to show how the concept of diaspora effectively describes the shared identifications of Newfoundland out-migrants as a group living in displacement, without homogenizing their experiences. As Floya Anthias warns,

the idea of diaspora tends to homogenise the population referred to at the transnational level. However, such populations are not homogeneous for the movements of population may have taken place at different historical periods and for different reasons, and different countries of destination provided different social conditions, opportunities and exclusions. [...] The diaspora is constituted as much in *difference and division* as it is in *commonality and solidarity*. (564, emphasis original)

For Anthias, this internal heterogeneity renders the concept of diaspora inadequate as both a theoretical and a social category: “the fact that a population category may be identifiable by an attributed origin (other or self), does not provide sufficient grounds for treating it as a valid sociological category. The differences within the category may be as great as those between the categories” (565). But the concept of diaspora, I argue, need not exclude the evaluation of internal gender, class, and even racial formations. Newfoundlanders, like any group, are not homogeneous. While the number of “visible minorities” is very small, it is made up of Mi’kmaq,

new immigrants from around the world, and second, third or fourth generation “hyphenated” Newfoundlanders. Deep-seated conflict between Catholics and Protestants still occasionally rears its head. Tension between the “baymen” and the “townies” (the outports versus St. John’s), is also prevalent, and is often connected to class conflict. But despite these internal differences, many Newfoundlanders do share a distinct sense of identity, and the experience of migration has become a common narrative in Newfoundland’s cultural memory. The term “diaspora” references this shared cultural narrative without necessarily eliding important internal differences.

This project does, however, concentrate on the literature of the island of Newfoundland and Newfoundlanders, excluding Labrador. Newfoundland has traditionally considered Labrador to be their backyard fishing ground, and Labrador figures prominently in the literary imagination of Newfoundlanders. But in reality it constitutes a separate literary culture with unique issues and concerns, which merits its own critical study. To include Labrador in my study would be to draw a literary community along provincial political lines rather than cultural lines, which is a move that I want to oppose rather than support. It would also allow the political concerns of the Innu and Inuit peoples to be swallowed by a falsely homogenized provincial identity.

Newfoundland and the Concept of Diaspora

Others have applied the term “diaspora” to Newfoundland out-migration. In their article on the use of the internet in diaspora communities, sociologists Harry Hiller and Tara Franz define Newfoundland out-migration as a diaspora because of Newfoundland migrants’ strong attachment to place, community affiliation, and “unique identity” (747). Other instances of the term, including those in literary criticism, are casual, lacking exploration of the term’s theoretical history and complexity. Shane O’Dea refers to “various diaspora groups (Jews, Irish,

Newfoundlanders)” (379). Stan Dragland, reflecting on the Newfoundland literary scene, muses “I know that a vibrant paper nation might look ironic to those in the Newfoundland diaspora who can’t afford to live here” (206). Photographer Greg Locke hosts a website titled *Dispatches from Exit 0: Going Down the Road with Newfoundland’s Diaspora*. In his informal meditation *Leaving Newfoundland: A History of Out-Migration*, Stephen Nolan calls the “tumultuous upheaval” of Newfoundlanders from their home a long-standing “diaspora” (2). I do not disagree with these examples of the term. But their offhand usage does mark the need for a theoretical investigation of the implications of the term in the Newfoundland context, particularly in the field of literary studies.

The need for such an investigation is clearer when one considers another, more awkward, instance of the term. In his submission to the Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada, G.C. Blackmore laments the major impact that out-migration has had on Newfoundland society, and asks, “does the biblical *diaspora* of our people to other places have necessarily to be interpreted as the weakening of our culture?” (355, emphasis original). Blackmore’s use of the word “biblical” here alludes to the original usage of the term, the Jewish diaspora.⁴ While Blackmore’s question is an important one, his phrasing is unsettling in that it seems to imply an equation of Newfoundland’s migration with the Jewish diaspora, and to identify “our people” – Newfoundlanders – with a religious or racial group. It does not seem to leave room for Newfoundland’s colonial history, for Newfoundlanders’ heterogeneous identities, or for the economic motivations behind the displacement. Rather than legitimizing the

⁴ As Gabriel Sheffer outlines, the word “diaspora” is in fact Greek; it is widely believed that it first appeared in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, in reference to the Jews. While the term was also used to describe ancient Greek colonialism, this usage is not well known, and until recent decades dictionary definitions were reserved for the Jewish dispersal (9).

Newfoundland usage of the term, Blackmore's usage tends to hyperbole; Newfoundland's diaspora could obviously never compare to the Jewish diaspora in scale or impact.

But does that mean that we should reject the application of the term to Newfoundland altogether? Most diaspora theorists now consider the Jewish Diaspora to be the origin of the term, rather than its exclusive referent; Avtar Brah writes that "to speak of late twentieth-century diasporas is to take such ancient diasporas as a point of departure rather than necessarily as 'models'" (181). Thus diaspora theorists tend to define the term rather broadly: in the introduction to *Theorizing Diaspora* (2003) Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur write that "diaspora refers specifically to the movement – forced or voluntary – of people from one or more nation-states to another" (8). Indeed in *Powers of Diaspora: Two Essays on the Relevance of Jewish Culture* (2002), Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin argue that "the cultural strategies of Jewish diaspora – of regeneration through statelessness – speak well [...] to the dilemmas and the possibilities of the 'new diasporas' born in the midst and in the aftermath of the modern world-system" (vii-viii). "New diasporas" is a term also used by Vijay Mishra, to recognize "the mid-to late twentieth-century diasporas of advanced capital to the metropolitan centres of the Empire, the New World and the former settler colonies" (421). As the Boyarins affirm, "we should not define diaspora such that some are more 'diasporic' than others, and we must watch the intellectual trap of speaking as if the concept *produces* the various phenomena rather than merely helping us *think them together*" (28). Thus while a direct metaphorical comparison between the Newfoundland diaspora and the Jewish diaspora uncomfortably exaggerates the Newfoundland experience, the application of the term as a theoretical concept to Newfoundland opens up new ways of thinking about the island's out-migration.

Diaspora theorists like William Safran and Robin Cohen have formed lists of criteria for societies to qualify as diasporas. But as James Clifford argues, “no society can be expected to qualify on all counts, throughout its history. And the discourse of diaspora will necessarily be modified as it is translated and adopted. [...] A polythetic field would seem most conducive to tracking (rather than policing) the contemporary range of diasporic forms” (306-307). Following Clifford, I am not interested in proving how Newfoundland out-migration meets each criterion, as though “diaspora” is an exclusive club that can accept or deny membership (though maintaining some definitional integrity is important). Rather, I adopt Canadian diaspora theorist Lily Cho’s idea that diaspora should be understood not as an object of analysis but as a “condition of subjectivity” (“Turn” 11). Newfoundland out-migration is not automatically a diaspora, then; rather diaspora is a means of describing out-migration as a collective experience. I am interested in exploring how considering migrant cultures in diasporic terms provides a space in which to “think them together,” and provides an enabling frame of reference through which to better understand experiences of displacement.

“Diaspora” is both an appropriate and useful term to describe Newfoundland out-migration in that it captures the magnitude of the phenomenon, and connotes what I identify as five main aspects of the migration experience: (1) painful displacement and a condition of loss; (2) the continued connection to homeland; (3) the formation of diaspora communities abroad; (4) the construction of homeland in neo-national rather than regional terms; and (5) a sense of difference and marginalization in the new home. I understand these elements not as definitions of diaspora, but rather as connotations that helpfully elucidate the experience of Newfoundland out-migration and its literature.

Painful Displacement

In her essay “Confederation,” which won first place in the Newfoundland literary journal *TickleAce*’s essay contest marking the fiftieth anniversary of Confederation, Kay Anonsen uses second-person narrative to tell the story of a woman twice displaced from Newfoundland. The first time, she leaves with her family in the 1960s. She returns as an adult, only to leave again after two decades in the province. We are not told the circumstances of the family’s original migration from Newfoundland to Ontario, but the father’s relationship to his birthplace implies a lack of choice: “your old Dad who lies far away from everything he understood told you many times that there was no one else worth knowing except a Newfoundlander” (51). His burial in Ontario, “far away from everything he understood” emphasizes both the rupture of identity caused by diaspora and its tragic permanence. Anonsen’s description of having to give up one’s Newfoundland driver’s license is equally powerful: “the woman took your information and your picture and your money and then she asked you for your Newfoundland driver’s license and you asked why and you didn’t want to give it to her, did you? It was the last proof of who you were, wasn’t it?” (50). Out-migration is painful because it represents both the loss of homeland and a threat to personal identity.

As diaspora theorists such as Paul Gilroy, Khachig Tölölyan, and Cho all argue, trauma and loss are central to the definition of diaspora. Anonsen’s piece shows that out-migration is profoundly painful for many Newfoundlanders. But can a situation in which people choose to leave for economic reasons, rather than being forced to leave by violence, legitimately be called a diaspora? Gilroy argues that “diaspora” is

not just a word of movement, though purposive, desperate movement is integral to it. Under this sign, push factors are a dominant influence. The urgency they introduce makes diaspora more than a voguish synonym for peregrination or

nomadism [...] life itself is at stake in the way the word connotes flight following the threat of violence rather than freely chosen experiences of displacement. (123)

Gilroy suggests that diasporas are provoked by the violence of “slavery, pogroms, indenture, genocide, and other unnameable terrors,” rather than more benign labour or economic pressures. But while Gilroy’s work has been profoundly important to the development of diaspora research, and while violence certainly figures prominently in theories of diaspora, most theorists do not confine the term exclusively to such displacements. Cohen, in *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, identifies a type of what he calls “labour diasporas,” which arise when groups not only leave a homeland in search of work, but also demonstrate a “strong retention of group ties,” a strong connection to a homeland, and the inability to easily assimilate in the host society (57-58). Cohen’s definition goes to the opposite extreme to Gilroy’s; his wide definition of diaspora even includes a form of “imperial diaspora,” which is marked by “a sense of forming part of a grand imperial design – whereby the group concerned assumes the self-image of a ‘chosen race’ with a global mission” of colonial expansion (67). Cohen traces the word’s etymological origins to Greek imperialism, and while he notes that these origins have “virtually been lost” in deference to the biblical usage, he uses this history to justify the “imperial diaspora” as a category. Yet the predominance of the Jewish Diaspora in the term’s development, and its more recent appropriation by postcolonial theory (Chariandy, no page), has shifted it from its Greek imperial origins to a very different meaning, with hundreds of years of persecution, slavery, and indentured labour behind it. I do not think that this history can be easily reversed. Much of diaspora theory is concerned with resolving Gilroy and Cohen’s extreme positions, with staking out a ground for diaspora somewhere in the middle that provides both the limits of meaningful definition and room for effective comparison and dialogue between displaced groups. Such work

is not merely a question of quibbling about semantics, since both claims to diaspora and moves to exclude certain experiences from it involve profoundly emotional negotiations.

In an issue of his influential journal *Diaspora*, Tölölyan identifies the term as having once been “saturated with the meanings of exile, loss, dislocation, powerlessness and plain pain” (“Rethinking” 9). While Tölölyan reluctantly concedes that “the definition has changed” (13), he effectively argues that the “amnesia” concerning the term’s long-standing connotations of trauma and loss is problematic. Similarly, Revathi Krishnaswamy warns that the terms “diaspora” and “exile” are “being emptied of their histories of pain and suffering and are being deployed promiscuously to designate a wide array of cross-cultural phenomena” (128). Cho also expresses dismay that recent claims “divorce diaspora from histories of loss and dislocation” (“Turn” 12). These are concerns that I share. At the 2006 Canadian Metropolis conference for Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis (RIIM) in Vancouver, sociologists Kenny Zhang and Yuen Pau Woo argued that the 2.7 million Canadian citizens living abroad could constitute a “Canadian diaspora.” While Canadians abroad may retain a group identity and connection to home, according to Zhang and Yuen, this “Canadian diaspora” includes the thousands of Asian migrants that have returned home after only a few years in Canada. By this definition, all that is required to be part of a diaspora is legal citizenship. While a “Canadian diaspora” may be possible, Zhang and Yuen do not attach the phenomenon they study to any shared sense of cultural identity or community abroad. Such a “loose” usage of the term, as Yuen himself describes it, renders “diaspora” meaningless – it collapses a multitude of movements and experiences into one term, emptying it of any sense of collective identity, traumatic displacement, or cultural significance. That is why the application of the term “diaspora” to Newfoundland must be carefully considered.

For Newfoundlanders the rupture from the homeland is obviously not violent like other diasporic engines such as slavery or war, but it is often experienced as a moment of painful loss propelled by forces beyond the migrant's control. The Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada states that "with job losses in many parts of the province being so severe, and without sufficient growth in employment opportunities elsewhere in the provincial economy, people have been forced to choose between unemployment and out-migration" (35). For people struggling to support themselves and their families, the choice between unemployment and out-migration is not much of a choice at all. As I write this, this feeling of coercion is emphasized with CBC television coverage of the closure of another Newfoundland fish plant, and footage of a sobbing father shouting "I'm the one that's got to go to my kid and explain to him why his father's got to leave and go to the mainland" (*The National*). This feeling of choicelessness, the splitting of families and the loss of home, all contribute to a sense of anguish.

As sociologists Peter R. Sinclair and Lawrence F. Felt found on Newfoundland's Great Northern Peninsula in the early 1990s, "migration in search of work plays an important role in legitimating young men's position in the local society" (22). One interviewee explains this phenomenon:

It's kind of expected, especially for males, that they go somewhere else to find a job if they can't find nothing here. If you lose the job or find something better here at home, it's all right, because at least you went away. My parents encouraged most of us to move away at least for a year or so to look for work and maybe try to save something before we would be welcomed back. Even the UIC (Unemployment Insurance Commission) people seem to treat you better if they knows you've been away to look for work. I knows that some people who never have left had it thrown up in their face when they go to stamp workers to try and get on make work projects so they can qualify for UI. (13)

The feeling of lack of choice is not only created by economic factors, but by the pressures of society. Not only is it expected that young people will *need* to move away, it is expected that they *should*. It has become a “*rite de passage*” (Sinclair and Felt 13) in this region, an important part of being accepted in the community. In her more recent study of youth in a small Newfoundland community, Dona Lee Davis found this phenomenon still at work, even ten years after the cod moratorium. She found that all the young adults she interviewed had been “raised to ‘get out’” (191), experiencing pressure from their parents, teachers, and peers to leave so that they would have more opportunities. The idea of “choice,” then, is not black and white; Newfoundlanders who make the *decision* to leave may not feel as though they had a *choice*.

Even for those who do choose to leave, the loss of the homeland can still be extremely painful, as it often constitutes both a rupture from place and a rupture of identity. In Anonsen’s “Confederation,” the second time the protagonist moves away from Newfoundland, the move is economically motivated. It also seems to be a positive choice: “you’re so happy to go to a place that has opportunity and good weather and the possibilities are endless” (49). But once the protagonist has left Newfoundland, the sense of loss is acute: “you walked out into the baking sunlight and realized how lonely you were, how lonely for Newfoundland, how lonely for Newfoundlanders” (50). This passage reveals the profound ambivalence of Newfoundland out-migration, the loss of identity and feeling of pain that accompanies even situations where people “choose” to leave. Applying the term diaspora here necessitates a rethinking of labour and economic migrations in terms of these affective connections.

Connection to Homeland

In Anonsen’s essay, the connection to Newfoundland remains strong, and is manifested in the collection of material items that represent the place, foster memories, and mark identity.

“You asked your sister to send you bumper stickers or license plate holders or anything that would signify you as a Newfoundlander,” she writes. “You put up Newfoundland memorabilia all over the house and you gazed with love at that old ratty hooked mat of the island and you read avidly anything in the paper about Newfoundland and you’ll never feel like an Ontarian or even a Canadian” (50). Of the six characteristics of diaspora that Safran identifies, four represent the importance of the original homeland: diasporas “retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland,” they “regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return,” they “believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity,” and “they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship” (83-84). While Clifford and others are wary of Safran’s list of qualifications for diasporas, through which “groups become identified as more or less diasporic, having only two, or three, or four of the basic six features” (Clifford 306), Safran’s list has been influential and is telling for the emphasis that it places upon the homeland as both place and idea, rather than upon genealogical or racial origin. As Clifford points out, these criteria in many ways exclude the Jewish and the “Black Atlantic” diasporas. But Clifford himself also emphasizes the importance of the original homeland in the concept of diaspora. He writes that “the language of diaspora is increasingly invoked by displaced peoples who feel (maintain, revive, invent) a connection with a prior home. This sense of connection must be strong enough to resist erasure through the normalizing processes of forgetting, assimilating, and distancing” (310). While the speaker in “Confederation” manifests her connection with her homeland in material symbols of home, her

need to make this connection tangible illustrates her resistance to those forces of forgetting, assimilating, and distancing.

Not all migrant Newfoundlanders would consider themselves part of a “diaspora” – some leave without a desire to ever return, and abandon their Newfoundland identity. But for many, Safran’s characteristics are representative of their experience. The desire to return is strong amongst diasporic Newfoundlanders – for some even strong enough to impel them to move back. Bella reports that between 1971 and 1998 over 350,000 Newfoundlanders left the province, but 250,000 returned. Of course this still leaves a net out-migration of 100,000, or 20% of the province’s population (1). As Bella found, for many migrants returning is not realistic, for the same reasons they left – unemployment and economic hardship. Sinclair and Felt’s 1993 study of return migration to Newfoundland’s Great Northern Peninsula found that while return migration is significant, it does not guarantee that former migrants will not have to leave again (21). But for Newfoundlanders in diaspora, the desire to return is not only driven by economics, or even the draw of family and friends, but by a profound attachment to place, the pull of the idea of “home” (Sinclair “Moving” 211). Bella found that “missing Newfoundland’s ocean and the landscape was more emotionally significant for some than missing family or culture” (95). As Boyarin and Boyarin establish, while the term “migrant” indicates a forward trajectory, presupposing the “ontological priority” of the new home, “diaspora” indicates a looking back at the original home (27). A “Newfoundland diaspora,” then, connotes this continued attachment to homeland, often accompanied by a strong desire to return.

Formation of Diaspora Communities

As Anonsen’s protagonist turns in her Newfoundland driver’s licence for an Ontario one, she meets another displaced Newfoundlander:

He also held a Newfoundland driver's license in his hand which he showed you, like a credential [...] You told him he was the first Newfoundlander you'd met since you got here and he said the man who owned the company he worked for was a Newfoundlander and everyone who worked there were all Newfoundlanders, every one. You made some kind of envious murmur and he said sure the first apartment building he moved into here was all Newfies, every single tenant in the whole building. (50)

Diasporas involve the movement of groups, rather than the travels or exile of individuals.

Newfoundlanders in other provinces or countries tend to form "ethnic enclaves" or "little Newfoundlands" (Bella 21);⁵ they may subscribe to *Downhome Magazine*, devoted to displaced Newfoundlanders; they often follow friends or family to the new destination in a pattern of "chain migration" (Bella iv); and they often form new connections with other migrants in clubs (Bella 44). They check websites like NewfoundlandersAbroad.com for businesses run by Newfoundlanders in their area. As Hiller and Franz found, modern technology has meant that Newfoundland's diaspora community can exist across great distances and borders, through email or online chat rooms.

Bella argues that migrant Newfoundlanders often associate with each other and form enclaves "because they view themselves as alike in important ways, such as common ancestry, experience and culture" (vi). Mishra calls such communities "diasporic imaginaries": "any ethnic enclave in a nation-state that defines itself, consciously, unconsciously or because of the political self-interest of a racialized nation-state, as a group that lives in displacement" (423). Another moment in Anonsen's piece suggests the ways in which these imaginaries are formed not only out of mutual cultural identification, but also out of class solidarity and an imposed sense of difference.⁶

And when your sister moved to Toronto and worked in a factory filling aerosol cans, and came home for the weekend and you all sat around the kitchen table to

⁵ I will address the issue of whether or not Newfoundlanders can be considered "ethnic" in Chapter Four.

⁶ I return to the contentious issue of class as it relates to the Newfoundland diaspora below.

hear her news and she told you how many Newfoundlanders worked in the factory, none of you could believe it. And then she said it was immigrants and Newfoundlanders, that's who was working in all the factories, and your Mom clucked her tongue and your Dad said sure what's the difference, we're immigrants too (49).

"Diaspora" signals this (imagined or real) shared experience of displacement between Newfoundland migrants and other immigrants. It also suggests an ongoing sense of group identity, and the link between these connections and Newfoundland as an imagined community. For the father, the term "immigrant" signals both social and economic marginalization, and a latent nationalism left over from pre-Confederation independence. Anonsen continues, "and then he boasted again of when Newfoundland was a dominion and even had its own stamps, its own money" (49). As Monika Fludernik notes, the "imaginary" aspect of Mishra's "diasporic imaginaries" links diasporas with Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities," (xi), a theory that has become central to the idea of nation. This linkage between Anderson's and Mishra's terms thus suggests the implications that diasporas have for various nationalisms, including the construction of Newfoundland as an imagined nation.

Nationalism

Initially, the idea that inter-provincial migration within a nation could constitute a "diaspora" may seem odd. But several diaspora theorists acknowledge the role of such intra-national movements in understandings of diaspora. Boyarin and Boyarin persuasively argue that "when we persist in the habit of focusing exclusively on diasporic spread across national borders, we unwittingly reinforce the prejudice toward thinking of those borders as the 'real' power divides, the ones that really count" (22). They therefore identify "diasporas-within-states" as important sites of analysis. Similarly, Tölölyan argues that the existence of what he calls "infranational" entities challenges the cohesion imposed by the state and indicates that "nation-

states may not always be the most effective or legitimate units of collective organization” (“Nation-State” 4). The fact that Newfoundland is a province of Canada is, in this context, secondary to its distinct culture, and to an ongoing *Newfoundland* nationalism that replaces the dominance of the Canadian nation with the memory or possibility of an independent Newfoundland nation.

An important aspect of Newfoundland nationalism is a collective memory of hardship and oppression going back to the earliest settlements in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Years of toil, of threats of starvation, of exploitation at the hands of a corrupt merchant system, of the constant dangers of life at sea, all contributed to what Patrick O’Flaherty calls the myth of the “hardy Newfoundlander” (56), a pride in an identity forged out of decades of hard work and suffering. In 1832, the colony of Newfoundland was given a system of democratic representative government, and in 1855 it was granted responsible government. These political changes transformed Newfoundland into a self-governing colony which, in 1907, became known as a dominion of Britain, like Canada. These legal changes were accompanied by the gradual development of Newfoundland as a distinct cultural identity. As Ronald Rompkey outlines,

by the end of the nineteenth century Newfoundlanders had emerged as an identifiable group [...] there was a growing acknowledgement of the existence of Newfoundlanders as a *people* with identifiable peculiarities of pronunciation and idiom, of song, proverb and folk tale. Such peculiarities were at times regarded as adaptations of existing English and Irish practices but at other times as consequences of the struggle against climate and terrain. (“Idea” 267, emphasis original)

O’Dea links this group identity to a growing sense of nationalism: “over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as more people came to be permanent inhabitants and, more importantly, descendants of permanent inhabitants, the sense of person-linked-to-place which is the essential for nationalism, grew into being” (380). Despite this strengthening national identity,

Newfoundland's self-government did not last even a hundred years. In 1933, faced with bankruptcy, the Newfoundland legislature voted itself out of existence, suspending responsible government in favour of a committee appointed by the British government. Established as an emergency measure, this unelected Commission of Government lasted until 1948, when referenda were held to determine whether Newfoundland would resume responsible government, or join Canadian Confederation. Fifty-two percent of Newfoundlanders voted to join Canada, which it did on March 31st, 1949. Confederation is thus a very recent event in what we might call Newfoundland's "cultural memory," and it remains an emotional and controversial subject. The slim majority of votes that led to the loss of the Newfoundland nation has spawned accusations of British and Canadian interference and conspiracy.⁷ Over the past 50 years Confederation has raised questions not only about the historical circumstances that led to it, but also the economic and social consequences it has had for Newfoundland.

Newfoundland nationalism is not only propelled by a unique history and the collective memory of Confederation, it is also driven by an ongoing sense of alienation from the Canadian nation-state. The same economic hardships that have propelled out-migration have also exacerbated a feeling of resentment toward the federal government, which controls the fishery. In a 2003 provincial opinion poll, 84% of respondents felt that the federal government ignores Newfoundland and Labrador (Royal Commission 433). The common feeling that government mismanagement is to blame for the collapse of the fishery leads to the view that the diaspora is driven not simply by the forces of nature and economics, but also by a federal government that does not care about Newfoundland. As Bella writes,

Canada's political leaders benefit if Newfoundlanders leave their home province for employment in Canada. Therefore, even though Newfoundland has been a

⁷ Edward Riche's screenplay *Secret Nation* (1992), for example, tells the fictional story of a historian who uncovers a conspiracy behind the referendum.

nation in its own right [...] Newfoundlanders' ethnic identity is ignored in Canadian public policy, and along with it their right to stay home after the collapse of a fishery, a collapse engineered by that same Canadian government.
(ix)

Bella's claim that "Newfoundland has been a nation in its own right" is contestable. Even after responsible government was granted in 1855, the imperial government maintained control over the colony's foreign affairs, and, after protests from Canada, Britain refused to ratify trade agreements that Newfoundland had negotiated with the United States. While the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were witness to a "surging nationalism" in Newfoundland (O'Flaherty 115), many Newfoundlanders (primarily the Protestant population) also strongly identified as British subjects, as citizens of a colony whose "face turns to Britain," as the anonymous 1869 "Anti-Confederation Song" suggests. Nor was nationalist sentiment enough to prevent a Royal Commission from recommending the suspension of responsible government in 1934, in order to give the debt-ridden colony a paternalist "rest from politics" (*Amulree* sect. 553). Nevertheless, what Michael Crummey calls the "lost nation" remains a powerful defining myth in Newfoundland culture. Newfoundland history, then, is characterized by a deep tension between nationhood as a political condition and the nation as a contested idea and identity.

Bella's assertion that the Canadian government "engineered" the fishery collapse might also be hyperbolic, but many experts have examined how the policies and failures of the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) and other ministries have contributed to both the fishery collapse, and ongoing social problems. Sinclair and others trace the fishery collapse back to the Confederation period, when "the provincial government's push towards an industrial fishery coincided with the objectives of Canada's federal government" (Sinclair "Narrowing" 238). The result was the development of unsustainable fishing practices with which small inshore producers could not compete. Ralph Matthews and John Phyne claim that DFO policies not only

failed to address key issues in its attempt to preserve fish stocks, such as foreign overfishing, but that it also ignored traditional management practices employed by individual fishermen for generations (166). Sociologists Barbara Neis and Susan Williams in part blame the DFO's "consistent over-estimation of stock abundance resulting in overfishing" (347). Neis and Rob Kean point out that in the 1980s, in association with these over-estimates, the DFO allocated between 10,000 and 20,000 tonnes of northern cod to European countries in return for access to European markets for Canadian goods, like grain, a move which seemed to favour the welfare of other Canadian producers over that of Newfoundland fishers. In the documentary *Hard Rock and Water* (2005), former fisheries minister and former premier Brian Tobin asserts that illegal foreign overfishing has continued because foreign vessels doubt our resolve as a country; compared to countries like Iceland, Canada has not been sufficiently forceful in dealing with foreign vessels inside the territorial limit or using illegal nets. Sean T. Cadigan shows that DFO policy has been based on the "tragedy of the commons" view, which argues that fishers exploited the resource without regard for conservation because it was common property, a view that, as Cadigan argues, has no historical foundation. Cadigan contends that government policy sees the crisis as a community problem and places all the blame on fishers themselves; "there is no acknowledgment of the role of the state in contributing to the political economy of open access that has led to such tragic resource depletion in the late twentieth century" (35).

Many Newfoundlanders also feel that the federal government has failed them in the aftermath of the fishery collapse. Sharon Taylor, in her work on The Atlantic Groundfish Strategy, or TAGS, shows how this program to retrain fishers affected by the moratorium has failed its beneficiaries by treating the fishery as "the domain of individuals, separate from community and family life" (249). By helping fishers who qualified but ignoring the impact of

the fisheries crisis on the next generation, the program left many young people with no other choice but to migrate to the mainland, in turn eroding the communities in which they grew up. Barbara Grzetic shows how the inequities of EI policies have credited women's fishery-related work to their husbands and restricted recognition of ground crew work unless those workers were directly involved in catching the fish in the boats. Neis and Williams add that "the federal government has treated the crisis with short-term programs, when in reality, fish stocks in some areas are recovering slowly and some may never recover, threatening the displacement of future generations" (354). There is a widespread belief, then, that not only did the Canadian government allow the fishery collapse to happen, it has also abandoned Newfoundlanders in the aftermath.

While it would be simplistic and incorrect to place all the blame for the fishery collapse on the federal government, what is important to acknowledge is the strong belief in the minds of many Newfoundlanders that the Canadian government, because of a perceived lack of caring and understanding, allowed or caused the collapse to happen. This belief is reflected in the passionate reactions of the people most directly affected, the fishermen and their families. In *Hard Rock and Water* Lisa Moore interviews cod-fisherman-turned-crab-fisherman Tom Best, who asserts that the loss of the cod fishery is the fault of the federal government:

Newfoundland is just one province in Canada, and our fishery resources have basically become a trading block for central Canada to use with other countries, European countries, in the interests of, I would say, Ontario and Quebec and some of the bigger provinces. [...] You know they keep telling us that we're getting enough form of [sic] transfer payments because of our economic situation. The reality of our situation is that if our resources were dealt with properly and had been managed properly by the government of Canada we wouldn't be looking for handouts from anyone, we'd be just as powerful and just as rich *as a nation*. (my emphasis)

Best's statement not only conveys deep feelings of injustice, but is also haunted by the loss of nationhood and autonomy. In more florid tones, Blackmore represents the resentment that many Newfoundlanders feel towards Ottawa as a function not simply of mismanagement, but of appropriation:

We have come to an unspoken understanding of our sea with its riches and its perils – a sea that served us (and which we served) from the very day we began coming here five centuries ago, a sea that in all that time has been exacting great human tariffs, a sea that prowls at our doorstep, filling our eyes, our ears, our nostrils. Consequently, we have difficulty in understanding how that ocean could come to be the domain and reserve of people thousands of miles away, people whose faces and minds are free of salt and scars, whose hands never dip into the North Atlantic, and who each spring recite to us their carefully measured regulation stories of the sea that they learned from afar, and then inform us in antiseptic letters just how long we can stay out there on that water, and when we must come in before the last, dark night falls. (348)

By this view the decisions that purportedly led to the fishery collapse, which in turn led to increased out-migration, are perceived as being out of Newfoundlanders' hands, and in the hands of federal lawmakers with other priorities. As Cadigan notes, the depopulation caused by the fishery collapse "is likely welcomed by most of the officials responsible for the management of natural resources" (14). Some even feel that the TAGS program is part of a covert resettlement plan, the ultimate goal being to get rid of small outport communities (Taylor 251). For many Newfoundlanders, then, out-migration is seen not just as an unfortunate consequence of economic hardship, but as a phenomenon encouraged by the federal government.

This rift between province and state has not been restricted to issues surrounding the fishery. At the end of 2004, Premier Danny Williams refused to fly the Canadian flag on government buildings, as a protest against the federal government's latest offer in negotiations over Newfoundland's oil revenues. At this time, seventy cents on every dollar of oil royalties were "clawed back" by the federal government through reductions in equalization payments. Williams was determined that the province be allowed to keep 100% of the royalties, in addition

to equalization payments, in order to pull itself out of poverty. In early 2005, the Martin government reached a deal with Newfoundland and Labrador and other Atlantic provinces, called The Atlantic Accord, which allowed Newfoundland and Labrador to keep their energy revenues for at least eight years, amounting to a minimum of \$2.6 billion. But while the Harper government, which took power in January 2006, claims to honour the Atlantic Accord, it has changed the equalization formula, a move that Danny Williams and other premiers argue undermines the agreement and will cost Newfoundland and Labrador millions of dollars.

The conflict between Newfoundland and the rest of Canada is felt not only in political and economic terms, but also as a cultural difference and a threat of assimilation. Anonsen looks pessimistically into the future, imagining a time when Newfoundland's unique communities have disappeared leaving only major centres, and future generations of Newfoundlanders will finally consider themselves Canadian. "And then we'll have true Confederation because we'll be like everyone else" (51), she writes. "True Confederation," for this speaker, means the loss of a distinct identity. Alexander is more optimistic about Newfoundlanders' ability to maintain cultural difference in the federation. He argues that Canada simply "cannot be a national state," because of the strength of regional and provincial identities ("Notions" 29). According to Alexander, "this provincial identity may be felt and expressed more strongly in Newfoundland than in any other province of English-speaking Canada" (31). Canada, then, is a prime example of Tölölyan's claim that the nation-state may not be the most "legitimate unit" of collective organization or identity.

Newfoundland identity, then, is marked by a political and cultural nationalism drawing from the recent memory of Newfoundland's independence. In the Royal Commission's 2003 provincial opinion poll, 12% of Newfoundlanders polled felt that Newfoundland should separate

from Canada (439). While the Commission considers this number small (143), it seems to me that it is rather large. Bannister agrees, arguing that one of the shortcomings of the Royal Commission is that

they based their assessment of nationalism largely on the question of whether Newfoundlanders support the political goal of separating from Canada. [...] The commissioners concluded that this percentage [12%] constituted a politically inconsequential proportion of the electorate, though it is significant that one out of eight respondents actually supported separation. By framing the question of nationalism in such limited terms, the commissioners failed to explore the many different ways in which nationalist sentiment is expressed beyond the political aim of separation. (187)

Bannister suggests that literature and historiography are two other key forms of this “nationalist sentiment,” which is a response to Newfoundland’s ongoing economic struggles. This nationalism is not merely a post-cod moratorium phenomenon. In his 1987 study on “emergent nationalism” in Newfoundland, sociologist Harry Hiller shows how a rise in cultural awareness coincided with economic concerns through the 1970s, creating a nationalism that is both politically and “ethnically” motivated (269). This “emergent nationalism” has resulted in nationalist and separatist political movements, the incorporation of cultural nationalism into secondary and post-secondary education, and the rise of a local publishing industry (269). As Stuart Hall argues, “a nation is not only a political entity but something which produces meanings – *a system of cultural representation*. People are not only legal citizens of a nation; they participate in the *idea* of the nation as represented in its national culture” (“Cultural Identity” 612, emphasis original). For many Newfoundlanders, the “idea” of the nation exists regardless of its current political status, and is embodied in both political resistance to the Canadian state, and a feeling of cultural difference.

This cultural nationalism has been directly linked to the development of Newfoundland literature. In a 1976 article in *Saturday Night*, Sandra Gwyn famously hailed the “Newfoundland

Renaissance,” a flourish of theatre, literature, and visual art. This movement, Gwyn argued, was in part driven by nationalism: “separation would be an economic absurdity. But anti-Confederacy, partly pure nostalgia, partly an expression of outrage at the colonialization [sic] of a proud and unique society, has become a vibrant force” (40). Since Gwyn, others have echoed this connection between nationalism and culture. Rompkey also highlights the role of Confederation:

Newfoundland and Labrador as a collectivity displayed at the time of Confederation many of the elements associated with nationhood: a lengthy recorded history, cultural tradition, distinctive linguistic traits, folk songs, folk tales, and above all a sense of place [...] but ironically it took Confederation itself to bring about what is sometimes regarded as their ‘renaissance,’ a flowering of cultural expression similar to those taking place in newly independent countries the world over. (“Colonial,” no page)

In a striking move, the loss of the nation becomes a moment of new independence, and cultural expression. Newfoundland’s national culture underwent its greatest development when Newfoundlanders felt the greatest need to differentiate themselves from the rest of Canada, both politically and culturally. O’Dea argues that cultural production and nationalism are inextricable in Newfoundland, where nationalism refers to a sense of national identity and “pride in place” (385).

I argue that the nationalist drive behind Newfoundland creative production is often intensified by diaspora, because in diaspora the cultural identity and difference of migrant individuals comes into direct tension with the assumptions of other Canadians. Anonsen’s piece powerfully conveys how a complex post-Confederation nationalism is often felt as a symptom of diasporic displacement. Suffering from an intense homesickness, the speaker admits that she

will never feel like an Ontarian or even a Canadian. But you are a Canadian, your friend says to you. And you smile and agree. How can you explain to her that the transfer was never completed, or isn’t yet completed because after all fifty years

isn't a very long time and neither Canadians nor Newfoundlanders have had a chance to get used to each other. (50)

The speaker's friend, as a non-Newfoundlander, cannot understand this alienation. But for the speaker it is profound. It is based not on political opposition but on cultural difference; Canadians and Newfoundlanders simply are not "used to each other." This difference prevents her from feeling truly "Canadian." The number of pieces in *TickleAce's* Confederation special issue that reflect on out-migration demonstrate this connection between nationalism and diaspora. Trudy J. Morgan-Cole's "Confessions of an Ex-Patriot" is exemplary: "despite having been born sixteen years after Confederation," she writes, "I am a Newfoundlander; nothing brought that fact home to me as much as living in Canada did" (52). In other words, the individual's displacement in the "Rest of Canada," as it is known, is central to her understanding of Newfoundland's identity and difference. The fact that Anonsen's essay, which focuses almost entirely on the experience of out-migration, is called "Confederation" emphasizes this idea that both diaspora and Confederation involve experiences of profound alienation. In Anonsen's piece, Newfoundland identity is defined in opposition to Canadian identity. Commenting on the father's insistence that only Newfoundlanders are worth knowing, she writes "you let him turn your heart into a Newfoundland heart, not a Canadian heart, and your soul into a Newfoundland soul, not a Canadian soul, and the context in which you understood the world became a Newfoundland context, not a Canadian context and there's nothing you can do about it now, not a damn thing" (51). "Inter-provincial migration" does not come near to describing the nature and complexity of this phenomenon, whereas "diaspora's" connotations of nationalism gesture toward Newfoundland's vexed position within the Canadian state.

Difference and Marginalization

Closely tied to this feeling of political marginalization, then, is a feeling of cultural marginalization. Safran identifies one of the defining characteristics of members of a diaspora as the belief that “they are not – and perhaps cannot be – fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it” (83). Newfoundlanders not only feel alienated by the Canadian state, but also frequently feel marginalized by fellow Canadian citizens. The same 2003 poll of Newfoundlanders commissioned by the Royal Commission found that 88% felt that other Canadians have stereotypes about Newfoundlanders, including “stupid,” “lazy/don’t work/don’t want to work” and “not educated” (Royal Commission 429). One does not have to look farther than one of the country’s national newspapers to see where this feeling of marginalization or prejudice comes from. *The Globe and Mail*’s Margaret Wenthe has become notorious for her anti-Newfoundland editorials. Her comments on January 6th, 2005, while the province was refusing to fly the maple leaf, are exemplary: “I like Newfoundlanders. I really do. But their sense of victimhood is unmatched. [...] Mr. Williams reminds me of a deadbeat brother-in-law who’s hit you up for money a few times too often. He’s been sleeping on your couch for years, and now he’s got the nerve to complain that it’s too lumpy” (A19). Wenthe goes on to complain about “all of the money we’ve sent you since you joined Confederation,” in the form of equalization payments and make work schemes, that never seems to satisfy these “surly islanders.” There is no acknowledgement of Newfoundland’s contribution in terms of its natural resources; instead she chooses to stereotype Newfoundlanders as complaining, lazy, greedy deadbeats. Interestingly, diaspora plays a key role in an article ostensibly about provincial policies:

we send more money so that people can stay in the scenic villages where they were born, even though the fish are gone and there’s no more work and never will

be, unless they can steal some telemarketing from Bangalore. [...] But who can blame people for wanting to stay put? Not me. No one will ever gobble down a plate of cod tongues and pen an ode to Scarborough. Scarborough is not romantic. It is filled with ugly high-rise towers of immigrants scrambling to gain a foothold in a new land far from home. The difference is that, when they do it, we congratulate them and call it enterprise. No one will ever buy a scenic picture postcard of a strip mall. But Scarborough supports itself, and Newfoundland does not, and I wish Danny Williams would explain why it's a good idea to keep picking the pockets of Chinese dry cleaners and Korean variety-store owners who work 90 hours a week in order to keep subsidizing the people who live in Carbonear, no matter how quaint and picturesque they are. (A19)

In a fascinating move, Wentle compares the industriousness of Chinese and Korean immigrants in Scarborough with Newfoundlanders who refuse to migrate, and therefore, it is implied, are too lazy to support themselves. The profits from Newfoundland oil that Williams is requesting be returned are imagined as being directly taken away from these hard-working, 'good' immigrants. Canada (read Ontario) is imagined as a benevolent host to immigrants who, through hard work, can make something of themselves in their new home. But this land of opportunity is not available to all Canadians. Simultaneously, the sting of potentially leaving home is transformed into a selfish desire for "romantic" scenery.

While most Newfoundlanders are white and privileged members of a labour diaspora, as opposed to refugees, they are sometimes subjected to prejudice and stereotyping. As Anonsen reveals, even so-called 'positive' stereotyping of Newfoundlanders can reinforce feelings of otherness: "You were always the Newfoundland family on the block wherever you lived. That meant you were the nice, friendly people who loved to see you come, who were so much fun, so generous and likeable. And after the neighbours left to go back to their own houses, your Dad would say, goddamn fools, and your Mom would say, they're only trying to be nice" (48). Anonsen's slightly sarcastic tone here emphasizes the frustration and isolation that cultural stereotyping can cause.

Newfoundlanders are often easily identifiable by their accents if not their appearance. Anonsen describes how this othering occurs: “And you never ever felt like a Canadian. You were from Newfoundland. Other kids you knew had moved to Ontario from Saskatchewan or British Columbia and no one noted it. But you were marked. You were different. You might as well have been from another country” (49). Newfoundlanders’ difference, then, is not always chosen or intentionally performed. I do not mean to suggest that Newfoundlanders’ experience of prejudice is equal to the racism directed against “visible minorities,” but it bears mentioning that discrimination against Newfoundlanders, often in the form of the ever popular “Newfie joke,” is often still considered acceptable where jokes aimed at racial minorities or other white ethnic groups such as Ukrainians or Poles are not. In her interviews with Newfoundlanders in the diaspora, Bella found that migrants frequently encountered “Newfie jokes” and stereotypes that Newfoundlanders are drunken, stupid, unreliable, and always on UI. Some Newfoundlanders have been denied jobs or credit explicitly based on these stereotypes (48-49). Many have found that their accents make such stereotypes and assumptions difficult to shake (53), while others go to great lengths to learn a mainland accent (56). Terms like “Newfie” and “the Rock,” are often considered ethnic slurs (47). In their study of the controversial term “Newfie,” Ruth King and Sandra Clarke argue that “expatriate” Newfoundlanders “are a minority group and their ability to object to outsiders’ constructions of their ethnic identity is influenced by this minority status, particularly if their socioeconomic situation is tenuous” (549). The term “diaspora” acknowledges this feeling of difference and these experiences of prejudice and marginalization.

“When Spreads Thy Cloak of Shimmering White”: Whiteness and Newfoundland

“Diaspora’s” connotations of difference and alienation are derived from the concept’s complex relationship to race. As Lisa Grekul notes, many contemporary diaspora scholars in fact

“implicitly collapse racialized and diasporic identity” (xvii), where “racialized identity” refers to the problematically drawn categories of ‘visible minorities’ or groups ‘of colour.’ Even traditional diasporas such as the Irish are often discussed in terms of their racialization, their tenuous and shifting relationship to whiteness. As Robert Young, Noel Ignatiev, David Roediger, Ann McClintock and Máirtín Mac an Ghaill all have shown, the Irish were not considered “white” through periods of mass emigration in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; Mac an Ghaill’s claim that the Irish have been “deracialised” in Britain (137) is based upon important historical developments and a changing conception of the term “race” in popular usage. This historical work raises the question, can ‘white’ groups be considered in diasporic terms?

Newfoundland is characterized by an overwhelming whiteness and Anglo-Celtic heritage; 5720 people in the province, a mere 1% of the population, considered themselves “visible minorities” in the 2006 census (Statistics Canada). I do not want to suggest by any means that Newfoundland identity is exclusively or definitively white, but the movement’s demographic make-up raises some important questions.

As the examples of discrimination against Newfoundlanders above suggest, a case could, and often has been made, that Newfoundlanders as a group are subject to “racism.” In an interview with CBC’s Debbie Cooper, former Federal Finance Minister John Crosbie calls Wente’s article cited above “the worst type of [...] racism I’ve seen in a long time” (*Canada Now*). In his satirical novel *The Nine Planets* (2004), Edward Riche satirizes this kind of move in a conversation between two teenage Newfoundlanders, one of whom, Chuck, is about to move to Toronto with his family:

“People are always calling me Newfie and shit. It’s horrible.”
“That’s racist,” said Cathy. She wasn’t sure it was. She was echoing a sentiment she’d frequently heard voiced by her father in an effort to boost Chuck. One of the

few things she knew about boys and men was how fragile their egos were, how in need of constant support. (165)

This humorous moment points to Newfoundlanders' ambivalent position in relationship to identity and race. While they have certainly been the brunt of discrimination, and while many Newfoundlanders do have Irish heritage, "racism" is a hyperbolic term. "Racism" suggests the way in which "visible minorities" are immediately identified as Other by perceived physical markers, the interpellation powerfully described by Frantz Fanon when a white child points him out: "Mama, see the Negro! I'm frightened!" (112). Racism has been used to justify institutionalized inequalities, as well as the worst historical violences – slavery, colonial conquest, *apartheid*, genocide. Applying "racism" to Newfoundland seems to deflate the term of its visceral power. Where "whiteness" is usually a code for "privilege," then, what tools do we have for understanding movements like Newfoundland out-migration, that account for both their whiteness and their dislocation?

The theoretical concept of diaspora has been ill-equipped to accommodate white racial identities. When "White Diaspora" as a category is considered it is usually as a form of colonial expansion, such as Gillian Whitlock's definition of "white diasporas" as the "distinctive and highly organized programmes of migration which were a feature of nineteenth century Anglo imperialism" (91), or Catherine Jurca's "ironic" usage of the phrase to highlight white American suburbia's self-representation as victims. These usages, regardless of their intended ironies or awareness of privilege, for me, problematically obscure diaspora's connotations of uneven power relationships with the new "host" society. Yet Canadian historian Donald Harman Akenson also finds the concept of diaspora useful for his work on the colonial settlement of Canada specifically. While Akenson carefully works through the etymology and theoretical development of the term "diaspora," he abandons many of the useful definitions that have developed in recent

decades in order to conclude that “diaspora” allows historians to consider the history of English-speaking Canada as part of a wider British ethnic and cultural nexus. But I remain unconvinced that applying the term “diaspora” adds any useful or appropriate nuances to the history. Rather it seems to form the opposite of the precise and “textured” view of history that he advocates (395), by suggesting that the migrations of every group to Canada can be considered in parallel terms. If the category of diaspora were to become so capacious, why not simply call it “dispersal?” At what point does the term become meaningless? Akenson cites the Armenian diaspora as an example proving that the term can apply to “white” groups, but by considering “diaspora” merely as a label to be applied rather than as, in Cho’s useful terms, a “condition of subjectivity” (“Turn” 11), he quickly slides down a slippery slope to the conclusion that any movement, including the colonial invasion of Canada, can and should be considered diasporic. The “whiteness” of the Armenian diaspora cannot be easily compared to the “whiteness” of British imperialism.

Cho convincingly maintains “that there is an important relationship between diaspora and race which must be attended to whenever diaspora is invoked” (personal communication). Given this relationship, an in-depth analysis of the ways in which diasporas and whiteness may clash or intersect needs to be done. On the one hand, writers like Akenson, Jurca and Whitlock raise troubling questions about the capaciousness of “diaspora,” and about how both the words “diaspora” and “white” should be defined. On the other hand, the adoption of the concept of diaspora in anti-racist discourse means that applying “diaspora” to “white” identities causes discomfort and serious ethical reservations. Theorists like Cho and Smaro Kamboureli find the concept of diaspora crucial to addressing the place of race in Canadian society; Cho’s concept of “diasporic citizenship” is one means of addressing the relationship of racialized “minority”

literatures to the “majority” (“Diasporic” 108). While few diaspora theorists explicitly exclude white identities from diasporic identification, we must address head-on the question of whether applying the concept to white identities undermines such crucial anti-racist work.

In order to answer this question, I want to linger, for a moment, on the definitions of “whiteness.” It is, as Gargi Bhattacharyya, John Gabriel and Stephen Small argue, a shifting and self-contradictory concept, an “imaginary” rather than an ontological state (12). As Daniel Coleman argues, whiteness has been tied to a Canadian national project of “white civility,” which manages different identities through the learned performance of normative colonial manners and behaviours. While whiteness *suggests* the biological markers of skin tone, it is for most theorists a marker of privilege. It is therefore possible for a diaspora to “become white,” as Ignatiev famously argues in his study of Irish immigrants to the US, or as Myrna Kostash describes as a Ukrainian-Canadian who has been differently racialized within her lifetime. As Roediger outlines, historically there has been a lot of anxiety about the racial identity of the Jewish diaspora as well, despite the group’s diversity.⁸ If whiteness is pure privilege, then we are forced to either consider marginalized “white ethnic” groups as being somehow outside of whiteness, or else, to simply include them in a homogeneous category of privilege. Himani Bannerji makes the latter move in an essay on Canadian multiculturalism. She writes: “In the presence of contrasting ‘others,’ whiteness as an ideological-political category has superseded and subsumed different cultural ethos among Europeans. If the Ukrainians now seek to be ethnics it is because the price to be paid is no longer there” (144). This kind of homogenizing of European identities as white privilege and supremacism not only discounts, but also seems to

⁸ Interestingly, FLQ leader Pierre Vallières, in his 1968 *Nègres blancs d’Amérique*, removes the connotations of privilege from whiteness in his claim that the Québécois are the “white niggers of America.” His usage of the racial term “nègres” further complicates the relationship between the seemingly biological markers of colour and the historical place of particular ethnic groups in Canadian society.

challenge the discrimination and sense of difference that many “white ethnics” have experienced. Ironically, if part of the power of whiteness is its very invisibility, or as Bhattacharyya, Gabriel and Small put it, its “naturalization” as being not a race but a norm, then Bannerji’s move to homogenize whiteness merely reinforces this naturalization. I think we must both acknowledge the privileges of whiteness, and highlight the fact that whiteness is a shifting, arbitrary and constructed category that does not always guarantee that privilege or possess a monopoly on it. We must acknowledge that “white” does not mean the same thing to everyone, and that people are not *naturally* white, but rather also undergo a process of racialization, a process of attributing white racial characteristics to groups (Bhattacharyya, Gabriel and Small 1). By defining whiteness exclusively as a form of privilege we merely reinforce its ability to appear, in Patricia Williams’ words, “un-raced” (qtd. in Bhattacharyya, Gabriel and Small 24).

Yet as Robyn Wiegman persuasively writes, in response to studies like Ignatiev’s and Roediger’s, history “rescues contemporary whiteness from the transcendent universalism that has been understood as its mode of productive power by providing prewhite particularity, which gets reproduced as prewhite injury and minoritization” (137). Wiegman thus warns against the manoeuvres that Ignatiev and Roediger make as they seem “unable to generate a political project against racism articulated from the site of whiteness itself” (139). The project of making whiteness particular, then, must not simply make claims to marginality or victimization, a kind of ‘empathetic otherness’ (Fee and Russell 188), but must acknowledge the privileges of whiteness even as it attempts to explode white universalism and invisibility.

I think it is crucial to carry this work of making white identities visible into the realm of diaspora studies. I argue that equating “diaspora” with “racial minority” in Canada serves to reinforce the notion of a homogeneous, dominant white majority, so that racialized “others” are

always outsiders, always from elsewhere. This move threatens to refigure experiences of racism as a problem of integration, rather than of systemic, institutionalized racism. Ien Ang argues a similar point when she writes that the idea of diaspora may be used as “a ploy to keep non-white, non-Western elements from fully entering and therefore contaminating the centre of white, Western culture” (34). These concerns lead Ang to question the usefulness of diaspora as a concept. But I think that we can reject this kind of racist move without abandoning the concept of diaspora altogether. By beginning to disentangle race from diaspora we expose the fact that racism is endemic in Canada, and that marginalization does not always hinge upon identification with an origin outside of Canada. I therefore propose the “Newfoundland diaspora” as one means of resisting the ways in which the term can reinforce a false binary between an indigenized, universalized white monolith, and racialized others perpetually asked “where are you *really* from?” (Ang 29). I hope to engage in a project of, in Wiegman’s terms, “not simply rendering whiteness particular but engaging with the ways that being particular will not divest whiteness of its universal epistemological power” (150).

Class

Negotiating these shifting positions of power and privilege also necessitates an awareness of the important relationship between the Newfoundland diaspora and issues of class. Many of the Newfoundland stereotypes described above are based upon a particular assumption of class. Regardless of actual socio-economic status, many Canadians believe that Newfoundlanders are often on EI or welfare, that they are uneducated and backward, that they cannot hold onto their money. While Newfoundland migrants form a diverse group, with different levels of education, socio-economic upbringing, and skill sets, as well as different motivations for leaving,

“diaspora” does not necessarily only apply to those forced to leave to avoid unemployment. As Anthias persuasively argues,

the factors that motivate a group to move, whether it be labour migration or forceful expulsion, do not constitute adequate ways of classifying the groups for the purpose of analysing their settlement and accommodation patterns nor their forms of identity. They would only be adequate if this motivation was seen to have *necessary* social effects. (563, emphasis original)

In other words, particular experiences are not necessarily ensured by the migrant’s motivation to move. Rather, lower, middle and upper class migrants can and do share similar experiences of alienation, homesickness, and group identification. This is not to say that the Newfoundland diaspora is a homogeneous category, nor that all Newfoundland migrants have identical experiences. Rather, what I want to suggest is that class alone does not necessarily create clear divides between different migrants, or exclude professionals and university graduates from diasporic membership. As Cho suggests, dividing groups along lines of privilege obscures the way in which heterogeneous groups such as the Asian diaspora or the Black diaspora are collectively marked by historical legacies of slavery and indenture. While Newfoundlanders are not racialized or marked by such extreme historical wrongs,⁹ I think that Cho’s argument can still be applied here. Newfoundland culture and identity has been impacted by its long history of out-migration, and the idea of a “Newfoundland diaspora” does not just refer to the post-cod moratorium outflux, but to a larger social phenomenon that has shaped Newfoundland literature. Malcolm Macleod’s review of Helen M. Buss/ Margaret Clarke’s *Memoirs from Away* suggests the way in which the Newfoundland diaspora can be considered in terms of a broad historical narrative:

“Memoirs from away” is the title of this one book, but it is a fitting label for a whole category of writing about Newfoundland. While Newfoundlanders have

⁹ While many early Newfoundland settlers were indentured labourers from Britain, indenture was not a cause of a Newfoundland diaspora as it has been for many in the Asian diasporas.

been massively re-locating themselves in North America for 120 years, literary elements in the *diaspora* have often penned accounts of displacement, adjustment and nostalgia for a distant, past homeland. (98, my emphasis)

This migrant literary tradition can be traced back to the early twentieth century and the poetry of E.J. Pratt, and through the stories and essays of the Montreal-based magazine *The Atlantic Guardian* in the 1940s. Contemporary narratives of out-migration also frequently locate themselves within a long historical diasporic trajectory, so that Wayne Johnston's memoir of family and displacement *Baltimore's Mansion* looks back at the retreat of one of the colony's first settlers, Lord Baltimore, as the beginning of a social pattern.

Class is just one of what Brah calls the multiple "modalities" through which diasporas are lived. "All diasporas," Brah argues, "are differentiated, heterogeneous, contested spaces, even as they are implicated in the construction of a common 'we'" (184). The concept of diaspora, then, "delineates a field of identifications where 'imagined communities' are forged within and out of a confluence of narratives from annals of collective memory and re-memory" (196). Experiences differentiated by class, gender, religion, and generation together form a heterogeneous culture of diaspora through which migrant Newfoundlanders can identify with each other, and with other diasporic peoples displaced from real and imagined homes. Literature is a key means through which diverse diasporic imaginaries are formed.

The Literature

In Newfoundland, critics have explicitly connected the development of literature to the massive change resulting from Confederation, the government resettlement program of the 1940s and 50s, and the collapse of the fishery (Gwyn, Rompkey). With this project I am arguing that much of Newfoundland's current literary production is also a result of, or a response to, out-migration. This culture of out-migration has had a profound impact on Newfoundland literature

as both a subject of poetry or prose, and as a condition from which many writers write. But rarely mentioned in the growing body of Newfoundland literary criticism is that many of Newfoundland's most successful writers – including Wayne Johnston, Donna Morrissey, Michael Crummey, and Patrick Kavanagh – wrote their award-winning or best-selling works outside of the province. This fact is significant primarily because these writers are simultaneously portrayed as representative Newfoundlanders, as part of Newfoundland's literary "canon" (Mathews "Report" 3). When out-migration *is* mentioned, it is often to question or even dismiss these writers as 'inauthentic' representatives of Newfoundland culture.

In this dissertation I address this oversight by examining the way in which key texts of the Newfoundland diaspora intersect with several theoretical flashpoints, including nostalgia, "authenticity," nationalism, and ethnicity and whiteness. As Fludernik argues, literature is central to the formation of diasporic imaginaries, "that web of images and dreams which creates a consciousness of ethnic belonging and collective identity in the hearts and minds of expatriates" (xxviii). Literature is a space in which writers, and their readers, imagine Newfoundland's past, its landscape, and the nation it might have been. Because these constructions of Newfoundland occur in the imaginations of writers, they are multiple, heterogeneous, and sometimes contradictory. Rather than moving chronologically through the texts, I take a comparative approach, examining how diaspora influences writers of diverse eras and genres. I begin by considering the way in which diaspora impacts personal narratives of displacement, and from there move outward to broader issues of collective identity.

In Chapter One, "'The "Going Home Again" Complaint': Nostalgia and Newfoundland," I theorize nostalgia as a literary practice in the poetry of Carl Leggo and the fiction of Donna

Morrissey. As Ato Quayson beautifully writes in “The Ethnography of Nostalgia,” the condition of diaspora is in part defined by a relationship to a dialectical idea of place:

The place that one finds oneself in is constantly calling up evidence of some elsewhere, the place that was departed from, or, as often happens, a utopia erected in place of the location of departure. Place is also dialectical because it is constructed through social relationships. Thus the character of such relationships will feed into the identity of place in the mind and sensibility of the person away from home. Place is also to be discerned in terms of the emotions that get cycled into the sites of arrival and departure. (131)

The nostalgic imagination of place becomes central to the construction of diasporic identities and the formation of diasporic communities. While nostalgia has often been considered a pejorative term in literary criticism, in Chapter One I argue that it plays an important role in coping with the losses of displacement, and even in political critiques of present society or the new hostland. As an affective response to migration, nostalgia can be a driving force behind powerful and moving forms of creative production.

Nostalgia is often considered an “inauthentic” response to displacement. In Chapter Two, “‘A Papier Maché Rock’: Pratt, Johnston, and Diasporic Authenticity,” I problematize this notion of authenticity as a means of policing identity, and of commodifying places. Literature about Newfoundland has in recent years enjoyed a newfound popularity in Canada and abroad; tourists now flock to Newfoundland’s outport communities in search of the Newfoundland depicted in the film versions of Annie Proulx’s *The Shipping News* or Bernice Morgan’s *Random Passage*. This desire for the exotic traces of Newfoundland culture, then, raises serious questions about cultural authenticity, appropriation, and the line between the preservation of culture and the perpetuation of regional stereotypes. If literature shapes conceptions of Newfoundland identity, what is that identity? Who has the right to construct it? Do outsiders like Annie Proulx have the right? What about diasporic Newfoundlanders? I address these questions by considering

the different standpoints from which claims to cultural authenticity are asserted and denied, and the various ways in which Newfoundland diasporic writers, from E.J. Pratt to Wayne Johnston, are represented as delegates of an essentialized “regional” culture.

In Chapter Three, “Writing the Old Lost Land: Diaspora, Confederation, and the Imagined Community,” I continue my analysis of Johnston, examining how texts by Johnston and David French construct nationalism and Confederation from the perspective of the migrant Newfoundland community. As Mishra writes, “diasporas construct homelands in ways that are very different from people of the homelands themselves. [...] At the same time the nation-state as an ‘imagined community’ needs diasporas to remind it of what the idea of homeland is” (424). Following Mishra, I propose that the Newfoundland diaspora is not just an extension of the community, but essential to the very construction of the imagined nation of Newfoundland. This nation is “imagined” not only in Benedict Anderson’s sense of a nation of strangers in whose minds “lives the image of their communion” (*Imagined* 6), but also in the sense of the imaginary, the product of fantasy, the nation as it might have been had it not become a province of Canada.

In Chapter Four, “Postmodern Ethnicity and the Family Memoir,” I consider alternatives to this nationalist identification, by examining displaced Newfoundlanders’ claims to “ethnicity.” Through analyses of memoirs by Helen M. Buss/ Margaret Clarke and David Macfarlane, I ask where Newfoundland identity fits within the Canadian discourse of multiculturalism, which as both a public policy and a cultural ideal attempts to manage ethnic bodies (Kamboureli 89). Fludernik argues that the popularity of the term “diaspora” is in part derived from “the communitarianism that has been sparked off by the multiculturalist movement,” meaning that “the terms exile, immigrant, expelled, refugee, expatriate or minority no longer fit the experience” (xvi). The multiculturalist roots of diasporic identification, then, suggests that the

concept of a Newfoundland diaspora cannot be based solely on an intense regional or neo-national affiliation, but rather demands that it be considered in terms of the multicultural delineations of both ethnicity and race.

My analysis of the Newfoundland literary diaspora, then, has implications for the broader institution of Canadian literature, as a body of work that continually questions the place of regional, national, and ethnic affiliations within a literature drawn along the borders of the nation-state. If we are to respond to what Smaro Kamboureli sees as the recent (and, I think, ongoing) “moment when the multicultural idiom had become normative but was being challenged by the immediacy of diasporic and transnational politics in our daily lives” (“Preface” xii), we must consider the ways in which the literature of the Newfoundland diaspora responds to critical movements in Canadian literature and culture, interacts with other Canadian diasporic and regional literatures, and plays a part in defining Canada even as it looks beyond the borders of Canada as a literary community.

Chapter One: “The ‘Going Home Again’ Complaint”: Nostalgia and Newfoundland

The summer madness is now at its riotous peak. It’s a deep-down yearning for the homeland in summer afflicting most of us Newfoundlanders exiled on the continent, especially in cities removed from the salt water. We call it the “going home again” complaint.

This longing to go back and perch for a spell on the sea-rocks of nostalgic memory – to listen to the waves and smell the cool ocean – attacks us a year or so after we leave the island, as soon as the novelty of the new place wears off, and stays in most cases until we die.

-Ron Pollett, “Summer Madness”

Nostalgia, over the last several decades, has become a pejorative term, synonymous with sentimentality and cliché. It has been called a “social disease” (Stewart), a “useless act” (hooks), and the regressive “fetishization of an idealized construction” (Naficy). In *Ethics and Nostalgia in the Contemporary Novel* (2005), John Su notes that in the popular imagination, “‘memory’ signifies intimate personal experience, which often counters institutional histories,” while “‘nostalgia’ signifies inauthentic or commodified experiences inculcated by capitalist or nationalist interests” (2). This bad reputation has led many literary critics to eschew theorizations of nostalgia in literature. But nostalgia is not an inherently negative term, not inherently commodified, nor can it be so easily separated from personal memory. Derived from the Greek *nostos*, meaning ‘return home,’ and *algia*, meaning ‘pain’ or ‘longing,’ it simply denotes a feeling of longing for a home distanced by time or space. Despite its bad reputation, nostalgia is a driving force behind many literary texts, particularly diasporic texts, and therefore a theoretical analysis of nostalgia and its functions is crucial.

Su's timely analysis carefully considers both the dangers of nostalgia and its potential usefulness, particularly in "postcolonial" communities. He helpfully connects nostalgia with ethics, arguing that nostalgic narratives can offer "palpable images of human needs that are not being met," thereby contributing to the process of negotiating "between various and often conflicting responsibilities" (175). While Su's book is a beginning, much more work needs to be done. The main limitation of the book is that it lacks a coherent definition of nostalgia.

"Nostalgia" for Su, refers to both an individual's reflection on personal memories, and a larger political desire for pre-colonial communities that no living person can remember, or that never existed. It is at once an act, a feeling or state of being, a "tone," an aesthetic style, and a political strategy. It is sometimes specifically a synonym for longing for a lost homeland. Of course nostalgia *is* all these things; it no longer only signifies the specific disease state "discovered" by a medical student in 1678, but is a term with multiple applications and nuances. This slipperiness is in many ways what makes nostalgia such an interesting and necessary topic for literary analysis. But Su does not flag these differences, or consider how different manifestations of nostalgia as a concept may have different contexts, effects, or implications. How can we differentiate between different manifestations of nostalgia in literature? What roles do these manifestations play in recovery from personal and collective traumas? And how is nostalgia constructed in specific diasporic contexts? In this chapter I consider the role of nostalgia in the literature of the Newfoundland diaspora, as a personal means of coping with displacement, and as a political commentary on Newfoundland's changing society. In the process I also lay out a typology of nostalgia that can be applied to a broader context, and that reveals how nostalgia functions as a literary practice.

Nostalgia has long been an important aspect of Newfoundland diasporic literature. In the 1940's, Arthur Scammell and Ron Pollett became the two main voices of the *Atlantic Guardian*, a magazine for expatriate Newfoundlanders published in Montreal. Their work features nostalgic idealizations of the outports of the past: fond boyhood memories of catching trout or collecting "hosstingers" (dragonflies), and tales of heroic deeds and honest hard work. Pat Byrne calls Scammell and Pollett the "romantic realists," because "even though they elected to present a rather idealized picture of the traditional outport culture in their writings, they had experienced the realities of that culture firsthand and were products of it" (68). Byrne's label indicates an almost oxymoronic quality of one form of nostalgia: a simultaneous drawing from deeply personal and heartfelt memories, and the rendering of those memories in romantic or idealistic, and therefore suspect, terms. Critics, then, have been wary of these romantic depictions of Newfoundland that, as Byrne argues, became "unintentional parodies" after Confederation (74). The nostalgic memory of the exile, James Overton warns, can often create a distorted image of Newfoundland: "The literature of exile [...] contains an 'out of time' vision of Newfoundland. One obvious clue to this is that it represents a vision of Newfoundland frozen at the time of the migrant's departure" (*Making* 129). Patrick O'Flaherty is also wary of the romantic realists' diasporic writing. He warns that Scammell's work represents "the old outport seen from a distance of time and space, through the distorting prism of middle age, with the pain filtered out. It is the product of expatriate sentimentality" (O'Flaherty 154). By these accounts, nostalgia is dangerous because it creates an "idealized mental construct" (Byrne 74) rather than an "authentic" representation of Newfoundland to bring into Confederation and modern times. But as I will explore further in the next chapter, "authenticity" is a problematic concept,

homogenizing experiences of home, privileging realism over other aesthetic forms and techniques, and reinforcing cultural stereotypes. If we reject “authenticity” as a means of evaluation, we must ask ourselves, what role *does* nostalgia have to play in diasporic literature?

This question becomes more urgent when we consider the fact that diasporic or immigrant writing in general is often dismissed as being “merely” nostalgic, as fixated on the past to the exclusion of social and political integration in the new home. Arun Mukherjee notes that immigrant writing is often perceived as nostalgic for the original homeland, and is therefore seen as being “caught between two worlds” and “unable to ‘become’ fully Canadian.” She writes:

Immigrant writing, it seems, is always about longing for homes lost, about the pain of transportation, about adjustment and not about the ‘ongoing dialectic’ of a society. [...] There is something very smug about this kind of response. I see it as a denial of the possibility that an ‘immigrant’s book’ may also have some relevance to readers in India. It seems that ‘the immigrant’s experience’ is relevant to no one except ‘the immigrant.’ (258)

Sneja Gunew similarly points to “the repeated and often dismissive response that ethnic minority writing ‘simply’ deals with nostalgia, and that its mode is elegiac [...] The logic appears to be that this writing deals with a landscape of the mind, of memory, which being apparently of minimal relevance to the here and now is therefore something to be outgrown” (*Framing* 111-112). The dismissal of nostalgia in these contexts becomes a dismissal of diasporic writing in general – the literature is seen as being regressively fixated on the past, without any possibility for aesthetic sophistication, complexity, or political engagement.

I want to recuperate nostalgia, and diasporic literature, from these negative connotations, in order to show that “nostalgia” is not an inherently pejorative term. It can in fact be a driving impulse toward psychological healing, or behind even aesthetic experimentation and political action. Here I will delineate what I have termed “experiential nostalgia” and “cultural nostalgia,”

in order to disentangle and illuminate their different strategies, risks, and functions, and to recover those functions from the realm of sentimental cliché.

Nostalgic Forms

The sentimental writing of Scammell and Pollett marks the beginning of a tradition of expatriate Newfoundland literature that memorializes the writer's personal experiences. While both wrote fiction, they also wrote non-fiction pieces that described their own memories and feelings. Pollett in particular often emphasized his diasporic location in the process of recalling the place of his youth. He begins his article "There's No Place like an Outport," for example, by admitting that

It's pretty well known that while I write of the restful Newfoundland countryside where I was cradled and schooled, I live and bide in the rip-roaring city of New York. [...] But what makes me happy, now that I'm getting up to the age when a man sits around in his socks and ruminates over his past – what makes me happy is to be able to look backward on a childhood and youth spent in an outport. (97)

Nostalgia provides happiness in both age and displacement, allowing him to dwell on memories of tobogganing, picking mussels, or the view from the kitchen window. While these memories may be idealized and unreliable or selective, they are based on very personal experiences, and serve as a source of comfort in displacement.

But impersonal tourist desire can also be termed "nostalgia." Tourists and locals alike can be nostalgic for traditional methods of salting fish on flakes, even if the practice died out before they were born. They can be nostalgic for "old salts" mending nets by lamplight, or for women in skirts and petticoats putting bread in their children's pockets to keep fairies away. In other words, they can be nostalgic for images they have never seen or experienced in "real" life, for an era and way of life constructed by movies and novels and other media of popular culture.

How can these two very different examples both be called “nostalgia?” How can an individual, remembering a very personal moment in his or her life, be the same as a tourist industry creating a simulacrum of a nineteenth-century landscape we have never seen – creating a desire for a fictional, Disneyified era? Nostalgia, for the purposes of this chapter, is a particular orientation or relationship to an object of memory. But the distance between that object of memory and the nostalgic subject may vary. There is, therefore, a spectrum of nostalgic orientation, with the intimacy of personal experience on the one end and the distance of popular constructions of an imagined past on the other.

A few theorists, across the fields of sociology, marketing, and cultural studies, have offered terms to get at these differences. Svetlana Boym, in *The Future of Nostalgia*, loosely refers to the overlapping categories of “psychological” and “mythical” nostalgia, to differentiate between nostalgia drawn from personal experiences, and nostalgia for a time or place outside of personal memory. But the terms are misleading: personal memory can have a “mythical” quality, and nostalgia for a place outside of one’s own experience is still felt as a “psychological” affect. Arjun Appadurai refers to “ersatz nostalgia,” nostalgia for that which we cannot remember. For Appadurai, ersatz nostalgia is manifested in commodification and consumption. But he does not give a name to its opposite. Market researcher Barbara Stern distinguishes between “historical nostalgia” and “personal nostalgia,” but the sphere of advertising limits the overall usefulness of the vocabulary. None of these terms have been widely adopted, and none of them are adequate for explaining the spectrum of nostalgia I have described. Yet delineating a spectrum of nostalgic orientation is vital to an understanding of the function of nostalgia in contemporary cultural texts.

What I offer, then, is my own scale of nostalgic orientation, with what I call “cultural nostalgia” on one end and “experiential nostalgia” on the other. Cultural nostalgia follows from Boym’s mythical nostalgia, Appadurai’s ersatz nostalgia, and Stern’s historical nostalgia. But its label does not emphasize fantasy or invention, since invention can also be involved in one’s own personal memories. Nor does it falsely suggest “historical” accuracy. Rather, the term emphasizes its collectivity, its cultural implications. The term “cultural” does not necessarily signify any particular culture, but rather participation in a collective act of ‘remembering’ or imagining, encouraged by images from popular media. Drawn from these popular images, cultural nostalgia involves a greater distance between the nostalgic subject and the original object; while one may feel deeply nostalgic for the turn of the twentieth-century fishing community, the distance between the nostalgic subject and that time and place, as the object of memory, is great. Often, then, cultural nostalgia is manifested in consumer culture, in the commodified simulacra of movies or amusement parks or even Halloween costumes. It is the force that makes the “sou’wester” fishing cap in the souvenir shop desirable as a symbol of a particular culture. Cultural nostalgia also can become central to the construction of an imagined cultural identity, so that in Newfoundland urban ‘townies’ can identify with and take pride in a collective, cultural nostalgia for a centuries-old fishing tradition, even if they have never caught a fish. Cultural nostalgia, then, does not necessarily mean that the nostalgic subject’s feeling is disingenuous or inauthentic; rather, the nostalgic intimacy is directed toward the cultural images of the memory object, rather than toward the memory object itself.

At the other end of the spectrum, then, is not “real” or “truthful” nostalgia, but “experiential” nostalgia. This term indicates nostalgia that is *based* on individual lived experience, without eliminating the elements of fantasy, the distortion of memory, and the

influence of the present inherent in the nostalgic condition. It also indicates that while it is experienced on the personal level, this personal quality does not exclude elements of broader cultural symbols; it may in fact be mediated by familiar codes, even stereotypes or clichés. The distance between the nostalgic subject and the memory object, however, is shorter, since the memory object is constructed from personal experience.

These terms – experiential nostalgia and cultural nostalgia – exist not as a simple binary, but rather on a spectrum, and nostalgic literary texts may shift between these poles. In the rest of this chapter, I use these ideas as a framework in order to examine the different functions that nostalgia may serve in Newfoundland literature. First, I analyze the diasporic poetry of Corner Brook native Carl Leggo, who now lives in BC, to show how experiential nostalgia becomes a means of coping with the pain of displacement. From there, I move to Donna Morrissey’s novel *Sylvanus Now*, arguing that the cultural nostalgia evoked by her novel makes important political statements for the present about Newfoundland’s fishery and the province’s relationship to the federal government.

Carl Leggo and Experiential Nostalgia

Carl Leggo’s three books of poetry, *Growing Up Perpendicular on the Side of a Hill* (1994), *View from My Mother’s House* (1999), and *Come-By-Chance* (2006) are undeniably nostalgic. In the first two books, the poems are connected in a larger narrative; all the poems are grounded in Lynch’s Lane, Corner Brook, where the speaker grew up, and concentrate on recounting significant childhood memories. In all three collections, the first or second poem establishes the fact that the speaker has left Newfoundland; thus the nostalgia of these poems is created by both temporal and spatial distance. There is a tone of loss, then, that haunts these poems, as in the lines from “Scratch in My Throat” in *Come-By-Chance*:

I live with the past

Trailing like a train of U-Hauls stuffed
with stories I no longer need.

It is always hard
to clean the closet, especially in winter
when the stories, like old sweaters,

might still be missed (lines 12-17).

There is a tone of guilt or sheepishness here, as Leggo's speaker admits to his own nostalgia for the past, but confesses that he cannot seem to let the past go. Leggo's poems are a prime example of experiential nostalgia because the source of the nostalgia is the speaker's own memories and experiences. Leggo, in fact, considers his poetry "life writing," a genre that he considers to be performative but also identity-forming, dependent upon "blood, life, and memory" ("Writing Lives," no page). While the poems may involve distortions, fictionalizations, or common cultural symbols like boyhood chums and wise father figures, they constitute experiential nostalgia because they are formed out of the speaker's personal relationship to his own past.

In her cultural analysis of nostalgia, Boym introduces a helpful typology of nostalgia that can further classify the experiential form. "Restorative" nostalgia, as she defines it, stresses the *nostos* part of the word, the return home, and therefore "attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home" (xviii). "Reflective" nostalgia, on the other hand, stresses the *algia*, the loss, and therefore thrives in "the longing itself" (xviii). Leggo's poems exhibit both restorative and reflective nostalgia, at different times. In many of the poems, the experience, person, or moment being remembered is itself emphasized. Leggo populates his books with interesting or significant characters from his speaker's childhood neighbourhood. Several of his poems are slices or vignettes of memorable moments and events, collected together like snapshots in an album. This snapshot quality is referenced by the title of the poem "Light Snaps," in which neighbours get

married, have babies, die, and even win the lottery. Together, the poems become a memoir of childhood, with the repeating refrain of “Cec, Frazer, Macky, my brother and me,” engaged in various forms of boyhood mischief, unifying the poems in both books and their speaker. These poems are light and often funny, featuring one or two-liners like “when Nan heard the Pope had died, / she said, his wife must feel some bad” (“Light Snaps” 51-52). They evoke a mood of happiness and safety as they reconstruct the remembered moment.

A few of the poems, however, such as “Scratch in My Throat” above, are “reflective.” “Tangled,” the last poem in *Growing Up Perpendicular on the Side of a Hill*, is subtitled “Lines from Edmonton to my father in Newfoundland.” It immediately immerses us into *algia*, into loss, with the first lines “far away / in a city you will never know” (1-2). The poem describes a memory of the speaker in a dory with his father, as his father tries to untangle the speaker’s fishing line. The memory blends in without pause to a reassertion of distance:

and I wouldn’t look at you
because I knew you were mad
and I had to look
and you weren’t mad
 you were smiling
and where I live now
there is no ocean
unless you stand on your head
and pretend the sky is ocean
 but it’s not (26-35).

The lack of punctuation and the repetition of “and” at the beginning of most of these lines connects the memory of the event with the loss created by distance, the fact that “where I live now” is far away from both the ocean and the father. Toward the end of the poem the untangled fishing line becomes a metaphor for home and identity:

you knew
an untangled line could be thrown
into the ocean's black silence
and
anchor you to the bottom (43-47).

But the speaker cannot establish a connection between himself and his new place of residence because “the line I throw out / never hooks into the sky / but always falls back / and tangles at my feet” (36-39). The tangles, in both the memory of the dory and in the figurative image of throwing a line into the sky, represent the speaker's restlessness. But he knows that it is the connections with both family and place, the untangled line thrown into the ocean, that have the power to “anchor” him, to mitigate the loss of diaspora. The “line” also has a dual meaning: not only the fishing line, but also the line of poetry. It is the nostalgic verse, then, that has the potential to reconnect him with his homeland.

Are these poems overly sentimental and therefore inauthentic, or representative of an unhealthy fixation on the past and the homeland? I argue that rather than contributing to an unhealthy fixation on the past, the nostalgia in Leggo's poems is central to the speaker's recovery from the pain of displacement. In her book on nostalgia and immigrant identity, Andreea Ritivoi notes that nostalgia, by revisiting the positive aspects of the past, is a self-reinforcing tool (30). In post-traumatic moments, such as diaspora, nostalgia helps one to locate a self that existed outside of that trauma, an identity that is not defined by the moment of loss or alienation, but also by positive memories. As it affirms personal identity, nostalgia also affirms survival of a traumatic event. Ritivoi uses the example of surgery to explain this process: “I confirm my survival by observing the continuity and mental connectedness between who I was prior to the event and the person resulting from the operation” (128). An important means of observing that connectedness is nostalgia for the time before the event; memory confirms the

continuation between the old self and the new self. While Ritivoi's examples involve more traumatic scenarios, the concept can be helpfully applied to situations in which a profound change has occurred in the speaker's life, which may not have involved trauma but that nevertheless has caused a crisis of identity. In *Yearning for Yesterday* (1979) sociologist Fred Davis notes that nostalgia often accompanies the milestones typical to the life cycle; the passage from adolescence to adulthood, marriage, the rearing of children, retirement. In moments when identity is threatened by a feeling of discontinuity, Davis argues, nostalgia provides a feeling of continuity, of connection with our earlier selves (49). Leggo's poems are exemplary of this function of nostalgia, since they focus on detailing memories and experiences of a Newfoundland childhood, on connecting the adult self in displacement with the boy growing up in Corner Brook. In "Eight Windows," the second poem in *View from my Mother's House*, the speaker establishes in the first stanza his childhood desire to leave his home and explore the world:

growing up I saw
from eight lean windows
in my mother's house
pitched in the gravel
of steep Lynch's Lane,
my whole known world,
culled in the compass
of the Humber Arm
and Long Range Mountains,
like a fortress,
and always I wanted
to see far beyond
the horizon (1-13).

The desire to leave is fulfilled in the final stanza, in which we are told that the speaker now lives in Richmond, BC, where "the only hills / [are] stockpiled sand dredged from the Fraser" (187-

189). While growing up he longed for a different view from that which he saw through his mother's eight windows, now he finds himself

in a world flat pressed
under gray soft skies,
seeking the same view
through eight lean windows
of my mother's house,
years ago bulldozed (193-198).

Now that he has seen the other coast, he looks for the same view of his childhood neighbourhood and the landscape of home, a view that will connect this older, displaced self with the self who years ago "walked off Lynch's Lane" (177). The nostalgic journey that the speaker takes through the rest of the book, through childhood memories of people and events, seems to achieve this goal. "Coastlines," the final poem of *View from My Mother's House*, recalls "Eight Windows."

In this poem, Leggo describes daily walks on the Pacific Coast, where the speaker sees

my image
upside down in the smooth
Fraser River, all the world
topsy turvy, but
still in balance (18-22).

His own image is reversed, corrupted in his new home, or rather *by* his new home, represented by the Fraser River. In the final part of the poem, the speaker expresses his desire to be like the eagle, gull or heron, who "sees the world / from other locations" (55-56), but instead he is "calling out the view, far / from my mother's house, / seeing still all the world / through eight windows" (61-64). The image of the speaker "seeking" the view of eight windows at the beginning of the book, is now transformed, into "seeing" that view. While the speaker has moved to the coast on the opposite side of the country, he still sees the world from the same perspective of his birthplace, and therefore confirms that he is the same person. This perspective, manifested in nostalgic remembrance of that birthplace, maintains or restores personal continuity despite the

fact that the world around him is “topsy turvy” (21). The past, as a shaping force of identity, is not left behind, but rather transforms his experience of the new home. The two opposing homes, the two opposite coasts, are held in “balance.”

Nostalgia is not only a means of affirming survival of displacement, it can also be a means of coping with the ongoing pain that that displacement causes. As Boym writes, nostalgia is the desire “to revisit time like space, refusing to surrender to the irreversibility of time that plagues the human condition” (xv). The act of nostalgic remembrance temporarily replaces the feeling of loss or alienation with happiness and familiarity. In her article “Nonlinear Dynamics and the Diasporic Imagination,” Minoli Salgado theorizes that

a form of temporal reversal is a key feature of the diasporic imagination in its quest for wholeness and connection with the past. While the lived reality of the writer undeniably affirms the violent temporal rupture that migration enforces [...] this very dislocation creates the conditions for the imaginative desire to negate time, reverse it and enact an endless return to the past. (188)

Nostalgia conflates time, so that the past is experienced as though it is the present, replacing, albeit temporarily, feelings of alienation with feelings of comfort, and overcoming loss through the power of memory. Leggo displays this effect in his poem “Lynch’s Lane,” in which the street where the speaker grew up is so intimately connected with his identity that “Lynch’s Lane is etched in my body” (4). In this poem, the speaker’s nostalgia has a definite ‘rose-coloured’ quality, as he tells us that “none ever tasted as good / as the first orange popsicle / of summer” (7-9). But the memory of this taste leads to a flood of other associated sensory experiences:

sweat stinging sunburn
water and tar on the lane
to keep dust down
Skipper mowing the grass
with whistles of the scythe (10-14).

The memories listed in this poem evoke all the senses, and are written in the present tense. The speaker, then, is not just recalling events and experiences set firmly in the past, but is walking down Lynch's – and memory – Lane as though he is experiencing these tastes, smells, sounds, sights and touches in the present. C. Nadia Seremetakis, in "Memory of the Senses," expands on the Greek etymology of nostalgia to explain the connection between it and the senses, and argues that memory and the senses are intertwined in such a way that memory is "a sense organ in-itself" (9). The memory of a taste becomes a re-experiencing of that taste; the opposite of *nostos*, she teaches us, is *a-nostos*, lack of taste. As Ritivoi explains,

If I can only relate to my past in a mediated way, through symbolic representation, at times I might also feel separated from it, so intensely aware of the constructed nature of my representations that the representations no longer feel authentic. But when the past seizes me, and it seems as though I am perceiving, rather than remembering it, I can nurture the illusion of a perfect connection to it. (35)

In this moment Leggo's speaker has been "seized" by the past, and has managed to collapse time, to travel to and re-experience the past through the memory of the senses, and therefore momentarily overcome the pain of loss.

There are several moments, however, when the speaker in "Lynch's Lane" re-establishes the distance between the moment of remembering, and the past remembered. The seasons are conflated so the summer popsicles of the second stanza are replaced by "icicles knocked from the eaves" in the fourth; we know the descriptions are in the past because memories of different times are remembered simultaneously. The speaker is also split. He is able to see himself as a child: "with Cec, Frazer, Macky, / my brother, and me playing war / cricket kick the can at day's end" (22-24). The passage of time has created a disjuncture between the voice speaking now and the "me" playing kick the can. Thus even as the speaker re-experiences these moments through

nostalgia, he, and we as readers, are not allowed to fully forget the fact that the moments have been lost through the passage of time and space.

Recent work on affect theory is illuminating here. As Sara Ahmed argues in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004), "emotions are not 'in' either the individual or the social, but produce the very surfaces and boundaries that allow the individual and the social to be delineated as if they are objects" (10). In other words, emotions, as "responses to objects and others," are what create the very surfaces of the self as a being in the world. If we consider nostalgia as an "emotion," then, it is not located internally, but rather marks the clash between the individual body and the new environment, the not-home. The emotion is not fully contained within the nostalgic subject but rather marks the interactions between that subject and other people or places in his or her surroundings. Even in its most "restorative" moments, then, nostalgia is a marker of loss as it shapes the division between the subject and the memory of place.

But this loss does not make the journey futile. As Ritivoi argues, "constant 'mental visits' to an inaccessible home or one forever relegated to the past become a way of adjusting to change and coping with difference" (30). Thus the final stanza brings us back to a slightly revised version of the initial image of the place "etched" in his body: "like black lines pricked in skin / with a needle for focusing / India ink in a point / Lynch's Lane is tattooed in my body" (45-48). The memories are not just located in the brain, but are part of the body, re-experienced by the ears, eyes, nose, mouth, and skin. They also mark the body, and therefore become an important part of his identity. The image of the tattoo, in its permanence, reveals the fact that the speaker carries these memories with him now, mitigating somewhat that disjuncture between the self of the past and the self of the present. As a mark on the surface of the body, it becomes a link or

seam between the ‘inside’ of the self and the ‘outside,’ what Ahmed calls the “stickiness” of emotions as objects meet in the world.

Experiential nostalgia, then, does not just maintain or preserve the connection between the speaker and his past self, it is also a crucial part of the construction of identity. Davis convincingly argues that if nostalgia is a means of relating our past to our present and future, it is “deeply implicated in the sense of who we are, what we are about, and (though possibly with much less inner clarity) whither we go” (31). It helps us to “salvage a self from the chaos of raw, unmediated experience” (33). The memories, and the place remembered, become a crucial part of who the speaker imagines himself to be. As Monika Fludernik asks,

how, except by clinging to what one knows, can one manage to face the new and survive the challenge [of diaspora]? Given this dilemma, the memory of the past and its re-invention as an imaginary homeland are of the utmost psychological significance. Identity operates through narrative, and narrative needs to start in the past and pace its way to a future that embraces and resolves the discrepancies between past and present (xxviii-xxix).

In other words, the diasporic speaker constructs a narrative of his past that places his present situation within the larger story of his life, thereby constructing an identity that accommodates both past and present. Fludernik’s reference to Salman Rushdie’s phrase “imaginary homeland” is crucial here. The speaker’s past, his home, is “imagined” in that it is reconstructed by memory, or nostalgia, rather than empirically described. But this imagined quality makes it no less significant psychologically. It is essential to that narrative of identity, to the extent that it becomes “tattooed on the body.”

As Leggo’s poetry reveals, then, experiential nostalgia can be central to coping with the experience of diaspora. But the psychological functions nostalgia can serve in diasporic literature do not mean that diasporic works should be dismissed as “merely” nostalgic or relevant only to other members of the diaspora. Experiential nostalgia does not necessarily signify sentimentality

and cliché, nor does it necessarily entail inauthentic, idealistic or disingenuous engagements with the homeland. Rather, as the admittedly sparse reviews of his work assert, Leggo's voice is both "personal and approachable" (Sullivan B4), and demonstrates sensitivity and "great care" (DeBeyer, 114). As a source of intense and personal emotion for the speaker, experiential nostalgia can create highly sensual and passionate images, it can reveal the complexities of the speaker and of his construction of personal identity, and it can emphasize both the importance of and the imagined nature of place in our own ideas of home.

The Nostalgic Reader

In diasporic literature, nostalgia can also be an important part of constructing the diasporic community, or as Vijay Mishra calls it, the "diasporic imaginary." As Lily Cho argues in her discussion of the poetry of Fred Wah, "[d]iasporic communities can be understood as constituted by the imminence of memory rather than by the backward browsings of historicism" ("Taste" 102). Nostalgia, then, not only serves an important psychological function for the displaced speaker, or perhaps the displaced poet. It also can perform similar functions for the reader. The act of reading itself becomes a nostalgic return to the homeland. In *Marketing Place: Cultural Politics, Regionalism and Reading* (1993), displaced Newfoundlander Ursula Kelly describes how reading Newfoundland literature in diaspora effects a nostalgic conflation of the present with the past:

The dead of winter. Again. Someplace, anyplace, not my place. Toronto, maybe. Or Halifax. At every turn, loss. [...] Then, in the sneaking, unsuspecting way that need sometimes seems to collide with commodity, I happen on a book of poetry, witting unwrapped but unread, a ghost of Christmas-just-passed. It is *The Time of Icicles* by Mary Dalton. I read. I devour. Now fits – of pain, rage, laughter, tears. My readings, labour. At book's end, I close my eyes. In my mind's eye, then, I see myself. I am laughing, crying, dancing. And I am home. (2)

While she is “home” only in her “mind’s eye,” she is nevertheless there; reading literature has transported her to her home, has collapsed the distance of both space and time that has made her feel lost in Toronto or Halifax.

The *Atlantic Guardian* is a good example of the community-forming role of nostalgic literature in the diaspora. Despite his hesitations about the authenticity of Pollett’s nostalgic memories, O’Flaherty concedes that “In Pollett’s life we see a pattern that repeated itself in the biographies of thousands of his fellow countrymen, who uprooted themselves from familiar rural settings to pursue, at great cost, economic opportunity in urban North America. Part of Pollett’s value as a writer is that he speaks for a mute multitude of emigrant Newfoundlanders” (155). This “multitude,” then, becomes a “diasporic imaginary,” a community of Newfoundlanders connected by their displacement, and their memories of home.

Byrne agrees, placing Pollett’s nostalgia in the context not only of displacement, but also of the massive change that Newfoundland was undergoing at the time:

There is little doubt, and letters to *Atlantic Guardian* confirm this, that part of the explanation for Pollett’s popularity was that in his attempt to rediscover and reconstruct the world of his own childhood from afar, he stirred in his readers nostalgic recollections of an outport way of life which, because of the changes that occurred between 1945 and 1955 in the aftermath of the war and with the advent of Confederation, many who had never left the Island felt was becoming equally as remote for them as it was for Pollett. (70)

Byrne goes on to explain the psychological importance of this nostalgia for the readers: “the depiction of the traditional Newfoundland way of life contained in the writings of the romantic realists was obviously general and idealized, but coming as it did at a time of social and cultural transition, it provided people, for a time, with a benchmark, or a ‘holdin’ ground,’ to use [Ted] Russell’s term, against which to measure and evaluate the changes” (73). Here is where we begin to move along the spectrum of nostalgia, away from the experiential and toward the cultural.

People read about the personal experiences of others whom they have never met, and generalize those stories and images to their own histories. They identify with both the memories described and the feeling of loss associated with them. They too take comfort from “reliving” the writer’s Newfoundland.

As readers, we recognize Leggo’s or Pollett’s nostalgia in the same way we recognize testimony. Testimony, as Ahmed argues, is not only a demand for recognition, but a form of recognition in itself (200). Nostalgia operates similarly, in that it witnesses the loss of the homeland, and calls for a recognition of that loss. It thus often evokes empathetic nostalgia in the reader. This transmission of nostalgia through literature is one form of what Teresa Brennan calls the transmission of affect, as it involves the passage of nostalgia from the individual to a larger group. But as the reader adopts the nostalgic affect of the author, experiential nostalgia moves closer to cultural nostalgia, as the distance between the nostalgic subject and the memory object increases.

Donna Morrissey and Cultural Nostalgia

The same period of extreme change in Newfoundland that is witnessed in the *Atlantic Guardian* is the setting of Donna Morrissey’s 2005 novel *Sylvanus Now*. The novel begins in the spring of 1949, with a fourteen-year-old outport boy named Sylvanus Now jigging for cod to pay for his new confirmation suit. The novel follows Sylvanus until 1960, and throughout this time he continues to make his living by jigging alone for cod, which he salts and dries – despite pressure from his brothers to buy a longliner with them, despite pressure from the government to use the new gill nets designed to make fishing more efficient, despite the huge foreign freezer ships on the horizon, and despite the fact that each year his catch becomes smaller. Sylvanus

stands as a representation of the past, of tradition, amidst the rapid changes of industrialization. In this sense, he is a literary figure of nostalgia, of a post-industrial longing for traditional ways.

Morrissey's depiction of Sylvanus's traditional fishing practices are idealized. The description of Sylvanus catching a female fish sets this tone at the beginning of the novel:

‘Whoa, now, who do we have here?’ he asked in astonishment as he pulled the forty pounder half out of the water, the brown of its back glistening wet, its belly creamy as milk and swollen with roe. A mother-fish. Rarely would she feed off a jigger, busy as she was, bottom feeding and readying herself for spawning. Reverently, he unhooked the jigger from the mouth of the quietly struggling fish and watched the sun catch the last glimmer of her gills as she dove back into the deep, the sack of roe in her belly unscathed. He felt proud. The ocean's bounty, she was, and woe to he who desecrated the mother's womb. The gods smiled, and within the minute he was pulling another fish up from the deep, a twenty pounder, twice the normal size for a hand-jiggered cod, and his heart pounded as he flipped it into his boat. (4)

The moment is depicted as a coming-of-age ritual for the young Sylvanus, who proudly returns to shore with “a fisherman's catch” and thus takes his father's place as a working man. But phrases like “reverently,” and “ocean's bounty” are romantically overwrought, or evidence of what Frank Moher calls Morrissey's “oddly antique prose” (WP3). The elevated language of this passage is also somewhat discomfiting; the phrase “the gods smiled,” aligns Sylvanus with the animism often associated with Indigenous religions, and therefore suggests the indigenization of traditional fishing culture. This move erases the colonial roots of Newfoundland society, and attempts to unite fishers and the environment in a natural, intimate connection that absolves them of any blame in the abuse of the resource. In this scene, then, it is easy to see how nostalgia gets a bad name. Not only does Morrissey's prose tend toward sentimental cliché, it idealizes the past in a way that threatens to erase historical violence and hardship. Nostalgia is often equated with anti-modernism or anti-industrialization (Su 11); it is often, then, considered a form of amnesia, as the hardships of a pre-industrial lifestyle are forgotten. Morrissey's idyllic scene leaves out the

difficult labour of catching and salting fish. Though the hardships of this lifestyle will become evident later on in the book, this opening scene establishes a tone of nostalgia that threatens to soften the accounts of life in a Newfoundland outport in the mid-twentieth century.

But despite these dangers, the passage establishes the pride and care that Sylvanus takes in his craft, and his respect for the resource – a respect sharply contrasted a few pages later by the description of the sixty-foot trawlers with thousand foot nets that are invading his strip of coast.

He'd never seen their nets, but he could figure the damage even one could do – all thousand feet of it being dragged along the ocean floor, its jaws held open by massive slabs of wood that were heavily shod with iron – dislodging boulders and flattening crevices and outcrops, crushing and burying billions of fish and their habitats in its path as it rolled along, striving to frighten up into its giant maw the bottom fish, including those mother-fish whose bellies were swollen with pounds of roe not yet spawned. Now then, imagine five hundred of them, all ploughing the spawning grounds. (14)

The violence of this plunder is emphasized by the shark-like images, the “jaws” and the “giant maw,” and we are asked to directly compare Sylvanus’s return of the mother-fish to the ocean with this waste of “pounds of roe not yet spawned.” Sylvanus’s brother goes on to explain that the trawlers dump tons of fish if they are not the species they want, and that sometimes the nets break as they are pulled out of the water, sending thousands of dead fish back into the sea. The idealized image of Sylvanus alone in his boat, then, evokes nostalgia for a sustainable way of life that we are soon told is under threat. This is the loss upon which nostalgia is dependent, the *algia* (longing) portion of the word.

Morrissey herself was not born until 1956, so the time period in which she has set her novel is outside the realm of her own personal memory and experience. The nostalgia of *Sylvanus Now* is thus a cultural nostalgia, based on the “cultural memories” of her family and community, remembered in oral and written history and retold in various art forms. As cultural

nostalgia is derived from public media, its functions also impact the broader community, rather than just the individual; it thus has a large potential to be political. Morrissey's cultural nostalgia uses the past to critique present industrial practices, distinguishes Newfoundland from the rest of Canada both culturally and politically, and uses the Resettlement program of the 1950's to address the impact of out-migration.

The period immediately following Confederation was a time of profound change in Newfoundland. The new province's premier, Joey Smallwood, had declared his intention to "drag Newfoundland kicking and screaming into the twentieth century," and set out to do so by encouraging Newfoundlanders to "burn their boats" and give up fishing to work in one of the many new industries that Smallwood was encouraging, from mining to glove manufacturing. Simultaneously, the traditional salt cod market was giving way to increasing global demand for frozen fish, and many fish processing plants were built to replace the flakes on which cod had been salted and dried for centuries. The Smallwood government offered loans to fishing companies willing to invest in fish plants and offshore trawlers, to ensure that Newfoundland took full advantage of this growing market. Both Canadian and foreign fishing was expanding, making use of new technologies including massive small-mesh nets, floating freezers, and fish-finding technology. The government also encouraged small inshore fishers to increase their production by buying larger longliners, but the average catch for inshore fishers nevertheless decreased dramatically. It is in this climate of rapid change and industrialization that *Sylvanus Now* is set.

Sylvanus himself is seen by his brothers as a man behind the times; while his brothers are equally concerned about the state of the stocks, they are determined that if the fish are going to die out, they may as well catch them for themselves rather than let foreign fishers have them.

Their strategy, then, is to keep up with these new technologies. As Sylvanus's brother Manny tells him, "there's always going to be bigger and better ways of doing something, my son. You just got to jump on board, buddy, and ride it to the end" (123). Yet Sylvanus refuses to change, and continues to handline for cod alone in his dory, and "make fish" by salting and drying it. Sylvanus's nostalgia, his close connection with his roots and the old ways, is belittled by his brothers' frequent exclamation that he is just like his dead father. But more serious disdain for what is seen as Sylvanus's excessive clinging to the past also comes from another source. The voice of the government berates the fishermen for failing to keep up with the times: "it's your spirit, men, it's your spirit – you haven't really given over the ways of the old, still too many of you clinging to your father's day and not taking on the more modern means we're equipping you with – what of the new fibre gill nets? We're giving them to you, free" (256). The government, then, is also accusing fishermen like Sylvanus for being nostalgic, for "clinging to their fathers' day." Yet it is this nostalgia, or perhaps this caution, that is preventing these few fishermen from contributing to the unsustainable exploitation of the resource. For Morrissey, then, nostalgia leads to more ethical and sustainable fishing practices.

Sylvanus's wife, Adelaide, recounts what she heard on the radio about the new gill nets:

it near sickened her what they were saying about how they hung like curtains in the water, catching fish by the gills in their mesh, and how they were made from a modern kind of fibre, from nylon, and never rotted – which was a good thing, except that they were always breaking from their moorings and then floating about for years in the sea, filling up with fish till their weight sank them to the bottom, and how, when all the fish rotted or were eaten by other fish, they rose again, fishing themselves full, till their weight sank them again, and again, fishing and rotting, fishing and rotting, and entangling other things in their mesh like sharks and seals. [...] "Nobody should be allowed to use them awful things."

"Unless it's the only way left to them," said Eva. (190-191)

Nostalgia for old-fashioned fishing methods is complicated by the violent contrast of the damage done by new technologies. The nostalgic depiction of handlining no longer seems merely

romantic and idealistic, but rather stands as an important alternative to these environmentally destructive methods. Anti-industrial nostalgia, then, is not always amnesiac, but rather, as Su writes, often “refocuses attention on what has been forgotten” (10). Sylvanus’s nostalgia is a means of celebrating the sustainability of traditional methods, and through contrast, of protesting against harmful industrialization. Sylvanus’s nostalgia becomes our own as readers, as we compare the impact of these fishing practices and register the dying of the old ways as loss. The experiential nostalgia of the character thus becomes cultural nostalgia, as Morrissey laments the loss of practices she may never have experienced.

The cultural nostalgia for handlining that Morrissey evokes at the beginning of the novel is also complicated here by Eva’s powerful statement, “unless it’s the only way left to them.” Here we become fully aware of how nostalgia functions. As a longing for the past, nostalgia cannot exist without loss. Morrissey’s depiction of Sylvanus jigging for cod, of saving the mother-fish, is only “nostalgic” because we know as readers that this way of life has essentially disappeared, and that Sylvanus cannot continue fishing this way indefinitely. In this passage we are reminded that this loss is traumatic, and that it involves complex environmental and economic pressures that have resulted in a feeling of choicelessness. For the contemporary reader, the character’s nostalgia is felt as a cultural absence. Cultural nostalgia, then, is not always merely naïve idealism or touristic commodification. Through this shared feeling of absence it evokes the cultural memory – in Boym’s terms the “shared social frameworks of individual recollections” (53) – of a loss fraught with pain and duress, and therefore it has the power to provide an important commentary on social change.

The image of the mother-fish returns toward the end of the novel, in a disturbing scene that upsets any remaining notion that Morrissey’s nostalgic rendering of Sylvanus is naïve

sentimentality. Sylvanus witnesses a net breaking as a trawler attempts to haul it out of the water full of fish:

Within minutes Sylvanus's boat was encompassed by the fish now drifting on their backs, their eyes bulging out of their sockets like small hen eggs, their stomachs bloating out through their mouths in thin, pink, membrane sacs. Gulls flapped and squawked frenziedly, clutching on the bellies of the fish, jabbing at the pink sacs till the membranes broke, spilling out the guts. The sea of red broke, and Sylvanus clutched his side sickeningly as he took in the spread of creamy white pods now floating before him. Mother-fish. Thousands of them. A great, speckled gull perched atop one of the pods nearest him, jabbing at her belly, weakening it, rupturing it, till the mother's roe trickled out like spilt milk. [...] [He] felt his smallness, his minuscule measure against a sphere where thousand of fish can be flung to the gulls thousands of times and count for nothing. He thought of the mother-fish he'd saved from his jiggers over the years, and her sacs of roe, and he drew his eyes now back to the frenzy of the gulls jabbing at her belly, spilling her guts, her unlive life, into the sea, and he weakened, seeing in the mother's fate his own. (255)

As Sylvanus realizes the futility of his own attempts to preserve the resource, the novel's nostalgia has irrevocably shifted from the fond idealization of its opening pages to the painful loss not only of livelihood but also of innocence. Here, nostalgia is closer to its correlate, the uncanny – in Freud's terms that "class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (220) – as the familiarity of the waters and fish is replaced by the horror of the grotesque bodies of dead fish, the violence of the gulls, and the excess of spilled, fruitless roe. As Gunew notes, both the uncanny or *unheimlich* and *nostalgia* etymologically incorporate "home" (*Framing* 116-118); both terms involve the distortion of home either through loss (nostalgia) or fear (the uncanny). In this moment in the novel, nostalgia is revealed as a complex longing that can lead to uncanny experiences of a corrupted home. As Sylvanus realizes that the mother-fish he has spared over the years will make no difference against this massive destruction, his idyllic, pastoral home is finally forever relegated to the past. The moment, then, becomes a profound statement against the destructive forces of unsustainable industrialization.

Morrissey takes some poetic license with history in this novel, particularly in her account of the destructive gill nets. While Morrissey has the government offering the gill nets free to fishermen in the late 1950s, in reality it was not until 1961 that the federal government began offering bounties to fishermen wanting to acquire gill nets. The provincial government began offering bounties in 1962 (Wright 142). This chronological adjustment works in interesting ways with Morrissey's handling of history. In her review of the novel for *The Globe and Mail*, Dawn Rae Downton complains that "there's no news in this 1950s Newfoundland, scarce recall of the world war just passed, no mention of Joey Smallwood" (D5). For Downton, a great fault of the novel is that "the outside world doesn't exist at all" (D5). I argue that the outside world does exist, not in the form of specific political figures or events, but rather in the form of intrusions that become almost mythological. The disturbing descriptions of the gill nets and the five hundred trawlers scraping the bottom of the ocean are quickly dwarfed by the three-hundred-foot, thousand-ton British ship with its plant and freezer all in one, "filleting and freezing thirty tons of fish a day." Sylvanus wonders, "how heavily carpeted would be the waters with this leviathan beast fouling her nets and losing or dumping her load? And more – much more than fouled nets and dumping – how heavy a price would those mammoth nets extract from the spawning grounds?" (121). The British ship called "The Fairtry" becomes an emblem of "awe and foreboding" (121) as it is refigured as a biblical "leviathan beast," personified as a mythical harbinger of destruction. The novel, then, becomes almost allegorical. The collapsing of time does not matter because the handing out of gill nets, along with these giant factory freezers, are symbolic of external intrusions on cultural tradition, and the damage inflicted by the new provincial and federal governments in their push for "progress." Sylvanus signs "the petitions and letters that were circulating, calling for governments to do something, to bloody do

something about the trawlers and factory freezers. So far they had done nothing” (201-202). The plural form “governments” here, does not simply refer to both the provincial and federal bodies; the lack of a definite article rather suggests a generalized, impotent and irresponsible bureaucracy. “Government” itself becomes symbolic of damaging, almost imperial, external forces beyond Sylvanus’s, and the community’s, control. This effect becomes clearer as Sylvanus realizes with horror that everyone else already recognizes the irreparable destruction that industrialization is wreaking on the fish stocks: “They knew. The weight with which this thought struck him forced him to sit. They knew. Of course they knew. Everybody knew. Governments. Corporations. Merchants. Even the fishers working the big boats knew. But they would keep doing it anyway, like a youngster gobbling down the profits from his jelly bean business – knowing the difference, but unable to stop” (219). Governments, corporations, merchants and fishers are lumped together into one destructive force, not represented by any particular political figure, nation, or corporation, but rather generalized into a conspiratorial body. The function of this allegorization is to make these historical moments part of a broader critique of a history of mismanagement, a problem that evokes not a particular moment in time, but a timeless repetition. Nostalgia resists the teleological narrative of “progress” from a primitive past to a modern future; Morrissey uses nostalgia not to advocate for a return to the past, but to collapse the progression of time into a cycle of destructive repetition.

Morrissey’s novel is haunted by the 1992 cod moratorium; most readers will be well aware of the collapse of the groundfish industry that led the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) to shut down the commercial cod fishery, putting thousands of people out of work, devastating the Newfoundland economy, and threatening hundreds of communities whose sole industry had been the fishery. The problem of huge foreign fishing vessels within the

territorial limits, of insatiable “ghost” gill nets, and of trawlers scraping the bottom of the ocean, are familiar images from more recent years, and their descriptions connect the 1950s of the novel with the pre-moratorium industry of the early 1990s. As Morrissey constructs the voice of the government saying the “fishery’s always been up and down, up and down; but she’ll be back, she always comes back” (202), we are painfully aware that the fishery will *not* just come back.

Morrissey’s nostalgia, then, is not simply for traditional practices in a time when the fishing industry is being rapidly modernized. It is nostalgia for a fishing industry, period. As Su puts it, nostalgic novels “assert the ethical value of articulating disappointment and frustration with the present by imagining a more satisfying past. In other words, nostalgia represents a necessary and often productive form of confronting loss and displacement” (12). For Morrissey and contemporary readers, the pain and frustration that accompany the loss of the fishery, the loss of livelihood for many Newfoundland families, the loss of entire outport communities, the loss of population to out-migration, the loss of cultural dignity, and the loss of what has historically been a defining aspect of Newfoundland society, is articulated through nostalgia for an earlier time. By returning to this earlier moment in Newfoundland history, Morrissey effectively comments on the importance the fishery has had for individual fishers and whole communities, and by evoking an overall mood of nostalgia, she places the events of the post-Confederation decade within a broader historical trajectory.

Another of the losses that is implicit in *Sylvanus Now* is the loss of the nation of Newfoundland. The novel begins in spring of 1949, the point in history when Newfoundland became a part of Canada. While Confederation is never directly mentioned, this date, provided before Chapter One even begins, is loaded, immediately referencing Newfoundland’s new status as a province of Canada, the handover of fishery management to the federal DFO, and the

beginning of Joey Smallwood's infamous twenty-two-year rule. As readers, then, if we are familiar with the subsequent history, we are immediately made aware of the importance of this moment and the profound change that it marks. The fishery collapse has also been directly traced back to this post-Confederation period. As Barbara Neis and Paul Kean show, "it is widely recognized that the arrival of the distant water fleets in the post-Second World War period and the expansion of eastern Canada's dragger fleets dramatically accelerated the ecological degradation of groundfish stocks in the northwest Atlantic" (73). Neis and Kean cite the tremendous harvesting capacity of the factory freezer trawlers, which could fish year round, twenty-four hours a day; the low size selectivity and species selectivity of trawl gear; and the impact of dragging on the benthic environment as specific practices initiated in the 1950s that would eventually lead to the total collapse of the groundfish stocks (74). The DFO, then, as a ministry of the Canadian government, is often blamed for the destruction of the industry, and therefore the loss of Newfoundland's main industry and traditional livelihood is considered intimately connected with the political loss of the Newfoundland nation. Morrissey's nostalgia for pre-industrial fishing practices, then, can also be read as nostalgia for a pre-Confederation, culturally and politically independent Newfoundland.

The push to industrialization and modernity is closely connected with Newfoundland's place on Canada's margins. Sylvanus angrily proclaims "that's what they're always saying, isn't it, that we got to be modern, that we're backwards with no vision? Shamed of us is what they are, shamed of a bloody sou-wester and a punt" (265). The "they" in Sylvanus's speech is not defined, but the context implies that the "they" is his own Newfoundland government, ashamed of its own heritage as it attempts to assimilate into the Canadian nation. "Well you better watch out, buddy," Sylvanus continues to his brother, "because they'll have you trading your skiff for a

trawler next, and your sou'wester for a derby, and next thing you'll be all nice and modern on the deck of a freezer, doing to us what the rest of the bastards have been doing for years now – wiping us out” (265). Modernization, here, becomes an act of violence, with the phrase “wiping us out” suggesting the extinction of Newfoundland culture. Newfoundlanders themselves, then, are in danger of becoming complicit in their own marginalization, and their own assimilation.

In her history of the Newfoundland fishery, Miriam Wright connects the changes to the fishery after Confederation to “modernization theory”:

According to this approach, the world consisted of ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ societies. Traditional societies had ‘simple’ forms of economic, social, and political organization. The economies tended to be labour-intensive, with low levels of capital and technology. The people [...] were backward-looking, resistant to change, and lacking innovative spirit. [...] Modernization theory assumed that by infusing traditional societies with capital, technology, entrepreneurship, and modern attitudes, they, too, could become modern. (7)

In other words, provincial and federal policy makers considered Newfoundland to be a backward society, in need of industrial development. Indeed, Smallwood had campaigned for Confederation on exactly these grounds; in his speech promoting Confederation to the 1946 National Convention, he declared “we are so used [to our ways] that we do not even see their inadequacy, their backwardness, their seaminess” (Gwyn *Smallwood* 81). These attitudes, reinforced both from within Newfoundland and without, overtly place Newfoundland in an inferior position to the rest of Canada. Morrissey rejects this marginalization by replacing disdain for Newfoundland’s backwardness with nostalgia, by lauding traditional practices and revealing them as a more responsible and satisfying way of life. Her nostalgia for a pre-Confederation Newfoundland marks the island’s difference from the rest of Canada and emphasizes the fact that the province cannot be fully understood or effectively governed from two thousand kilometres away.

As Ahmed shows, the western concept of emotion has often been plagued by an “evolutionary thinking,” through which “emotions get narrated as a sign of ‘our’ pre-history, and as a sign of how the primitive persists in the present” (3). This privileging of “thought and reason” is particularly evident in relationship to the status of nostalgia in western society. Nostalgia, as an emotion that turns to the past, and that often involves the idealistic reconstruction of that past, has been particularly associated with primitiveness and weakness at the bottom of what Ahmed identifies as a “hierarchy between emotions” (3). The idea that Newfoundland is a more primitive society than the rest of Canada, is an affective argument, in which nostalgia, as a form of emotionality, endows “ ‘others’ with meaning and value” (4). Phrases like “backward” and “clinging to your father’s day” are emotionally charged and serve to, in Brennan’s words, project unwanted affects onto others “in a process commonly known as ‘othering’” (12). Newfoundlanders, figured as nostalgic, are constructed as emotionally weak and lower in an evolutionary scale. They are therefore both “other” to the Canadian identity, and in need of being dragged into modernity.

This marginalization is similarly depicted in the feminine sphere of fish making. Adelaide is a bright young woman whose mother forces her to quit school in order to work on the flakes, back-breaking work involving picking maggots out of salted fish and laying it out and turning it over to dry. But the government encourages the local merchants to build a fish plant, to tap into the North American frozen fish market. The voice of the government is once again parodied:

“Can you imagine that, outport housewives? No more working the flakes? Nice indoor jobs all year round with regular pay, and dressing your youngsters in nice clothes from the catalogues, and getting rid of them old oak dressers, and furnishing your kitchens with vinyl and chrome and all those other nice things you’ll be seeing on your nice new television sets once we gets you electrified and everything modernized?”

“*Mod-er-nized*, ” drawled out Joycie-Anne. [...] “That’s all I hears about these days, getting *mod-er-nized*. I wonder what we’re all going to look like when we gets *mod-er-nized*.” (45)

The women working on the flakes poke fun at the idea of becoming “modernized,” and in the process they assert the value of their own work. The women take the pejorative nostalgia projected onto them and embrace it, seeing it not as an indication of backwardness but rather as a valuation of their culture. Rather than being ashamed of their way of life, they return the disdain that they get from the rest of the country, including St. John’s as an outpost of Canadian rule. The government’s privileging of vinyl and chrome over oak becomes amusingly ironic. Joycie-Anne’s question is answered by her neighbour Suze: “ ‘Aah, Joycie, you’ll be prettier than a fancy city woman. [...] God bless their little pinkies – they think that worms lives only in the ground’ ” (45). While the women work hard plucking worms from fish, the city women are satirized for their pretty pink fingers, and, it is implied, their lack of knowledge and work ethic.

The criticisms of “modernization” become more serious as working in a fish plant is described in terms of one’s hands becoming gnarled from cold and the discomfort of hours of standing on a concrete floor. The women give up gardening with the arrival of the new plant (58), becoming entirely dependent upon their and their husband’s wages to feed their families. “That’s something you makes time for, gardening. What happens if you gets a bad year fishing?” Sylvanus asks Adelaide. “Not supposed to, with the plants,” Adelaide replies (58). Adelaide’s statement is dramatically ironic, as readers recall the many plant closures in recent decades, putting thousands of people out of work. The fact that people are “letting their gardens go” does not just mean the loss of an important part of traditional outport life, it becomes a moment of foreboding of the hard times to come. While working on the flakes is certainly not idealized, the

idea that the new plant will bring progress and modern comforts to a community behind-the-times is brought into serious question.

The most profound change with which Sylvanus and Adelaide are confronted is the government plan to “resettle” their community, to move all of the households to a larger centre. Between 1935 and 1965, the Newfoundland Centralization Program gave families in small outports welfare assistance in return for relocating to larger centres where access to basic services could be provided more easily. But all households in the community had to agree to move in order for any of them to receive assistance. Between 1965 and 1975, a joint program between the provincial and federal governments took over, which dictated that families move to particular “growth centres.” Again, a certain percentage of the community had to agree to move for anyone to get assistance, and many obviously felt extreme pressure to move from their neighbours, or out of fear that if they did not move now they would miss out on the opportunity for assistance. Unfortunately in the new “growth centres” unemployment was already at about twenty percent, the best fishing grounds were reserved for long term residents, and the new settlers were rarely able to find work outside of the fishing industry they had always known. The small assistance that they received did not come close to the value of the homes they were forced to abandon, and many could not afford homes in the new centre where costs were suddenly driven skyward. All totalled, about 250 outports, about a quarter of the communities, disappeared.

When Sylvanus is told that they are all being moved from their home in Cooney Arm, he reacts with disbelief and anger. He begins to look at his birthplace differently:

Move. A sickness churned in his stomach, and he stood still against the squalls as though to feel the steadiness of the rock beneath his feet, to assure himself that it, too, wasn't about to erode. It started to drizzle, the wet scenting the air with a fleet

of smells that, under this threat of moving, were already alien with nostalgia. He'd been breathing them since the day of his birth. (266)

In this passage, the “nostalgia” that Sylvanus already feels is made possible by the feeling of rupture from his homeland that the news of resettlement has already caused. Here, nostalgia signifies not the idealized remembrance of the home, but a profound sense of loss. As Su argues, “nostalgic longings enable characters to articulate in clear and powerful terms the disappointment that the narratives containing them cannot resolve” (179) In other words, Sylvanus’s nostalgia allows him to express the pain of resettlement and therefore provides an emotional critique of the government program.

Resettlement does not just threaten Sylvanus and his family with the loss of home and the lifestyle that they have always known, it also threatens their personal and cultural identities. The importance of place to Sylvanus’s identity is best exhibited as Sylvanus surveys the house and community he seems about to lose:

Undoubtedly, as a feathered creature shapes and grows into its habitat, so was he woven into the fabric of this land. But it was when he lifted his head at the day’s end that he differed, when he saw the all of what he’d done and what he had become. For he was more than the land and the sea. He was an accumulation of all that had come before him – his father, his grandfather, his great-great-grandfathers who had coddled and had been coddled by these waters since time began. A repository, that’s what he was, a casket into which the old put themselves. No, not a casket, a sieve whereby they continued to flow through him, and those others who, god willing, would come from him. An ocean of ancients is what lay behind him, and he, little more than a drop of rain before his immersion into that great sea.

Perhaps she did see him as a mindless galoot covered in gurry. Perhaps the whole damn world saw him as that. But he knew different. And to remove himself from the very thing that sustained him would kill him as it would kill it. Yet that was the very thing being asked of him – no, not asked, told – that he go pour himself over the outgrowth of another. And for some, that ought to be the way of it, to pull their past forward and combine it with the newness of another to make a different thing.

But ought not there be some things that remained the same, as with the trees and rocks around him? Ought not some things stand still for those others caught in the cyclone of change, should they need to return? (269)

Here Sylvanus's identity, his place in a genealogy, and his home place are all inextricably connected. Home, and the way of life connected with it, are not merely idealized but rather established as the very thing that "sustains" his life. Sylvanus acknowledges that his nostalgia enables his marginalization, as a "mindless galoot covered in gurry," or fish offal. But he rejects this view of himself and reaffirms his commitment to his traditional and sustainable way of life. While Sylvanus recognizes that change is sometimes necessary, he also asserts that some things should "stand still for those others caught in the cyclone of change," as, to return to Ted Russell's term, a "holdin' ground," a home place. The push to "modernization" cannot change everything without leaving some base of place or culture for people to construct positive identities.

Morrissey raises the stakes even more as she depicts the homes of another resettled community further up the coast being burned by the government, to prevent the families from moving back. Adelaide witnesses the scene from the water, as "black smoke coiled out over the water beyond which flamed Little Trite, its houses, sheds, and wharves, all convulsing into an orange wall of fire" (315). The horrible awe that the fire inspires will become the "everlasting" sight that "would keep her awake" at night (315). Adelaide is concerned for her mother-in-law Eva, who believes that her dead husband's spirit still resides in her house, and vows that Eva's home will not be destroyed. Adelaide finally takes action. She brings home one of the dreaded gill nets for her husband. This, she knows, is the only way that they can avoid resettlement and stay in their home, the only way that Sylvanus can continue to make a living there.¹⁰ The novel that began with an idealistic picture of Sylvanus jigging for cod, ends with him casting the new

¹⁰ Once again, Morrissey is taking some license with the history. Under the Newfoundland Centralization Program, all of the households in the community would have had to move for any of them to get government assistance. This option, then would have had to be negotiated with Sylvanus's brothers and neighbours.

net into the water. Again, the idealism usually associated with nostalgia is tainted by this choice and Sylvanus's "repulsion" at having to make it. The contrast between this repulsion and the nostalgic depiction of Sylvanus's old ways becomes a poignant criticism of the position in which he is placed.

I argue that just as the industrialization of the fishery in this novel is haunted by the 1992 cod moratorium, the threat of official resettlement in the novel is haunted by the ongoing forces of urbanization and out-migration. The more recent mismanagement of the fishery and the failure of the government to provide adequate alternatives for employment are seen by many as an unacknowledged reprise of the resettlement agenda. The current economic and social pressure to leave outport communities does not just involve relocation to larger urban centres within the province, but relocation to other parts of Canada. The pain of leaving one's home, whether that be on the level of the individual community or of the larger imagined community of the island, including both rural and urban areas, is similarly devastating to both one's happiness and one's sense of personal identity.

Sylvanus and Adelaide, then, are figures of resistance to this pressure. While their future is extremely uncertain, the novel ends with what is admittedly a rather clichéd epilogue that provides a sense of hope, as Adelaide finally gives birth to a healthy daughter whom she names "Sylvia." We are reminded of Sylvanus's assertion that his genealogical line is intimately connected with place, and are reassured that with this birth this lineage will continue in Cooney Arm, a lineage represented in part by the baby's name, a feminized form of "Sylvanus." But if we resist the temptation to succumb to the clichéd image of new birth, the epilogue could also be read more ambiguously. As readers we know that the fishery will eventually collapse, and that resettlement pressures will continue, particularly as Sylvia reaches school age in a community

without a school. Sylvia's birth, then, perhaps portends not Cooney Arm's salvation, but rather its final dying breath.

At this moment, then, and throughout the novel, Sylvanus's family name "Now" is significant. It indicates that while Sylvanus may be a figure of nostalgia, nostalgia indicates a concern with the present, not the past. "Now" becomes the last word of the novel, as Adelaide tells her husband "Her name is Sylvia. Sylvia Now" (324). The repetition of the first name joined with the last emphasizes the word, and punctuates the novel. While their futures may be uncertain, the family is prepared to live in the present, in the here and now. The word shows that while nostalgia may be an important force or theme in the novel, it does not preclude a life in the present for these characters and their community. The word "now" also connects the historical moment in which the novel is set with the reader's now, the post-cod moratorium present. In that word time is collapsed, so that the present concerns of Newfoundland communities are entwined with those of their forebears. Nations and cultures, like individuals, also go through moments of transition and of trauma, and here is where cultural nostalgia is often put to work in providing a feeling of continuity. With the ruptures of Confederation, industrial development, resettlement, the fishery collapse and the cod moratorium, the nostalgia of *Sylvanus Now* connects pre-Confederation Newfoundland society with the present Newfoundland whose communities are threatened by unemployment and out-migration. The connection serves as a reminder of what Newfoundland communities have already endured, and provides a glimmer of hope that they may continue to resist the forces of assimilation and out-migration.

The Nostalgic Spectrum

On the other edge of the experiential-cultural spectrum is nostalgia for the simulacrum, delight in the longing for what we know is not quite real. Here is where nostalgia is no longer

intimately intertwined with diaspora, as the personal investments of cultural memory give way to cultural reconstruction, based on common images of popular culture. Kevin Major's fantastical novel *Gaffer* provides a disturbing prediction of where this kind of extreme cultural nostalgia may lead: to the transformation of Newfoundland into a theme park, "Newfoundisney" (174).¹¹ Here tourists are not interested in the past so much as the simulation of a past: the performance of a "Red Ochre ceremony," or the feeling of time-travel as they negotiate between restored traditional homes and the "giant squid ride." Here the delight of nostalgia comes from an indulgence in fiction. In the meantime, however, the real people of the simulated culture are rendered "uncivilized" relics of the past (Major 179), without life in the present. This is where nostalgia, then, can become particularly dangerous, as it does not restore culture but rather violently transforms it.

The placement of these different manifestations of nostalgia on a spectrum between the experiential and the cultural is thus important for delineating the highly personal and emotional experiences of loss in diaspora from national, political allegories, and from encounters with material culture that exist only in the realm of simulation and performance. This delineation is crucial for recovering nostalgic literature from easy dismissal as overly sentimental or naively fixated on an idealized past, and for enabling nostalgia to provide political critique of the present and articulate the desire for a better future.

¹¹ A current television ad for Newfoundland tourism declares that Newfoundland is "about as far from Disneyland as you can get," a claim that, in light of Major's dark forecast, becomes both ironic and ominous. In the next chapter I return to tourist discourse and the idea of "authentic culture" that it constructs.

Chapter Two: “A Papier Maché Rock”: Pratt, Johnston, and Diasporic Authenticity

Red is the sea-kelp on the beach
Red as the heart's blood,
Nor is there power in tide or sun
To bleach its stain.

-E.J. Pratt, “Newfoundland”

From a mind divesting itself of images, those of the land would be the last to go.
We are a people on whose minds these images have been imprinted.
We are a people in whose bodies old sea-seeking rivers roar with blood.

-Wayne Johnston, *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*

When E.J. Pratt left Newfoundland in 1907 at the age of twenty-five he was not unusual; Patricia Thornton estimates that in the first decade of the twentieth century net migration amounted to a loss of 16,700 people, or 8% of the population (25). But Pratt was perhaps the first significant literary figure in the Newfoundland diaspora. Of course, at this time, he was not merely leaving one province of Canada for another, but literally emigrating to another country. Much has been written on Pratt's poetry, including the detailed textual analysis of Frank Davey and Sandra Djwa, the biographical work of David Pitt and Susan Gingell, and the scholarship by Northrop Frye, John Sutherland, Desmond Pacey and others that locates Pratt's poetry within a developing Canadian national literature. Little has been written on Pratt, however, in the last twenty years. A large proportion of the scholarship, then, particularly that coming out of the thematic criticism movement of the 1970s, reflects a particular period in the development of Canadian literary criticism as a field struggling to assert the texture and the value of a national literature. Analysis originating in Newfoundland in this period, such as Patrick O'Flaherty's important 1979 literary history of Newfoundland, similarly reflects a rise in cultural nationalism in a province struggling to define itself in relationship to the rest of Canada. Much of this Pratt

scholarship, then, discusses the ways his poetry does or does not reflect his childhood in Newfoundland as a provisional Canadian space. My concern here is not so much with a reading of Pratt's poetry or with rehearsing the analyses that have proliferated over the last century, but with an examination of the ways in which he has been appropriated by and excluded from particular cultural identities as a diasporic and national figure. My reading of Pratt and his critics in terms of the idea of cultural "authenticity" reveals many of the problems associated with diasporic identity and literature, not only in Pratt's time, but through the post-Confederation period to today.

In this chapter, I show how debates over Pratt's "authenticity" as a Newfoundlander largely took place in the context of the post-Confederation nationalism of the Newfoundland Renaissance, revealing more about the tenor of the 1970s than about the time in which Pratt himself was writing. I show the problems of the notion of authenticity, as a rhetoric that demands that diasporic figures become delegates for their home culture and that values their work in terms of the accuracy of their representations. The concept of "authenticity" also traps critics like O'Flaherty into perpetuating cultural stereotypes, and fetishizing the idea of a "real" Newfoundland, which hides the process of its own construction. I show that despite these problems, the vestiges of this debate over cultural authenticity remain in some discussions of Newfoundland literature, leading to scepticism over the "authenticity" of contemporary diasporic writers like Wayne Johnston, and to a conservative, regionalist portrait of Newfoundland identity and culture. In response to these regionalist readings, Johnston constructs his Newfoundland as, in Salman Rushdie's helpful terms, an "imaginary homeland," playing with and subverting the restrictive concepts of cultural authenticity and authority.

Patrick O’Flaherty’s “Emigrant Muse”

Pratt is often considered a transitional figure in the history of Canadian literature, occupying what W.J. Keith calls a “pivotal position within the history of the country’s verse,” bridging the gap between the late-Victorian romanticism of the Confederation poets and the new Canadian modernism espoused by the Montreal poets of the 1920s and 30s (83). As W.H. New writes, Pratt’s early work, the Newfoundland-centred texts *Rachel* (1917) and *Newfoundland Verse* (1923), show “more kinship with [Charles G.D.] Roberts than with [A.J.M.] Smith, more affinity with a late Victorian progressive version of science” than with newer scientific principles (*History* 190). But as a whole his work reflects many of the contradictions and changes of his time; as Djwa explains, Pratt’s work shows the confluence in the 1920s of a developing Canadian nationalism, new cosmologies, and scientific movements (“Transitional” 55). Djwa identifies his interest in psychology, satire and irony as an “entirely modern” sensibility (63-64), and locates Pratt’s work within a shift in Canadian taste over the course of the 1920s from “a complacent acceptance of the practices of the late Victorians to a growing awareness of modern poetry, prose and criticism” (58). By the end of his career Pratt had become known for his epic long poems, whose heroic themes and “elaborately rhetorical and prosodic features” mark him, as Smaro Kamboureli argues, as “aesthetically and ideologically a solitary figure” (*Genre* 29). As a poet that “could be appreciated by a basically conventional audience” (Djwa “Transitional” 60-61), Pratt straddled a multiplicity of influences and critical categories.

This period of transition through the 1920s was also characterized by a burgeoning Canadian nationalism. Though Pratt was not born in Canada, he spent his entire literary career, and indeed most of his adult life, in Toronto, and was to both influence and be influenced by the literary communities that developed around the conservative Canadian Author’s Association

established in 1921, and the younger poets represented in the influential 1936 anthology *New Provinces*, in which he was included.¹² Pratt moved to Toronto in 1907 to pursue a career as a Methodist minister. He completed his M.A., B.D. and Ph.D. and was ordained, but instead of entering the ministry he was hired to teach in the Department of English at the University of Toronto. His first book of verse, *Rachel*, was printed privately in 1917, and throughout the next four decades he became well known as a poet with the publication of both collections of shorter poems, and long poems including *The Witches' Brew* (1925), *The Titanic* (1935), *Brébeuf and His Brethren* (1940), and *Towards the Last Spike* (1952). As Jonathan Kertzer suggests, Pratt engaged in a deliberate project of building a Canadian national literature, particularly with works like *Towards the Last Spike*: "Through a battle of muscles ideas, words, and images, Canada is moulded across the land and in the minds of citizens, who become authentic Canadians through this epic ordeal, and who find a national voice in Pratt's poetry" (12). Looking back on Pratt's career in 1968, Northrop Frye, long a champion of Pratt's work and its prominence in the Canadian literary tradition, declared that "Pratt has been, in Canada, a kind of unofficial poet laureate" (*Bush Garden* 188). But Pratt's status as the "first 'Canadian' voice in poetry" was recognized as early as the 1920s (Djwa "Introduction" xiv-xv), even before his work took on national themes like the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway. As Djwa reflects, "Pratt's vision of nature and his original poetic voice were important qualities in a decade [the 1920s] characterized by a persistent call for an authentic Canadian poetry. Despite his Newfoundland birth (the province did not join Confederation until 1949), Pratt soon became recognized as Canada's national poet" ("Introduction" xv). One of the most important voices to declare Pratt's status as a Canadian national poet was A.J.M. Smith, in his *Book of Canadian Poetry* first

¹² As F.R. Scott wrote to A.J.M. Smith in 1934, the Pratt poems chosen for *New Provinces* were "the less successful but more experimental and more contemporary work," which "belongs to our Anthology in spirit if not in skill" (Gnarowski xiv).

published in 1943, and revised in 1948 and 1957. Smith's anthology lauds Pratt for his attention to contemporary ideas and events and universal scope, but also for his patriotic themes, finding in his work a cosmopolitanism that is "rooted" in Canadian life without being restricted by a colonial mentality (36). It was not only a retrospective process of canon-making, then, that secured Pratt's position as, in John Sutherland's 1956 words, "the leading poet of Canada" (2), but rather the appreciation of his contemporaries in a time of nationalist desire for "authentic" Canadian literature.

Despite this place at the centre of Canadian nationalism, Pratt writes that his Newfoundland childhood had an important influence on his poetry, for "a man cannot get far away from his heritage" (Gingell *Life* 14). Specifically, he identifies eccentric characters of the outports (Gingell *Life* 14); the drama of storms and marine disasters and the heroism such disasters inspire; and nature (Gingell *Life* 4-5), as strong memories or influences from his early life. These local images and themes are easy to spot in his early collection *Newfoundland Verse* (1923): the "old salt" in "Overheard in a Cove"; the sealing disaster described in "The Ice-Floes"; the personification of the sea in "Sea Variations" or "The Secret of the Sea." As Susan Gingell argues, "habits of mind developed in his early years and images impressed on him at that time remained central factors in his verse-making throughout his poetic career" ("Context" 104). In *E.J. Pratt: The Evolutionary Vision* (1974), Djwa finds not only thematic connections between Pratt's poetry and his heritage, but formal ones as well. She argues that the long poem *The Witches' Brew* (1925) is influenced by traditional Newfoundland folk ballads, particularly Johnny Burke's humorous tongue-twisting song "The Kelligrew's Soiree." She convincingly concludes that

the sense of driving rhythm which informs Pratt's poetic voice in general (especially in *The Witches' Brew*, *Titans* and *The Titanic*) can be linked with the

Newfoundland oral tradition, in particular with pulpit oratory, the hymn, and the folk song. All of these expressions have in common a brisk and insistent rhythm that is largely a reflection of the patterns of Newfoundland speech – a highly accented patterning which Pratt himself retained all of his life. (49)

Djwa's reading effectively locates Pratt's work in relationship to a long vernacular narrative tradition on the island. In her introduction to *E.J. Pratt: Selected Poems* (2000), Djwa further explains that in the nineteenth-century Newfoundland in which Pratt grew up, "the poet is most often a storyteller and [...] the poem, like the folk song, has a public function in affirming community, celebrating heroes, and lamenting death" (ix). Djwa connects the public function of the Newfoundland ballad tradition to Pratt's life-long belief that "poetry should express the speech and emotions of ordinary men and women" (ix). Clearly Pratt's Newfoundland upbringing, as both a source of vivid images and as a cultural heritage, did have a lot of influence on the content and the form of his work.

In a 1968 address in St. John's, Northrop Frye identifies the Avalon peninsula, the part of Newfoundland in which St. John's is located, as Pratt's "fundamental environment" as a poet: "like all poetic environments, his was a mixture of memory and literary convention, and many of you might not recognize it as the place that you actually live in. But it would certainly never have existed without this *actual place*" (*Bush Garden* 191, my emphasis). Here, before an audience connected to Newfoundland through the immediacy of residence, Frye's words raise questions about the relationship between the intangible influences of cultural heritage and the lived experience of place. Similarly, Gingell notes that "Pratt would go for the essence of Newfoundland experience rather than for individualized experience," which leads her to conclude that Pratt is not necessarily a "regional" poet because "he does not stress the particular" ("Context" 97). But how does one define the "essence of Newfoundland experience," or even the

“actual place”? And when do the failures of memory or the embellishments of literature lead to stereotyping, exoticization, and cultural appropriation?

In his memoir of Newfoundland *The Danger Tree* (1991), David Macfarlane paints a less flattering picture of the poet, who had a loose acquaintance with Macfarlane’s family:

Once ensconced in Toronto, he rarely returned to Newfoundland. Eventually he became a professor of English, an enthusiastic golfer, and, in Canada, a famous poet. Staring from the window of his warm, comfortable house on Davenport Road in Toronto, while the wall clock ticked behind him and his wife prepared roast chicken for a Sunday gathering of his academic and literary friends, he composed verse about a wind-racked, rock-bound island he remembered, just as, while reading Masfield and Kipling and Robert Bridges, he composed elegies to the fallen dead of a war he neither fought in nor saw. (58)

Macfarlane’s disdain for Pratt is in part derived from his “old-fashioned, uninventive, and ornate” verse (59), but also from a sense of betrayal; Macfarlane recounts the story of how Pratt raised the money to leave Newfoundland by selling concoctions he called Universal Lung Healer in communities around the island (58). Pratt’s con of trusting outporters terrified of tuberculosis is sharply juxtaposed with the above image of Pratt’s eventual comfort in Toronto. While Macfarlane is critiquing Pratt’s behaviour here as much as his poetic skill, Macfarlane continues to emphasize the distance that seems to betray Pratt’s disingenuous connection to his countrymen. In *Acta Victoriana* Pratt published and introduced the last letter sent home by Hedley Goodyear, Macfarlane’s great uncle, before Hedley was killed in WWI. Macfarlane describes the exaggerations, mistruths and overly sentimental phrases in Pratt’s introduction: “Pratt, writing from the distance of his Toronto study, seemed to be idealizing the Goodyears, if not inventing them” (278). As I will discuss in Chapter Four, Macfarlane in his own work is not averse to fictionalizing events in his family’s past, including a war he never saw. But while Macfarlane himself writes about Newfoundland from the distance of Toronto, he cannot bring

himself to excuse Pratt for claiming phoney intimacies and making a personal family tragedy “windy and meaningless” (277).

In contrast to Gingell, Djwa and Frye, at least two Newfoundland critics reject Pratt as a “Newfoundland poet.” In his foreword to the anthology of Newfoundland literature *Baffles of Wind and Tide* (1974), Clyde Rose writes that “presumably by choice, [Pratt] moved to Toronto and seldom returned to Newfoundland. His scholarly works [on Newfoundland] though accurate in detail lack the authentic sounds” (xii). For Rose, a feeling of “remoteness” and a resulting lack of authenticity make Pratt not a Newfoundland poet, but “a Toronto poet who uses Newfoundland and its people as a canvas for his work” (xii). This assessment, which emphasizes Pratt’s location in Toronto, leads me to ask to what extent his exclusion from Rose’s collection of Newfoundland writers is a result of his dislocation, rather than the qualities of his work. In other words, can a Newfoundland writer in diaspora *ever* be an “authentic” Newfoundlander?¹³ This question gestures toward the general question that diaspora theorist R. Radhakrishnan asks: “Is the Ethnic ‘Authentic’ in the Diaspora?,” and is the central concern of this chapter.¹⁴

O’Flaherty, in his literary history *The Rock Observed* (1979), also takes serious issue with Pratt’s treatment of Newfoundland, arguing that “Pratt succeeded in discarding, to the extent that it could be discarded, his ancestral claim on the Newfoundland experience” (126). He directly rejects Djwa’s claim that Pratt’s formal innovations can be connected to the

¹³ Interestingly, Rose credits Farley Mowat, who is not from Newfoundland but lived there for several years, with beginning the “Newfoundland Renaissance” in the 1960s, and teaching Newfoundlanders that “we were worth writing about” (xi). Michael Cook, an Irishman, is also celebrated in Rose’s “Foreword” for the fact that he has “not adopted the ex-patriot Irishman’s stance but has become imbedded in *this* land and its people” (xii, emphasis original). Rose’s critique, then, is not so conservative as to exclude those who, in Newfoundland parlance, are from “upalong”; rather Rose finds in Pratt’s work a “remoteness” that Mowat and Cook have overcome. While Mowat and Cook chose to live in Newfoundland, Pratt chose to leave it. In contrast, Patrick O’Flaherty scathingly considers Mowat an “intruder” whose representations of Newfoundland were characterized by “sentimental excess” (180).

¹⁴ In Chapter Four I discuss whether or not Newfoundlanders can be considered in “ethnic” terms; for now, I apply Radhakrishnan’s use of the term “ethnic” to a Newfoundland context as a signifier of the cultural difference felt by both diasporic Newfoundlanders and other Canadians.

Newfoundland folk ballad, stating that her “arguments are unconvincing” (125) without explaining why – an unfair dismissal of what I take to be an astute reading of *The Witches’ Brew*. O’Flaherty’s book remains the only literary history of Newfoundland, and has been profoundly influential in the field of Newfoundland literary criticism. His arguments are very much derived from the political and cultural context of the 1970s, problematically fetishizing the image of what he calls the “real” Newfoundland. While this datedness may make him seem too easy a target for critique, his work remains significant and widely read, framing, for example, Lawrence Mathews’ recent introduction to *Essays on Canadian Writing’s* special issue on Newfoundland literature (2004). I therefore examine O’Flaherty’s analysis of Pratt’s work at some length, exposing the ways in which his privileging of cultural authenticity continues to reverberate through Newfoundland literature and its criticism. O’Flaherty titles his Pratt chapter “Emigrant Muse,” and while he does not unpack this phrase it immediately establishes two main aspects of his assessment of Pratt’s work, the romantic quality of the poetry, and Pratt’s physical and emotional distance from his subject as someone who left his home.

One aspect of O’Flaherty’s uneasiness with Pratt’s Newfoundland work is inaccuracy of detail. Citing examples in Pratt’s first published poem on Newfoundland, *Rachel* (1917), and his collection *Newfoundland Verse* (1923), O’Flaherty notes that Pratt is occasionally “careless” with facts. He mentions the non-existent “Gulf of Labrador,” for example, and has a character describe the habits of a skunk, despite the fact that there are no skunks in Newfoundland (O’Flaherty 120). While these details are not ultimately important in their respective contexts, they do, for those familiar with Newfoundland, jar. They eliminate any sense of intimacy with the setting. Nor do these mistakes seem to serve any significant purpose. These minor inaccuracies merely add to what O’Flaherty sees as the overall inaccuracy of the representation

of Newfoundland and Newfoundlanders. In *Rachel*, for example, Pratt constructs “a Newfoundland glamorized, a fictitious ‘Elizabethan’ Newfoundland, lumbered with the stock imagery and themes of Victorian sea romances, and honoured, more in flattery than in truth, with a large share in the traditions of the English sea dogs” (121). O’Flaherty’s criticisms of Pratt here are just – not because they reveal an inauthentic identity, but because they show evidence of sentimental images and flat, unoriginal characters. What O’Flaherty fails to consider in his critique, however, is the literary context within which Pratt was writing. As Djwa explains, romantic poetry survived longer in Canada because of a unique reaction to the Great War, reflecting a sense that the nation was “coming of age” and that the land itself provided a source of optimism and hope in contrast to the battlefields of Europe (“Transitional” 56-57). While Pratt’s work has often been noted for its representation of the harshness of the Newfoundland environment, this harshness is also often the site of the heroic. The romantic, Victorian quality to which O’Flaherty objects in Pratt’s early work is more an indication of Pratt’s literary and social influences than of an intentional misrepresentation of his homeland. But as O’Flaherty adds that “[i]n fact, there is hardly any observation even of the land and sea that summons up the *real* Newfoundland” (121, my emphasis) we must ask what, exactly, *is* the “real” Newfoundland that O’Flaherty imagines?

O’Flaherty argues that “the essential vision of Newfoundland life contained in [Pratt’s poems] is spare and bleak. [...] Pratt’s Newfoundland poems form a sombre chronicle of human defeat, displaying a gloomy but intense interest in the impassive forces of nature which unite to dwarf and destroy men” (123). This observation is easily supported; Pratt’s often-quoted poem “Newfoundland” is written in broad, sweeping language that seems to encompass the island:

Here the tides flow,
And here they ebb;

Not with that dull, unsinewed tread of waters
Held under bonds to move
Around unpeopled shores –
Moon-driven through a timeless circuit
Of invasion and retreat;
But with a lusty stroke of life
Pounding at stubborn gates,
That they might run
Within the sluices of men's hearts,
Leap under throb of pulse and nerve,
And teach the sea's strong voice
To learn the harmonies of new floods (1-14).

The title “Newfoundland” is juxtaposed with the “here” of the first line, implying that this “here” is not a particular outport or beach, but the entire island. The images do not name specific locations or describe the details of a particular moment in time, rather they are generalized, reflecting the “timeless circuit” of the sea. For O’Flaherty, this scope makes the content of the representation troubling. The romantic conflation of people with the environment, evident in images like the tides that run “within the sluices of men’s hearts” (11), is celebratory, but it is also, as O’Flaherty contends, tragic: the winds “breathe with the lungs of men” (42), but “Their hands are full to the overflow, / In their right is the bread of life, / In their left are the waters of death” (47-50). The melodrama of these lines, emphasized by their placement at the end of the stanza, constructs a Newfoundland defined by hardship, and a population that is present only in the “breath” of the winds. Indeed the “tide and wind and crag” (75) are active, personified, while humans are a ghostly presence represented by a “broken rudder” (30) and kelp “red as the heart’s blood” (31). Yet O’Flaherty does not read the Newfoundland poems in the context of his larger body of work; the observation that his poems chronicle human defeat and the destructive forces of nature could be applied to much of his poetry, including those poems concerned with other Canadian locales. Yet O’Flaherty concludes that “when one considers the entire body of Pratt’s Newfoundland poems – not a large portion of his *oeuvre* – what stands out are these images of

horror and grief and the persistent theme of tragedy. The overwhelming impression given is that Newfoundland was a good place to escape from” (123). O’Flaherty thus directly connects Pratt’s “bleak” representation of Newfoundland to his emigration from it: “Pratt’s Newfoundland is seen in retrospect, simplified into images of cruelty and fear, reduced to the hard and fixed outlines to which memory often reduces the distant past. It is a Newfoundland jettisoned, and half remembered” (125). O’Flaherty thereby rejects Pratt’s representation of Newfoundland as false and ethically suspect due to his willing emigration.

“The Heart of the Country”

O’Flaherty is not only concerned with what Pratt says, but also with what he leaves out. O’Flaherty adds that “Pratt did not attempt, much less achieve, a comprehensive statement about his homeland” (124). This statement begs the question, is “a comprehensive statement about one’s homeland” necessary to be a Newfoundland poet? While O’Flaherty qualifies (in what seems like a moment of self-contradiction) that “this is not to belittle what he did write,” and that Pratt was nevertheless “Newfoundland’s finest poet,” he goes on to tell us that “it is still surprising to see what is left out of his poems on Newfoundland”:

really his poetry showed no interest in Newfoundland history. He evidently had no interest in exploring the distinctive traditions and habits of speech of his people. There was nothing in his poems that showed a genuine curiosity about the outport way of life, no fingering of outharbour contrivances, no examination of the mechanics of fishing and sealing, no investigation of how the people adjusted to the demands of their harsh environment, no detailed studies of individual fishermen. The ‘drama of the sled and dory’ is alluded to but not examined. (124)

By registering his “surprise,” O’Flaherty is revealing his own prescription for what constitutes Newfoundland literature. Because Pratt maintained a Newfoundland “dialect” in speech, but wrote in educated English, O’Flaherty contends that Pratt’s “literary language represents his almost complete dissociation from the culture into which he was born” (126). It seems that for

O’Flaherty embracing the culture of one’s birth involves an essentialization of that culture, its reduction to a few particular traits binding the group together: in this case the use of vernacular language, and a concentration on everyday working-class life in the outports. Again, O’Flaherty fails to consider the fact that the Canadian poetry of the 1920s rarely employed vernacular language or dealt with specific moments of everyday life. While O’Flaherty’s objection may be due to the contrast between Pratt’s romantic Newfoundland lyrics and his later work, through which he became known for meticulously researching and cataloguing the technical details of ship parts, naval lingo, or the duties of workmen building the railway, I see this contrast as the result of his development as a poet over several decades, rather than a deliberate “dissociation” from his culture.

But O’Flaherty’s comments here are representative of a prevailing attitude in post-Confederation Newfoundland literature and literary criticism, that the outport constitutes the “essence” of Newfoundland culture, or in Adrian Fowler’s words, “the prime source of Newfoundland’s cultural identity” (“Myth” 71).¹⁵ The outport came to be privileged, by tourist and anthropological discourse, as the centre of Newfoundland identity, as, in O’Flaherty’s words, “the real Newfoundland” (121). As Overton details, “The ‘Real’ Newfoundland” actually became a campaign for Newfoundland Tourism in the 1980s to capitalize on this desire for exotic authenticity: “ ‘The “Real” Newfoundland’ is the outports and ‘the people,’ ‘the fishermen knitting their nets, caulking their boats, or building a wiggly garden rod fence’ ” (106). Arguing that this idea of a distinct Newfoundland culture rooted in rural life was largely generated from

¹⁵ As Sherrill Grace argues in *Canada and the Idea of North* (2001), Canada as a whole is often similarly identified with a non-urban marginal space, the construct of “the North.” As Grace writes, the North “is, above all, Other, and as such emphatically invoked to distinguish *us* from those who are more southern. The *we*, *my*, *us*, or *our* that is tacitly assumed as authoritative speaker or attentive listener *rarely* lives north of sixty and cannot possibly inhabit North” (16, emphasis original). Newfoundland and Labrador as a province certainly participates in this naturalization of the North “as essential to Canada” (15). But the idea that the outport is essential to Newfoundland operates similarly; in an increasingly urban Newfoundland the authority of the outport Other is paradoxically maintained to distinguish Newfoundland from other North American regions.

outside, Paul Chafe recounts how “Newfoundland satirist Ray Guy coined the phrase “Newfcult” to describe this phenomenon in which Newfoundland became regarded as unique and unspoiled – a bastion of folksy humanity on the edge of the technocratic, metropolitan world” (“Buddy” 72). “Newfcult” was internalized by Newfoundland’s cultural producers; in his contribution to *Essays on Canadian Writing’s* special issue on the Literature of Newfoundland, Fowler outlines the development of the outport as a “major theme” in the literature, arguing that by the 1970s “the outport community was acknowledged to be the heart and soul of Newfoundland” (“Myth” 71). The pervasiveness of the outport as theme or setting was not limited to those writers who grew up there. In an earlier essay, published in 1985, Fowler wrote that even “the townie writer” (meaning those from St. John’s) has “felt the need to come to terms with outport life” (“Roundabout” 128). The appropriation of the outport by the “townie” writer has been perceived as a way of tapping into the core of Newfoundland.

The idea that the outport contained the essence of Newfoundland culture was spawned in part by the threats to outport life. Confederation and the following twenty-three-year reign of Joey Smallwood brought many more changes, perhaps the most significant of which was the Newfoundland Settlement Program and its precursor, the Newfoundland Centralization program. Between 1935 and 1975, hundreds of families in small outports were moved to larger “growth centres,” where they would supposedly have better access to services. A quarter of Newfoundland’s communities were abandoned. According to Shane O’Dea, the “rediscovery” of the outport in post-Confederation literature was part of an important movement of resistance to these very real threats against it. The 1970s brought more changes, including the discovery of off-shore oil and the beginning of a battle with the federal government over ownership of the resource, and the province’s attempt to renegotiate the terms of the 1969 sale of power from

Churchill Falls to Hydro-Quebec, all of which caused Newfoundlanders to question their province's place within Confederation. In this moment of political dissatisfaction, provincial arts policy under Premier Frank Moores began to promote Newfoundlanders' identity as "a people with a unique way of life" (Rompkey "Idea" 272). In a 1976 article in *Saturday Night*, Newfoundland-born journalist Sandra Gwyn famously hailed the Newfoundland Renaissance. The subtitle of her article read "[d]estruction of the outports has unexpectedly spawned Newfcult, the miraculous and exciting revival of art and theatre on Canada's poor, bald rock" (38).¹⁶ The comment is perhaps a little melodramatic, but it reveals the direct link that was made between the threat to the outport and creative – including literary – production. Gwyn writes,

what the planners overlooked was that these settlements – clusters of flat-roofed, white clapboard houses and churches on the brink of the Atlantic [...] and the people who left them for mobile homes and prefab bungalows, contained the essence of the Newfoundland mystique. [...] A way of life, *the* Newfoundland way of life, had been foreclosed. [...] This overpowering sense of loss and betrayal has permeated the consciousness of every artist working there, and suffuses every art form. (40, emphasis original)

Paradoxically, as she argues that "the old order that produced all of us is being smashed, homogenized, and trivialized out of existence," she is also arguing that this destruction is the very "source of inspiration" for cultural production (40). The destruction of culture perpetuates the production of culture.¹⁷

In 1979, then, O'Flaherty was reading Pratt at a time of both a growing Newfoundland cultural nationalism and profound social change, when the outport was regarded as the threatened "essence" of Newfoundland culture. His reading of Pratt's work, though the poems

¹⁶ The phrase "poor bald rock" was originally Joey Smallwood's.

¹⁷ Today, according to Fowler, the myth of the old outport persists as a "powerful inspiration" (71) for writers, and stands as a symbol of Newfoundland community. To prove his point, he points to recent works like Patrick Kavanagh's *Gaff Topsails* (1996), and Bernice Morgan's *Random Passage* (1992), which look to the outport of the past as a defining emblem of Newfoundland culture.

were written several decades earlier, was influenced by this cultural climate. By ignoring the common details of outport life, O’Flaherty argues, Pratt failed to imbue his writing with this authentic “essence.” Ironically, then, while O’Flaherty criticizes Pratt for his use of romantic, “inauthentic” stock images, he simultaneously seeks other stock images of the “outport way of life” (124). This privileging of the threatened outport as the heart of Newfoundland culture could be regarded as a form of strategic essentialism, as an overemphasis of the cultural value of the outport in order to resist its dissolution and to unite Newfoundlanders as a distinct group. But strategic essentialism requires an acknowledgment of the constructedness of “essential” attributes, a self-reflexivity that is missing from O’Flaherty’s critique. This idea, then, that there is an authentic “essence” of Newfoundland is highly problematic. It homogenizes Newfoundland culture, excluding experiences of life in the city in the process. If the outport as motif represents a “dying culture” and the loss of the old ways, then a Newfoundland identity defined by outport culture is deeply troubling, for this identity is seen as being under imminent threat, or even already dead. This idea also traps the island in a sentimental ideal, where technological or economic progress or change is seen not as supplemental to culture, but counter to it. In other words there is no happy medium between economic viability and cultural viability, and no space for exploring the concerns of contemporary rural communities.

While the idea that the outport represents the “real” Newfoundland has placed demands on writers within the province, O’Flaherty’s critique suggests that diasporic writers in particular need to assert their identity by adhering to certain literary conventions or expectations. As a transplanted Newfoundlander who became well known as a poet in Canada, Pratt is a target of what Sneja Gunew identifies as the perception that the minority or diasporic writer’s “function [is] a representative one (in the sense of delegation or speaking for)”; Pratt is therefore charged

with the responsibility of “correctly” representing his culture (*Haunted* 76). At times, Pratt embraced this role. He writes that as the son of an itinerant clergyman, “I had a good opportunity of getting acquainted with the heart of the country, which is essentially the outport life” (5). But according to O’Flaherty, the fact that Pratt’s family moved every few years meant that he did not form strong attachments to the communities he lived in (117); he was always an outsider to the community, and his reflections on this “heart” of the country are therefore generalized and romanticized. Pratt’s biographer, David G. Pitt, writes that he sometimes “conjured up a picture of himself when a boy as a ‘typical’ outport youth, a character whom he clearly admired: rough, tough, full of oaths and colourful braggadocio, ‘heroic,’ mischievous, a truant in more ways than one” (*Truant* 19). But even Pitt writes that

it must be said straightaway that the self-portrait is largely if not wholly a fictive one. The circumstances of E.J. Pratt’s early life made it impossible for him ever really to have lived the life of an *authentic* outport Newfoundlander, or to have known such a life as an actual participant rather than mainly as an observer, albeit a very percipient and sensitive one. The fact is, I think, of considerable importance in understanding and appreciating Pratt’s perspective and perception of the outport world. It is a fact that largely accounts for the absence from his Newfoundland poems of any *real* identification with either the place or the people. (*Truant* 19-20, my emphases)

Pratt’s family not only had to move frequently but also held a distinct and somewhat distant place in the communities in which they lived. As Pitt writes, “the very fact of his birth into a Methodist minister’s family meant that E.J. Pratt could never have been a full-blooded member of the local tribe. Only had he been born of the native stock, raised in one small village, and sent to sea, semi-literate at best, at the age of fifteen or earlier, could he have qualified for such membership” (*Truant* 20). Pitt’s analysis reinforces the idea that Newfoundland “authenticity” requires an intimate connection with the outport. But Pratt’s departure at the age of twenty-five cemented his position as a cultural outsider. For O’Flaherty, by failing to pay appropriate

attention to everyday outport life in his poetry, not only did Pratt misrepresent his homeland, he misrepresented it *to* a foreign audience. This point raises a crucial question: if Pratt had written the same works, in the same way, but stayed in Newfoundland, would he be more of a legitimate Newfoundland poet in O’Flaherty’s eyes, a poet capable of writing observations “of the land and sea that [summon] up the real Newfoundland” (O’Flaherty 121)? Would his authority to speak as a Newfoundlander have been questioned if he had written these works at home?

Sea to Sea

For O’Flaherty, it is troubling that “when Pratt became famous he grew fond of parading his Newfoundland background before the many audiences he addressed. It somehow became an ornament to be displayed rather than a limitation to be overcome” (126). Pratt’s “boasting about Newfoundland” seems both exploitative and “patently contrived when one realizes how easily he broke his ties with the colony once he got the chance to leave for Ontario” (122). O’Flaherty thus claims that from 1907 until Pratt’s death in 1964 “Toronto would remain his actual and intellectual home” (120). It seems then that for O’Flaherty, the problem with Pratt’s depictions of Newfoundland is not only that they were contrived, simplistic representations of the place, but that they were representations born outside of Newfoundland, in what O’Flaherty perceives to be a disingenuous connection to the island. It is his “emigrant” status, then, that makes his depictions of Newfoundland suspect, relegating them to the category of appropriation.

O’Flaherty suggests that the problem with Pratt is that he substituted a new Canadian identity for his Newfoundland identity, at a time before Confederation associated the two:

Pratt in his maturity was obviously making an attempt to move beyond what two Canadian critics have called ‘the lesser inspirations of Newfoundland’ in order to become, ‘apparently quite deliberately,’ Canada’s national poet.¹⁸ This meant throwing off parochial concerns to take on bigger themes: the Canadian Pacific

¹⁸ The quotation is from Tom Marshall, ‘E.J. Pratt,’ *Canadian Forum* 57 (1977).

Railway rather than Newfoundland's narrow gauge line, Brébeuf rather than Coughlan or Jens Haven, the Iroquois rather than the Beothucks. (125)

O'Flaherty interprets Pratt's adoption of Canadian themes in his work as a rebuff against Newfoundland. He argues that "Pratt succeeded in discarding, to the extent that it could be discarded, his ancestral claim on the Newfoundland experience" (126). The fact that he is "Canada's national poet," for O'Flaherty, precludes a Newfoundland identity. Before Confederation, Canadian and Newfoundland identities, it seems, are mutually exclusive.

O'Flaherty's reaction may be due to the way in which Pratt's Newfoundland heritage has been appropriated by critics into a Canadian national narrative. In his introduction to the 1958 *Collected Poems of E.J. Pratt*, Frye writes:

His work now, of course, has a stature and an authority that reaches beyond Canada. But he will always have a special place in the affections of Canadian readers (I am speaking by synecdoche of English Canada). His work began with Newfoundland, and his latest major narrative ends in British Columbia. On his seventy-fifth birthday the CBC recorded tributes to him from all over Canada, some of the most eloquent being from the province of the ice-floes and from the province of the last spike. It was a sign that the work he had helped to do had been, not of course done, but well begun. In defiance of every geographical and economic law, Canada has made itself not simply a nation but an environment. It is only now emerging from its beginning as a shambling, awkward, absurd country, groping and thrusting its way through incredible distances into the west and north, plundered by profiteers, interrupted by European wars, divided by language, and bedevilled by climate, yet slowly and inexorably bringing a culture to life. And as long as that culture can remember its origin, there will be a central place in its memory for the poet in whom it found its tongue. (xxvii-xxviii)

This nation "groping and thrusting" its way into existence begins with Newfoundland on the east coast and ends with British Columbia on the west, with no mention of the fact that Pratt's Newfoundland, exemplified in 1923's *Newfoundland Verse*, long preceded Confederation in 1949. Pratt's Newfoundland, then, is anachronistically reinscribed into the national story. Similarly, the thematic criticism of the 1960s and 1970s easily found in Pratt's Newfoundland poems Frye's "garrison mentality" ("The societies in Pratt's poems are always tense and tight

groups engaged in war, rescue, martyrdom, or crisis”) (*Bush Garden* 226), and the “survival” instinct that Margaret Atwood so famously identified as the heart of the Canadian literary impulse (33). “Seldom has a man been more faithful to his heritage,” Peter Buitenhuis writes (48), citing the recurring theme of the sea in Pratt’s poetry as his main evidence. He adds that “[i]n the still-primitive conditions of the Canadian Far West and the Eastern seaboard, where Pratt grew up, the wilderness of plain, sea, and rock gave a meaningful setting to the clash of forces taking place within society. Pratt’s work is filled with images of primitive nature and evolutionary history” (50). The significant body of criticism that emerged in this era worked to simultaneously identify Pratt as quintessentially ‘of’ Newfoundland, and to thereby rewrite Newfoundland into a pre-Confederation Canadian literary tradition. Robert Collins, in his 1988 *E.J. Pratt*, writes that Pratt was a “Canadian poet – not in the limiting but in the truest sense: that is, he both spoke for the society and, in doing so, created a national tradition that helped define the country to itself in ways that accorded remarkably with the need of the Canadian people in the first half of the twentieth century” (vii). While this may well be true when one considers the full body of Pratt’s work, Collins clarifies that

paradoxically, the regional intensity that marked his youth contributed, as much as anything else, to make E.J. Pratt a national poet. [...] Rogue child though it was, Newfoundland is an indispensable part of what became a nation. The beginnings of Canada come out of that eastern sea, the Atlantic. [...] The sea-girt outpost of Canada, Newfoundland was truly the gateway through which Europe passed to become Canada, so long an outpost in the Atlantic that only in the mid-twentieth century did it become part of the confederation through which a political identity was given it. [...] It seems almost destiny, then, that the nearest thing that Canada has brought forth as an epic poet is a man whose childhood and youth were shaped by the fundamental thoughts and rich imaginative rhetoric of the outports of Newfoundland. (2)

For Frye, Buitenhuis, Collins and others, the Newfoundland and Canadian identities, even before Confederation, are not contradictory or mutually exclusive, but rather fit together teleologically,

in a sea-to-sea vision of Canadian unity. Thus Newfoundland is retroactively appropriated into the Canadian imagination, and Pratt's "Newfoundlandness" is defined in relationship to his "Canadianness."

In some contexts Pratt himself perpetuated this teleological vision of Canadian Confederation, particularly later in his career when the colony was embroiled in a passionate debate over the issue. In a letter to Joey Smallwood just prior to the referendum, Pratt wrote of his "personal wish that Newfoundland should 'come in.' [...] I find that such a wish is shared by the great majority of Newfoundlanders living in Canada" (Pitt *Master* 392). This enthusiasm is also expressed in "Newfoundland Calling," written in anticipation of the union. In this poem Pratt links the place names of Newfoundland with that of Canada, declaring "The names will know their cousins when they see / Them, greet them with the same sonorous hail" (31-32). There are no people here, nor even places; rather the names themselves are personified and stand in for Newfoundlanders and Canadians, as well as their histories and cultures. He conflates the Newfoundland hardship that he so often lauds with that of other Canadian regions, so that together they form one history:

They have survived through strains of genes and blood
Storms, fishing admirals and dust-bowls; rolled
On decks and log-jams; watched pitheads; withstood
The prairies' drought, blizzard and rust, and told
The explorers' yarns through a long Arctic night
Till dawn broke with a soft Pacific light (49-54).

Pratt thus performs the melding of Newfoundland and Canadian histories and identities, appropriately fixing his early work within a unified corpus as Canada's "national poet" (Collins 2; O'Flaherty 129).

But Newfoundland and Canada were (and in many ways still are) culturally and politically distinct, and in other contexts Pratt himself was quick to point out the differences. In

his essay “Memories of Newfoundland” (1937), Pratt wrote that “so distinctive is the Newfoundland type that it is only with the greatest difficulty that one may translate it in foreign terms or communicate it even to Canadians” (*Gingell Life* 6). Despite the gesture of “*even to Canadians*,” Pratt goes on to assert the profound cultural differences between his birthplace and his adopted country in terms of cultural authenticity. The passage merits quoting at length:

When a half-dozen of us Newfoundlanders gather together in Toronto to smoke and yarn, the foreign born, if he happen to be invited to the company, finds himself only on the fringe of the charmed circle.

The conversation, once it has lapsed into dialect, is a closed book to him. He may know that haggis is a Scotch dish, or a particular hybrid of stew is Irish, but has he ever eaten brewis? No. His palate for dried cod is limited to a few tasteless fillets which the proprietor of a meat-and-fish store in the city claimed to have been cut from genuine cod. Has he ever eaten whorts? No, only blueberries – a fundamental error. Or bake-apples, or capillaire, or partridge berries? Never heard of them. Had he ever been stimulated by the smell of kelp after a northeaster had lashed the shores – a tonic like strychnine to the blood? Or by the smell of caplin three days after the tonnage had been deposited on the cabbage beds? No. Then he was forever excommunicate, a stranger to the true faith. How did he pronounce the name of the country? With the accent on the second syllable. That was enough – the final heresy. (6-7)

Here Pratt establishes his cultural identity, largely through the experience of particular tastes and smells. These experiences constitute an insider knowledge that amounts to something of a secret code determining ‘authenticity.’ The religious rhetoric of “excommunicate,” “true faith” and “heresy” emphasize the sacredness of this authenticity, as well as its mysterious exclusivity. His Newfoundland identity becomes akin to his religion or ethnicity. But the hyperbole of the religious metaphor also gives the entire passage a somewhat playful tone; the fact that Pratt was an ordained Methodist minister makes the passage seem almost tongue-in-cheek. In the end it is difficult to determine how serious this assertion of Newfoundland difference is meant to be.

Pratt does not declare his identity by directly recounting his memories, but by framing the recollections within an imagined encounter between insiders and outsiders. This rhetorical

strategy reveals the relationship between Pratt's cultural identity and his diasporic location; his identity is defined in contrast to that of his new neighbours. The essay was written for Joey Smallwood's mammoth compilation *The Book of Newfoundland*, and a primarily Newfoundland audience. The references to insider terminology and experiences thus serve to create a camaraderie between the diasporic subjects in the piece and their compatriots back home. The suggestion is that even as he is hailed as a great Canadian poet, he resists total appropriation into Canadian culture. Pratt's self-positioning is thus shifting and strategic, and largely dependent upon his particular audience.

Pratt's claims to Newfoundland identity are thus inseparable from his position as a diasporic figure; he needs to assert his cultural authenticity only because of his location in Toronto. In their introduction to *Theorizing Diaspora*, Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur note that diasporic persons are often considered inauthentic "imitations of the real citizens in the home state" (8). Based on O'Flaherty and Rose's criticisms, Pratt fits into this category. Yet Braziel and Mannur add that recent theorizations of diaspora have "offered ways out of the trappings of this hierarchical construct of nation and diaspora," by considering diaspora as "an alternative paradigm for national (or multinational, transnational, and even postnational) identification" (8). This new paradigm subverts what Gayatri Gopinath identifies as the old hierarchical construct of diaspora as the inauthentic "bastard child of the nation – disavowed, inauthentic, illegitimate, and impoverished imitation of the originary culture" (qtd in Braziel and Mannur 8). In this newer model, the diaspora is not an inauthentic imitation of the nation, but rather a means of subverting the importance placed on nationhood in the construction of identity. For Pratt, there is no contradiction between supporting Confederation and the dissolution of the Newfoundland nation, and asserting his Newfoundland cultural identity in opposition to the

dominant Canadian culture. His diasporic identity affirms that Newfoundland identity exists outside of political boundaries.

As Radhakrishnan points out, “ethnicity is often forced to take on the discourse of authenticity just to protect and maintain its space and history [...] It becomes difficult to determine if the drive toward authenticity comes from within the group as a spontaneous self-affirming act, or if authenticity is nothing but a paranoid reaction to the ‘naturalness’ of dominant groups” (210-211). Of course we can never know Pratt’s intentions behind this narrative, if this was a “self-affirming act,” or if he felt threatened by assimilation into the dominant Canadian culture, or if he was merely exoticizing or even making fun of his own identity as a celebrity poet. I am inclined to assume the latter, given the ease with which he produced stereotypical images of his countrymen. As a well-known poet and a Newfoundland expatriate, around the time of Confederation Pratt was asked repeatedly by Canadian magazines, newspapers, clubs and societies for poems or addresses about the new province. His essay “Newfoundland Types,” was written for this occasion, in which he outlines the “Newfoundland types” that he says “make up the bulk of the population on the fishing coasts” (Gingell *Life* 9). With this phrasing he suggests that Newfoundlanders can be classified into stereotypical stock figures: the sailor with centuries-old “Devon blood,” the preacher with a rough “native eloquence,” the saucy, quick-witted child, or the community healer always fetched in a crisis (Gingell *Life* 12-17). Interest in regional identities was commonplace at this time; as Lisa Chalykoff notes, critics such as Edward McCourt contributed to the view that regions are “imbued with a distinct native ‘spirit’ that exerts itself uniformly upon all subjects who exist within its borders” (164). Yet interest in the “Newfoundland type” specifically betrays a desire for the backward and the exotic. As Pratt wrote,

The appeal of this subject never seems to wear out. I have been asked to prepare next winter some broadcasts over the CBC for Ontario high schools and the director suggested that as far as possible I introduce a number of poems dealing with eccentric persons slightly off balance, not in their minds exactly, but in their tastes, hobbies, and preoccupations. Part of a writer's job is to collect and describe such characters. (Gingell *Life* 15)

While Pratt does not say so explicitly, the context of his comments suggests that the “eccentric persons” the director was asking for are the quaint and interesting “types” found in Pratt's Newfoundland work. Part of his appeal as a writer, it seems, is for this exotic or amusing representation of Newfoundland stereotypes. His poem “Newfoundland Seamen,” published in several national newspapers on the day Newfoundland joined Confederation, and read by Prime Minister St Laurent in his “welcoming broadcast” on “Confederation Day,” is exemplary:

This is their culture, this – their master passion
Of giving shelter and of sharing bread,
Of answering rocket signals in the fashion
Of losing life to save it (1-4).

While the poem is idealistic and reverent toward “Newfoundland seamen,” its role as an introduction to Canadians of their new countrymen serves to essentialize the culture and people into an image of primitive struggle, hardly changed from when, “[c]enturies before Argentinia's smoking funnels, / That small ancestral band of Devon men / Red-boned their knuckles on the *Squirrel* gunwales” (14-16). It is thus crucial to note that his assertions of a sort of Newfoundland ‘ethnicity’ were often a response to Canadian requests for it. One might conclude that he recognized its marketability at this time. Does this make these assertions disingenuous, his identity ‘inauthentic?’

Whether or not Pratt is an ‘authentic’ Newfoundlander is ultimately an impossible and fruitless question, since ‘authenticity’ is itself a shifting, contested and constructed concept. What is important here are the reasons why the question is asked, and what it tells us about

Newfoundland identity. The question reveals the effect of diasporic location on cultural identity, and the stakes for Newfoundland writers who leave the island. Cast as delegates for their homeland from both inside and out, they are charged with the impossible and restrictive task of accurately representing their culture to a foreign audience. The question reveals the anxieties that grew in the post-Confederation decades and the nationalistic 1970s about Newfoundland's place in Canada, as both the brunt of stereotypes and a culture under threat of assimilation.

The idea of diasporic authenticity is always understood in relationship to external cultures, in this case, those of mainland Canada. O'Flaherty is by no means an anti-confederate; he believes that "opting as they did, in 1948, for a chance at a decent and secure mode of life, the people may have chosen, not assimilation, but a kind of freedom" (187). But while he believes that the Canadian nation can accommodate Newfoundland culture, he is wary of what he sees as a deliberate rejection of that culture in favour of membership in the dominant majority of central Canada. Insofar as Pratt perpetuates reductive stereotypes of Newfoundland, perhaps these are legitimate concerns. But ultimately, authenticity is a limiting concept because it oversimplifies the formation of identity. It asks diasporic subjects to choose either assimilation, or the limitations of realism and cultural expectation. And it cannot easily accommodate the post-Confederation Newfoundland that Pratt dreamed of and saw come to fruition in 1949, a place in which one can, ostensibly, be both "authentically" a Newfoundlander *and* a Canadian.

A "Pastework Substitute": Wayne Johnston's *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*

While I have argued that this debate over Pratt's authenticity can be attributed to the cultural climate of the 1970s both in Newfoundland and the rest of Canada, similar concerns have been raised much more recently around the work of Wayne Johnston. Johnston was born and raised in the small community of Goulds, just outside St. John's. He moved to Toronto in his

early thirties. Though he has lived in Toronto since 1989, he continues to write primarily Newfoundland-centred books. He has become one of Newfoundland's best-known writers, with novels such as *The Story of Bobby O'Malley* (1985), *The Divine Ryans* (1990), and *The Navigator of New York* (2002). Johnston's 1998 novel *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* is his most popular work, and was shortlisted for the Giller Prize and a runner-up on CBC's *Canada Reads*. The novel has been strongly criticized, however, for its fictionalization of Joey Smallwood, the province's first premier and the man who brought Newfoundland into Confederation. For those who remember Smallwood the man, Rex Murphy writes, Johnston's rendering amounts to a "pastework substitute" (49). In his review article in *Newfoundland Studies*, historian Stuart Pierson concurs, but extends his criticisms to Johnston's depiction of the island itself, which he lambastes for being full of factual inaccuracies.

Pierson opens his article with an anecdote about James Joyce, and the fact that the famous writer of the Irish diaspora wrote to his aunt in Dublin to confirm details about the city as he completed *Ulysses*. While Pierson does not say so directly, the comparison suggests that to him, Johnston is not an authentic expatriate. Pierson goes on for two pages simply listing the geographical and historical errors in *Colony*: a house on Blackhead Road cannot look out on the harbour from the front and on the Atlantic from the back, Harbour Drive did not yet exist in the 1920s, the girls and boys schools Bishop Spencer and Bishop Feild did not back on to each other, etcetera (283-284). Pierson's equally detailed lament over various grammatical errors in *Colony*, without considering the fact that these "errors" occur in vernacular speech, indicate that his analysis is so finely focussed as to lose sight of the narrative voice, and of the novel as a work of fiction.

Yet Danielle Fuller also feels compelled to ask the question, is Johnston a “Newfoundland writer?” “Johnston, born and raised in Newfoundland,” she writes, “has lived in Toronto since 1989 and rejected the ‘regional writer’ label explicitly in an interview with *TickleAce* editor Bruce Porter. [...] For the purposes of this essay, Johnston [is a writer] with an intimate knowledge of Newfoundland who [has] written extensively about it” (“Strange” 47). While I read Fuller’s question as a cautious attempt to avoid classifying Johnston in the essentialist terms of a native informant, the way in which she frames her query as a question of diasporic identity is telling. Fuller recognizes that geographical inaccuracies serve particular aesthetic functions in this work of fiction, yet Johnston’s dislocation still puts his identity as a Newfoundland writer into question. For Fuller, a “Newfoundland writer” is a “regional writer,” and while in her book *Writing the Everyday: Women’s Textual Communities in Atlantic Canada* (2004) she astutely differentiates between various definitions and forms of literary regionalism, here the term is left unexamined. In his interview with Porter, Johnston does not reject a Newfoundland identity per se, but rather rejects the concept of considering literature in “regional” terms as too “self-contained” (Porter 27). In the rest of this chapter I show how Johnston’s representation of Newfoundland exceeds the limitations of traditional regionalism and the idea of “a distinct Newfoundland literary style” (Johnston 27), as he plays with issues of nationalism, citizenship, and political and historiographical authority.

Johnston’s Imaginary Homeland

Pierson argues that Johnston’s “casual attention to geographical and historical detail indicates that his settings, as in the theatre, where a papier mâché rock can stand for any island in the world, do not carry with them, by themselves, any numinous significance” (283). I emphatically disagree. St. John’s, and Newfoundland in general, are not just important, but

central to every aspect of the novel: its plot, its characters, its theme. The first words in the novel in the voice of Smallwood are “I am a Newfoundlander” (8) – his identity, indeed his life, is centred upon his relationship to his homeland. The novel not only follows perhaps the most iconic figure in Newfoundland’s history from birth to death, it also follows Newfoundland itself through periods of great change, from the colonially-influenced, class-based society of the turn of the twentieth century, through the tragic sealing disaster of 1914, through the collapse of responsible government, the influx of Americans and Canadians during WWII, and Confederation with Canada. As Herb Wyile puts it, “though Smallwood is the central figure of the novel, in many ways Newfoundland itself is the protagonist, and through Smallwood Johnston emphasizes the elemental, class-bound, and poverty-stricken conditions in which those below ‘the quality’ eke out an existence” (*Speculative* 127). The very title, “the colony of unrequited dreams,” at once encompasses the island’s colonial history and the legacy of what “might have been” (Johnston 560).

Pierson’s comparison of Johnston with Joyce, however, sets up his critique as a concern over diasporic inauthenticity. It asks us to read the novel’s inaccuracies not as intentional but as evidence of imposture. But Pierson seems to forget that what Johnston has written is a work of fiction. Newfoundland novelist Bernice Morgan, in her review of *Colony* for *TickleAce*, also admits that she was driven “to distraction” by the errors, particularly in descriptions of “the St. John’s I have lived in all my life”: “he keeps referring to ‘the apron,’ tells us coves are little streets between Water Street and the Harbour Drive,” not to mention “crosses in Protestant homes, a bridge moved in from Kilbride, Newfoundlanders strolling into Fort Pepperell in wartime” (103). But Morgan also recognizes in Johnston’s work a strong “sense of place and love of place” (103). She wonders, ultimately, “if a writer as confident and canny as Johnston

could have set me up” (105). While Morgan’s short review does not explain the literary function of such a “set up,” her generous reading leaves room for a consideration of the aesthetic purpose of Johnston’s fictionalized island.

Johnston creates Newfoundland as, in Salman Rushdie’s terms, an “imaginary homeland.” As Rushdie writes, reflecting on the process of writing his own novel *Midnight’s Children* from his new home in England, “our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind” (10). As with the criticisms of Johnston, Rushdie found that people wanted *Midnight’s Children* “to be the history, even the guidebook, which it was never meant to be” (25). Yet in attempting to remember the details of 1950s and 60s Bombay, Rushdie found that “it was precisely the partial nature of these memories, their fragmentation, that made them so evocative for me. The shards of memory acquired greater status, greater resonance, because they were *remains*” (12, emphasis original). The very impossibility of “total recall,” and the errors that will inevitably arise from the attempt, leads to a productive, creative reimagining of a space already mediated by its very centrality in the novel. For Johnston, like Rushdie, this “imaginary” quality is not a problem to be overcome, but is useful in the process of writing fiction. In *Colony* many errors serve symbolic purposes. The location of Bishop Feild school on the corner of King’s Road and Colonial Street – two streets which, as Pierson points out, do not cross – identifies the school as a juncture between Imperial England and the colony, and carries with it the tension between patronizing English teachers and Smallwood, one of the “savages descended from the ‘dregs of England’” that they have been assigned to “civilize” (34). The idea that both the harbour and the Atlantic are visible from opposite ends of Smallwood’s childhood home

similarly poises him between the “old world” and the “new.” This location also places Smallwood’s home in a particularly precarious position, vulnerable to harsh Atlantic winds from all directions, reflecting both the family’s poverty and dysfunction and Smallwood’s own psychic fragility. It also allows Smallwood’s father to visit his drunken rants upon the city below on some nights, and on the Atlantic Ocean on others. Stan Dragland notes that this location acts as “a pivot between two great physical realities of Newfoundland, the land and the sea, and between the city with its assertion of humankind, especially family, and the human-kind-neglecting sea” (203). Dragland concludes that “the Smallwood house is wrong, then. It’s also right. A symbolic setting woven into the mythic fabric of the novel” (204). As Rushdie explains, in his own writing the fragmentation and errata caused by his displacement “made trivial things seem like symbols, and the mundane acquired numinous qualities” (12). Some of Johnston’s geographical inaccuracies do not seem to serve much of a narrative purpose, and it is unfortunate that they take some readers out of the story. But clearly some play important symbolic roles.

Yet there continues to be a strong anxiety in Newfoundland about “accurately” representing the island, an anxiety that has not changed much from the post-Confederation efforts to preserve an “authentic” culture in the face of a threatening assimilation. The sense that the outport and its fishing culture is the true essence of Newfoundland continues, exacerbated by the fact that this culture is seriously threatened by the cod moratorium and the resultant slow death of fishing communities. There remains an internal pressure to preserve what is imagined as Newfoundland’s “real” culture, which leaves some Newfoundlanders wondering where they fit in. As renowned Newfoundland writer Lisa Moore admits, “sometimes I feel like a fake Newfoundlander. I have no connection to the fishery. I’m a townie. I’ve never been in a dory. My family have never fished. I don’t even like salt cod” (Doran). This statement, from a born-

and-bred Newfoundlander and one of its strongest literary voices, is a testament to the pressure exerted by this notion of the “real” Newfoundland.

Pierson’s reading misses the way in which Johnston in fact plays with such pressures and stereotypes, subverting the very concepts of authenticity and cultural representation. As Sheilagh Fielding, Smallwood’s fictional life-long love interest and the novel’s other narrative voice, sails away from Newfoundland on her way to New York, she reflects on this idea of authentic Newfoundland identity in her journal:

A band you can hear all over the boat is playing Newfoundland music. I am familiar with most of the songs they’re playing, songs about fishermen, sealers, loggers, but I know little more about the lives of such people than I know about the lives of Eskimos. It seems a pity there are no songs for people like me. You would probably think it very unsocialist of me, but to pass the time I have been making up titles of white-collar folk-songs: “Journalist’s Jig,” “Lawyer’s Lament,” “Concerning an Architect Named Joe,” “The Chartered Accountant from Harbour Le Cou,” “The Banker’s Song,” “The Real Estate Reel,” “Come All Ye Civil Servants.”

I remember my uncle Patrick singing, upon request at Christmas time, “The Ryans and the Pittmans,” sitting in his chair with his head thrown back, his face flushed from drinking, his eyes closed as though he could smell the salt spray, as though he were revelling in voyages past, despite the fact that, so terrified was he of the water, he could not be coaxed into going once around the pond in his row-boat at the cottage.

“The Ryans and the Pittmans” is sung to the tune of “Farewell and Adieu to You, Spanish Ladies,” and everyone joins in the chorus: “We’ll rant and we’ll roar like true Newfoundlanders, / We’ll rant and we’ll roar on deck and below.” (150-151)

Fielding’s satirical song titles, which mimic the structure of real Newfoundland folk song titles, point to the way in which Newfoundland culture is traditionally defined by the rural working class, and counter such homogeneous perceptions of the place. Her memory of her uncle simultaneously exposes the ease with which Newfoundlanders perform and perpetuate stereotypes of cultural identity. The lyric “we’ll rant and we’ll roar like *true* Newfoundlanders” –

sung to the tune of an appropriately transnational folk song – finally becomes ironic, as we are left questioning who the “true Newfoundlanders” are, and who is excluded from this vision.

While Fielding writes these words in 1920, they are easily applied to contemporary representations of the island. As Fuller, Overton, and Chafe have all recognized, this idea that outport life and fishing culture form the essence of a unique society is easily appropriated by tourist discourse; Newfoundland is still regarded by many outsiders, and is often marketed to outsiders, as a marginal, exotic space. Such exotic visions of Newfoundland are still perpetuated by Newfoundland Tourism, which capitalizes on impressions of the province as a “mysterious land” of “unmoving authenticity” (NewfoundlandandLabrador.com). The current home page of Newfoundland and Labrador tourism declares “Come to Newfoundland and Labrador, a place that stays the same, but changes you forever.” In this vision, Newfoundland is a primitive, anachronistic space, embodied by majestic landscape and “friendly people,” where “authenticity” is somehow rendered a tangible commodity.

Despite the novel’s predominantly urban setting, many reviewers and critics have read *Colony* with a similar picture in mind of Newfoundland as, as Fuller puts it, a “strange terrain,” a “myth of Newfoundland as a cure-all for the urbanite’s ills, a wilderness space, a quaint cultural backwater offering old-time folky charm” (“Strange” 22). In this construction of Newfoundland as an exotic, marginal, rural working-class space, Newfoundland and its literature are “regional,” in the word’s traditional association with “provincialism, with a rural context, or with local-colour writing” (Wyle, Riegel, Overbye and Perkins xi). This regionalist perspective is evident in Justin Trudeau’s defence of the novel for CBC’s *Canada Reads* as “a story of barren rock upon which nothing was expected to grow [...] least of all a people as tragically beautiful and noble as Newfoundlanders” (qtd in Chafe “Buddy” 69). As Chafe responds,

It could be argued that Trudeau missed the point of Johnston's novel – that *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* is more about dismissing the traditions of lament and loss than it is about promoting a profound sense of inborn island malaise and fortitude. One can hardly fault Trudeau for this romantic though dismal treatment of Newfoundland – we Islanders have been promoting this image for years. (69)

In his review for the *New York Times*, Luc Sante writes that “Newfoundland is more than just a maritime province of Canada. Like few places these days, it seems remote, even exotic in a chilly way, and it's likely you haven't been there. It therefore can assert itself as a setting to the point of claiming a character role: a vast, desolate mystery hovering just over our northeast flank” (BR6). In a recent article in *Studies in Canadian Literature*, Owen D. Percy reads Johnston's Newfoundland as a “peripheral, dangerous, and foreign [space] on the hazy edges of mainstream Canada” (214). Percy claims that Johnston, along with Michael Winter and Robert Kroetsch, write alternative, postmodern histories for their real life characters, yet also claims that these writers adhere to the conservative tenets of Atwood's *Survival* in their representations of a “sub-zero Canadian clime as threatening or dangerous” (213). He adds that Newfoundland is a region “with little or no place in the master narratives and History of the nation” (214). For Trudeau, Percy and Sante, Newfoundland is an exotic hinterland. As perhaps the Newfoundland writer best known outside of the province, Johnston, and his Newfoundland, are considered representative of a peripheral space. Alexander MacLeod astutely notes that “for the vast majority of *Colony's* reviewers, especially those outside of Newfoundland, Johnston's novel is not so much a playful re-telling of a history they have probably never heard in its original form, as much as it is an almost naturalistic representation of a harsh physical environment they have probably never visited” (70). Yet MacLeod reinforces these naturalistic interpretations, ultimately arguing that Johnston's novel represents a “deterministic reading of geography” (77). MacLeod places the novel's treatment of geography within a Canadian literary tradition, also

arguing that the harshness of the Newfoundland landscape makes it “a book that would easily fit into those now infamous thematic studies of Canadian ‘Survival’ or the ‘Garrison Mentality’” (71). Drawing on theories of Canadian regionalism, MacLeod contends that Johnston’s narrative is fused to what Lisa Chalykoff calls a “‘first solitude’ interpretation of regionalist environmental determinism,” whereby social space is interpreted as “impenetrably ‘natural’ or objectively ‘real’” (MacLeod 74). Yet Johnston’s distortion of Newfoundland’s geography belies MacLeod’s reading; Johnston’s Newfoundland is emphatically *not* “real.” Rather, *Colony* subverts first-solitude regionalism by, as I will show in the rest of this chapter, destroying the idea that space can be ‘authentically’ represented and by replacing geographically determined representations of Newfoundland with a self-consciously constructed imaginary homeland.

As New argues, the term “region” is sometimes “used (by the place that believes itself to be the ‘centre’) as a way of declaring its current power and defining its periphery, and of consigning others – the excluded – to the margins” (*Land Sliding* 118). Johnston is often identified, then, as a regional writer whose work is, as Janice Fiamengo describes the “regional” label, “mainly of referential rather than aesthetic interest” (244). In this sense, the regional occupies the same rhetorical space as the minority, as Others excluded from the mainstream and defined by homogeneous stereotypes. As Gunew argues, “minority writers” are

invariably confined to the issue of their ‘identity’ even in a poststructuralist world of decentred subjectivity. They function as what Gayatri Spivak (1988) has termed the ‘native informant’, with an unproblematically coherent subjectivity projected upon them. They are constructed as ‘insider’ sources for ‘information-retrieval’ rather than being deemed capable of postmodernist writing. In short, their ability to produce ‘textuality’ or to play textual games is rarely countenanced. As well they are legitimated in large part by their ‘eye’-witness’ accounts of certain minority histories which also confine them to realist genres. (*Haunted* 72-73)

Johnston resists such minoritizing visions of Newfoundland as a marginal but knowable space with playful postmodernism. Even as critics attempt to appropriate his novel as representative of an exotic Canadian regionalism, Johnston plays with and upsets these labels, calling into question the very categories of region, nation, and colony. Indeed the plot of the novel largely centres on Smallwood's desire to "measure up to such a place" (552) and the irreconcilable contradictions between the idea of the Newfoundland nation, its lingering colonial status, and impending Confederation with Canada.

As Fuller argues, Johnston's descriptions of Newfoundland history and geography signal "the difficult balancing act of writing about culturally distinct but heavily mediated marginal places." Johnston adopts what Fuller calls a "'doubled' mode of representation," shifting between a narrative voice directed at "insiders," and an "anthropological style of narration" that describes the city of St. John's, as well as cultural practices such as drying cod ("Strange" 42). According to Fuller, this doubled narration both appeals to the consumption of place promoted by tourism, and subverts the idea that such a mediated experience could lead to "authentic" encounters. Johnston

manages to engage non-Newfoundland readers with a persuasive fiction of St. John's, while signalling the construction of his consumer-friendly representation to those with 'insider' knowledge. In doing so, he indicates self-awareness about his own contribution to the marketing and commodification of place – and the concomitant reproduction of certain place-myths – as a writer whose work circulates internationally ("Strange" 45).

Johnston forces us into a St. John's of his own making, a city that plays with whatever preconceived perceptions we may bring to the novel, and that therefore stands as the perfect backdrop for a Joey Smallwood who is equally fictionalized. Fuller effectively argues that Johnston's "semifictionalized" place "foregrounds the 'traffic' that occurs between psychic, physical, and textual space. While Johnston may be teasing the tourists and testing local readers,

his prose portrait suggests how cultural forms such as narrative fiction play their part in the production of space and place” (42). Even as readers like Sante and Percy make claims about the harshness of Johnston’s Newfoundland landscape and its peripheral position in Canada’s hinterland, Johnston highlights the constructed and shifting nature of place as a locus of identity.

Fiamengo points out that “regions are thought to be natural entities, distinguished by a dominant geographical feature and an associated industry or way of life: we think, for example, of the Atlantic region’s geographic and economic links with the sea” (244). Johnston’s emphasis on the land rather than the sea subverts this definition of the Atlantic, or more specifically, the Newfoundland region, replacing a geographic determinism with an awe-inspiring but ultimately unknown interior space. Noting that “virtually the whole population lived on the coast, as if ready to abandon ship at a moment’s notice,” Smallwood emphasizes the fact that “of the land, the great tract of possibility that lay behind them, beyond their own backyards, over the farthest hill that they could see from the windows of their houses, most Newfoundlanders knew next to nothing” (139-140). But Smallwood’s fascination with the land shifts the attention from the coast, literally the periphery of the continent, to an interior reimagined as the centre. As Smallwood stares at his island from a boat off the southern shore, he muses that “it was hard to believe Newfoundland was an island and not the edge of some continent, for it extended as far as the eye could see to east and west, the headlands showing no signs of attenuation; a massive assertion of land, sea’s end, the outer limit of all the water in the world, a great, looming, sky-obliterating chunk of rock” (347). In this image the sea does not mark the edge, the margins of the land, but rather the reverse; the margins of the sea mark the beginning of a large and powerful mainland. Elsewhere, travelling by train through the interior, Smallwood imagines Newfoundland not as an island, but as “a landlocked country in the middle of an otherwise

empty continent, a country hemmed in and cored by wilderness, and it is through this core that we are passing now, the unfindland that will make us great some day” (141). Here, Newfoundland is once again imagined as the heartland, centre to an undiscovered hinterland ripe for exploration and exploitation.

Ironically, Smallwood’s great ambitions for his country are what lead him to bring Newfoundland into Confederation, ultimately securing the island’s fate as part of the Canadian hinterland. This vast empty wilderness inspires an intense patriotism in Smallwood, and his attempt to traverse it on foot in the cause of unionizing railway workers nearly kills him. Smallwood is constantly trying to map Newfoundland, beginning as a young man when he practices drawing the island’s outline, only to find it impossible to capture perfectly “what with its half-dozen major peninsulas, themselves endlessly peninsulated, and its infinity of bays and inlets” (90). Much later, on the campaign trail for Confederation, he draws “a map of Newfoundland with the plane,” so that “looking down I saw demarcated, as I never had before, whole peninsulas, whole bays and lakes. I wished we could fly high enough so that I could see the island whole, all of it at once in its map-drawn shape, a single entity, no longer composed of many parts, but one distinctive, discrete shape among the many that comprised the world” (452). Yet the island’s “many parts” cannot be so reduced, nor does this process of mapping bring him closer to the island’s essence; “travelling by plane, I was not lulled into the usual mute, inert wonder by the landscape. It was possible, at least for as long as we remained aloft, to believe that I really had found the ‘something’ I could do that would match the land itself, which had seemed an impossible-to-meet obligation until now” (452). Confederation, then, is the culmination of Smallwood’s attempt not just to honour, but to capture and control the place. Yet later we find out that while he thought Confederation might be commensurate with Newfoundland’s great

“peculiar beauty,” ultimately he “was wrong” (552). Newfoundland eludes him once again; the greatness of the land cannot be fully known or contained. This elusive quality resists what Johnston sees as the “triple colonization” of the island, having been handed from British colonial rule to Canadian rule, and subjected to the “cultural, social, political, and geo-military” influences of the U.S. As Fielding puts it, ultimately “it doesn’t matter to the mountains that we joined Confederation, nor to the bogs, the barrens, the rivers or the rocks. Or the Brow or Mundy Pond, or the land on which St. John’s and all the cities, towns and settlements of Newfoundland are built. It wouldn’t have mattered to them if we hadn’t joined” (560). As she adds that “we have joined a nation that we do not know, a nation that does not know us,” (560), we are confronted with the fact that Canada cannot – nor indeed can anyone – ever fully “know” all the aspects of the landscape that, for Fielding, “finally, primarily, are Newfoundland” (562).

Johnston’s Newfoundland is, certainly, bound up with images of geography, but rather than an environmentally determined regionalism and an imposed marginality, Johnston’s concern with place represents what Fuller calls a “strategic regionalism”; the particularities of place form a location from which to resist dominant national visions. While Johnston resists the term “regional,” in the sense of a restrictive and marginalizing determination of identity, Fuller argues that “regionalism” remains a useful concept in that it points to feelings of marginality as well as significant “common experiences, like out-migration” (*Everyday* 31). In Chalykoff’s terms, then, Johnston’s work is neither bound by a “first-solitude” understanding of geographic determinism, or the “second-solitude” idea that regions are constructed exclusively as regions “of the human mind” (169); as Chalykoff argues, these two conceptions “have acted in tandem to stunt our ability to theorize literary regions as spaces that are capable of representing simultaneously the social differences that exist inevitably within regionalized space *and* the

complex particularities that issue from a condition of geographic co-presence” (161, emphasis original). Johnston, then, can be considered a regional writer in this new sense that “regions are socially produced spatializations,” taking into account the social, geographical and psychological influences on the construction of heterogeneous spaces (Chalykoff 175). Yet I would go further, suggesting that the local specificity of the novel is not in fact a result of a “regional” sensibility, but rather, as I discuss in the next chapter, evidence of a national identity drawn from the recent memory of Confederation and the country it eliminated. As Wyle argues, “the novel serves as a reminder that Newfoundland, which has been absorbed into Confederation as a region or sub-region of Canada, has a much longer history as a separate colony and nation” (*Speculative* 125). I argue that in Johnston’s case, diaspora is central to an understanding of Newfoundland identity centred on Newfoundland as homeland, rather than hinterland. The first-solitude regionalism of geographic determinism does not leave any room for Johnston’s displacement, and the important impact that out-migration has had not only on Johnston’s own work but also on the culture of Newfoundland in general. Diaspora means that Johnston’s Newfoundland is, in Rushdie’s terms, a Newfoundland “of the mind” (10). But this is not the same “of the mind” as the second-solitude regionalists, either; rather, Johnston’s imaginary homeland is a mental construction based on the materiality of place and a deep personal connection to home.

Come From Away

In his article on “Truth and Fiction” for *Newfoundland Studies*, Gordon Inglis also expresses his admittedly conservative expectation that writers depicting real places “get it right” (69). Inglis’s article references many writers whose careful research inspires “confidence” in the reader that the settings are reflected “correctly” (70). While Inglis does not mention the fact that Johnston lives in Toronto, he brings his critique of *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* together

with a critique of American Annie Proulx's widely successful novel *The Shipping News* (1993), which has also been extremely controversial in the province. The comparison is apt since both novels have been similarly criticized for inaccurately depicting Newfoundland. But the comparison also raises deeper questions about the identity of the author, and a closer look at it will be a fruitful digression.

Proulx's novel depicts a harsh and backward Newfoundland, rampant with incest and sexual abuse, whose characters' voices are peppered with archaic words mined from *The Dictionary of Newfoundland English* and whose accents are ventriloquized in sometimes nearly indecipherable phonetic spellings. Many Newfoundlanders have reacted to such representations with anger, or, as in the project started by several Memorial University education professors, revision. This program, "Between a Rock and a Great Place," is a week long "learning vacation," combining sight-seeing with lectures and presentations, which aims to "focus attention on multiple representations of Newfoundland, often juxtaposed for purposes of critique, and to supplement them with a variety of interactive explorations and *authentic* experiences for participants" ("Between a Rock and a Great Place" website, my emphasis). Proulx's representations are questioned in a classroom atmosphere, and "challenged" by personal experiences created by Newfoundlanders. In his review of *The Shipping News*, Pierson finds that "the author has made out of [Newfoundland] a fable, and even worse, not one well-thought-out. She is explicit in seeing it as a pastoral, in which the gentle, humane bucolic past has been overcome or subverted by the violent, harsh Americanized present" ("Shipping News" 153). As Tracy Whalen writes, "these critical responses, whether they call for geographical, cultural, or linguistic change, speak of a search for the true, a desire for narrative felicity with actual experience or real culture in Newfoundland" (52). These responses draw an important line

between Proulx as an outsider and “real” Newfoundland culture inside; they point out not only the inauthenticity of her portrayal but her lack of authority since she is a “CFA” or “Come From Away.” These critiques are thus very similar to critiques of Pratt and Johnston, in that they privilege both the inauthenticity of the representation as well as the lack of authority of the writer – his or her location in relationship to the culture.

In an attempt to explain the uproar that books like *The Shipping News* have generated, Newfoundland writer Michael Crummey argues in an interview with Leo Furey that “in some ways that feeling [of resentment] was generated by communities of people who knew their stories hadn't yet been told and were just finding their own voice. So having somebody from the outside come in and start telling those stories when they had their own storytellers who were just in the process of doing that was a loss for them” (no page). These concerns are reminiscent of the “appropriation of voice” debates of the 1990s, initiated by protests against the appropriation of the stories of First Nations or people “of colour” by white Canadian writers. In their collection *Borrowed Power: Essays on Cultural Appropriation* (1997), Bruce Ziff and Pratima V. Rao outline the key aspects of cultural appropriation, one of which is the concern that the appropriator benefits materially from the appropriation. Proulx’s commodification of Newfoundland has been lucrative, resulting in the sale of three million copies of her book worldwide, plus the movie rights. While many have argued that cultural appropriation eliminates the market opportunities of “authentic” members of the culture, in Newfoundland this may not have been the case; rather it seems that *The Shipping News* helped to spark wider interest in Newfoundland, making other texts set in the province more marketable. But this material benefit may come at a high cultural price. Joseph Pivato explains that “appropriation of voice, by definition, is not a dialogue among equals but an exercise of power by the appropriator over the

minority person, who is thus made an object and not a subject” (155). For Newfoundlanders who feel marginalized both within Canada and North America at large, the appropriation of their voices and their homeland is regarded as an act of domination. Proulx’s creation of Newfoundland characters amounts to ventriloquism, a term that, as Gunew argues, “accentuates the power relations involved and certainly raises questions about whose voices we are hearing and who the ‘we’ are” (Gunew *Haunted* 75). It is not just the inauthenticity of the story she is telling, then, but the fact that Proulx is American that makes her work seem so egregious to some Newfoundlanders.¹⁹

Another aspect of appropriation is the idea that it causes damage to the culture represented. As M. Nourbese Philip writes, “the danger with writers carrying their unfettered imaginations into another culture [...] is that without careful thought, they are likely to perpetuate stereotypical and one-dimensional views of this culture” (103). Proulx’s vision of Newfoundland is one of “[h]arbours still locked in ice. Tombstone houses jutting from raw granite, the coast black, glinting like lumps of silver ore” (35). Her gloomy imagery is not just of primitive and exotic individuals, scenarios, or specific locations, but is rather generalized into representations of Newfoundland as a whole. “If he drowned when he was twelve he couldn’t have been my grandfather,” Quoye tells his aunt. “Ah, you don’t know Newfoundlanders,” she replies (25). “I’ve heard it said – cynically – that sexual abuse of children is an old Newf tradition,” Nutbeem tells Quoye later in the novel (218, see also 155, 248). The overall impression is that Newfoundland is a place of bleak hardship and primitive barbarism, and it is this exoticism that in part makes the novel so successful. I find Proulx’s characters’ suggestions

¹⁹ Many Newfoundlanders, of course, did like the book. Crummey, for example, reads *The Shipping News* as an example of a gothic novel, and finds Proulx’s depiction of the US just as “distorted”: “you won’t find either place in the real world, although there are elements in both Newfoundland and the U.S. that made her portrayals feel ‘authentic.’ All of the choices that she made as a writer served particular aesthetic ends. And it’s a damn good story” (“Salvaging” 8).

that Newfoundlanders are all incestuous simply offensive. But while it is easy to reject her impression based on her outsider status, it is the representation itself, rather than her personal lack of cultural authority due to her American identity, that must be called into question. Otherwise the debate centres around Proulx's national identity, rather than focussing on the social and cultural implications of her representation.

While the idea of cultural authenticity in this context has significant ethical import, it is also not always easily defined. As Gunew puts it,

in the struggle for minority rights and the battles over who controls representation there are those who take the position that only members of such minority groups have the authority, or at least moral right, to represent themselves. But who, institutionally speaking, decides the group membership and who interprets and legislates whether this authenticity has been achieved? (*Haunted* 69)

How does one *define* an “authentic” Newfoundlander in the first place? And more to the point: are *diasporic* Newfoundlanders insiders or outsiders?

Crummey claims that when he was living in Kingston, Ontario, he felt like a “faux Newfoundlander” (“Being”). Writing, he claims, was his way of feeling more connected to his homeland, but his return to St. John's has made his writing feel more “authentic.” But is Crummey suggesting that diasporic writers like Johnston are *not* authentic? Elsewhere, Crummey expresses his respect for *Colony*: “for me, the liberties that [Johnston] took there served the purpose of his speaking about Newfoundland. So the historical facts took second place to his idea of what Newfoundland was and how it worked” (Interview with Leo Furey, no page). As Crummey's comments suggest, the concept that geographical or historical accuracy is a measure of the “authenticity” of the writer impedes the writer's creative freedom. Crummey's return to Newfoundland is thus a personal choice rather than a moral mandate.

Johnston recognizes the proprietary impulse behind critiques of *The Shipping News*, but considers it “unnecessary” to worry that Americans who write about Newfoundland, or Canada in general, will prevent Canadians from doing so (“Afterlife” 125). He prefers to judge Proulx’s book, which he admires, on its artistic merits.²⁰ In his own work, then, Johnston not only plays with the knowability of place, but he also subverts the idea of the writer as authority. As I will discuss in detail in the next chapter, Johnston constantly subverts the authority of the historiographer, rendering Judge D.W. Prowse, author of the mammoth *History of Newfoundland* (1895), a decaying elderly man suffering from dementia and obsessively revising his book and the mistakes that he has found in it since its publication. Fielding’s mock “Condensed History of Newfoundland,” excerpts of which begin the novel’s chapters, is, she claims, a “corrective” of Prowse’s work (405). Morgan points out a metafictional joke in the novel that anticipates *Colony*’s controversy. In her “History,” Fielding writes of William Vaughan, owner of an early settlement in Newfoundland, who wrote a book called *The Golden Fleece* “extolling its virtues” although he had never been to the place (67). Fielding tells us that he later wrote a “tract of advice for settlers about how to survive the perils of life in Newfoundland, which, though he has never experienced, he, being a writer, is able to imagine so vividly that other people who have never been to Newfoundland find the book convincing and it sells quite well” (77). As Morgan suggests, this moment exposes the fact that factual accuracy or authorial authenticity is not necessary for a representation of Newfoundland to become “convincing” to outsiders. Johnston thus simultaneously makes fun of tourist culture and the gullibility of outsiders and undermines his own authorial authenticity. As Dragland writes, Johnston “seems to be pre-empting some of

²⁰ The Vintage Canada edition of *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* includes an endorsement from Proulx on the back cover: “Wayne Johnston is a brilliant and accomplished writer and his Newfoundland – boots and boats, rough politics and rough country, history and journalism – during the wild Smallwood years is vivid and sharp.” While the phrase “his Newfoundland” does suggest that a variety of Newfoundlands are possible, it is interesting that she is called upon not only as a literary authority but as an authority on Newfoundland literature in particular.

his critics” (194) when he has Smallwood publicly claim that he does not “get” Fielding’s ironic newspaper editorials, and cannot understand “the popularity of a writer so given to ‘romancing,’ which in Newfoundland simply meant not talking or writing about things as they really were” (500). This metafictional moment also hints at the fact that Johnston himself is “romancing” throughout his novel, subverting the accuracy of history and geography, even as he takes part in the Newfoundland cultural tradition of the tall tale.

Countless forgeries also constantly undercut the authority of the written word in the novel, such as those throughout Fielding’s “History” (eg. 18-19, 83-84), or young Prowse’s forgery of his grandfather’s autograph (52). Smallwood’s expulsion from school is a result of another forgery, an anonymous letter written to a city newspaper that frames him. Elsewhere Fielding writes opposing editorials for two rival newspapers under two different pseudonyms, “attacking in one paper the opinions she had expressed in the other and getting a war of words going between her two imaginary selves” (255-256). In a fascinating reading, David Williams argues that Fielding herself could be seen as Smallwood’s “autobiographer,” as the real force of editorial control over the novel and its structure. While Stuart Pierson is also irritated by various anachronisms in the novel’s plot, Williams sees them as intentional hints that Fielding is writing or even inventing the text; the mistakes point to another potential forgery (107-108).

Johnston’s latest novel, *The Custodian of Paradise* (2006), which revives the character of Sheilagh Fielding, continues this project of subverting literary authority, in this case, his own. In an admittedly maddening fashion, this novel seems to clash with the facts and events of *Colony*. Johnston does not correct the “errors” of *Colony*, but rather compounds them. The plot centres around the fact that Dr. Fielding, the man who raised Sheilagh, is not her real father, a suspicion that obsesses both her and the doctor. Yet nothing of this important fact is even suggested in the

first novel. Fielding writes a newspaper column under the byline “Fielding the Forger,” which consists of satirical letters supposedly written by prominent local figures. Yet this persona is not mentioned in *Colony*, in which Fielding’s satirical voice is heard in her column Field Day. *The Custodian of Paradise* is not as successful a novel as *Colony*; the novel’s focus on Fielding’s personal struggles with finding her true father and giving up her own children for adoption is drawn out, and seems to evacuate the character of the strength that made her so compelling when we first met her. Yet reading the two novels together emphasizes the deliberate manipulation of facts and chronology and the playful shirking of narrative fidelity that ultimately exposes the fictionality of Johnston’s place and his characters. Johnston self-consciously rejects, then, the tendency to privilege narrative authenticity and its concomitant policing of cultural borders.

A Novel of Memory, or The Tree that Doesn’t Look Like a Tree

This constant subversion of narrative authority forces the reader to consider both Smallwood and Fielding unreliable. Indeed almost all of the errors that Pierson and Morgan cite above are either Smallwood’s or Fielding’s, as they reflect on places and events of the past. For example, when Smallwood is on the south coast we learn that the people there do not have electricity, yet later Smallwood recalls: “take away their radios and they lived not much differently than people in such places had a hundred, even two hundred years ago” (388). What Pierson fails to recognize in pointing out this discrepancy is the fallibility and tone of condescension that this moment lends to the character. Memory is not perfect, and in a novel that is in large part about change, in a fictional biography that follows a character from childhood to death, these moments of imperfection give the voice depth. Smallwood is an unreliable narrator who is remembering, and as Rushdie puts it “one of the simplest truths about any set of

memories is that many of them will be false” (24). Johnston’s position as a migrant allows him to construct a moving novel of memory, and, I will argue, of diaspora.

Chafe effectively explains another of Johnston’s ‘errors,’ which occurs at the beginning of the book, in one of Fielding’s journal entries dated not long after Confederation:

It must be noted that Fielding’s depiction of a St. John’s bathed in amber ‘in the evening, in the morning’ by sun shining through unfurled sails is impossible. Anyone possessed with a rudimentary knowledge of St. John’s would know that the setting sun could never pass through the sails of schooners docked in the harbour and cast a glow across the streets. Fielding is creating a ‘home in memory.’ (“Scuttlework” 343)

Chafe’s subtle reading connects Fielding’s feeling of unhomeliness in a place where “the past is literally another country now” (*Colony* 3), with the inaccurate idealizations of nostalgia. In other words, Johnston’s ‘error’ here is really a fault of Fielding’s memory, and exemplifies the disconnection that she feels from both her past and the nation that is no more. Fielding concludes her memory: “This was our city when we were still in school. This is what it looked and smelled and sounded like. But how it was before what happened between us, how it *felt* before we met, we can no more recall than we can how we felt when we were born” (8, emphasis original). Here Fielding tries to do the impossible by disconnecting her memory of what the city looked like from how it “felt.” In a moment of dramatic irony, she does not realize that in her physical description of the city her memory has already failed her. In Fielding, Johnston constructs what Chafe calls a “peculiar form of immigrant,” the Newfoundlander who feels displaced by Confederation even though she remains, ostensibly, at home. In Chapter Three I flesh out these connections between literal and metaphorical displacements and the theme of Confederation. What is important for my discussion here is the way in which the errors enabled by Johnston’s own displacement become central to conveying Fielding’s sense of disconnection. They become part of the “imaginary homeland” created by what Rushdie calls the “double filter” (24) between

the writer and his or her subject. The distance created by both the passage of time and distance means that the Newfoundland constructed exists only in the imagination, thereby emphasizing the loss brought about by that distance. The opening passage of the novel, then, ends with a tone of loss that will shade the rest of the book.

For Johnston, dislocation has been crucial to his creative process; he says he left Newfoundland “because I couldn't write about the island while I was there. [...] Life was too immediate. I was too inundated by the place and its details. I'd write about something and see it when I walked across the street the next day” (Holt).²¹ As Radhakrishnan writes, “it is counterproductive to maintain that one can only understand a place when one is in it. It is quite customary for citizens who have emigrated to experience distance as a form of critical enlightenment or a healthy ‘estrangement’ from their birthland” (210). Rather than leading to inauthenticity, displacement can lead to an objective, “nuanced historical appreciation of the home country” (210). Johnston’s dislocation, then, enables him to make necessary errors, to achieve the distance needed for creative freedom. It enables him to conjure Newfoundland as an imaginary homeland. As Rushdie writes, the diaspora can be a “fertile territory” for the writer to occupy: “If literature is in part the business of finding new angles at which to enter reality, then once again our distance, our long geographical perspective, may provide us with such angles”

(15). In his interview with Wylie, Johnston explains his displacement in similar terms:

²¹ Other Newfoundland writers have expressed similar sentiments. Patrick Kavanagh wrote his first novel, *Gaff Topsails* (1996), which is set in a small outport, in Beijing. For Kavanagh, “distance makes it easier to fiddle with the details, to step aside from reality if it helps the story” (Vandervlist). It seems then that diaspora is particularly useful for writing a historical novel like *Gaff Topsails*, largely set in 1948 in a fictional Newfoundland Catholic parish. Kavanagh sets out to create an origin myth for his parishioners that predates British settlement of Newfoundland, and that permeates the mid-twentieth century community poised on the edge of Confederation. The novel’s concept that Newfoundland identity is derived from a divinely ordained settlement *outside* of colonialism depends upon a romantic, mythical tone that eschews historical “fact” or the detail of realism. While I find Kavanagh’s construction of Newfoundland deeply troubling for its version of history as well as its romanticization of Newfoundland culture, whether or not he is an “authentic” Newfoundlander does not seem to be the right question to ask. A more appropriate question is what is achieved (or lost), by the Newfoundland that Kavanagh imagines. See Delisle, “Nation, Indigenization, The Beothuk: A Newfoundland Myth of Origin in Patrick Kavanagh’s *Gaff Topsails*.”

when I'd been away for long enough, going on ten years – the spatial and temporal remove from Newfoundland, especially the spatial remove, finally allowed me to see things from a new perspective, and also removed an inhibition that I think a lot of Newfoundland writers feel about writing about Newfoundland in a certain way. When you're there, there are certain things that are *verboten*, things you don't mention. You don't portray a downtrodden Newfoundland or an embittered Newfoundlander or things like that, no matter how many of them there might be around. Thus that spatial remove is really important. (120)

Johnston explains that *Colony* in particular required this distance because of its subject matter, since Newfoundland would have been a “censorious atmosphere” in which to write a book about so iconic a figure as Joey Smallwood, who at the time Johnston started writing the novel had been dead only three years (“Afterlife” 107). He suggests, then, that Newfoundlanders are particularly protective of the way in which the place and its historical figures are depicted, since to portray “downtrodden” Newfoundlanders would be contributing to already common and damaging stereotypes.

Yet while distance may have afforded Johnston more freedom to write the book his way, it did not diminish this sensitivity. If anything, it exacerbated it. The concern of critics like Pierson and Inglis is not just with Johnston's *ability* to represent the island accurately from away, but of his *responsibility* to represent it accurately to an outside audience. But charging writers with such a responsibility merely perpetuates the notion that “regional” writers are incapable of postmodernism. As we have seen, Johnston deliberately shirks this responsibility in order to subvert the (first-solitude) regionalist tendency to read marginal spaces as real, authentic, and homogeneous. In an understatement of his postmodern usage of historiographic metafiction, Johnston asserts that his novel “records an impression of history. It is impressionistic writing in exactly the way that some painting is impressionistic painting. No one objects when an impressionistic painting of a tree doesn't look like a tree” (“Afterlife” 113).

Conclusion: “Roaring with Blood”

Both Pratt and Johnston, then, while vastly different writers from very different eras, are frequently appropriated into conservative visions of Canadian literature. In the two epigraphs to this chapter, both writers use the symbol of blood to connect the Newfoundland landscape with the body. Both images are romantic assertions of the enduring power of geography on the body – the stain which “cannot [be] bleach[ed],” the “sea-seeking” force that continues to propel the body – they can be read as evidence of a first-solitude regionalism that posits that “to exist within the region is to feel its essence, and thus to be part of a regional community” (Chalykoff 165). The essence of Newfoundland runs through the Newfoundlander’s very arteries.

Pratt’s romantic image is one prominently grounded in Newfoundland geography. Yet the readings of his work that consider Newfoundland in terms of environmentally-determined garrisons identify his depictions of local space as evidence of a Canadian nationalism; in Frye’s assessment in the preface to *The Bush Garden*, “the question of Canadian identity, so far as it affects the creative imagination, is not a ‘Canadian’ question at all, but a regional question. [...] Identity is local and regional, rooted in the imagination and in works of culture” (i-ii). While Pratt embraced an unabashed Canadian nationalism, the anachronistic readings of his work that retroactively appropriate Newfoundland into Canadian space oversimplify his national and diasporic identity, rewriting the Confederation moment as a natural “consummation devoutly to be wished” (D.W. Prowse, qtd in Johnston *Colony* 429), and perpetuating a marginal, homogeneous vision of Newfoundland culture. Pratt’s location at a moment of Canadian literary nationalism and as a prominent figure when Newfoundland joined Canadian Confederation makes him a figure onto whom a series of anxieties about regional and national identity are projected. Critics who read his work for authentic expressions of a homogeneous regional

identity oversimplify both the historical moment, and the national and cultural identities struggling for articulation in a time of great change.

Johnston's regionalism is also seen as quintessentially Canadian, an interpretation that distorts the very subject of his book, Newfoundland's tumultuous and even suspicious entry into Confederation and the ongoing sense of distinct identity that is defined in national rather than regional terms. Johnston's image, then, concludes a novel that constantly upsets the authenticity of place, so that while the arteries may be sea-seeking rivers, they never quite get there; there is a sense of removal from the physical landscape, an unrequitedness, that brings the novel's tone of loss full-circle.

Turning our attention to the diasporic aspects of Newfoundland literature is one means of upsetting the clear lines drawn between the centre and the hinterland, and of challenging the essentialist representations of an unchanging, "authentic" Newfoundland culture.

Chapter Three: Writing the Old Lost Land: Diaspora, Confederation, and the Imagined Community

Newfoundland is no artistic utopia. I know that. But I was struck almost as soon as I got here by how much of the nation remains, and I've come to see how persistently it's growing in a massive communal project of recovery and creation in which many people toil alone, some of them offshore.

Both history and fiction are wanted to keep this paradoxical country of no country growing.²²

-Stan Dragland, "*The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*:
Romancing History?"

Wayne Johnston's *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* is just one example of what historian Jerry Bannister calls Newfoundland's "wave of historical fiction since the 1990's," a wave that reflects the view that Newfoundlanders "are not free from our past but trapped by it, forced to endure seemingly endless cycles of economic failure and social misery" (177). Central to this obsession with the past in Newfoundland literature is the Confederation moment itself, a moment that has been represented, Bannister argues, as a "debilitating psychic wound" leading to "a type of post-traumatic stress disorder" (182). While Bannister is wary of the nationalist sentiment that this "trauma" feeds, he persuasively identifies Confederation as a significant moment in Newfoundland's "cultural memory," or what Sandra Gwyn has referred to as "the nerve ends of their own history. [...] Their equivalent to the Plains of Abraham" (45). Similarly, Stan Dragland observes that "what's left over when all the excellent material arguments in favour of Confederation have been advanced [is] a persistent, nagging dissatisfaction, tributary to a much broader current, a myth of fall or loss that is not so easy these days to balance with gain" (188). This loss, Dragland suggests, has been a driving force in Newfoundland's cultural production.

²² The phrase "country of no country" comes from Wayne Johnston's *Baltimore's Mansion*.

As these critics point out, the Confederation moment marks an ongoing grief, a rupture of identity and of connection with homeland. In this sense, I argue, the loss brought about by Confederation is similar to the loss brought about by out-migration; for post-Confederation migrants this loss is a double wound. In this chapter I examine how this double loss in the work of David French and Wayne Johnston leads to the construction of Newfoundland as an “imagined community” that resists what is regarded as the assimilating influences of Canadian citizenship and identification. French, in his cycle of plays about a Newfoundland family in Toronto, creates an imagined community for diasporic imaginaries abroad and a second generation of Newfoundland migrants. Johnston, in his memoir *Baltimore’s Mansion* and his novel *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*, uses postmodern techniques to question historical narratives that consider Confederation the consummation of an *a mare usque ad mare* vision of Canada. French and Johnston’s narratives also reveal the usefulness of the concept of diaspora to Newfoundland displacement, by highlighting the losses of migration, and the group identity that is still bound by nationalist feeling even after the possibility of the Newfoundland nation has been foreclosed.

The Diasporic Imaginary and the Preservation of Identity

In French’s Mercer cycle, five plays originally produced by Toronto’s Tarragon Theatre over a period of three decades, audiences encounter a family of Newfoundlanders relocated to Toronto. Two of these plays, *Salt-Water Moon* (1984) and *Soldier’s Heart* (2001) take place prior to the migration, when Jacob Mercer and his wife-to-be, Mary Snow, are young. But the three remaining plays, *Leaving Home* (1972), *Of the Fields, Lately* (1973), and *1949* (1988) take place entirely in the Mercer family home in Toronto, and set the personal trials of Jacob, Mary, their two sons Ben and Billy, and other members of their extended family and community

against the broader cultural clashes of Newfoundland with the rest of Canada. In this chapter I will focus on *1949*, which takes place over the three days leading up to Confederation, as this play in particular exhibits the crucial link for the Mercer family between Confederation and their own emigration. While the other plays in the Mercer cycle concentrate on intimate familial relationships, with Newfoundland heritage in the background, *1949* stands out for its broader focus. The personal family conflicts, while touching and genuine, can also be read as political allegories for the relationship between Newfoundland and its new host country. *1949* has by far the biggest cast of the cycle – fourteen compared to *Leaving Home*'s seven or *Salt Water Moon*'s mere two – and comprises not only family members, but old acquaintances from back home and figures in the local Toronto community, who together encompass many differing perspectives on the Confederation issue. *1949*, then, unlike the other four very intimate plays, is a play about community, and the permeability between the private and the public.

The Mercer family live and work among other displaced Newfoundlanders in Toronto, who together form an ethnic enclave, or in Vijay Mishra's terms, a "diasporic imaginary." Mishra defines a "diasporic imaginary" as "any ethnic enclave in a nation-state that defines itself, consciously, unconsciously or because of the political self-interest of a racialized nation-state, as a group that lives in displacement" (423). The Mercer household is the centre of such a diasporic imaginary. Jacob's mother lives with the family, and Mary's sister Dot and her husband Wiff live down the street, representing the common pattern of "chain migration" whereby family members or friends follow each other to the new city, benefiting from a shared network of contacts and knowledge (Bella 2). The Mercers also board Ned, a young Newfoundlander, in their home. Jacob works construction with other men from the same part of Newfoundland, continuing old friendships and rivalries. Within this enclave they share a manner

of speaking, memories, traditions and prejudices. Thus the adult Newfoundlanders are distinguished in the written script by the phonetic spellings of many words to indicate the Newfoundland accent, such as “t’ink” for “think,” or “j’in” for “join,” as well as grammatical idioms like a first person pronoun with a third person plural verb form, such as “I gets.” French uses the technique just enough to convey difference, without making it difficult to read or making the character, or the actor’s interpretation of him, a caricature. From the moment these characters open their mouths they are distinguished from the Canadian characters like Doctor Hunter or the teacher, Miss Dunn; April in fact mistakes Jacob’s accent for Irish (86). As Ruth King and Sandra Clarke argue, Newfoundlanders constitute a “minority group” within Canada, in part distinguished linguistically (538). Even outside of their home province, then, the Mercers are audibly part of a distinct cultural group. Although they have lived in Toronto for several years, and could not even vote in the referendum, the Mercers refer to Newfoundland and Newfoundlanders with the personal pronouns “us” and “we” and “ours.” The distinct accent and references to “back home” establish the Mercer home as a kind of Newfoundland outpost, where the functioning of the household seems defined by its Newfoundlandness. Many of the interactions with Canadian characters centre upon this cultural difference; Ned’s conflict with his girlfriend, April, derives from the fact that he lied about his origin, claiming to be Irish. Ben’s conflict with the teacher, Miss Dunn, has its origins in Miss Dunn’s singling him out as a Newfoundlander, and the cruel teasing he endures as a result. Both the neighbour, Norman, and the family doctor arrive concerned that Rachel is wearing a black armband, never dreaming that she wears the sign of mourning not for a person, but for her country. As Rachel explains to Doctor Hunter, “I’m afraid you’d have to be a Newfoundlander, my son, to understand. It’s not your fault you was born in Canada” (17). This light-hearted teasing reveals the insular quality of

knowledge, experience and identity within French's Newfoundland diaspora. Thus the ethnic enclave, and its interactions with the neighbours who live outside it, expose the cultural distinctiveness of Newfoundlanders, both as immigrants to Canada, and as citizens of a province joining Confederation.

The family is initially divided on the Confederation issue; while Rachel expresses her grief over the outcome of the referendum, her son Jacob is pleased. His motivations for supporting Confederation are the same as his motivations for leaving home: his kids "never saw fresh milk or fresh fruit till they come here," and he points out that the outports "have the lowest standard of living of any place in the English-speaking world" (78). He therefore welcomes the social welfare that Confederation with Canada promises. "Why are there more of us, Wiff, living in New York City than live on the island?" he asks. "Why did I bring my own family here if it wasn't to find work and a better life for my kids?" (78). But Rachel shames her son for his support of Confederation by comparing him to his father: "Oh, your father may not have had two cents to call his own, but by God, he knowed who he was. He'd never have put his mark on a ballot that gave away his birthright. The way some did last summer, just to get the baby bonuses and old age pensions" (44). Jacob's response that the impoverished people who voted for Confederation couldn't afford their own funerals does not faze Rachel, who compares the betrayal of the confederates to that of Judas Iscariot (44). Rachel's passionate arguments against Confederation are balanced by the logic of Jerome, an old acquaintance, now a journalist in St. John's, who comes to the home to do a Confederation Day story on the family. Jerome backs up his anti-confederate sentiments with political facts: that the confederates lost on the first ballot, that they won the second ballot by only two percent, and the promise that Britain had made to restore responsible government – which was suspended in 1934 by the Amulree Royal

Commission – once the island’s finances returned to order. Jerome admits that the poverty of his homeland is dire, but he articulately expresses his concern with “what we’re losing [...] Like our sense of ourselves. The pride of an independent people” (78). The complexities of the issue are slowly teased out as Jerome and Jacob debate, with Jerome admitting that his rich father voted against Confederation to “keep his power,” while Jerome himself voted against it to “keep our identity. It’s the sort of issue that makes for strange bedfellows” (79). French does not allow his audience to take one side or another easily, as the debate seems to fall into a conflict between philosophical issues of identity, and practical economic concerns. Jerome, as the non-migrant, represents loyalty to cultural and national identity. For Jacob, the pragmatist, Confederation and out-migration go hand in hand, as both are seen as pathways to a better life for his family. Individual immigration to Canada, then, is a small-scale version of Newfoundland’s joining of the Canadian federation.

But as French deftly reveals, migration also leads to alienation and assimilation. Ben’s troubles at school originate when his teacher, in anticipation of Confederation, asks him to point out on a map the place where he is born. He is unable to do so, having left when he was just six years old. But Ben’s inability to point to the place where he was born is a sign of both the erosion of identity in the second generation and of impending assimilation. As Rachel argues, “he should know where he comes from and be proud of it” (45). Jacob responds by showing Ben his birthplace in an atlas. But there is a sense that the locating of place on a page cannot make up for his overall loss of identity. Billy, the younger of the boys, is excited to go to school on Thursday because he will get a medallion in honour of Confederation and his school will sing “The Ode to Newfoundland.” But when asked by his grandmother, Billy does not know the meaning or significance of the song, nor the words (32). As the second generation of the

Newfoundland diaspora and the first generation of Newfoundland Confederation, Billy and Ben are warning signs of a potential loss of identity. Confederation and out-migration are thus dual forces of assimilation; French's drama reveals that Newfoundland is not simply another province of Canada, but a failed nation with a distinct culture. The transition from citizen of the colony of Newfoundland to citizen of Canada, whether effected by Confederation or by migration, is not smooth, but rather a moment of rupture and loss. This idea of citizenship-as-loss gestures towards Lily Cho's concept of "diasporic citizenship," a term whose inherent "dissonance" references "the losses which enable citizenship" ("Diasporic" 108). While Newfoundlanders may not have experienced the same racialized violences as the Asian and African diasporas to which Cho refers, the concept is useful here in that it simultaneously identifies the loss of home involved in becoming Canadian, and indicates that for these new Canadians "citizenship" is a qualified term. For Cho, embracing the concept of diaspora and its attendant emphasis on cultural memory "allows us to be up against citizenship, to embrace it even as we hold it at some distance, to recognize it as both disabling and enabling" (108). For French's characters, diasporic memory means that their new Canadian citizenship is provisional, in ways that are both productively resistant to cultural assimilation and psychologically and emotionally damaging.

The adult characters encounter ignorance and resentment in their new home of Toronto. Ned's girlfriend's mother, not knowing where Ned is from, laments the joining of the tenth province: "'Isn't it awful,' she said, 'the expense that Newfoundland will bring on the Canadian taxpayers?'" (88). Jacob meets a man in a bar, who asks where he is from. When Jacob replies "Newfoundland," the man asks him if he knows an O'Leary from Red Rocks. Jacob's reply is impatient: "'For Christ's sake, man,' I said, 'Newfoundland is the sixteenth largest island in the world with a coastline of six thousand miles. You might as well ask me if I knows Norma Sludge

from Dildo.’ The damn fool!” (39). These moments serve to bolster what French, in an early interview with Peter Neary, identifies as the “feelings of inferiority” (27) of this generation of immigrant Newfoundlanders. All of these incidents in *1949*, as precursors to the Confederation moment, cast a tone of foreboding upon the upcoming union. The prejudice and ignorance that these immigrant Newfoundlanders have felt on a personal level foreshadow what will become an uneasy transition from nation to province of Canada.

But these incidents are rather mild compared to Ben’s experiences at school. One of Ben’s classmates recalls the sign at Sunnyside Swimming Pool during the War that said “No dogs or Jews allowed,” and adds that “the only mistake they made [...] was not adding Newfies to the list” (61). This shocking abuse stands out for its disturbing undertones of violence. In this moment the audience is prevented from regarding Newfoundlanders as easy Canadians or as possessing white privilege. Rather, we are confronted head-on with Newfoundland’s difference, defined here in almost racial terms. Ironically, this same classmate is called a DP and a Wop by other kids. As Jacob explains to his son, “A Wop is someone without papers. A DP is a displaced person. There was at least a million people like that in Europe after the War. Poles. Estonians. Jews. People like that. [...] You’d see them at Union Station, with tickets in their lapels. The Jewish kids had tickets around their necks, on a string with a lead seal” (61). This description of the hardship of displacement and ethnic otherness prompts Ben to ask “which were we, Dad? DPs or Wops?” (61). The question evokes Jacob’s pride, as he declares “We come from Britain’s oldest colony. Four hundred and eighty-one years old” (62). Jacob, here, attempts to align Newfoundland with Britain in what Daniel Coleman calls the project of white civility. As

Coleman writes, “non-English Celts used Britishness to infiltrate colonial privilege” (87).²³ The island is not just a British colony, but its “oldest,” a fine example of how the “trials of colonial settlement were a kind of crucible that refined the civility inherited from Britain” (Coleman 24). Newfoundland, then, is both aligned with “pan-ethnic British cooperation” (Coleman 19), and exceeds “British Britishness” through the hard work of building a colony and several centuries of progress. This moment, then, highlights Jacob’s ethnic insecurities; he seems to protest too much as he uncomfortably asserts his superiority over other European immigrants. Despite Jacob’s claims to white civility and his laughter at the child’s innocence, Ben’s question reveals the child’s sense of inferiority or alienation as an immigrant to Canada. For young Ben, this prejudice is internalized. Ned finally reveals to Jacob the full extent of what happened between Ben and his classmate: “Junior was sitting on his chest, screaming, ‘You’re just a Newfie, Mercer! Say it! Say it!’ and Ben was screaming back, ‘I’m not a Newfie! I’m not! I’m not a fucking Newfie!’ [...] Maybe it wasn’t what you thought, Jacob, Maybe it wasn’t that Junior insulted Newfoundlanders. Maybe Ben was just upset that Junior called him one” (91). Ned makes the connection between Confederation and the alienation of out-migration clear when he asks Jacob “what kind of pride are you teaching [Ben]? What the hell does Ben know about Newfoundland except that his own father can’t wait to give it away?” (91). This revelation becomes a moment of crisis for Ben’s father. For the Mercer family, displacement lays bare the prejudice directed by Canadians against Newfoundland as a whole; this moment of violence not only exposes immigrant alienation, but also the alienation of Newfoundland as a whole as it is metaphorically displaced into Canada, and the failure of Newfoundlanders’ claims to white civility.

²³ The Mercers may well be descended from one of the many English families that settled in Newfoundland over several centuries of colonial rule, but in order to construct Newfoundland as a civilized colony they must claim a more generalized Britishness, to accommodate the Celtic origins of much of the population.

This event leads Jacob to completely reverse his opinion of Confederation, and to join his mother in donning the “trappings of mourning” in the hours leading up to the union. Mary remains in favour of Confederation, and for the sake of the kids opposes her husband’s theatrics: “This is their country now, Jacob, their new home, and it’s a little late in the day to be draping a black flag on the porch for some place they hardly even remembers. At their age they just wants to fit in.” Jacob’s response completely contradicts his earlier comments about their British citizenship: “It’s not right to make them feel ashamed, either. Oh, they may not have come here with tags on their necks, but they’re no different than any other immigrants” (120). The contradiction is humorous, and adds to Jacob’s construction as a comically unreliable and melodramatic character, but it also emphasizes the extreme impact that Ben’s fight at school has had on Jacob and his sense of self. This statement also seems closer to the truth, given the experiences of not only Ben, but Ned, and Jacob himself. Mary’s response is cool: “I wants them to have what we never had, a chance in life. Isn’t that why we came here?... Remember what I told that Immigration man who almost turned us back? ‘If you sends us home on the next boat,’ I said, ‘I’ll take the kids and leap overboard” (120, ellipsis in original). Mary’s response confirms their immigrant status, but also prevents the audience from reading the play as a clear protest against Confederation. Like Jacob in the first half of the play, Mary’s motivations for immigrating and her motivations for supporting Confederation are the same and cannot be separated in her mind. She sees both Confederation and migration as equivalent steps towards the better life that Canadian citizenship can provide, with more employment opportunities and economic stability.

The upcoming union between Newfoundland and Canada is mirrored by a proliferation of personal unions in the play: love is sprouting everywhere as Jerome and Grace decide to marry,

Ned and April's relationship becomes more serious, and there is even chemistry in the air between the elderly neighbour Norman and the teacher, Miss Dunn. But the trope of relationships and marriage in *1949* does not just represent love and union, it also involves conflict, doubt, and sacrifice. While Mary does not realize it, her choice to marry Jacob echoes Jerome and Rachel's reasons for rejecting Confederation. One of the play's sub-plots is the tension arising from the fact that Jerome is an old flame of Mary's; Jacob in fact convinced her to break off her engagement with Jerome to marry him instead, despite the fact that Jerome came from a rich merchant family.²⁴ Jerome's return makes Mary nervous, Jacob and Grace jealous, and Jerome vulnerable as he asks her after all this time if she made the right choice. Mary's powerful speech to her son about why she married his father is informative:

What do you suppose I saw in that man there, Ben? From the moment I decided to marry him I knowed there'd be no sable coats in my future. No expensive scotch whiskey in silver boxes. Those dreams belonged to another time... No, what I saw in your father from the first is what made him special. You see, I recognized that no odds what that man would always be there for me. Always be there for me and my kids. He'd sooner die first. [...] It takes courage to build a life, Ben. The courage to keep on against all the odds. And in the long run it may be the greatest courage of all. (163-164)

Mary's decision to marry a man for love and dependability rather than comfort echoes her own decision to do what she feels is best for her children, namely to sacrifice her national identity for a new home in a foreign country and the promise of better economic opportunities. While Jerome accuses her of choosing comfort over identity in the Confederation question, her choice to marry Jacob over him belies, or at least complicates, this assessment.

Wiff and Dot's marriage is in crisis throughout the play. Dot has moved out of the house and in with her sister's family, because Wiff refuses to take a fertility test. In the end we discover that Wiff had the test long ago, but has kept it from Dot because his positive results mean that

²⁴ This moment is dramatized in French's later play, *Salt-Water Moon*.

she is the one unable to bear children. Eventually we discover that this is likely because while Wiff was overseas in the war, Dot had an affair, became pregnant, and had an abortion. Wiff has always known this secret, making the depth of his sacrifice to protect his wife more profound. In his analysis of the Mercer cycle, Konrad Gross argues that the separation and reconciliation of Wiff and Dot “could be translated into a commentary on the relationship between Canada and Newfoundland,” since the couple stands on opposing sides of the Confederation issue. In the final scene, the reconciled pair dance a tango, and as Gross effectively argues, the scene takes on political overtones: “Now to dance the tango, Wiff, you have to keep this distance between us. See?... That means we don’t ever get any farther apart than this. Or any closer” (173, ellipsis in original). Gross argues that the distance maintained between them in the dance can “be read as a comment on the future relationship between Canada and the new province, which despite the union will be able to retain her regional distinctness” (262). But what Gross fails to consider is that this union is barren. The dance freezes at the stroke of midnight, and the radio announces the King’s Confederation message: “May the union that is now complete continue, under God’s guidance, to grow in strength, prosperity, and happiness, and may it bring new benefits to its people from sea to sea” (174). The tableau of the dancers, narrated with the phrase “the union that is now complete,” makes the symbolism of a reserved distance between the couple clear, and the audience is invited to consider Dot’s infertility against the wish for growth and “new benefits” (174). The mistakes of the past may be forgiven, but cannot be undone. The action “unfreezes, and the dance goes on,” but it is a dance tinged with loss and doubt about the future. While the action in this scene is clearly allegorical, the national layer does not overshadow the literal layer that develops over the course of the play, the human pain of the couple’s infertility and the strain on their marriage. The play does not reduce the relationships to a superficial

allegory, but rather weaves together the intimate lives of this community of Newfoundlanders with the future of their nation.

“The Most Beautiful Story”: Art and the Preservation of Nation

Amidst this loss and doubt, literary expression is the remaining hope for Newfoundland identity. Ned is an aspiring writer, but begins the play having just had another story rejected. Simultaneously, his relationship with April seems over when April discovers that Ned has been lying to her about his origins, pretending to be an Irishman instead of a Newfoundlander. His ability to write becomes intertwined with his vexed identity, as April confronts him over his deceit:

APRIL:
You think James Joyce ever denied his race? Or Yeats? Or any of those other writers you admire?

NED:
I don't deny what I am, damnit.

APRIL:
I think you do. I've never read your stories, Ned, but I'll bet there's not a trace of your homeland in a single one.

NED:
Listen, I've lived in this city now for four years. And if I choose to write about it, that's my business.

APRIL:
Keep telling yourself that, Ned. It may be why your stories never get published. [...] Joyce lived in Paris most of his life, Ned. Is that where he chose to set *Ulysses*? (89)

April's criticism leads Ned to write an autobiographical story, set in Conception Bay, “about how a young boy comes to be ashamed of his father. How he wants him to be like the American who stole his mother. Maybe it'll help you understand me” (135). Ned's revelation that he is ashamed of his father is strikingly similar to the action in French's earlier play, *Of the Fields*,

Lately, which is set twelve years later, in 1961. An adult Ben comes home to Toronto from the west and reflects on how he was always ashamed of his father, a shame that causes an irreparable rift between them. Both sons experience what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick calls the “double movement shame makes” (37), as they both uncomfortably identify with the other, the father, and wish to separate themselves from him. In both relationships, it is the father’s Newfoundlandness that is the source of shame: for Ned, his father cannot live up to the American rival; for Ben, the rift begins when Jacob shows up to his baseball game: “Twelve years old, and ashamed of my old man. Ashamed of his dialect, his dirty overalls, his bruised fingers with the fingernails lined with dirt, his teeth yellow as old ivory. Most of all, his lunchpail, that symbol of the working man” (*Of the Fields, Lately* 1-2). For Ben, his father’s dialect, which marks him as a Newfoundlander, is intertwined with his working-class immigrant status, and Ben’s desire to fit in with his Toronto friends seems to necessitate the repudiation of his family origins. For Ben and Jacob, the damage is irreparable, and at the end of *Of the Fields* Jacob dies, with “the wall” between them still there (112). In 1949, however, Ned confronts, and perhaps even overcomes, his shame of both his father and his identity by addressing it with his art. His new story allows him to reconcile with April, who tells him “it’s the most beautiful story I’ve read in years” (170). For Ned and April, reconciliation means the union of a Newfoundlander and a Canadian, but it is only possible once Ned comes to terms with, and celebrates, his own identity.

Thus at the moment that the nation of Newfoundland is dying, Ned’s story becomes a way of re-imagining both his own identity and his homeland at large, asserting the ongoing cultural identity of the “diasporic imaginary.” As Mishra writes, “diasporas construct homelands in ways that are very different from people of the homelands themselves. [...] At the same time

the nation-state as an ‘imagined community’ needs diasporas to remind it of what the idea of homeland is” (424). Mishra’s argument thus connects the “diasporic imaginary” with the larger “imagined community” of the homeland, suggesting that the diaspora not only imagines its own connections within and across communities in displacement, it also constructs itself as an extension of an imagined homeland. Diasporas, then, like nations, are “imagined” because their members do not know most of their fellow members, yet “in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson, *Imagined* 6), and they are “communities” because regardless of the inequalities that may prevail within them, they are perceived as possessing “a deep horizontal comradeship” (7) both with and within the homeland. Thus Ien Ang argues that “just like nations, diasporas are not natural entities but ‘imagined communities.’ [...] The transnationalism of diaspora is actually proto-nationalist in its outlook, because no matter how global its reach, its imaginary orbit is demarcated ultimately by the closure effected by the category of the diasporic identity itself” (144). Ang considers this proto-nationalist quality to be the limitation of diaspora in an increasingly globalized world (153), but in a situation where the nation no longer exists as a political reality, but exists *only* in the imagination, diasporic literature can strategically construct alternative or subversive imagined national identities. In his more recent book *The Spectre of Comparisons* (1998), Anderson identifies the connection between the diaspora and the homeland as “long-distance nationalism” and is similarly wary of the phenomenon’s potential for violence and extremism (“Long-Distance” 74). In his article for Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbin’s *Cosmopolitics* (1998), Anderson warns that the “‘diasporic’ collective subjectivities that are imagined, census-fashion, as bounded series” problematically lead to “indentitarian” conceptions of ethnicity, with serious “essentialist implications” (130-131). But while there is potential here for essentialist and violent ethnicization, long-distance nationalism is not, as Anderson admits,

inherently extremist. Rather, the term is useful for bridging the concept of diaspora to the imagined community, where the nation can be just as significantly “imagined” from a position of displacement as it can from within. For diasporic Newfoundlanders, reconstructing the homeland as an imagined community is a means of combating the threat of assimilation and the persistent “feelings of inferiority,” as French puts it (“Coloured” 27). It is a means of strategically preserving and celebrating a sense of identity and community within a sometimes hostile host environment.

As Cheah writes in his collection of essays on Benedict Anderson, *Grounds of Comparison* (2003), “the connection Anderson posits between the nation-form and imagination is so axiomatic to contemporary academic discourse by now that it scarcely needs to be mentioned” (5). As Mishra and Ang’s comments show, the concept of the “imagined community” is not only axiomatic, but profoundly useful for the way in which it articulates the overlap between the ideological construction of nations and of diasporas. What I find particularly useful about the idea of the imagined community is the role of print media in its formation. As Anderson argues, print media is key to the development of the “imagined community”; the newspaper and the novel play important roles in allowing their readers to imagine a community of fellow readers in “homogeneous, empty time” (*Imagined Communities* 24). The experience of simultaneous consumption is perhaps even more profoundly felt in theatre performances, in which the audience is acutely aware of the presence of other audience members, viewing and hearing the same performance, at the same time.²⁵ As Jonathan Culler argues in his article for Cheah’s collection, it is not the content of the text (or performance) itself, but the imagined communal act of its consumption that creates this community:

²⁵ Obviously, audience members at the play’s original run at Toronto’s Tarragon Theatre were not entirely or even mostly displaced Newfoundlanders. But the anonymity of a public audience does allow one to “imagine” a community of fellow audience members.

The power of Anderson's thesis about the novel is that it makes it a formal condition of imagining the nation – a structural condition of possibility. Critics, who are interested in the plots, themes, and imaginative worlds of particular novels, have tended to transform that thesis into a claim about the way some novels, by their contents, help to encourage, shape, justify, or legitimate the nation – a different claim, though one of considerable interest. The fact that Anderson's own examples involve some slippage from one claim to the other helps to explain the critical reception but does not excuse it. (48)

Culler argues that the difference between these claims must be maintained for the sake of “theoretical rigour” and the force of the argument, since the argument that “the novel, through its representations of nationhood, made the nation,” places us on “shaky ground” (49). But acknowledging the slippage that occurs in Anderson's work, and the potential for “shakiness,” I argue that in the case of Newfoundland, where the nation exists *only* in the imagination, Anderson's term is useful for considering the way in which the content of literary texts, and performances, *re-construct* the nation in the minds of its readers. Ned's story performs the continued imagining of a community that has lost its opportunity to achieve political status as a nation, and should it be published, will connect its readers in a communal act of imagining, regardless of whether they identify as insiders or outsiders. In other words, it is not the act of reading alone here that could form the Newfoundland imagined community, but rather the act of reading about Newfoundland as a distinct, if troublesome, identity.

While out-migration lays bare the passions and prejudices that accompany Confederation, out-migration itself clearly does not mean the renunciation of nation or identity. In *1949*, Jerome's last words to the family express this sentiment: “a country isn't just contained within its borders, Mary. It's contained within its people. It's what makes us special in our own eyes, and in the eyes of the world. Losing that sense of who we are is a high price to pay for comfort” (167). Even as Jerome laments the loss of identity that he fears accompanies Confederation, he privileges personal identification as the means of preserving the idea of the country. As he claims

that “a country isn’t just contained within its borders,” he acknowledges the role that the diasporic imaginary has to play in constructing the country as an imagined community. The implication of Jerome’s words, then, is that if Newfoundlanders are able to maintain that “sense of who we are” in spite of Confederation and out-migration, the “country” will live on as an imagined construct.

Ned and the Mercer family have a key role to play on the front lines as Newfoundland begins to negotiate its own Canadianness. In her discussion of diasporic narratives, Sneja Gunew credits Anderson as she suggests that

it may be time to consider the role of the writer as inventor of community where community is conceived not in the sense of the nostalgic return to the past and a lost place but as the impulse forward, the potential carried by the seeding of diaspora in hybridity. [...] The attempt here is to analyse the components and strategies of a kind of belonging that has not yet been established which [...] is assembled precariously out of the shards of individual lives and their ‘imagined relations’ to genealogies (private histories) and public events, that is, global or national histories. (*Haunted* 109)

In 1949, and in the two plays that catch up with the family several years later, we see the Mercers struggling to resolve their imagined diasporic community with the fact that their homeland is now also a part of Canada. By the late 1950s, when *Leaving Home* is set, Jacob is able to joke about his identity, which could be read as a coping mechanism for this ongoing struggle. The joke also indicates the importance that his place of origin continues to have to his identity: “Harold, there’s only two kinds of people in this world – Newfies and them that wishes they was. [...] Why else would Canada have j’ined us in ’49?” (62). The joke that Canada joined Newfoundland, rather than the other way around, suggests a continuing national pride even as it pokes fun at his homeland’s lowly status. We discover in *Of the Fields, Lately* that young Ben, as the next generation, is incapable of this “precarious” kind of belonging, as Gunew puts it. But

where Ben eventually fails, we may hope that with his short story Ned has found a way to reconcile his genealogy with a new hybrid identity.

Ronald Rompkey also uses Anderson's term in reference to Newfoundland literature when he writes that "throughout the world, new political transformations, especially newly independent colonies, have found ways of symbolizing identity. A similar process has occurred for the past fifty years in Canada's newest province." Where other post-colonies become "imagined communities" as independent nations, Rompkey asserts that Newfoundland's status as an "imagined community" is driven by its rebirth as a Canadian province.²⁶ I argue that Newfoundland literature's search for such "new ways of symbolizing identity" is motivated by the post-Confederation desire to preserve the nation in the imagination.

***Baltimore's Mansion* and Newfoundland's "Grievous Wound"**

A more explicit privileging of art as the locus of the imagined community of Newfoundland occurs in Johnston's work. Johnston's family memoir, *Baltimore's Mansion*, reflects on three generations of Johnstons and their relationships to Newfoundland identity, both before and after Confederation. The memoir centres around the relationships between three generations of Johnston men: Wayne, Wayne's father, Arthur, and Arthur's father, Charlie.²⁷ Wayne is focussed on unravelling the mystery of the falling out that Arthur and Charlie had around the time of the referendum and Arthur's departure for the mainland. Though Wayne does not know why, he senses that this mystery is central to understanding what Confederation has meant for his family.

²⁶ Rompkey discusses Newfoundland as a "post-colonial" entity in the sense that it is simply no longer a colony of Britain. For a more nuanced discussion of Newfoundland as postcolonial, see Paul Chafe's article on *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*, "The Scuttlework of Empire."

²⁷ I use "Wayne" to refer to the speaker in the text itself, and "Johnston" to refer to the author.

Throughout the memoir, the extreme passion and melancholy that the Johnstons feel both at the moment of Confederation and for decades afterward is conveyed. Wayne remembers one startling outburst from his father: “ ‘My God Wayne,’ he said once, his voice suddenly breaking with emotion. ‘What a country we could have been. What a country we were one time’ ” (166). Wayne’s aunt and uncle leave the room whenever “O Canada” is played, protesting against this symbol of a new adoptive citizenship. The extended family repeatedly and ritualistically mourn their country with evening-long performances during which Arthur rants about the conspiracy surrounding the referendum and the treacherous “closet confederates,” Uncle Harold tearfully recites “The Lament for Newfoundland,” and the whole family sing “The Ode to Newfoundland” (58-68). For these Newfoundlanders, the loss of the nation is a “grievous wound” (13), it is “something that had been done to us” (65). It represents an affront to Newfoundland identity and the termination of future possibility. The loss of the nation is most vividly symbolized by the death of Johnston’s grandfather, Charlie: “For my father, as for all the Johnstons, it was not ‘immediately before the expiration of March 31, 1949,’ as set out in the Terms of Union, but with Charlie’s passing that the old Newfoundland ceased to be” (202). Thus the Confederation moment is not simply a transferral from Dominion status to provincial status, but is rather rendered as a death, a traumatic and irresolvable passing of both the country and the past. Johnston even suggests that Confederation was the cause of Charlie’s death: “He had fretted himself to death as the countdown to Confederation proceeded, each day changing on a schoolroom slate that he hung on the wall in the kitchen the number of days left in the life of Newfoundland. Charlie died on January 14, 1949, the day after erasing the number 77 and hours after writing the number 76 on the slate” (200). Charlie’s death, then, is not an allegory for the death of the nation, but rather the two events are entwined as parts of the same grief. For the

Johnston family, Charlie's death is more a metonym for the loss of the nation than an allegory for it, a highly personal manifestation of a larger national mourning.

If, for the Johnstons, the Confederation moment is marked by the death of Charlie, it is even more so for Arthur, Charlie's son, who is away in Canada when both the death and Confederation Day occur. As Wayne surmises, the last time Arthur and Charlie see each other becomes a traumatic memory for Arthur:

It was to Canada that my father was going, to Canada at this of all times, the country he esteemed no more highly than Charlie did, but he had no choice, there being no college at that time in Newfoundland. To Canada, which Newfoundland would become part of while he was away. It must have seemed to Charlie like a betrayal. And when his father died while he was in Canada, how must my father have felt? Somehow to blame perhaps. Against all assurances to the contrary – and there must have been many – somehow to blame. (201-202)

The death of Charlie and the death of the nation are conflated for all the Johnstons, but for Arthur, since both events occur while he is in Nova Scotia, the losses are not only conflated but compounded by the pain of displacement. Arthur does not even have the money to return for his father's burial. When he does finally return, both the nation and his father are gone, and the "lifelessness" of his father's forge seems to embody the profound loss and change brought about by Confederation (251). The physical distance between Arthur and his home when both deaths occur exacerbates this sense of loss, and contributes to a feeling of guilt that his physical abandonment of his father and his country has somehow led to their demise.

Out-migration and Confederation are coupled throughout the memoir. Wayne's Uncle Dennis's tentative contributions to his family's anti-confederate rituals are barely tolerated, for "he had gone away to Canada – as the Canadian mainland was still referred to by members of my family, though we had been Canadians for twenty years – and it had taken him seventeen years to see the error of his ways" (56). Dennis in fact returns in 1966, Newfoundland's "Come Home

Year,” a campaign orchestrated by Smallwood to celebrate the completion of the Trans-Canada Highway across the island and to encourage the tourism industry. Come Home Year saw the return of thousands of migrants, some for short visits, others permanently. But its association with Smallwood’s industrialization schemes, upcoming Canadian centennial celebrations, and the completion of the nation-wide highway, all link Come Home Year with confederate complicity and, ironically, Canadian assimilation. As Johnston writes,

these Newfoundlanders had been told by relatives or had read in ads placed in mainland newspapers that they were coming home to a new Newfoundland, the post-Confederation Newfoundland so different from the one they had left that they would hardly recognize it. They were told that once they saw that Newfoundland no longer lagged behind the rest of the world, they would want to stay for good. (52)

For some, Come Home Year was an opportunity to assert the importance of post-Confederation Newfoundland identity, to reinforce cultural ties across the diaspora. Arthur Scammell’s commissioned promotional song, “A Newfoundland Come Home Song,” expresses this sentiment:

Our time spent together will ebb like the tide,
Distance may part us but never divide;
We want you to know we are proud that you came –
Some things have changed but the folks are the same. (117)

The lines gently allude to Confederation and the many changes of the 1950s and 60s, but assert that despite these changes a Newfoundland culture or identity remains constant – “the folks are the same.” The sentimental optimism of the song effectively evoked nostalgia in many of the island’s lost sons and daughters. But Johnston’s take on the event is cynical. He writes, “it was a kind of amnesty, as if, on behalf of their relatives who could not bring themselves to do it, the government had declared to prodigal sons and daughters who had gone to the mainland to find work that all was forgiven, there were no hard feelings” (51). In *Baltimore’s Mansion*, then,

migration to the mainland is regarded as a kind of betrayal, a new way of voting for Canada even when it takes place following Confederation. Out-migration is perceived as complicit with the confederate cause, and by extension, with the foreclosure of Newfoundland identity. As a result, a full return is never possible, for former migrants are marked as outsiders.

Out-migration not only exacerbates the loss and guilt of Confederation, but also problematizes the citizenship that is a central part of identity. For the Johnston family, identity and citizenship are still thought of in pre-Confederate terms, so that the label “Canadian” is synonymous with “outsider,” even two decades after Confederation. But who qualifies as an outsider shifts; the layers of belonging and the factions of identity are complex and often self-contradictory. Ironically, Arthur is forced to become a federal fisheries inspector, and travels around the province to various fish plants. When he attempts to shut down a plant at a small community on the southern shore, he is met with extreme hostility: “In the shouting he makes out the words ‘townies,’ ‘traitors’ and ‘Canadians.’ There is no contradiction for these people, despite having voted for Confederation, denouncing feds as ‘Canadians.’ By Canadian, they do not mean confederate, they simply mean outsider, a kind of hyper-townie” (155). Johnston points out that for many outport Newfoundlanders in isolated communities, who had never seen Canada and knew nothing about it, a vote for Confederation was simply a vote for improved social programs, and did not change their perception of their own identity or citizenship. They see “Canadians” as interlopers who may have brought social programs but who also don’t understand their way of life and attempt to interfere with their livelihood. For them, the terms “Newfoundlander” or “Canadian” have nothing to do with political citizenship, but are entirely concerned with personal demarcations of identity.

But for those who, like Arthur, had already left Newfoundland or who were going to leave, diaspora highlights the profound change and loss associated with Confederation. The individual alienation that the expatriate feels in mainland Canada reflects the larger alienation of the island within the Canadian state. For Arthur, this alienation is felt as a kind of physical trauma, when, “at college in Truro, Nova Scotia, on April 1, 1949, induction day, the day Newfoundland joined Confederation, my father was set upon by a group of his mainland friends who hoisted him on their shoulders and, ignoring his protests that he would always be a Newfoundlander and the tears streaming down his face, carried him around the campus shouting, ‘Three cheers for the new Canadian!’” (199). The Canadians’ blindness to his distress, the physical restraint, and the forcible application of a new identity despite his contrary self-identification, mirrors what many Newfoundlanders regarded as the forcible co-option of the island as a whole by a colonizing nation that had “rigged the referendum” (56). While Arthur returns to Newfoundland, years after Confederation he still regards himself as “a man without a country” (176). The shift from citizen of Newfoundland to citizen of Canada is felt not merely as a change in political labels but as a kind of displacement from the nation of origin. Indeed when Arthur returns from the mainland it seems as though “all of Newfoundland had been resettled in his absence, its destiny as profoundly changed as if it had been floated on a raft across the Gulf” (252). Confederation is imagined as a physical displacement.

At another point in the narrative, this idea that Confederation mimics displacement is literalized: Johnston describes the Newfoundland expatriates and travellers who left their country before the referendum with Newfoundland passports that did not expire until 1954, only to find themselves “itinerant citizens of a country that, since they saw it last, had ceased to be.” Johnston continues:

In no sense were these people anything but Newfoundlanders until the first time they set foot on “native” soil, or until their five years were up. There were supposed to be some who neither came back home nor acquired new passports from the Canadian embassies in their countries of residence. Instead, they stayed away in protest, in self-exile from the country that now occupied their own. I loved the idea of these Newfoundlanders in the States, in England, Germany or France blending in among foreigners, still carrying their outdated passports. Citizens of no country, staging their futile, furtive, solitary protests that were at once so grand and so absurd. I wasn’t even sure if there were such people, or if it was possible for anyone to live that way for long without detection. But it was a good story. (228)

For these “itinerant citizens,” out-migration means the possibility of hanging on to citizenship as a form of imagined community, “imagined” not only because in the minds of each citizen “lives the image of their communion” (Anderson, *Imagined* 6), but also because of their nation’s imaginariness, its non-existence.

A Citizen of Story

The idea of “a good story” is the central theme of Johnston’s memoir; it even seems to shape life itself. As Johnston describes meeting his father in the yard the night before he is to go to the mainland for university, for example, he reveals both the constructedness of his story and a sense of inevitability about it. The circumstances of the moment are similar to those of when Charlie revealed his own secret to Arthur, the night before Arthur left for college:

I know, before he begins to speak, that he is going to tell me. Everything favours it. If he does not tell me now he never will. I am leaving. He knows I plan to be a writer. He knows, or hopes, that someday I will write about him. He cannot get the story straight in his mind and believes that when I tell it he will understand it better.

I do not know it yet, but there is a symmetry here that it would be pointless for us to resist. The time of the year is the same, early September, which in Newfoundland means early fall. Even the time of day is the same, almost twilight. (196)

Johnston’s metanarrative here points to the importance of story as a means of making sense of his family’s lives. In an interview with *Quill & Quire*, Johnston makes the imagined quality of

place in his narrative explicit: “I wanted to describe Ferryland [the outport where his father grew up] as a place of the mind – of my father's mind and of my own. [...] All the landmarks in Ferryland are capitalized, for example. Even if we're talking about the Pool, it's capitalized because, for my father, these places were kind of a template for everything that happened to him afterwards” (Pyper 20). For Johnston, Ferryland constitutes an “archetypal personal geography” (Pyper 20) whose imagined quality highlights both its importance in the construction of cultural identity, and its ephemerality.

The imagined quality of Johnston's Ferryland can be extended to his Newfoundland as a whole. Wayne claims that “for someone who, like me, was born after 1949, the very existence of the country known as Newfoundland was just a story” (228). While Johnston uses the diminutive “just,” his memoir reveals that story is vital to the continuation of both personal and national identity. This story is not, as Tony Tremblay suggests, the recreation of “a pre-1949 ‘independent’ Newfoundland” (273), but is rather the construction of an alternative Newfoundland that is not confined to the pre-Confederation era but rather continues to exist in the imagination. *Baltimore's Mansion* performs the re-construction of Newfoundland citizenship as narrative, an ongoing connection to an “imagined community” that is imagined in part because it is forever relegated to the realm of what might have been. Stan Dragland draws a similar link between literature and the idea of the nation when he suggests that “Newfoundland is not a failed nation but a work in progress. [...] Newfoundland is very much alive *as an idea* and getting livelier with every book written on and out of the place” (189, my emphasis). As Dragland affirms, the nation exists not within the political arena, but within the culture and imagination of Newfoundlanders, and regardless of Confederation its story is still being written.

Out-migration, then, is a key plotline in this story of the nation. Throughout Johnston's memoir, we are inundated with people leaving: Wayne's great aunts who marry American servicemen, his Uncle Dennis, his own father who leaves for college, Wayne's siblings, Wayne himself. When his retired parents decide to leave Newfoundland for Alberta, the move is regarded with a sense of inevitability: "though they were in their sixties, the time had come, as it seemed it did eventually for all Newfoundlanders, to set out on their journey westward" (232). This journey is seen as one of "inscrutable necessity" (249). The organizing motif of the memoir, that of Lord Baltimore who established the settlement of Ferryland in 1628 and left with his fellow settlers after just one winter, sets up this inevitable pattern of out-migration: "theirs was the first casting-off, the first abandonment, the first admission of defeat. They were the first to pack up and leave everything behind. They blazed a trail of retreat that many after them would follow" (260). The book's title, *Baltimore's Mansion*, establishes this "trail of retreat" as a framing image for his family's story, reinforcing the connections between identity, Confederation, and out-migration. The mansion stands as a symbol of both ambitious hopes for the future, and abandonment. But as we are told of the archeological digging in Ferryland that is revealing the lost artefacts of Baltimore's mansion, the image also comes to stand for the careful uncovering of the past, and the reconstruction of that past, the reimagining of it, from the pieces retrieved. *Baltimore's Mansion*, then, the book, is also an archaeological site, a reconstruction of a narrative of the past from fragments of memory, second-hand stories, historical facts, and speculative fiction. The text gives the impression of constant revision, as Johnston 'the archaeologist' – in the Foucauldian sense of rejecting the authority of traditional historiography – uncovers new secrets, new pieces of the narrative, and jumps between decades to fill in the gaps.

While Baltimore's retreat from Newfoundland is one of defeat, for Johnston, out-migration is crucial to preventing the daily lived experience of Newfoundland from interfering with this imagined Newfoundland nation. Thus Wayne wonders how to tell his father "that I have chosen the one profession that makes it impossible for me to live here. That I can only write about this place when I regard it from a distance. That my writing feeds off a homesickness that I need and that I hope is benign and will never go away, though I know there has to be a limit. And that someday it will break my heart" (236). The "distance" that Johnston needs enables his imagination to construct the nation not only as it was but as it "should have been" (186). Johnston calls the story of what might have been had Confederation been voted down a "ghost history": "Cashin as prime minister. The Pink, White and Green as the national flag. In that ghost history, the independents had won the referendum, the members of the national parliament of Newfoundland has been meeting since 1949, and it was Joey's and not Cashin's name whom no one under forty could remember" (241-242). Here, Johnston does not just construct a story of what might have happened, rather he constructs a ghost history that runs parallel to the "real" history. By using the word "history" to describe what *did not* happen, Johnston suggests that history itself is just a story, and that remembering and imagining are closely linked. Johnston expands on the concept in his interview with Wyile: ghost history "has always been a theme in my work, the question of what is versus what might have been, and how the road of what might have been does still go on, at least people are aware of it all the time, so they have this parallel existence between their reality and their hopes and their dreams" ("Afterlife" 112). Johnston argues that in Newfoundland there is a "healthy obsession" with the circumstances of Confederation and what might have been had people voted emotionally rather than "bargaining self-reliance and self-definition, for material, if not wealth, at least security" ("Afterlife" 112).

The alternative histories that might have been are “ghostly” not only because they have an ethereal, intangible quality, but because they haunt Newfoundlanders, even decades after the moment of their demise.

These themes are fleshed out in the section of the memoir in which a young Wayne and his father take a round trip across the island on the train in 1968, not long before the railway is set to be closed down by its new post-Confederation owners, CNR. As Johnston explains, the railway is endangered by the new Trans-Canada highway and its faster buses, and the debate between the train and the bus becomes a revival of the old Confederation debate, with patriotic, nostalgic anti-confederate Newfoundlanders clinging to the railway, and confederates extolling the progress of the bus. On the trip, Arthur encounters a man who represents the pro-bus side, who advises him, in an echo of confederate rhetoric, that he should “face the facts”:

‘We’re a country of fact-facing bus-boomers,’ my father said, grinning, looking out the window.

‘A province,’ the fact-facing bus-boomer said. ‘We’re a province now, not a country. Never were a country, really. If you know your history.’ I heard in his voice a politeness that was meant to be transparently insincere, patronizing, the tone of someone who held in reserve a trump card he need never play. I could just see it. A riot on the train fought over a matter decided twenty years ago.

‘I know *my* history,’ my father said. (79, emphasis original)

The semantic question of whether or not Newfoundland ever was a “country” (as opposed to merely a colony or dominion of Britain) becomes a conflict of multiple versions of history.

Arthur’s adamant assertion that he knows *his* history is also an assertion of patriotic feeling. His own version of national history, in which Newfoundland *was* a “country,” goes hand-in-hand with his current claims to “country” status, claims based on culture and identity that continue to be asserted regardless of the political changes brought about by Confederation.

For Johnston, the way in which history is constructed and imagined as narrative is therefore central to the personal and cultural identity of Newfoundlanders. For many

Newfoundlanders, the island's unique history is one of the main loci of Newfoundland difference.

Elsewhere, Johnston writes

There is a misconception, by some people much encouraged, by others simply allowed to go unchallenged, that Newfoundland was 'born' in 1949, that in 1949, Canadian history retroactively became our history. That, for instance, 'our' first prime minister was Sir John A. MacDonald. The same misconception is applied to pre-confederate Canadian literature. Our actual history and literature now exist in a kind of limbo where not even many archivists set foot. ("*A History*" 140)

Johnston implies that remembering and celebrating a unique past prevents Newfoundland culture from assimilation within the Canadian nation. To combat the historical "limbo" of which Johnston warns, many Newfoundland writers reconstruct a distinct Newfoundland past in their historical novels, plays, or memoirs.²⁸ In this article, Johnston goes on to extol the importance of Judge D.W. Prowse's *History of Newfoundland* (1895), a text that is central in Johnston's novel *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*. In *Baltimore's Mansion*, pondering the decision of many outporters to vote for Confederation, Johnston wonders "in how many homes or even classrooms was there a copy of Prowse's *History of Newfoundland*? Time was local, personal and even then less enduring than their experience of space, the circumscribed geography of 'home'" (89). Johnston suggests that had these outporters known more about their country's history, fewer would have voted for Confederation. Thus history is perceived as central to the idea of the nation, and Confederation enacts a "sudden severance from the past" (143), a fundamental rupture between pre and post-Confederation identities. By returning to that pre-Confederation past, continuously, almost compulsively, in both the memoir and his novels *The*

²⁸ Bernice Morgan, author of the historical novels *Random Passage* and *Waiting for Time*, both claims this goal of connecting present Newfoundland identity with Newfoundland history and connects it explicitly to out-migration: "a lot of those children, those young people who are reading [*Random Passage*] are going away, they're going to leave Newfoundland, most of them forever, and it would be nice for them to know where they came from, you know? And why people came here in the first place" (qtd. in Fuller *Writing* 116).

Colony of Unrequited Dreams and *Time of their Lives* (1987), Johnston attempts to mend that rupture, writing a narrative of Newfoundland identity that stands separate from Canadian history, and that accommodates multiple perspectives, alternative possibilities, and archaeological fragments.

The imagined community of Newfoundland, for Johnston, is also intimately connected with landscape and geography. “The land,” Wayne’s father tells him, “is more important than the country. The land is there before you when you close your eyes at night and still there in the morning when you wake. No one can make off with the land the way they made off with the country in 1949” (227). While the nation as a political entity has been lost, the land still functions as the physical locus for the imagined community. The importance of physical space is revealed in an anecdote about Wayne’s parents later in life. In 1992, Johnston’s aging father and mother move to Alberta, where some of their children live:

“The Newfoundland I knew is gone,” my father said.

He said it regretfully, but it also sounded a little like wishful thinking – wishful thinking that it might not be too late to escape the pull of the past. He was hoping that space would do what time had not. [...] It might not be too late for him, for them to not mind that nationality was obsolete, that it no longer mattered where they lived because the Newfoundland they loved, *their* Newfoundland, did not exist. (229)

But a few weeks after they arrive “abroad” (248), Arthur has a heart attack; four years later, one day after returning to Alberta after a visit to Newfoundland, he has a stroke. Clearly the stress and emotion of leaving his home, and likely the physical impact of travelling, lead to serious consequences for his health. Six years after moving to Alberta, Wayne’s parents return to Newfoundland. Nationality is *not* “obsolete,” it *does* matter where they live because “their Newfoundland” is inscribed in their very bodies. While they can never return to the past, the place itself still has a firm grip on their sense of themselves. Newfoundland, then, is not a lost

nation relegated to the past but an imagined community with an ongoing “sense of nationhood” (Johnston “Afterlife” 119). Johnston argues that “for a person to go from Saskatchewan to Manitoba is simply to go from one province of this country to another; for a person to go from Newfoundland to anywhere else in the world is to leave a country, not literally, but in every other sense” (“Afterlife” 119-120). I do not believe that Johnston means to suggest that the Saskatchewanian would not feel a sense of loss or homesickness in leaving his or her home, but his statement reveals the extent to which Newfoundland’s recent independent status continues to animate Newfoundlanders’ constructions of their own identity.

The vastness and mysteriousness of the landscape justifies its nation status. The symbol of the train, so important to Arthur, is linked to this perception of geography, since the vast landscape of the interior can only be appreciated by train, which cuts a narrow swath through the wilderness. As young Wayne reflects, “my father had wanted me to see all this. How much land there was, how like a country Newfoundland was in its dimensions and variousness” (88). “The point of this journey,” Wayne adds, “was to get me away from the sea so that when I went back to living within two miles of it, I would know the land was there, land whose capacity to inspire wonder in all those who beheld it was in no way diminished by its being coloured the colour of Canada on maps” (88-89). Arthur suggests that it is the inability to comprehend the vastness of this unknown landscape that led many fishermen to vote for Confederation: “they had conceived of Newfoundland as a ribbon of rock, a coast without a core, a rim with water outside and nothing, a void, inside. [...] They had had no idea when they cast their votes what they were voting for or what they were renouncing. They had not known there was a country” (89). Here the question of whether or not Newfoundland was ever really a “country” recurs, and the source of the conflict is identified not as the nuances of political definition, but rather as a problem of

the knowledge of geography. “Country,” here, is a term whose meanings of ‘rural landscape’ and ‘nation’ are not different meanings but are rather coterminous. For Arthur, the existence of the nation literally depends on one’s ability to imagine the country.

For Johnston, that Newfoundland is an island is key to its continuing identity as a separate culture. The clear borders that separate Newfoundland from the rest of Canada are central to the imagined geography of cultural identity. Johnston recalls his impressions upon first seeing the gulf separating Newfoundland from mainland Canada as a boy: “The other side of *this* gulf was remoter than the moon, on which men had just landed and which I had seen with my own eyes countless times. Only on TV and in photographs had I ever seen the world alleged to exist beyond the shores of Newfoundland. I had read about it in books, but any book not set in Newfoundland was to me a work of fiction. Anywhere but Newfoundland was to me as fabled a place as the New World must have been to Cabot or Columbus” (94, emphasis original). The rest of Canada is not even visible, and seems so different from his own experience that he cannot even comprehend it. According to Johnston, “an island until you leave it is the world” (120). This phrase is repeated, with a small variation, emphasizing the mantra: “Any place between you and which there is land is more real than a place from which you are separated by the sea. An island to someone who has never left it *is* the world. An island to someone who has never seen it does not exist” (218, emphasis in original). These phrases connect the geography of Newfoundland as an island with its identity as an imagined community, physically and therefore cognitively isolated from the country that has adopted it and the continent alongside which it sits. Once Wayne does leave it, it becomes possible for him to imagine his homeland as a construct, to make it a place of fiction, and therefore to preserve it as a possible nation.

The final lines of the text illustrate how story works to preserve the nation by stopping time. Johnston imagines his grandfather at the moment of his death: “As he looks out at the sea, everything is as it was before he crossed the stream, before he crossed over into Avalon. The House, the Gaze, the Beach, the Downs, the Pool, Ferryland Head, Hare’s Ears, Bois Island, Gosse Island and the sea. All are fixed in a moment that for him will never pass” (272). As David Williams argues, this moment in the memoir is a means of preserving “the world in a moment of fixity.” The text is therefore a way “to fix the ‘nation’” in a manner that will endure (130). I would add that the distance of out-migration is crucial to preventing daily life from interfering with this fixing of the nation.

The Colony of Unrequited Dreams and the Diasporic Imaginary

The importance of history and geography to the imagined nation is paralleled in *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*, to which *Baltimore’s Mansion* has been called the “nonfiction counterpart” (Dragland 188). As Danielle Fuller argues, “if *Baltimore’s Mansion* is a personal elegy for ‘the circumscribed geography of “home”’ possible in pre-Confederate Newfoundland (89), then [*Colony*] operates as a public elegy for the lost dream of a nation-state” (“Strange” 30). The books were published a year apart, with *Baltimore’s Mansion* appearing in 1999, the fiftieth anniversary of Confederation. The texts were thus being written and published at a time when Confederation had returned to the forefront of Newfoundlanders’ consciousness, when the upcoming anniversary cast light on the fact that, as Bruce Porter notes in the anniversary issue of *TickleAce*, “the same anxiety that marked the vote of 1948 pervades its cultural psyche still” (7). As I suggested in Chapter One, much has been written on *Colony* and its treatment of Confederation, Joey Smallwood, and Newfoundland history. But like *Baltimore’s Mansion*,

Colony also couples Confederation with the experience of out-migration, and the displacement of both Smallwood in his early life, and Johnston himself, are key.

Colony depicts several examples of the Newfoundland diasporic imaginary in early twentieth-century New York. As a young man, Smallwood moves to New York in order to pursue his socialist ambitions. Smallwood's reasons for leaving are entirely personal, but as he boards the ship that will take him to the mainland he places his departure within the context of the diaspora that had already been in progress for decades: "To leave or not to leave, and having left, to stay away or to go back home. I knew of Newfoundlanders who had gone to their graves without having settled the question, some who never left but were forever planning to and some who went away for good but were forever on the verge of going home" (144). In New York, he moves in to a boarding-house nicknamed "the Newfoundland Hotel" because so many Newfoundlanders live there: "the hotel was like some sort of vertically arranged indoor community, as if the entire population of some outpost had been relocated to New York and was now being housed in this one building. Each floor was like a neighbourhood, each hallway on each floor like a street" (157). Within the building, the residents leave their doors open to welcome visitors from other rooms in the tradition of small outpost communities. Fielding, the love interest who follows Smallwood to the city, sums up the boarding-house with characteristic acerbity: "have you ever seen so many island-pining, mother-missing, sweetheart-I-left-behind-bemoaning, green arsed Newfoundlanders in your life?" (158). But Smallwood remains an outsider to this imaginary, closing his door and refusing to participate in the evening socializing and parties, refusing to become a part of the community. His choice of residence is not motivated by any desire to become part of the expatriate community. Rather, "it was convenient," he explains, "aside from the fact that I could afford it, because it was about a block from Fifth

Avenue and five minutes' walk from Union Square" (136). His place of residence serves only to emphasize his difference, by juxtaposing the tight-knit community with the isolation in which he chooses to live. Smallwood's self-imposed exile from the community foreshadows the tenuous relationship that he will have with his country as the father of Confederation. Smallwood is a man who dreams of becoming the Prime Minister of Newfoundland, but who holds himself apart from his compatriots. He is in some circles considered a "representative" Newfoundlander, and proclaims his identity proudly, but at the same time can pass for a Jew, because of his nose, or an Irishman, because of his accent, when circumstances make such passing beneficial to his project of campaigning for socialism. This self-isolation and contradictory identity are key to the characterization of a man who will, as much out of personal political ambition as for ideological reasons, drag his country into Confederation against the will of 48% of its citizens; he will later tell us that "I decided I would be [Confederation's] champion in part because it was the one cause that, far-fetched and unlikely to succeed, had no champion" (433). While he tells us he believes in the cause, his personal motivations cloud the moral and economic reasons for Confederation.²⁹ Throughout the book, Smallwood continues to be a man whose identity stands separate from the rest of the nation. His initial isolation from the tight-knit diasporic imaginary is important background to Smallwood's complex and contradictory vision of his country.

The diasporic imaginary is extended when Smallwood, unemployed and reduced to sleeping in a park, is recognized as a Newfoundlander by the brand of his boots. Hines is a

²⁹ Johnston explains to Wyle that "the people who voted for Confederation, many of them, I have no doubt (and I have spoken with them), did so very reluctantly and did so with an enormous burden of guilt on their shoulders. They believed in their own hearts that they were acting as traitors, that they were bargaining self-reliance and self-definition, for material, if not wealth, at least security. [...] My guess is that in 1948, something like seventy-five to eighty-five per cent of the population, from an emotional point of view, wanted an independent Newfoundland" ("Afterlife" 112). While Johnston's suspicions cannot be proven, what is important is that for him Confederation was, on an emotional or ideological level, much less popular than the referendum results would indicate. Smallwood's decision to bring Confederation to the table, then, is for Johnston closer to a cultural betrayal than to democratic action.

fellow expat who periodically wanders the parks on the lookout for Newfoundlanders. He publishes a newspaper for expatriate Newfoundlanders called the *Backhomer*, and Smallwood goes to work for him, writing articles on Newfoundland subjects, and editing the “lost Newfoundlanders” page of letters searching for long lost friends and family. “We were always homesick; we could not help it, since all we ever wrote or read about at work was Newfoundland,” Smallwood tells us. “We were at once homesick and sick of home, sick to death of hearing about it, writing about it, sick of keeping tabs on and interviewing other homesick Newfoundlanders” (190-191). Newfoundland becomes central to Smallwood’s day-to-day life, but it exists for him only as painful loss, as a homeland just out of reach.

The *Backhomer*, as a text distributed to Newfoundland readers in forty different countries (185) connects its readers in a diasporic imaginary.³⁰ Anderson places great importance on the newspaper as a means of constructing imagined communities, as “each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion” (*Imagined* 35). The *Backhomer*, which is probably not a daily and which would have taken some time to distribute to other cities and countries in the 1920s, does not constitute quite the same sort of daily ritual that Anderson has in mind, nor is it consumed on such a large scale. But the knowledge that the same issue is being read almost simultaneously by other displaced Newfoundlanders constructs the diaspora as an imagined community. Hines periodically publishes the abroad subscription lists, “putting asterisks and exclamation points

³⁰ While *The Backhomer* is an invention of Johnston’s, the magazine and the expatriate community that surrounds it does have some historical basis. Several American cities in this period had large enough populations of Newfoundland migrants to warrant clubs like the Newfoundlanders’ Mutual Benefit Association and the Cabot Club. *The Backhomer* resembles *The Atlantic Guardian*, the later magazine started in 1945 by Arthur Scammell, Brian Cahill and Ewart Young, and published out of Montreal. The title is reminiscent of the current magazine *The Downhomer*, now called *Downhome Magazine*, which has been published since 1988 out of Ontario and caters to expatriate Newfoundlanders, even including a “where are they now” section.

after the names of the farthest-flung subscribers” (191), emphasizing to the readers that they are a part of such a community, and making that community more intimate by giving names to some of the fellow “communicants” he or she imagines. Since the paper is also read by Newfoundlanders at home, it also connects the diaspora with the homeland in one imagined community. But rather than identifying with this community, Smallwood fantasizes about more extreme alienation from it, imagining himself as one of his “Lost Newfoundlanders,” “dropping out of sight and coming across thirty years from now, in a paper like the *Backhomer*, a picture of me as I was when I was twenty-four. [...] For a clean getaway, I would have to do little more than change my name” (192). Smallwood’s fantasy again emphasizes his alienation from his own community.

Hines also keeps a boarding house called the Coop, and rents out the rooms at a reduced rate to anyone who can prove himself to be a Newfoundlander. The Coop is free for two weeks, after which time if the resident finds a job, he can stay on indefinitely. Hines’ charity is part of the diasporic network, and is extended only within a group defined by national parameters. Here Smallwood finds himself forcibly a part of, rather than isolated from, the diasporic imaginary. But the community is a place where imagining the homeland is a painful, rather than productive, creative process, and seems to bring him further from home rather than closer to it.

Hines is also the minister of a church he calls the Pentecostal Church of Newfoundland, which features a large wooden carving of Newfoundland on the pulpit. He prints his sermons in the *Backhomer*. In his column, Hines “forever likened Newfoundlanders to the Jews, pointing out parallels between them. There was a ‘diaspora’ of Newfoundlanders, he said, scattered like the Jews throughout the world. He saw himself as their minister, preaching to his flock from his columns, most of which began with epigraphs from the Book of Exodus” (191). He is fond of

telling his reporters in lofty, biblical language to “remember [...] thou art a Newfoundlander and unto Newfoundland thou shalt return” (191). While Hines is an eccentric, even ominous character, and while Johnston’s rendering of his church is rather hyperbolic and satirical, the ties between religion and nationality are nevertheless striking and serve to emphasize the strong feelings of ethnic identity and difference that Newfoundlanders tend to share in displacement. Where in *1949* the comparison between Newfoundland out-migration and the Jewish diaspora highlights the hardship and prejudice experienced by newcomers to Canada, here the comparison serves to sanctify Newfoundland identity, giving the island an other-worldly, almost heavenly character. The place takes on an imagined quality that renders it just out of reach. The distant, sacred quality of the homeland is fleshed out in the only sermon that Smallwood attends:

Some of you who left that new found land were drawn here by prideful ambition. Some, like me, were driven here by shame. But most of you came here because you had to, and you believe yourselves to be as undeserving of your exile as Jonah was of being swallowed by the whale. But you are wrong, for because you are sinners, you deserve much worse than this.

Homesickness. What is that compared with hell-fire and damnation? You were homesick before you left home. You were in exile when you lived in Newfoundland. Homesickness is but the yearning for salvation. Newfoundland is but the place your body came from. Your true home is the birthplace of your soul, the place where it began and to which, when you have breathed your last, it will return. Remember, man, thou art a Newfoundlander and unto Newfoundland thou shalt return. (198)

In this odd sermon Newfoundland is at first merely “the place your body came from.” But as he ends the thought with the statement “unto Newfoundland thou shalt return,” Hines suggests that “Newfoundland” in fact represents the Garden of Eden, or heaven, that it is the “birthplace of [the] soul.” Newfoundland thus becomes spiritual, ethereal, but also a place of dramatic and irreparable loss. This loss is felt not only within the diaspora, but even as Smallwood returns home.

The Old Lost Land

After five years in New York, Smallwood approaches Newfoundland by sea:

It was as if I saw, for a fleeting second, the place as it had been while I was away, and as it would be after I was gone, separate from me, not coloured by my past or my perceptions, but strange and real as towns seem when you pass through them on your way to somewhere else, towns that you have never seen before but that seem remindful of some not-quite-remembered other life. A kind of hurt surged up in my throat, a sorrow that seemed to have no object and no cause, which I tried to swallow down but couldn't. It was the old lost land that I was seeing, as if, like fog, the new found one had lifted. How long I stood there staring at it, I'm not sure, seconds or minutes. When I came out of whatever "it" was, the new found land was back and tears were streaming down my face. (212)

This image of Smallwood as an outsider to his homeland echoes the isolation he felt from the Newfoundland diasporic community in the Newfoundland Hotel, and from Newfoundland itself as a homesick writer for the *Backhomer*. Here, this feeling of alienation is represented by the recurring image of the "old lost land." Although he is returning, he views the island with nostalgia, as though he can never fully return. Smallwood is terrified that his life will not make an impact on his nation's history, yet most readers know that he will go on to engineer Confederation, the most profound political change the island will undergo. That inevitable future looms in this scene, it is implicit in the phrase "on your way to somewhere else." And yet in this instant Smallwood sees the "old lost land" as a country estranged from him, "not coloured by [his] past or [his] perceptions." The "new found land" carries with it a ghostly other, its mirror image, the "old lost land." The country's political future is haunted by its alternate ghost histories, its "not-quite-remembered other lives." It is Smallwood's departure and return that makes this ghost visible.

The phrase "old lost land" initially appears at the beginning of the novel, as Smallwood's father rants "they should have called it Old Lost Land, not Newfoundland but Old Lost Land" (17). Here the phrase reads as the nonsensical ravings of a drunken man. But by the end of the

novel it has taken on significant meaning. The image of the “old lost land” is explicitly connected to Confederation when Smallwood has dinner with his parents, a few days before the second referendum. Charlie Smallwood once again is driven onto the deck to yell at the city below: “‘OLD LOST LAND,’ he roared. [...] ‘A country that might have been but may never be because of one of mine’” (480). Charlie’s phrasing captures the loss already inherent in the idea of the nation of Newfoundland – it is merely a colony, but “might have been” a country were it not for Confederation. The “old lost land,” then, is the loss of possibility for this “country of no country” (*Baltimore’s* 228).

The image of the “old lost land” also appears in *Baltimore’s Mansion*. Wayne’s parents and aunts and uncles long to forget the pain of Confederation, and hope that the defeat of Smallwood in the 1971 provincial election will help as they will no longer be “daily reminded by his face and his voice and his name in the paper of their father’s Old Lost Land” (186). Here, the “old lost land” is explicitly the island before Confederation and before the legacy of Smallwood’s rule. The “old lost land” exists in the memories of this generation of Newfoundlanders, separate from the political realities of the new Newfoundland. Its memory is painful, but it captures the essence of Newfoundland’s “greatness,” its physical geography rather than its colonial and political history.

In *Colony* the same idea noted in my discussion of *Baltimore’s Mansion*, that the greatness of the land is commensurate with status as a nation, prevails. Johnston makes the parallels between the two texts obvious, not only with the repetition of similar phrases, but also with the recurrence of an identical scene. The first passage below is from *Baltimore’s Mansion*, when Wayne asks his father how big Newfoundland is, and his father tries to show him on a

map. The second passage is from *Colony*, and appears in Fielding's journal at the beginning of the "Old Lost Land" chapter. Fielding recalls asking her father the very same question as a child.

"We're here," my father said, pointing at the tiny star that stood for St. John's. "Now last Sunday, when we went out for our drive, we went this far." He moved his finger in a circle about an inch across. Then he moved his hand slowly over the rest of the map. The paper crackled beneath his fingers. "Newfoundland is this much bigger than that," he said, making the motion with his hand again. "All this is Newfoundland, but it's not all like St. John's. Almost all of it is empty. No one lives there. No one's ever seen most of it." (*Baltimore's Mansion* 88)

"We're here," my father said, pointing at the tiny encircled star that stood for St. John's. "Now last Sunday, when we went out for our drive, we went this far." He moved his finger in a circle about an inch across. Then he moved his hand slowly over the rest of the map, the paper crackling expansively beneath his fingers. "Newfoundland is this much bigger than that," he said, making the motion with his hand again. "All this is Newfoundland, but it's not all like St. John's. Almost all of it is empty. No one lives there. No one's ever seen most of it." (*Colony* 128-129)

Johnston does not just recycle a similar image, but rather repeats the passage almost word for word. For those readers who have already read one of the texts, reading the second becomes an experience of *déjà vu*, even if one does not immediately or consciously recognize the passage.³¹ The overall effect is to ritualize the first awesome discovery of the landscape. But in both scenes this ritual discovery is tinged by loss. In *Baltimore's Mansion*, the scene prefaces Wayne and Arthur's pilgrimage across the island on one of the last train trips. In *Colony*, the scene opens the chapter entitled "Old Lost Land," in which Smallwood's departure from his homeland occurs.

³¹ Other similar scenes occur in both *Baltimore's Mansion* and *Colony*, such as the scene of the child arriving home to discover that his family is moving, with all their possessions already loaded into a truck. Here, Wayne's childhood experience parallels Smallwood's, not Fielding's. In fact Johnston was struck when he began writing *Colony* by all of the similarities between him and the real Joey Smallwood ("Afterlife" 115). Johnston has been criticized for turning Smallwood into a version of himself (Pierson 295). But as Wyle suggests in conversation with Johnston, the parallels and repetitions between the texts seem to "foreground that historical fiction like all fiction is to an extent autobiographical and to underscore Smallwood as an invention rather than a replica" (Johnston "Afterlife" 114). By autobiographically aligning himself with both Fielding and Smallwood, Johnston emphasizes the fact that *both* narrative voices in the novel are invented – both Fielding, the entirely fictional character, and Smallwood, the historical figure.

In the journal entry that opens the chapter, Fielding goes on to reflect on the lyrics to “The Ode to Newfoundland,” written by Sir Cavendish Boyle while he was governor of Newfoundland from 1901-1904:

Though they are anthem-like, there is something indefinably sad about the words, resigned, regretful, as if Boyle imagined himself looking back from a time when Newfoundland had ceased to be. It is the sort of song you might write about a place as you were leaving it by boat, watching it slowly fade from view, a place you believed you would never see again. He was governor of Newfoundland for only a few years, so he must have written it in the knowledge that he was soon to leave. (129)

In this passage, Confederation is foreshadowed with the image of Boyle looking back “from a time when Newfoundland had ceased to be.” This sense of impending loss is brought together with the image of leaving, so that Newfoundland “ceasing to be” and the physical departure from the island are felt with the same sadness and resignation. Fielding’s sense that Newfoundland’s anthem has a tone of loss and a subtext of departure is telling; even the trappings of nationalism seem to foretell eventual loss.

The primary narrative voice in the novel, the first-person voice of Smallwood, is speaking from a time far in the future; as Smallwood explains his dishevelled appearance upon first arriving in New York, for example, he does not just describe himself, but reflects that “there survives a photograph from that time,” which he goes on to describe (155). This narrative device signals that the narrative perspective is, while first-person, that of a man looking backward, relying on memory and artefacts like photos to recount his story. Throughout the novel, then, the tale is coloured by knowledge of the future. The tone of loss that seems to permeate every mention of Newfoundland as a country can thus be directly connected to the event that is not mentioned until some 432 pages into the novel, Confederation. Thus the Commission of Government is seen as a sort of preamble to Confederation: “Newfoundland was entering a

limbo, the whole country now was on the dole. We had admitted, *neither for the first nor the last time*, that nationhood was a luxury we could not afford” (339, my emphasis). Even earlier, upon crossing his first land border, that between New Brunswick and Maine, Smallwood reflects how arbitrary the border seems, since the landscape is identical on either side. He thinks

Perhaps we Newfoundlanders had been fooled by our geography into thinking we could be a country, perhaps we believed that by nothing short of achieving nationhood could we live up to the land itself, the sheer size of it. It seemed so nation-like in its discreteness, an island set apart from the main like the island-nations our ancestors left behind. Perhaps it was not patriotism that drove us on, so much as a kind of guilt-ridden sense of obligation. Yet no sooner had these thoughts occurred to me than I felt guilty for thinking them and chased them from my mind, telling myself I was only looking for an excuse to justify my leaving home, about which I was also feeling guilty. (154)

Although this moment in the text occurs decades before Confederation, long before the idea of Confederation has even occurred to Smallwood, long before even responsible government is given up to the rule of a British Commission, the past tense in the passage suggests that it has already occurred, that the nation’s fate has already been sealed. Here, guilt over his thought that Newfoundlanders had been “fooled” into thinking themselves a nation is intertwined with guilt over leaving home; again, Confederation and diaspora are coupled as similar or related griefs, griefs for which Smallwood feels guilty.

The idea here that Newfoundland’s impressive geography demands an equal political status recurs throughout the novel, and becomes one of Smallwood’s motivations for campaigning for Confederation: “here was the something commensurate with the greatness of the land itself, which I had so often felt was just beyond my understanding. The paradox of this permanent imminence was solved at last” (433). After Confederation, however, Smallwood reflects “I did not solve the paradox of Newfoundland or fathom the effect on me of its peculiar beauty. It stirred in me, as all great things did, a longing to accomplish or create something

commensurate with it. I thought Confederation might be it, but I was wrong” (552). In this moment Smallwood becomes an almost tragic character; despite the fervour with which he campaigned for Confederation, and the despotic arrogance with which he governed the new province for the following two decades, ultimately, secretly, he feels that he was wrong in pushing Newfoundland into Canada. His dreams of greatness for his country are left “unrequited,” and the country can never move beyond its status as a “colony” of somewhere else. Johnston is devious in deflating his Smallwood in this way, but he makes the regret that many Newfoundlanders feel over the fate of their country profound by putting it into the very man who orchestrated Confederation in the first place. Johnston argues that a “sense of grievance” over the loss of the nation has become a culturally foundational “animating myth” of Newfoundlanders” (“Afterlife” 119). The tragic irony of Johnston’s Smallwood is that he has succeeded in creating a cultural myth that “brings people together and holds people together,” by creating a legacy of loss and grievance. In this moment he becomes the quintessential Newfoundlander, the origin of what Johnston sees as an overwhelming “legacy of guilt” over the loss of the nation, a guilt that “distinguishes Newfoundland from the other parts of Canada” (“Afterlife” 113).

For many Newfoundlanders this regret over Confederation is, as in *Baltimore’s Mansion*, experienced as diaspora. As Paul Chafe writes,

While Johnston’s novel deals only briefly with the “Newfoundland diaspora” [...] it does deal extensively with the notion of Newfoundlanders “leaving” their colony/nation and “arriving” in a strange new country. In the opening lines of the novel, Sheilagh Fielding states that “[t]he past is literally another country now,” and she again expresses the anxiety generated by the loss of “cultural identity and cultural belonging” brought on by such a unique “diaspora” near the end, when she claims, “[w]e have joined a nation that we do not know, a nation that does not know us.” (323)

In other words, the physical movement of diaspora becomes a metaphor for the jarring experience of Confederation. The line “the past is literally another country now” opens *Colony*,

setting a tone of loss that will colour the entire text. Indeed Fielding's journal entry goes on to read "in this journal I write to people as if I am bidding them goodbye, as if they are asleep in the next room and will read what I have written in the morning when I'm gone" (8). Despite the fact that Fielding is not leaving, her engagement with her country and with Smallwood feels like a departure. This sentiment, in fact, bookends the novel. Fielding is also given the final lines in the book, in which she describes a train conductor celebrating on Confederation night by blowing his whistle:

I have often thought of that train hurtling down the Bonavista like the victory express. And all around it the northern night, the barrens, the bogs, the rocks and ponds and hills of Newfoundland. The Straits of Belle Isle, from the island side of which I have seen the coast of Labrador.

These things, finally, primarily, are Newfoundland.

From a mind divesting itself of images, those of the land would be the last to go.

We are a people on whose minds these images have been imprinted.

We are a people in whose bodies old sea-seeking rivers roar with blood.

(562)

Although the land endures, and the bogs and rocks do not care about Confederation (560), it is as though Newfoundlanders have been physically severed from this landscape, so that the images even of the physical topography exist not around them, but nostalgically imprinted in their "minds." The rivers of blood running through them seek the sea, as though they have been distanced from it and long to return. As Chafe puts it, "fearing the loss of her culture as her home transforms into another country, Fielding places Newfoundland *within* Newfoundlanders. [...] A peculiar form of immigrant, the Newfoundlander occupies the in-between space of identity" (343). There remains "always a longing for a return to what never was – the colony of Newfoundland *if only* things had turned out differently" (344). Diaspora, again, becomes a metaphor for Newfoundlanders' severance from an imagined colony of the past.

What Might Have Been

Alexander MacLeod argues that “In *Colony*, it seems that although we are encouraged to read history as a subjective, infinitely re-workable narrative that can be accepted, rejected, or edited at any time, we are simultaneously taught that there is nothing flexible about geographic discourse” (71). MacLeod reads Smallwood’s actions as examples of “environmental determinism” (78). But he misreads the way in which the physical geography of the island is linked to its political status: its identity as a “country” and its future as a province. MacLeod argues that in *Colony* “even Newfoundland’s entrance into Confederation is environmentally determined,” citing the divide between the urban anti-confederates and the confederate “baymen.” He argues that “Newfoundland is clearly not a nationalist ideology, nor a cultural entity, nor an imagined community. Though the colony is free to transform itself into a province, it remains, resolutely, a Rock, a ‘hard’ Canadian place where the forces of environmental determinism continue to shape the subjectivities of inhabitants” (80). What MacLeod misses is the intense dissonance between the “greatness” of the landscape, and the island’s colonial history and the provincial status to which it is relegated. He notes that the physical environment drives Smallwood to campaign for Confederation, but ignores Smallwood’s later realization that Confederation does *not* measure up to the land.

MacLeod also cites Fielding’s final comments that “it doesn’t matter to the mountains that we joined Confederation, nor to the bogs, the barrens, the rivers or the rocks. [...] These things, finally, primarily are Newfoundland” (Johnston 560-562). Paradoxically, MacLeod contends that this harsh physical environment, which persists in spite of Confederation, is characteristically “Canadian.” Of the avalanche that stuffs Smallwood’s neighbour’s mouth with snow early in the novel, MacLeod writes “a more iconic ‘Canadian’ death would be hard to

imagine” (72). He anachronistically identifies Johnston’s Newfoundland of the 1920s as a “naturalized, starkly physical Canadian landscape,” (76) decades before Newfoundland becomes part of Canada. What MacLeod’s comments do not consider is the way in which the persistence of this physical geography in fact *resists* assimilation into the Canadian nation. The island’s vast interior and clearly-defined borders suggest a Newfoundland “nationhood” (Johnston 154) that cannot be subsumed into a broader Canadian identity. MacLeod’s attempt to fit the novel within “the familiar spatial epistemologies consistently used to interpret Canadian [...] cultural geography” (76) merely homogenizes Canadian space, obscuring Johnston’s treatment of the Newfoundland nation as an uncomfortable fit within the Canadian state, and as an entity with a distinctive identity prior to Confederation.

MacLeod reads the novel as an example of Linda Hutcheon’s important concept of “historiographic metafiction” because it departs from the biographical facts of the real Smallwood’s life, because it includes a satirical condensed version of Prowse’s *History*, and because “its narration oscillates between two first-person points of view that interpret the same historical events from opposite perspectives” (69). But despite his convincing reading of *Colony* as an example of historiographic metafiction, MacLeod contends that geography determines both the course of Smallwood’s life and the fate of Newfoundland itself. He argues that “[a]lthough we are taught that the story of the past can be retold in multiple variations, we are also reminded that the story of space is literally set in stone” (72). Yet throughout the novel Johnston plays with alternative possibilities to Confederation, effecting what Wyile aptly calls “an allegorical meditation on ‘the road not taken’” (*Speculative* 126). MacLeod’s environmental determinist reading, which, as he points out, reflects many of the novel’s reviews and other scholarly articles, misses the fact that the “road not taken” is also a road embedded in the local

environment. Rather than a single, deterministic geography, Johnston creates a doubled geography, represented by the division between the “old lost land” and the “new found land.” In this dichotomy, Johnston represents the fork between the road not taken and the road taken, the nation of Newfoundland and Confederation. I argue that it is the disjuncture between Newfoundland’s impressive geography and its fate as a have-not province of Canada that provides the space for the most significant example of historiographic metafiction in the novel, the construction of the nation as imaginary, as a meditation on what “might have been.” *Colony* illustrates what Hutcheon identifies as a postmodern concern for the local, “in opposition to the uniform, the universal, the centralized” (19). Rather than fulfilling any universal image of Canadian geography, as MacLeod suggests, Johnston’s text questions the very notion of a pan-national geography and focuses his attention on the particularities and possibilities of Newfoundland space.

In the final section of the novel, in one of Fielding’s editorials dated 1959, Fielding alludes to the choice she made as a young girl to give up her children, connecting this event with the event of Confederation:

We have joined a nation that we do not know, a nation that does not know us.

The river of what might have been still runs and there will never come a time when we do not hear it.

My life for forty years was a pair of rivers, the river that might have been beside the one that was.

On the day this country joined Confederation, I was hiding out from history, mine, yours, ours. (560)

The image of the “river of what might have been” recurs. It is connected to the final image of the novel, Fielding’s statement that “we are a people in whose bodies old sea-seeking rivers roar with blood” (562). The river of what might have been runs in their very bodies, connecting Newfoundland identity with the “old lost land.” The image also appears in *Baltimore’s Mansion*,

where Johnston reflects on the bewilderment of his parents' generation at the loss of their nation, and their inability to let go of their other, ghost history. He writes "they had followed the river of what should have been, knowing it led nowhere" (186). Here, the "might" is transformed into "should," and the image takes on a darker tone of irreparable and unjust loss. The novel, then, is perhaps a lighter and more optimistic version than the memoir, but in both texts Newfoundlanders are haunted by ghost histories.

In Chapter Two I showed how the distance provided by out-migration enables Johnston to play with geographical and historical details in meaningful ways, and to challenge the idea of authenticity of place by constructing Newfoundland as an "imaginary homeland." But we can also take this argument further. Johnston's Newfoundland is not only an "imaginary homeland" in the sense that it challenges the authenticity of memory and place; it is also "imaginary" in the sense that it is a nation constructed in the mind as an imagined community. Drawing from the work of Slavoj Žižek, Mishra argues that "the nation itself is a fiction since it is built around a narrative imaginatively constructed by its subjects" (423). Thus "the fantasy of the homeland is then linked, in the case of the diaspora, to that recollected moment when diasporic subjects feel they were wrenched from their mother(father)land" (423). In the case of Newfoundland, the nation is literally a fiction, it exists only in the realm of story. But the rupture of diaspora enables the construction of the fantasy of the nation, the image of what "might have been," through the recollected moments of both departure and Confederation. In *Colony*, Johnston creates a fiction that represents the imagined quality of the nation through its meta-fictionality. *Baltimore's Mansion* shows that Johnston needs the distance from his homeland in order to imagine the Newfoundland nation. This same distance allows him to play with the country's pre-Confederation history, constructing a colony that occupies a shifting space. By highlighting the

constructedness of his representation of both the history and geography of Newfoundland, he emphasizes the nebulous quality of the Newfoundland nation – its imaginariness as a country that is no more, and as the point of origin for the diaspora.

Johnston tells Noah Richler that

I'm someone who, like Shelagh [sic] Fielding in *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*, believes that history – even recorded history – verges on chaos. The attempt to find patterns in history, the need for those patterns, and the *imposition* of those patterns on life and on art interest me because they are the tendencies that destroy a lot of people. *These* are the things that I write about, but I am not trying to put forward any of those interpretations myself. (qtd. in Richler 303, emphases original)

For Johnston, historiographic metafiction actually becomes a way of combating Confederation; he adds “when Shelagh [sic] Fielding says that after the referendum, there will always be the people and the place of Newfoundland, it is a way of countering historians trying to fit the place into patterns” (305). Newfoundland does not fit easily into the “pattern” or fantasy of Canadian union from sea to sea. Its pre-Confederate history does not naturally lead to Confederation, but rather combats it, as “Newfoundland is already outside whatever patterns there may or may not have been” in Canadian history and literature prior to 1949 (Johnston, qtd in Richler 303).

Johnston writes against traditional history by exposing the seams behind traditional historiography and making it suspect, by satirizing historiography, and by manipulating the historical record, creating a history with intentional changes or ‘errors’ that highlight the constructedness of historical narratives.

Prowse’s *History of Newfoundland* frames the novel, with excerpts from it serving as epigraphs to each of the novel’s parts. The novel’s first epigraph introduces its technique of historiographic metafiction from the first page: “The history of the Colony is only very partially contained in printed books; it lies buried under great rubbish heaps of unpublished records,

English, Municipal, Colonial and Foreign, in rare pamphlets, old Blue Books, forgotten manuscripts...” (no page, ellipsis original). Later on we are told that the *History* “was, as Prowse confessed in his foreword, not complete, it could not be at even ten times its eight hundred pages, for the instant he finished writing it a moment of history went unrecorded and even in what was written there were gaps, implausibilities, unsatisfying explanations and conjectures” (45). Prowse himself, then, admits to the limitations of historiography, the gaps, the errors, the impossibility of gathering all the documents into one historiographical narrative. By opening his historical novel with this admission, Johnston signals that his own historiography is similarly scattered. The epigraph acts as a sort of caveat or warning of the suspect history to follow. Prowse himself is a character in the novel, reduced by a stroke to delusions and confusions, writing “revisions” of his book that amount to nonsensical scribbles. After its publication he discovers many mistakes, and is tormented by the never-ending stream of documents continually coming to light (47). The man’s obsessive dementia reinforces the dubiousness of historiography, as well as warns of the dangers of an obsession with history. It is therefore exemplary of the scepticism and self-reflexivity of historiographic metafiction. Not only does it emphasize that history is, in Hutcheon’s words, a construction, “having been *made* by the historian through a process of selecting, ordering, and narrating” (15), it also exaggerates the unreliability of the historian. It therefore constitutes a challenge to the historian’s authority and “the traditional causal, closed, linear nature of narrative history” (Hutcheon 14).

Prowse’s *History* takes a central role in the plot of the novel; it is an object of obsession for Smallwood’s father, who carries on whole conversations with it, calling it “the Book” (65). As Bannister effectively argues, “over the course of the novel, The Book transforms into a type of secular Bible that impels [Joe Smallwood] to seek the truth about the past” (138). While Charlie

Smallwood's rants are drunken and often nonsensical, his conflict with the book derives from the illegible autograph that the senile Prowse writes in it, and the fraudulent "translation" by his grandson, Joe's schoolmate: "I was glad to hear from your son that you enjoyed my book so much. He and my grandson are great friends at Bishop Field, as you and I might have been had we gone to school together" (50). The comment exposes the serious class divisions that mark Newfoundland at this time, and for Charlie it takes on a tone of condescension, leading him to exclaim that the book "mocks me, it affronts me" (67). When Joe's mother throws it down the hill in frustration, it causes a fatal avalanche that becomes her and young Joe's devastating secret. The *History* is also the object of Joe's downfall at school, since the letters cut from another copy of the book form a letter sent to the newspaper designed to frame him. As Wyile argues, the object

symbolizes the intrusive presence of the narrative of the past, the cumulation of class hegemony and colonial subordination that overdetermines the circumstances in which Smallwood and Fielding encounter each other, and ultimately prevents them from realizing their mutual attraction. Thus, by being at the heart of the key intrigue in the novel, 'the book' suggests the malevolent, divisive effects of history in a class-bound, colonized society. (*Speculative* 156-157)

Smallwood retrieves his father's copy when the snow melts, and seems fated to carry the book with him throughout his life, taking it to New York, and carrying it despite its heft on his long arduous walk through the interior to unionize the sectionmen of the railway. He reads it over and over again with impressive zeal, until "it began to seem that this, and not the walk, was the epic task that I had set myself, to read the history of my country non-stop, over and over until I had committed it, word for word, to memory" (214). For Bannister, "Smallwood is depicted as a type of prophet: his arduous journey across the island enlightens him about the plight of his own folk, instilling in him the mission to see them through to the promised land, i.e. Confederation. [...] In place of religion, he gives Smallwood a conscience based on his relationship with history" (138).

These religious overtones echo Hines' sanctification of the Newfoundland diaspora, further elevating Newfoundlandness as a meaningful identity rather than an accident of colonialism. But this obsession with history, both as an authoritative document and as an ambition, is Smallwood's fatal flaw. His obsession does not leave room for alternative interpretations, perspectives, or futures.

Johnston, then, makes fun of the privileging of history, rendering it a physical object that can be powerful, that represents Newfoundland's colonial past and class divisions, but that also can be manipulated. Prowse's *History*, in 1895, identifies Confederation with Canada as "a consummation devoutly to be wished" (Johnston 429); it is the part of the historical narrative that has not been written yet, but that seems inevitably imminent. Historiographic metafiction resists the assimilation of Newfoundland history into a teleological narrative ending in Confederation with Canada. By playing with and questioning Prowse's teleological narrative, Johnston puts the outcome of Confederation itself into question.

Johnston also plays with Newfoundland history by adopting one of the island's most well-known historical figures as his protagonist and intentionally changing the details of his life. As we saw in Chapter Two, this manipulation of Joey Smallwood has been met with a great deal of discomfiture, with reviewers like Rex Murphy and Stuart Pierson denouncing Johnston's irreverent distortion of the historical record and of Smallwood as a historical figure. But these disruptions of traditional history serve aesthetic and political purposes. Johnston places Smallwood, for example, in the midst of the notorious 1914 *S.S. Newfoundland* sealing disaster, which he shifts to 1916.³² This moment becomes the driving force behind Smallwood's turn to

³² In 1914 the crew of the sealing vessel *Newfoundland* were caught in a storm and separated from their ship for 53 hours. Seventy-eight sealers died of exposure. The event emphasized the deep class divisions in Newfoundland society, as the profit-driven captain of another ship, Abram Kean, turned the men out onto the ice despite the changing weather. The tragedy has been memorialized in several literary works, most notably Cassie Brown's *Death on the Ice* (1972).

socialism; it therefore dramatizes what was for the real Smallwood a more gradual realization. But the event also allows Johnston to tap into a crucial moment in Newfoundland's collective memory. The war years, marred by the disasters of the *S.S. Newfoundland* and the Battle of Beaumont Hamel, became, through their horrific losses, defining moments of Newfoundland identity.³³ Johnston both captures the sealing disaster as a key event in his nation's story, and uses it to literalize Smallwood's disconnection from his homeland. Smallwood is a journalist, not a sealer, and is made to stay on the ship while his bunkmates go out on to the ice to their deaths. His impotence and estrangement from the sealers that represent his countrymen and his class are emphasized when the storm comes on, and Smallwood lies alone in the sleeping quarters. When the bodies of the men are found he becomes a perverse voyeur: "I saw what I had not been able to through my binoculars: that these were not survivors but a strange statuary of the dead. I was not repulsed by what I saw. I could not take my eyes away" (107). While his later ambitions to bring Newfoundland into Confederation are justified by his desire to rescue his working class countrymen from poverty, this scene casts doubt upon his intentions, or his abilities, to represent Newfoundland's sealers and fishermen and their families. Johnston's Smallwood is always an outsider.

Johnston's fictionalization of this iconic moment in Newfoundland history is just one of the many 'made up' aspects of this fictional biography, which also include Fielding, Smallwood's life-long love interest and sometimes nemesis; and a fictional trek across the island to unionize railway workers. As Johnston writes in his response to Murphy's review, "There is

³³ On July 1, 1916, The Newfoundland Regiment was decimated in the Battle of Beaumont Hamel; 710 men were killed or wounded. Interestingly, Johnston does not discuss the battle in his novel. Johnston argues that historical events that are absent from the novel were left out simply because they were not germane to the narrative design ("Afterlife" 109-110). But the elegiac tone of the novel, and its awareness of Newfoundland's colonial subordination to Mother Britain, make the war losses conspicuously absent.

no reason for us to be so much in the thrall of our historical figures that we cannot suspend our disbelief when writers of fiction ring variation on their lives” (Johnston “Truth” D1). Johnston suggests that by playing with Smallwood in this way he diminishes the incredible power that Smallwood still has over Newfoundland’s “collective memory.” It is because of the very fact that Smallwood is, as Murphy puts it, a figure “that so many Newfoundlanders still remember” (49), at once notorious and exalted, that Johnston manipulates him, teasing out what Johnston calls an “emotional truth” (“Truth” D1) rather than venerating him as the force behind Newfoundland’s inevitable future as a province of Canada.

The imagined community constructed by the novel excludes Canadians from full understanding – when insiders recognize the geographical and historical inaccuracies, such as the changes made to Smallwood’s biography, they are jarred into recognition of their insider status, interpellated as Newfoundlanders. This occurs regardless of current location. This interpellation, then, establishes difference, identifying Newfoundland as a recent addition to the Canadian state whose unique and separate history continues to distinguish it from its fellow provinces. The novel’s plurality of perspectives and histories, and its problematization of class differences, encompasses the heterogeneity of Newfoundland identity, even as it draws Newfoundlanders together in an imagined community defined against the rest of Canada.

Johnston does venture into dangerous territory with his imagined community, however. In the final section of the book, Fielding’s *Field Day* article from 1959, the ten-year anniversary of Confederation, Fielding compares herself to Shanawdithit, or Nancy April, the supposed last of the Beothuk.³⁴ In Chafe’s assessment, “Fielding perhaps foresees her entrance into the

³⁴ Shanawdithit died of tuberculosis in 1829 in St. John’s. In 1823 Shanawdithit, her mother, and her sister were captured; subsequent attempts to return the women to their people failed. Her sister and mother died soon after, and Shanawdithit was eventually taken in by W.E. Cormack, the president of the Beothuk Institute. The drawings she shared with Cormack provide much of what anthropologists know about Beothuk culture. She was the last known

absence and silence occupied by Shawna'dithit and the Beothuk. Fielding projects a time when Newfoundland's past life as a colony or an independent country will no longer exist in living memory, and any talk of such times will be an address to a lost and unanswering past" ("Scuttlework" 341). But the profound power of this moment of loss is diminished by the comparison; as Fuller argues, "Johnston's inclusion of 'Nancy April's' story is sudden, unexpected, decontextualized, and, because Fielding speculates on the parallels with her own life story, problematically naïve and romantic" ("Strange" 33). The Beothuk comparison leads into Fielding's discussion of what "might have been" in both her own life and in her country's; the "extinction" of the Beothuk thus becomes another aspect of the old lost land, the "ghost history" of the road not taken. The column, which emphasizes the link between Newfoundlanders as "a people" and the physical landscape of the island, thus equates the colonial destruction of the Indigenous people with the losses of Confederation and potential assimilation, lumping this history together into one culture of loss that Chafe problematically argues has "forged the collective psyche of Newfoundlanders" ("Lament" 93). While Confederation may be traumatic and threatening, it does not equal the colonial eradication of an entire people and their culture. Nor can the complicit settler history of Newfoundland be easily transformed into a homogenous story of Newfoundlanders as "a people" (Johnston *Colony* 562), with the Beothuk demise operating as an allegory for Newfoundlanders' right to the land. This troubling moment, however, is contrasted by the plurality of perspectives and historical narratives that dominate the book. While Johnston's imagined community does threaten to descend into the homogenizing tendencies of identity politics, it is nevertheless useful for articulating the sense of difference that

survivor of her people. There are various spellings of Shanawdithit's name. For consistency, I use Beothuk historian Ingeborg Marshall's spelling, but in quotations I retain the spelling as written.

many Newfoundlanders still feel in relationship to the rest of Canada, as both literal and metaphorical migrants to the mainland.

As in *Baltimore's Mansion*, Johnston constructs the Newfoundland nation as a narrative that runs parallel to the traditional story of Confederation. Ironically, like French's Ned, like Wayne Johnston himself, Johnston's Smallwood also has literary ambitions: we are told that as a boy he "fancied that I would one day write a book that did for Newfoundland what *War and Peace* had done for Russia, a great, national, unashamedly patriotic epic" (40). Smallwood does go on to write, as a journalist, as a radio storyteller, as the editor of Newfoundland's encyclopaedias, as a political orator, and finally as an autobiographer. But he does not write a novel. Smallwood's ambition to write Newfoundland's epic novel is not driven by artistic desires, but rather by his patriotism, and a general desire for greatness. He also dreams, at this young age, of becoming the Prime Minister of Newfoundland some day. Just prior to the first referendum he reflects "it seemed to me that unless I did something that historians thought was worth recording, it would be as if I had never lived, that all the histories in the world together formed one book, not to warrant inclusion in which was to have wasted one's life. It terrified me that if it were possible to extrapolate the judge's book past 1895 to the present, I would not be in it. And I was forty-eight years old" (454). Following his success on referendum night, he thinks "I didn't have to write about others any more. From now on, others would write about me. I would make history, had made it. I no longer had to write it" (484-485). This distinction between writing history and making history is key to Smallwood's perspective on nationalism. His boyhood desires to be Prime Minister or write the Newfoundland epic novel are not in conflict with the orchestration of Confederation. Rather, by changing the course of Newfoundland history, Smallwood *becomes* that national epic, becomes history. But as we have seen,

Smallwood eventually admits that this history does not “live up to the land.” He goes on to muse that “perhaps only an artist can measure up to such a place or come to terms with the impossibility of doing so. Absence, deprivation, bleakness, even despair are more likely than their opposites to be the subject of great art, but they otherwise work against greatness (552). Once again, art is privileged as the locus of the nation. Smallwood seems to concede that Confederation has done little to combat “absence, deprivation, bleakness and despair,” rather these problems have overshadowed what he had hoped would be his legacy. Johnston strategically undermines the significance of Smallwood’s achievement.

In the process, Johnston opens up the possibility that his own epic achieves what Smallwood could not – for Dragland, the passage “surely invites us to consider whether Johnston himself has risen to the challenge of holding the greatness of the place” (201). Dragland answers that “*The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* builds a vision of Newfoundland large enough and compelling enough and playfully original enough to earn a place alongside other nation-making epics” (208). But Dragland’s praise comes with a full awareness of the irony of writing a “nation-making epic” for a nation that is no more. Johnston’s novel, I argue, constantly plays with the idea of what “national epic” might mean for a colony that is now a mere province of Canada. By distorting and deflating historiography Johnston both reveals Newfoundland’s difference from the rest of Canada, and resists the traditional teleological narrative in which Newfoundland’s difference is resolved in a tidy union with Canada. Historiography can be questioned and manipulated, and the nation of Newfoundland lives on in the alternative narratives created. Where Confederation threatens to sever Newfoundlanders from their own past, Fielding recuperates it, adopting it as a basis for national imagining, but refusing to allow it to become a single narrative. Both Smallwood and Fielding do battle with the past, but where

Smallwood sees it as a single narrative to be “made,” Fielding sees it as a construction that can be imagined.

Throughout the book, we are given excerpts from the viciously funny *Fielding's Condensed History of Newfoundland*. Her book constitutes a parody of Prowse's in some of its structural elements; her fraudulent preface by Prime Minister Sir Richard Squires almost replicates the “prefatory note” to Prowse's *History* by Edmund Gosse. The key historical moments documented by Prowse are rewritten with caustic irony, exposing the exploitation of the settlers who are forbidden to fish before the arrival of the merchant fleet, for example, by ironically arguing the merchants' case: “True, they always pull their nets up before the merchant fleet arrives, but whenever it is found that a fewer than usual number of settlers have died throughout the winter, the admirals deduce what they have been up to and punish them accordingly” (148-149). The fact that hers is a “condensed” history gently pokes fun at the verbosity of Prowse's eight-hundred-page text, which Smallwood as a boy thinks contains “not a record of the past, but the past itself, distilled, compacted to such density that I could barely lift it” (46). Fielding's book works against this laudatory impression, by showing that Prowse's book is emphatically *not* history, but rather one interpretation subject to critique and even ridicule. Fielding's text, then, is not only a parody of Prowse's work, for she also references his book directly: Prowse's *History*, Fielding writes, “sits on the desk in front of us as we write, goading us to refutation, disputation, sustaining us through this corrective” (405). She in fact echoes the lamentations of Smallwood's father, exclaiming “That BOOK! Had we departed from this world ignorant of its existence we should have been happier than we expect to be when the final curtain falls” (406). Her text also satirizes other historical documents, rewriting the words to Robert

Hayman's complimentary 1628 text *Quodlibets*, for example, claiming to have found the original, authoritative version:

The aire in Newfoundland unwholesome is, not goode,
One cannot goe outside without a hoode.
The Waters, salt and fresh, they are like ice.
All who fall in perish in a trice. (84)

Similarly, Boyle's "Ode to Newfoundland" is given an alternative version, representing his "love/hate" relationship with the place (474-475). Fielding titles this chapter "The Ode Not Taken" (474), playfully alluding to Frost's poem, as well as to the dichotomy between the river of what "might have been" and what was. The two odes form two possible histories, two possible but conflicting perspectives. This moment is juxtaposed with Smallwood's account of the pre-referendum campaigns, reinforcing the link between the two "odes," and the two "roads" of Confederation and Responsible Government. The final verse of the rewritten ode, then, seems a meditation on the possibility of the ruptures of Confederation. The line "As lived our fathers, we live not," suggests the dichotomy between the pre-Confederate past and the post-Confederate future. The final assertion "With God nor King to guard our lot, / *We'll* guard thee, Newfoundland" (475, emphasis original), is a claim of both loyalty and ownership; it suggests resistance to both the Commission of Government and the confederate cause. The two roads, the two odes, continue to run parallel. While Fielding's politics can never be pinned down – she is actually exposed as writing conflicting columns for rival newspapers under various pseudonyms – her voice never allows Smallwood's first person narration to have complete control of the novel. His vision for Newfoundland, in turn, is consistently undermined.

The satirical revisions of "The Ode to Newfoundland" and *Quodlibets* both play with the authority of these texts by colonial figures. Historical documents of the sort that Prowse

privileges in the novel's epigraph, are reduced to bawdy verse, such as the poem supposedly from *Quodlibets* that laments

Fish for breakfast, fish for lunch,
Of fish I cannot stand the sight.
And worst of all this savage bunch
Who bugger me night after night.
I wish we had some women here,
I wish some womenfolk would come.
The men then might not be so queer,
Nor, I think, so sore my bum. (179)

As Hans Bak convincingly argues, "Fielding's *History* serves to place Smallwood's achievement in an ironic historical perspective by evoking that history as a postmodernist cartoon version" (231). While Smallwood's life is devoted to earning his place in the history books, Fielding's satirical versions of history belittle this ambition, emphasizing the constructedness of historical narratives, and, by extension, of nations.

In her newspaper column *Field Day*, Fielding also makes fun of Smallwood's radio program "The Barrelman," which sets out to instil national pride by sharing positive stories of Newfoundland bravery, intelligence, and success. Fielding's column wryly exposes the program's elision of real class differences and makes fun of the mindless promotion of a generalized Newfoundland. Her parody includes a letter from an imagined listener:

Dear Mr. Barrelman: It has come to my attention that there are in the world a number of books – I am endeavouring to find out how many and will let you know when my research is complete – in which no mention whatsoever is made of Newfoundland. [...] I am myself in possession of several such books, including *A Guide Book to Chilean Songbirds*, the absence in which of the word *Newfoundland* is so inexplicable that I have written its publisher demanding an explanation. (386-387)

According to Fuller, Fielding's sharp parody of Smallwood's radio program "punctures Smallwood's grand gesture and renders his attempt to create an imagined community as naïve and romantic in a society riven by class and economic differences, where, as Joey should

recognize from his own experience, people are not so much ‘starved for information’ as hungry for food” (“Strange” 27). This is true, particularly given Smallwood’s alienation from his own community both in diaspora and as a working-class Newfoundlander. But where *Smallwood’s* imagined community is based on trite patriotic sentiment, Johnston’s novel constructs an imagined community of a different sort, where the “imagined” is closely aligned with the “imaginary,” and lays bare the constructedness of national history and identity. The loss of the Newfoundland nation is both exposed through this fictionality, and combated, as Newfoundland is preserved as a country of the mind.

The Country of Newfoundland

In *Against Race* (2000), Paul Gilroy reflects on the complex relationship between diaspora and nationalism:

Diaspora identification exists outside of and sometimes in opposition to the political forms and codes of modern citizenship. [...] Diaspora yearning and ambivalence are transformed into a simple unambiguous exile once the possibility of easy reconciliation with either the place of sojourn or the place of origin exists. (124)

I argue that the converse is also true; reconciliation with the new homeland can be strategically resisted through diaspora identification. Since diaspora identification resists the easy adoption of new citizenship, identification with the Newfoundland diaspora is a means of resisting assimilation into the post-Confederation Canadian state. For Newfoundlanders, reunion with the nation-state of origin is not possible because of the fundamental rupture of Confederation. But maintaining the idea of Newfoundland as an imagined community in diaspora prevents the erasure of Newfoundland as a distinct identity. In all three of these texts, *1949*, *Baltimore’s Mansion* and *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*, the nation of Newfoundland exists as a product of the imagination, as a fiction, a story. And in all three texts out-migration plays a key role – as

a chapter in that story, as a motivation behind it, and as the location from which the story is written.

Toward the end of *Colony*, in a 1949 journal entry, Fielding claims that with Confederation “nationality, for Newfoundlanders a nebulous attribute at best, will become obsolete, and the word *country* will be even more meaningless than it was before” (493). But her own work, and that of Johnston and French, belies this pessimistic attitude. While the word “country” may no longer have political reality, it is far from meaningless, for it signals the post-Confederate and diasporic imagined communities constructed by Newfoundland literary texts.

Chapter Four: Postmodern Ethnicity and the Family Memoir

To what extent is nationalism necessary to preserve a distinct Newfoundland identity? Two memoirs of the Newfoundland diaspora, Helen M. Buss/ Margaret Clarke's 1999 memoir *Memoirs from Away: A New Found Land Girlhood*, and David Macfarlane's 1991 memoir *The Danger Tree*, both raise the question of how Newfoundland diasporic identity can be understood outside of the discourse of nationalism.³⁵ Buss/Clarke's memoir, which is published as part of Wilfrid Laurier University Press's Life Writing Series, has also informed her academic work on the memoir form, particularly her book *Repossessing the World: Reading Memoirs by Contemporary Women* (2002). In her case, her pre-Confederation Newfoundland origins do not preclude a Canadian identity, but rather mark it; in her memory, the occasion of her country joining another is a moment of positive self-declaration and performance. David Macfarlane was not born in Newfoundland, but was rather born and raised in Hamilton, Ontario. His mother's identity as a Newfoundlander, and his fascination with his mother's family and heritage, mark him as a hybrid figure, whose Hamilton origins do not tell the full story of his own identity.

Many diaspora theorists argue that the concept of diaspora in fact subverts nationalism. As David Chariandy summarizes, "an impulse to worry the nation" is fundamental to articulations of diaspora by writers and theorists who are concerned by "the patriarchal, classist, ethnocentric

³⁵ As Buss/Clarke informs us in the foreword, "Helen Buss," her first name and her married name, is the name she has given her "sensible side," which she uses in her academic writing. "Margaret Clarke," her middle name and her maiden name, is the name she gives her "inner child" (xii), and is the pen name she has used as a creative writer. In her memoir she finds these two separated identities coming together, hence the dual authorship of the book. These two identities are in constant dialogue throughout the memoir; I therefore refer to her as "Buss/Clarke" throughout this chapter in order to acknowledge this duality.

and homophobic aspects” of ethnic articulations of nationhood (no page).³⁶ “Diaspora,” then, challenges the dangerous conflation of the nation-state with clear ethnic boundaries; this is what Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin call the “powers of diaspora.” Boyarin and Boyarin write that “diaspora offers an alternative ‘ground’ to that of the territorial state for the intricate and always contentious linkage between cultural identity and political organization” (10). Diaspora, then, necessitates group identities that exist outside of the place of origin. Diasporas are therefore usually unified by a common genealogical kinship rather than a common territorial homeland. Yet Newfoundlanders are defined by an identity grounded in place, rather than racial or religious commonalities. How, then, can a Newfoundland identity continue to exist once its subjects are removed from that place of origin? In other words, if not by place of residence, how is Newfoundlandness defined and demarcated?

Frequently, diaspora connotes “ethnicity.” In her influential 2000 book, *Scandalous Bodies: Diasporic Literature in English Canada*, Smaro Kamboureli does not in fact differentiate between “diasporic” and “ethnic” literature. “I have refrained from joining the ongoing debate about the semantic and political differences between diaspora and ethnicity as concepts,” she writes in her preface, “although they are different, their genealogies overlap, and I have decided to work with their intersections rather than to offer definitions that could at best be provisional” (viii). While many diaspora theorists have proposed definitions of diaspora that are not dependent upon ethnic identification, in Canadian contexts the terms are often inextricable. Chariandy asks, amongst a litany of other crucial questions, “are racial and ethnic groups automatically diasporas?” – a question prompted by the work of several key diaspora theorists

³⁶ While Chariandy does not directly reference Jonathan Kertzer’s 1998 *Worrying the Nation: Imagining a National Literature in English Canada*, Kertzer’s definition of “worrying” as a “dogged engagement with the problematic” is illuminating. The link drawn between diaspora theory and Canadian “national” literature by this rhetorical overlap is also evocative. As Kertzer writes, the nation “promises to unify a people and/with/through their literature, but it simultaneously speaks of their irreducible plurality” (35).

that reveals the extent to which “ethnicity” and “diaspora” are coupled. Vijay Agnew, in her introduction to *Diaspora, Memory and Identity*, acknowledges the multiple and shifting definitions of the term, but also indicates that diasporas “create an understanding of ethnicity and ethnic bonds that transcends the borders and boundaries of nation states” (4). If Newfoundland out-migration can helpfully be considered a “diaspora,” are Newfoundlanders, then, “ethnic?”

Are Newfoundlanders “Ethnic?”

Applying the term “ethnic” to Newfoundlanders does create discomfort with some academics who work on issues of ethnicity and race, as well as with some Newfoundlanders, and the potential arguments against it require careful consideration. Such a claim to ethnicity threatens to erase the history of colonization, substituting Irish and English settler heritage with a myth of indigeneity. It suggests homogeneity and ethnic absolutism, erasing the presence of First Nations and recent immigrants, as well as the long conflicts between classes, religions, and rural and urban dwellers. It could be interpreted as the appropriation of ethnic identity in order to increase the cultural capital of members of a perceived dominant white majority. It allows cultural stereotypes to represent the people; it threatens to privilege the “invented traditions” (Hobsbawm) of “screech-in” rituals, which initiate outsiders as honorary Newfoundlanders, over historical realities of British settlement and rule. It often allows what Kamboureli calls the “performative manifestations of heritage” (106) – the exotic cod-tongue-eating, fiddle-playing performance of “Newfoundlandness” – to stand in for actual experiences of identity.

James Overton writes that Newfoundland’s cultural revival of the 1970s and 80s grew out of the assumption “that there exists a distinctive Newfoundland culture, way of life, ethos, character, soul, or ethnic identity (older writers tend to use the term ‘race’)” (49). But he also shows how a particular Newfoundland culture was “invented” for the growing tourism industry.

For Overton, this invented cultural heritage means that Newfoundland becomes “a kind of cultural species which tourists are invited to see” (148). Newfoundland ethnicity or culture may be a more recent invention than the images of five centuries of Newfoundland history may suggest, articulated largely in reaction to Confederation and the industrialization and urbanization schemes of the Smallwood government in the 1950s and 60s. But all cultures are both constructed and performed. How long does a cultural community need to exist before it can be appropriately considered an “ethnicity?”

For sociologists studying out-migration, it seems, it is not a particular length of time that a culture has existed, but rather its relationship to other cultures with which it comes into contact, that constitutes the formation of ethnic boundaries. Despite the dangers outlined above, for those who study Newfoundland out-migration, “ethnicity” has been a helpful concept for articulating Newfoundlanders’ community formations and sense of difference in the hostland. In her sociological study of Newfoundland out-migration, Leslie Bella argues that

Newfoundlanders ‘away’ in Canada are a distinct ethnic group. Many Newfoundlanders can trace their roots in Newfoundland further back than most mainland Canadians. Newfoundland has its own dictionary. The Newfoundlanders participating in this study belong to a ‘true ethnic group,’ associating together because they view themselves as alike in important ways, such as common ancestry, experience and culture. However, Newfoundlanders are invisible in Canadian literature on ethnicity and multiculturalism. (vi)

While the criteria that Bella uses to define ethnicity here may be contestable, clearly Newfoundland ethnicity is, for her, a helpful and important claim to make to further her understanding of the experience of out-migration. Similarly, Harry Hiller and Tara Franz, in their study of online diasporic communities, claim that

The intense loyalty which Newfoundlanders feel to their homeland has produced a nascent or emergent ethnicity that is rooted in distinctive speech patterns and word meanings, vibrant myths and folklore about the past, a strong sense of history and a pervasive group consciousness. [...] All of this has occurred in the

context of economic underdevelopment and dependency and frustrations over political and economic control. (736)

For Hiller and Franz, Newfoundland ethnicity is demarcated not only in diaspora, but also at home, in Newfoundland's relationship to the rest of Canada. Sociolinguists Ruth King and Sandra Clarke define Newfoundlanders as an ethnic group based on "emic" grounds (539), a self-identification that is meaningful to both resident Newfoundlanders and "expatriates." In her study of the Newfoundland expatriate community in Cambridge, Ontario, Karen Dearlove quotes Dick Stoyles, known as the "mayor of Cambridge Newfoundlanders." "Some people think Newfoundlanders aren't an ethnic group. But we are," Stoyles argues. "We have our own language, our own food, our own music" (qtd in Dearlove 10). Ethnicity, then, is a way of articulating Newfoundlanders' sense of difference at home and abroad, both in terms of positive differentiation and negative marginalization, and in both academic and popular contexts.

Some Newfoundlanders are perhaps inclined to claim "ethnicity" because, as Kamboureli, Enoch Padolsky and others have noted, Canada's official multiculturalism policies privilege ethnic identification. Newfoundlanders, who feel that their heritage constitutes a crucial aspect of their personal identity, and who do not feel an easy identification with English or Irish origins, may claim ethnicity because that has become a dominant discourse of Canadian society, whether it is in the much derided sense of "song and dance" multiculturalism – "boutique multiculturalism" in Stanley Fish's terms – or in the optimistic sense of anti-racist activism and awareness of the links between ethnic status and social power (Padolsky). Whether or not we agree with the ideology of multiculturalism, to deny that sort of claim to Newfoundlanders who want to make it does not seem to be productive. Ethnicity is a dominant framework within which to articulate their feelings of difference and marginality. To be clear, I do not mean to suggest that for Newfoundlanders the adoption of "ethnicity" is always a matter of choice; the choice

lies, rather, in whether or not to adopt the *term* “ethnicity” as a means of articulating their experiences of identity. As Margery Fee argues, responding to Werner Sollors’ location of ethnicity on a sliding spectrum of “consent” versus “descent,” “the more powerful our social group, the more likely we are to believe that our social relations are freely chosen, while the more powerless our social group, the more likely we are to believe, in part because a hard-edged ethnicity is forced on us, that our social relations depend wholly on descent” (274). Where Newfoundlanders might fall on such a spectrum varies according to individual experiences. But whether ethnicity is experienced as a chosen identity or as an imposed marker of difference, clearly for some Newfoundlanders “ethnicity” is the most appropriate term to describe their identity within a multicultural society.

At this point, then, it is necessary to consider exactly what is meant by the term “ethnicity.” The connotations of “ethnicity” are shifting and often contradictory. “Ethnicity” has been used almost synonymously with “minority” or “race,” suggesting experiences of prejudice and marginalization. This understanding of the term is key to Kamboureli’s theorizing of diaspora. But elsewhere, “ethnicity” has been regarded as a term co-opted by the discourse of multiculturalism in order to circumvent issues of race; it has been associated with delineations of whiteness, and therefore relative privilege. As Sneja Gunew notes, “[e]thnicity’ as a defining category was initially employed as a differential term to avoid ‘race’ and its implications of a discredited ‘scientific’ racism. Ethnicity was more easily attached to the European migrations which proliferated around the two world wars” (*Haunted* 16). Structured as a “choice,” “ethnicity was of course not able to deal with the characteristics pertaining to visible minorities” (23). In still other contexts, “ethnicity” is meant to reference neither privilege nor marginalization, but rather the cultural heritages to which everyone may lay claim, so that

English is just as much an ethnicity as, say, Chinese. Kamboureli argues that under the 1988 Multiculturalism Act, “treated as a sign of equality, ethnicity loses its differential role. Instead, it becomes a condition of commonality: what ‘all Canadians’ have in common is ethnic difference” (100). As Kamboureli writes, this false image of ethnicity as equality “dehistoricizes the social and political conditions that have discriminated against many Canadians” (101), and hides the fact that a white majority still dominates the country. Clearly this is an important concern. But as Fee sees it, “the assumption of ethnicity may indeed be deployed to add to the privilege of the already-privileged, but it also has the potential to lead to an understanding of how that privilege has been ideologically constructed” (272). While the idea that everyone has an ethnicity may have some dangers, it may also be a crucial step towards fostering real equality.

I want to locate my analysis of Newfoundland out-migration, then, at the juncture of these conflicting meanings of ethnicity. By straddling these contested and contradictory connotations of marginality, privilege, *and* equality, I am able to reference the prejudice and feeling of difference that many Newfoundlanders experience in relationship to the rest of Canada, while simultaneously acknowledging the difficulties with marking a settler culture and province of Canada as “ethnic.” What I am moving towards, then, is a strategic ethnicity; many Newfoundlanders, at home and abroad, strategically lay claim to ethnic identity as a means of marking their difference as a distinct society within an officially multicultural state. It is therefore a *process* of identification, in Stuart Hall’s terms, rather than a biological or cultural certainty (“Diaspora” 392). What I have in mind is similar to Ien Ang’s concept of a “postmodern ethnicity”:

This postmodern ethnicity can no longer be experienced as naturally based upon tradition and ancestry. Rather, it is experienced as a provisional and partial 'identity' which must be constantly (re)invented and (re)negotiated. In this context, diasporic identifications with a specific ethnicity (such as 'Chineseness')

can best be seen as forms of 'strategic essentialism' (Spivak 1987: 205): 'strategic' in the sense of using the signifier 'Chinese' for the purpose of contesting and disrupting hegemonic majoritarian definitions of 'where you're at'; and 'essentialist' in a way which enables diasporic subjects, to 'return home', but, in the words of Stuart Hall, to 'insist that others recognise that what they have to say comes out of particular histories and cultures and that *everyone* speaks from positions within the global distribution of power.' (36)

In the rest of this chapter, I strategically invoke postmodern ethnicity as a means of theorizing the Newfoundland diaspora and its complex relationship to the rest of Canada, as it pertains to Buss/Clarke and Macfarlane's examples of family memoir.

While the phrase "postmodern ethnicity" is Ang's, in her important 1988 work *The Canadian Postmodern*, Linda Hutcheon also links the two terms in a more literary context. Hutcheon argues that the postmodern takes a unique shape in Canada, citing the country's regionalist tendencies as well as its ethnic diversity as "ex-centric" impulses that lend themselves particularly well to a postmodern aesthetic (*Canadian* 3-4). Hutcheon has been criticized for the way in which she theorizes "ethnic" writing, particularly in the anthology that she edited with Marion Richmond, *Other Solitudes: Canadian Multicultural Fictions* (1990). Kamboureli argues that Hutcheon and Richmond erase "the marginalization of ethnic writing" by positing ethnicity as a normative identity, repeating Margaret Atwood's famous phrase "we are all immigrants even if we are born here" (qtd in Richmond no pg). By claiming that the Canadian literary canon is already ethnically diverse, Kamboureli argues, Hutcheon and Richmond ignore the fact that ethnicity is "a matter of cultural and social contingencies" (Kamboureli 163). Kamboureli extends this criticism to Hutcheon's theories of postmodernism, arguing that Hutcheon's privileging of "ex-centricity" in postmodernism serves to unify ethnic difference with differences based on class, gender, or sexuality, appropriating marginalized identities into the new master narrative of postmodernity itself. For Kamboureli, Hutcheon's postmodernity erases ongoing conditions of violence and grievance (168). She adds "within this postmodern view of the world,

the term ‘ex-centric’ functions not so much to designate a condition, or a site where the ethnic subject resides, as it does to recast marginality as a palatable, and thus consumable, cultural product” (167). I agree with Kamboureli’s concerns over Hutcheon’s erasure of important historical and current hierarchies of ethnic and racial difference. But while Hutcheon’s use of the term “ethnic” as a sign of equality or of Canadian identity may be problematic, Kamboureli’s recourse, to reserve “ethnicity” for groups who feel marginalized by the dominant white majority, is also problematic. As Avtar Brah argues, identities that are often figured as “minorities” in fact “continually challenge the minoritising and peripheralising impulses of the culture of dominance.” By identifying dominant white identities such as Englishness as “just another ethnicity” (210), some of the power of that centre is potentially deflated. As Hall suggests, the deployment of ethnicity is crucial to anti-racist or other political work: “ethnicity is what we all require in order to think the relationship between identity and difference. [...] We cannot do without that sense of our own positioning that is connoted by the term ethnicity” (“Ethnicity” 18). In a specifically Canadian context, Fee writes that

Anglo-Canadians are seen as without ethnicity, as possessed of a ‘Canadian’ ethnicity (generally depicted as not much different from no ethnicity at all), or as possessing the national high culture, while ethnic minorities are permitted to have broken English, colourful costumes, exotic dances, and unusual food. Their writing, categorized as ‘ethnic writing,’ is instantly devalued as both less than national and therefore, less than literature. (“Ethnicity” 270)

Fee suggests, then, that the universal application of ethnicity is crucial to combating this devaluation. But the notion that we all may have ethnicities does not erase the important differences between them in terms of hierarchies of power.

Ang’s linkage of postmodernity and ethnicity, then, and its attendant implications for the “Canadian postmodern,” in Hutcheon’s terms, is evocative and helpful. The postmodern, with its connotations of historiographic metafiction and a questioning of received histories and master

narratives, of fragmentation, of invention, of fluid or hybrid identities, becomes a useful discourse within which to think Newfoundland identity and diaspora.

Buss/Clarke's Diasporic Double Consciousness and Postmodern Ethnicity

In his review of Helen M. Buss/ Margaret Clarke's 1999 memoir *Memoirs from Away: A New Found Land Girlhood*, Malcolm MacLeod writes "'Memoirs from away' is the title of this one book, but it is a fitting label for a whole category of writing about Newfoundland. While Newfoundlanders have been massively re-locating themselves in North America for 120 years, literary elements in the *diaspora* have often penned accounts of displacement, adjustment and nostalgia for a distant, past homeland" (100, my emphasis). The title of Buss/Clarke's memoir immediately identifies the two poles of diaspora, that of the Newfoundland homeland, and the current location "away." As Ang writes, drawing from Paul Gilroy's memorable phrasing, for migrants, "the relation between 'where you're from' and 'where you're at' is a deeply problematic one. To be sure, it is this very problem which is constitutive to the idea of diaspora, and for which the idea of diaspora attempts to be a solution" (30). While Buss/Clarke's primary concern throughout the memoir is her experience as a woman and the development of her feminist ideology, this problematic disjuncture between the migrant's origins and new location colours the narrative; it is both the occasion for writing and the framework within which she negotiates the construction of her multiple identities as a woman, an academic, a writer, a daughter, and a Canadian.

Buss/Clarke's two names are emblematic of a fragmented postmodern identity. While she signs off her foreword with the statement that a "desire for the self that is joined to all the others and the otherness that makes me who I am, leads me to sign myself . . . Helen Buss / Margaret Clarke" (xiii, ellipsis original), the effect of the slash is not one of fusion, but rather places

emphasis on the fissure. The origins of her names – the maiden name of her childhood versus the married name of her adopted western home – also identifies the slash between them as the rupture of diaspora. Diaspora enables both identities to exist simultaneously, divided by space as well as the passage of time, so that Buss/Clarke imagines that returning to Newfoundland space will also enable a return to the past. Researching her memoir, she plans to “travel back over the territory of my life, all my Canadas, from my research into the past in Victoria, through the Calgarian present, to a month of reflection and preparation at the Manitoba cottage,” with the trip culminating in Newfoundland, the place of her childhood. As Susanna Egan argues in her chapter on diaspora in *Mirror Talk: Genres of Crisis in Contemporary Autobiography* (1999), “autobiographers of diaspora privilege space over time in order to retain all their possibilities. Space, as realized in these narratives, enables plural identities to coexist simultaneously despite their being contra-dictory [sic]” (158). But for Buss/Clarke, this privileging of space over time is precarious. Once those spatial distances are collapsed, Buss/Clarke’s careful demarcations of identity are threatened. She writes that

the idea of walking in my old neighbourhood has, over the years, become mysteriously fearful. The memory of feeling like a ghost when I went there in my twenties, my refusal to set down my foot there when I had come a few years ago, had built a kind of anti-nostalgia in me: the dread that some carefully shaped identity would disintegrate by the very act of touching the ground. (15)

Her identity as a Newfoundlander, (re)constructed from “away,” depends upon that spatial distance, that diasporic location. While she longs to experience a “present moment in Newfoundland” (5), she recognizes that “I cannot construct a return to my homeland in the satisfying way you and I might want it. [...] I did not, and cannot return to my homeland. After four decades of living on the Prairies I am from ‘away’ and therefore cannot come home” (9-10). Buss/Clarke’s precarious Newfoundland identity, then, is both claimed and thwarted within the

introduction, rendering any assertions of identity that the speaker might make throughout the book suspect, or at least multiple.

Autobiography, as Betty Bergland and Leigh Gilmore both argue, intersects with postmodernism in key ways, as "postmodern theories begin to provide us with a vehicle for understanding the multiplicity of subjectivities" (Bergland 158). For Buss/Clarke, the state of diaspora means that identity is perpetually multiple and constantly being constructed:

In Newfoundland 'away' is the word they use to explain the crass, the ignorant or the merely mysterious acts inevitable to the condition of being foreign to a place: 'Never mind the girl, she's from away,' they would say with compassion. And I will always be from away. [...] The truth is, dear reader, that wherever I am I will always be from away. What happened to me in Newfoundland in that summer of returning was something between déjà vu and tourism, short moments of familiarity, small glimpses of people I might have been. (10)

Buss/Clarke's evocation of the people she "might have been" were it not for the rupture of diaspora is reminiscent of Johnston's reflections on Confederation in *Baltimore's Mansion*, but for Buss/Clarke, what "might have been" refers not to the alternative possibilities for the island, but to her own multiple subjectivities.

The specificity of the state of 'awayness' to Newfoundland culture highlights the insularity of the place, and Newfoundlanders' propensity to fiercely cling to Newfoundland identity in the face of the perceived threats of Canadian assimilation. If Newfoundlandness is an ethnicity, Buss/Clarke cannot lay claim to it because of this barrier of 'awayness.' She can only lay claim, then, to a *postmodern* version of Newfoundland ethnicity, which allows her multiple identities to coexist, in all their precarious constructedness. While she does not use the word "ethnicity," Buss makes this claim to a particularly postmodern Newfoundland ethnicity through her memoir, by constructing her own past as a historiographic metanarrative, by strategically refiguring her

own Newfoundlandness within the context of Canadian diversity, and by foregrounding her own body as a contested space of identity.

Making Stories: Historiographic Metafictions

Hutcheon identifies historiographic metafiction as a key development in postmodern literature. While Hutcheon's term is most commonly used in reference to the novel, it is also, as Egan notes, helpfully applicable to various autobiographical forms, including memoir (151). Buss/Clarke deploys metafictional techniques throughout her text, sometimes ad nauseum. As Claire Wilkshire writes in her review for *Canadian Literature*, "the dogged exploration of Buss/Clarke's at times conflicted motivations constitutes one of the book's main weaknesses" (131). But while it may be "relentless," even "self-absorbed" (Wilkshire 131), the metanarrative is a key strategy in the construction of Buss/Clarke's postmodern ethnicity.

The metanarrative elements occur on almost every page; the text in fact reads as though it was not subjected to any revisions. "I have just read these last paragraphs aloud to my husband" (7), she writes, creating a sense of immediacy and intimacy, as though we are reading a journal or a work in process. Elsewhere she pauses to tell us "it is harder to do this than I imagined. Real people keep getting in the way. Between this paragraph and the last, between yesterday and today I have heard from two of my three children" (32). By foregrounding the constructedness of the memoir, reducing it to the creation of specific paragraphs and highlighting the difficulty of the process, Buss/Clarke reveals the constructedness of her very identity, exposing the gaps in memory and the invention necessary to the recreation of her Newfoundland.

The recollections of her childhood neighbourhood, for example, include a two-page memory of discussing with another little girl the fact that the French eat snails.

“Would you eat snails?” I asked.

“Oh no,” said she. “What would the garden do without them? They turn the soil you know.” Sometimes, even if you are only six years old, you have enough sense to know when you are in the presence of poetry. (16)

But Buss/Clarke interrupts her own tale: “Now that I reread what I have recounted to you as my memory of the snails and the little girl (whose name I still cannot remember), I realize much of it may be invented out of mere fragments of actuality” (17). She goes on to explain that “the part about turning the soil and realizing poetry – well – that’s just what decades of education in the literary tradition makes you do. [...] After an hour or so at my word processor, language just takes over, has its way with me. I’m sorry. I apologize” (18). The direct address to the reader implicates him or her in this metafictional moment; as Hutcheon writes, metafiction makes “us aware of the active role of the reader in granting meaning to texts” (17). The moment alerts us to the literary conventions and expectations that creep into the construction of narratives; by identifying and disrupting these expectations Buss/Clarke questions the way in which narratives operate to construct particular identities.

As Buss/Clarke negotiates these moments of invention, of fiction, she grapples with her own feelings of impostorhood and discomfort with an invented identity. She feels “unreal” in Newfoundland (5), like “a ghost haunting a former life” (4). Part of this feeling of unreality is connected to narrative, and her inability to locate a Newfoundland identity within her life story: “Every place I looked, I found the stories belonged to someone else; they were not mine. Cousins were kind, hospitable, but I did not feel at home. They had lives in this place; I did not” (4). She is “a woman haunted by unmade stories” (5). The memoir, then, is her opportunity to make her own stories, but her feelings of disconnection cause her to foreground their making, their invention.

As Hutcheon suggests, such a postmodern process of invention can be inspiring: “postmodernist ‘recording’ and ‘inventing’ are clearly processes, not products. They are not fixed, closed, eternal, and universal. Instead of feeling threatened by this un-fixing of certainties, postmodern culture tends to find it liberating and stimulating. Perhaps the loss of the modernist faith in fixed system, order, and wholeness can make room for new models based on things once rejected: contingency, multiplicity, fragmentation, discontinuity” (19). In her academic work on memoir, Buss explicitly connects these processes of recording and inventing with her autobiographical form: “Memoir’s acts of survival are restoration, reformation, and reinvention. Through making the old alive in the new, we can perform acts of repossessing the self and the world” (*Repossessing* 34). Instead of being “haunted” by her precarious identity and lack of stories, Buss/Clarke finds that a postmodern invention of Newfoundland ethnicity is an important way of negotiating her place in the world. Perhaps this is why Buss/Clarke’s title refers to a “New Found Land Girlhood,” rather than a “Newfoundland girlhood”: by splitting the name up into its component parts, Buss/Clarke restores the place of her childhood as a “new found” location of identity. Buss/Clarke’s process of reinventing her own identity thus resonates directly with Ang’s concept of postmodern ethnicity as an identity that is constantly “(re)invented and (re)negotiated” (36).

Buss/Clarke begins her narrative with the memory of Confederation, an event that her family supported and that became a key moment in her construction of self:

My father made predictions, while others denied their validity; it was an intense male world which my mother stayed well away from, and which I watched through the glass-panelled doors that looked into that room full of men. These are the kind of moments memory’s imagination shapes for its myth of the self; all the time delays, all non-essentials of character and plot fall away and only the archetypal necessities of identity remain. (2)

Here, while Buss/Clarke foregrounds the imagined or invented aspects of the memory, she nevertheless emphasizes the importance of the memory to her identity. Identity, however, is figured as a “myth of the self”; again, identity itself is characterized by invention. Buss/Clarke places this mythology of self within the context of citizenship and diasporic location:

Spending an extended time in Florida, I found myself writing about the Canadian identity that I adopted, or that adopted me, as a seven-year-old Newfoundlander; the American difference reminded me constantly of what it was to be Canadian. Being Canadian is real in Florida, because you know you are not American, whereas here in Victoria, in my own country so to speak, I often find myself uncomfortable, as if I were a Newfoundlander from the old-time outports in a merchant’s town parlour. (1)

This analogy, oddly, renders her Newfoundland origins as a metaphor; she is not from an “old-time outport,” but rather grew up in St. John’s. It is unclear, then, whether her feeling of discomfort is derived from her Newfoundlandness, or if Newfoundlandness and the implied class hierarchies are simply analogous to a less tangible feeling of alienation. Buss/Clarke in fact goes on to identify this discomfort as a key component of *Canadian* identity:

Some days now I feel like the only Canadian. Some days I feel like the last Canadian. Some days I feel that being a Canadian is impossible. I like to think that all of these feelings are essential to being a Canadian. Every Canadian must feel this alone. All Canadians must feel that their own personal history is the one that makes them Canadian and since no one else has had quite the same history, they live alone in their Canadian identity. When we talk of being Canadian we speak not of national myths, but of our own lives. To be a Canadian is to be an autobiographer. (2)

While Buss/Clarke suspects that this strange relationship to Canadian identity is experienced by all Canadians, the way in which this paragraph is introduced, through the memory of Newfoundland Confederation, suggests that the simultaneous feelings of impossibility, of uniqueness, of singularity, are derived from her Newfoundland origins and a resulting hybridity. Moreover, she identifies the project of autobiography as the space in which to negotiate her personal feelings of nationality with the imperfect experience of citizenship. Her Canadian

identity, in fact, is explicitly an “invention” (1); she describes standing as a little girl on the eve of Confederation beneath the maple trees in her childhood backyard (the symbolism of the maple is also noted), ritualistically declaring “I am a Canadian; I am a Canadian; I am a Canadian; I am a Canadian” (2), as though the performance will close the gap between the fact of the words, and the personal experience of identity. From the second page, then, we are made aware of the contingency of Buss/Clarke’s Canadianness, and the fluidity of her national or ethnic origins. While she is Canadian by citizenship, she is not Canadian by birth; her Newfoundland origins therefore occupy the place of ethnic identity, as a modifier of her nationality.

In *Memoirs from Away*, then, moments of metanarrative are usually deployed in reference to the construction of her personal history. But there are also important moments of historiographic metafiction. “There is always a history,” she writes. “You just have to find it and shape it to your needs” (34). Historiography is one means by which diasporic subjects reconstruct their own ethnic identities. Janice Kulyk Keefer connects the form to ethnicity specifically in her formulation “historiographic ethnofiction.” For Keefer, “part of the aesthetics of writing ethnicity is the writer’s ethical need to confront and struggle with the history, both private and public, of her ‘ethnos’” (“Historiographic” 101). This process involves the “Janus-faced” vision of writers both engaged in the “invention of ethnicity” in the new home and invested in a relationship with the country of origin and its history (“Historiographic” 85). For Keefer, history is key to an understanding of ethnicity: “history in a twofold sense: personal and public, private and collective” (84). Buss/Clarke delves into such a twofold history as she describes exploring a now-deserted Newfoundland outport, and reading “its story in the language of the graveyard’s headstones” (13). The narrative that she constructs for the settlement is made representative of the island as a whole:

These bleached-white testaments tell the history of so much of Newfoundland, the brave, tenuous communities of interconnected families, the generations of lives spent in these small worlds of the coves, their ultimate diaspora. It would not be surprising if we were to meet someone from Sudbury or Seattle or Singapore climbing up through the underbrush to see her ancestor's graves. (14)

Buss/Clarke thus locates her own private diasporic identity within the public history of Newfoundland as a whole, and identifies the search for one's ancestors as an important part of that diasporic experience. Genealogical historiography, then, as an archaeological process, creates a narrative of identity out of fragments of memory and the artifacts of place, and Buss/Clarke transforms this historiography into a self-reflexive "ethnofiction."

As a child, Buss/Clarke's negotiation through history class becomes a negotiation of citizenship. She writes of her grade six *Story Workbook in Canadian History*, which was "like my own personal Canadian citizenship papers, sent by Uncle Louie [Prime Minister St. Laurent]. The *Story Workbook* taught me that the history of New France was my history also, that Cartier, Champlain, and the Jesuits at Long Sault were all mine. This concept had to be held inside my head with the opposite idea that, as obviously illustrated by *The Story of Newfoundland*, the French were our sworn enemy, the armed raiders that were hellbent on killing my ancestors" (129). As she moved through the grades, these conflicting accounts of history were complicated by the contradictory representations of both England and the United States. Buss/Clarke writes,

History worked its way around all this confusion and finally came up with a correct story that went something like this: Newfoundlanders were a strong and free people who, with little help from anyone, had achieved one hundred years of independence which had to be given up because of some hard-to-understand money matters. We came again under the wicked rule of the Colonial Office. Now, however, we did not need independence or money, because we would be part of the great Canadian nation where the French were no longer our enemy, a sea-to-sea nation which had showed those pushy manifest-destiny, slave-owning Americans a thing or two in the War of 1812. (130)

This simplified, tongue-in-cheek version of Newfoundland's place in the world is carefully constructed out of a multiplicity of conflicting histories; Buss/Clarke's facetious historiography here locates Newfoundland at the centre of an invented Canadian identity. As Hutcheon writes, postmodern texts "re-narrate and re-conceptualize the past, both literary and historical, and thereby re-formulate the possibilities of subjectivity narrated in them" (9). Buss/Clarke uses this "re-narration" to identify her own Newfoundland subjectivity as a contested site. It also contrasts the alternative narrations of Newfoundland Confederation that identify Newfoundlanders not as a "strong and free people" who complete the Canadian nation, but as a charity case dependent upon Canada's goodwill.

The "Multiple Origins" of Canadian Identity

Buss/Clarke's historiographic metafiction, then, is one of the means by which she locates her own Newfoundlandness within the context of Canadian diversity. At the end of the memoir, Buss/Clarke describes her visit to the Museum of Civilization. She describes how

the European first-comers to Newfoundland were pictured in the museum in the form of a diorama [sic] of those tough Basque sailors surviving the fishing season on the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, and a few hard winters in Placentia. I admired them and was very willing to share origins with them, but my people's early arrival was not noted. [...] I was beginning to feel the loneliness of my Canadian identity again. My ancestors – unlike the First Nations peoples, unlike the Basque fishermen, unlike the Acadians, unlike the Québécois, my ancestors – with their fish flakes and their cabbages – were not part of the origins this national museum chronicles. (152)

While Buss/Clarke's Canadian identity includes her Newfoundland history, it is a "lonely" identity; the Canadian identities described by the official histories of the national museum exclude her origins. Newfoundland does not enter into the museum's "story of Canada" until Confederation, and while this omission may be appropriate to someone like Johnston, who resists the appropriation of Newfoundland history into Canadian history, for Buss/Clarke, the

omission is alienating. The phrase “my people” immediately references Buss/Clarke’s own ancestors, but it also asserts that Newfoundlanders as a group form an identity equal in importance to the Acadians or the Québécois – in other words, an ethnicity. Buss continues:

As far as a museum of Canadian civilization is concerned, I want more for the next generation than I have had. I want the museum to collect a multitude of histories, a plethora of voices, a whole babble of memoirs and organize it all in some clever multimedia way so that when my children and grandchildren come to the museum they can seam together their multiple origins. I like to imagine my niece, Margaret Clarke from Nova Scotia, coming one day to the nation’s capital, to the museum that chronicles all the civilizations that have made themselves real in this country. [...] I think she should be able to take up all the threads of her history and pattern them as she wants with the history of many others in the museum. And as she does so, she should be learning a way to make an identity that does not portray women’s lives as merely a backdrop to the histories of men. She should be given many possibilities of identity so she can make her own story. (153)

In this moment, Buss/Clarke locates her heritage, and in fact her own memoir, within the context of Canadian multiculturalism; she privileges her memoir as having the potential to locate Newfoundland history within the larger narrative of Canadian history, and to therefore become one of the postmodern ethnicities that make up an imagined Canadian mosaic.

As she theorizes in *Repossessing the World*,

The memoir is increasingly used to interrogate the private individual’s relationship to a history and/or a culture from which she finds her experience of her self and her life excluded. Although individual men can also find themselves in an excluded position (and do write memoirs as a result), it is women who most often take up the memoir form for the specific purpose of revising cultural contexts so that their experience is not excluded. In doing so, these women are changing the ways in which we tell our stories as human beings; they are bringing female gendering to bear on our previously male-gendered narratives of the self and culture. (3)

Buss thus privileges memoirs as giving voice to marginalized or “excluded” subjects, and equates her exclusion as a woman with other forms of exclusion, such as the marginality of her home province. But her references to “making” an identity out of many “possibilities” is a decidedly postmodern vision of how Canadian identity might be both performed and represented.

As Hutcheon writes, “the textuality of history matches that of literature: that is, the only way we can know the past today is through its traces, its texts. This is one of the lessons of the postmodern” (14). This postmodern vision of identity and historiography is in sharp contrast to her experiences of Canadian education as a young diasporic Newfoundlander: “we were way ahead of the prairie kids, but lost out in the end because they laughed at our Newfoundland accents and we felt inferior” (126). In this brief moment, Buss/Clarke references the popular definition of ethnicity, that of marginality. She does not dwell on this moment of prejudice as an audible minority. But her vision of a museum that would celebrate her own history and legitimate her place within Canadian society acts as a response to such moments of prejudice and erasure.

The Autobiographical Body

Buss/Clarke’s vision of a postmodern, pluri-ethnic museum ends with a feminist emphasis. She writes that while “I trust my nation’s continuing propensity for revision to bring us around to the early settlement of Newfoundland sooner or later,” she is “not so sure that the larger revision of culture will come so quickly around to the gender consciousness I would want” (152-153). Throughout the memoir, Buss/Clarke emphasizes her experiences of patriarchy and her own identity as a feminist; despite the title of her book, this identity takes precedence over her relationship to Newfoundland. But Buss/Clarke’s feminist attention to her gendered body is helpful in understanding her relationship to identity formations.

For Buss/Clarke, her female body is what Sidonie Smith calls a site of potential homelessness: “the body functions as a powerful source of metaphors for the social. It offers itself up, in bits and pieces, in its blood, immune system, organs, in its topography and pathology, for use in constructing the social environment and assigning persons their places in that

environment” (“Identity’s” 269). Buss/Clarke describes this process of “assigning persons” to particular social roles with characteristic anger:

puberty is not a physical fact so much as it is a political fact. In today’s world puberty begins with the assault of a sex-drenched, reproductively starved ideology mounting a little girl’s mind with masochistic images of her body as object of desire. In my day things worked a little differently. No television existed to shape our imaginary selves, but instead we had the hands of men protected by the terrible positivism of a society that said all dads were good guys. (137)

She thus has learned what she calls one of the lessons of civilized identity: “You do not need to live inside a body so powerless that anyone can use it. You can tend that body, use that body, eventually learn to protect that body, even, if you have a mind to, take pleasure from that body. But you do not have to live there” (144). This profound disconnection between the self and the body is a result of her generation’s refusal to speak of the realities of sex and gender, of her painful socialization as a woman, and of her own experiences of childhood sexual abuse, all of which taught her that it is male authority figures, not herself, that possess the control of her body. For Buss/Clarke, the process of memoir writing in many ways mimics the extensive psychological therapy that she has undergone, and the postmodern fragmentation, lack of linearity, and blurriness of “truth” are all part of what she has elsewhere termed making “memory work to help heal the past” (*Repossessing* 153).

If the literary techniques of postmodernism can recreate the therapeutic work of coming to terms with the trauma of sexual abuse, they can also be useful in coming to terms with the ruptures of diaspora. Buss/Clarke’s “homelessness” in the gendered body also extends to a sense of homelessness in the ethnic body. Reflecting on an earlier trip to Newfoundland, Buss/Clarke writes that she “felt like a ghost haunting a former life. I remember not liking that feeling. It was the beginning, I think, of being overly conscious of my disconnectedness from my own lived life, the uneasy way you have to feel in order to be driven to words, driven by desire for those small

moments when, writing, you live inside your own experience, your own body” (4). Her inability to place her foot on the ground in her childhood neighbourhood further emphasizes the rupture, the irreconcilability that diaspora has caused between the homeland and the physical body. For Sarah Ahmed, the feeling of being at home is like inhabiting a “second skin,” and thus the ruptures of migration are often felt as physical discomforts. Diaspora entails a split between home as place of origin, and home as bodily experience, “the sensory world of everyday experience” (90). For Buss/Clarke, this uneasy disconnection from the body becomes a driving force behind her writing. As a diasporic figure, the moment of writing becomes a moment of reconnection with her body and her homeland, a resolution of the multiple and “unreal” identities that occupy her. But these moments of reunion with the body are necessarily fragmented, experienced as temporary sensory memories rather than a coherent narrative where home and body coexist in perfect union.

The White Body

Often, such feelings of diasporic homelessness are attributed to the alienation of the racially marked body. But how do migrants who are racialized as ‘white’ understand their own experiences of homelessness? It *could* be argued that Newfoundlanders like Buss/Clarke, who describes being laughed at for her accent, are victims of racism despite their prevailing visual “whiteness.” Bella tentatively makes this move, pointing out the negative impact of “Newfie” jokes and stereotypes, which sometimes results in migrants not being able to find work or being denied credit (xiv). Bella also cites many Newfoundlanders’ deliberate attempts to lose their accents as possible “internalised racism” (xv). Clearly these examples constitute prejudice and discrimination, but are they “racism?” Is the postmodern ethnicity that I have laid out merely a

euphemism for racialization? And if not, how do “white” identities fit within the phenomenon of diaspora?

In the Introduction to this study I have argued against the tendency to conflate diasporas with groups racialized as ‘visible minorities,’ or to justify diaspora status by tracing what Robyn Wiegman calls a “prewhite particularity” (137). Buss/Clarke’s contradictory relationship to identity illustrates how I want to deploy the concept of Newfoundland diaspora as a particular but sometimes powerful whiteness. Buss/Clarke in fact reveals anxiety about her own whiteness. She describes her childhood fantasy of living in mid-nineteenth century Newfoundland, and befriending the last Beothuk. In her fantasy, Buss/Clarke escapes with the captured Shanawdithit, just after she contracts the consumption that will kill her. Buss’s fantasy, she tells us, takes various forms:

I used to like the learning-to-survive-in-the-wilderness plots the best: how Shanawdithit teaches me to use snowshoes and chew deerskins until they are soft leather and how I brew up a secret tea that my grandmother taught me to make on the Scottish moors, tea which cures Shanawdithit’s illness. [...] We live in a teepee of course and hunt in the winter and live off berries in the summer. [...] In my stories we never seem to make much effort to find her people or mine. We live outside of history. (134-135)

Buss/Clarke admits that “nowadays I realize that this fantasy is merely an appropriation of someone else’s tragedy, honed into story to make me feel less shame” (135). But despite this self-consciousness, the moment nevertheless reinforces stereotypes and a problematic power relationship between the white woman and the colonized Beothuk. Shanawdithit is helpless and needs to be saved by the white woman. She is idealized, yet silent. While Buss/Clarke admits “I know I have no right to make such a story, that I have to live with sadness and shame as part of my share of history” (135), her fantasy nevertheless distances her from colonization. Her “shame” becomes directly equated with the shame she feels following sexual abuse; shame “was

what I felt when the father of the boys next door walked up to me while I was skipping and put his hands between my legs, pinching me where I peed. Shame was the feeling that something terribly wrong had happened, something deeply forbidden, something you did not dare tell your parents about, because it was bound to be your fault” (133-134). By equating the shame of sexual abuse with the white shame of colonization, she defines “shame” as a guilty feeling on the part of the victim. Buss/Clarke’s story is not only “an appropriation [...] to make me feel less shame,” it is appropriation disguising an absolution of racial guilt.

Buss/Clarke’s childhood fantasy is thus an appropriation of a story about colonial violence, distorted into a story about feminism. By rewriting history with a feminist goal, by indigenizing herself into a constructed matriarchal tribe, she denies Shanawdithit’s history as a victim of colonial invasion, and forces her into a story that has little direct relevance to her plight. Instead it serves Buss/Clarke’s own feminist agenda. Her suggestion that a matriarchal society would not have exterminated the Beothuk people is a way of not talking about the real issues of colonial power. She writes: “it seems obvious to me as an adult feminist that what I should have been feeling then was neither shame nor sadness at the fates of my heroines. What I should have felt was robbed: robbed of a fuller history, robbed of the very moral values my culture told me it abided by” (134). The tragedy is centred around Buss/Clarke herself, and her feminist disappointments.

Buss/Clarke’s narrative, then, reveals anxiety and self-consciousness about her own whiteness, even as it reinforces the privileges of whiteness; she, and not Shanawdithit, is in a position in which she is able to re-imagine the outcome of history. The unsettling suggestion that her victimization as a woman may equal, or at least be comparable to, the victimization of colonial genocide, exposes the idea of a Newfoundland ethnicity as a site of relative privilege.

This privilege, then, this unequal power dynamic that continues even more than a century since the “last Beothuk” died, reveals why the Newfoundland diaspora must not be racialized outside of whiteness. Diaspora as a concept must be able to accommodate both the pain and marginalization of the Newfoundland migrant in displacement, and the relative advantage of Newfoundlanders in relation to groups that do not benefit from the privileges and histories of whiteness.

Buss/Clarke’s gendered and raced body is thus emblematic of the contested positionings of postmodern ethnicity. She embodies both the marginalization of womanhood and the privileges of whiteness, often occupying both positions simultaneously. Her body, then, is a site of multiple strategic essentialisms that mark her as a diasporic figure; indeed her diasporic condition does not necessitate an essentialized, minoritized ethnicity, but rather enables the postmodern invention and multiplication of identities as she moves between various spatial and conceptual “homes.”

“The Holdin’ Ground”: Second Generation Newfoundland Ethnicity

If most diasporic Newfoundlanders are “white,” physically marked only by their accents, one may assume that their children, born outside of Newfoundland, do not feel marked by a particular Newfoundland ethnicity. Indeed, even diaspora theorists “of colour” wonder about the ethnic affiliation of their own children in the new homeland. Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan distinguishes between first generation immigrants, “emotionally committed to India,” and the second generation: “It would be foolish of me to expect that India will move my son the same way it moves me” (208). But he goes on to admit that “it would be equally outrageous of me to claim that somehow my India is more real than his; my India is as much an invention or production as his” (208). Is the second-generation invention of an imagined homeland really

lacking in “emotional commitment?” And is it driven by that generation being “*marked* as different by virtue of their skin color, their family background, and other ethnic and unassimilated traits” (Radhakrishnan 206, emphasis original)? In other words, to what extent does the “white” second generation retain ethnicity?

For second-generation diasporic Newfoundlanders, ethnic affiliation may be embraced, rather than imposed by experiences of racism, but it nevertheless does evoke strong feelings of identification and a significant “emotional commitment.” Ted Russell’s classic radio play, *The Holdin’ Ground* (1954), creates a powerful metaphor for the ethnic affiliation of the children of Newfoundland out-migrants:

I’m sittin’ on my stage head lookin’ out at where Skipper Joe Irwin’s schooner is ridin’ at her moorin’. And lookin’ at her, I’ve noticed how she’s always on the move. Swingin’ this way and that with the tide and the baffles of offshore wind from the hills; fallin’ back till her chain brings up taut, then shootin’ ahead to slacken it. Always and forever on the move. A stranger not knowin’ the difference’d think she was adrift. That is, if he didn’t know about her chain and her anchor – and her holdin’ ground. (1)

Initially, this metaphor stands for the “people along this part of the Newfoundland coast. And most likely [...] people everywhere,” who differ in opinion but are nevertheless held together by a common bond. But as the play goes on, the swinging and moving of the schooner comes to stand for out-migration. The play tells the story of Michael, the son of an outport family that left for the mainland before he was born. Michael returns to visit the place, and though he has not been there before, he knows the location of all the hidden rocks in the cove, and cries as he surveys the abandoned houses of his family. The common expression “you can take a man out of the Bay, but you can’t take the Bay out of the man” (37), recurs throughout the play, revealing that an emotional connection to place can exist even for those who have never lived there.

Michael is attached to his homeland, then, despite his birth abroad and worldwide travels, like the schooner anchored to the “holdin’ ground” below.

This image of the “holdin’ ground” as the tie of the second generation to their Newfoundland ancestry is a helpful starting point for an analysis of Newfoundland ethnicity. While the second generation are not marked by physical traits that identify their heritage, they often feel a genealogical link to place that becomes an important aspect of identity. As Hiller and Franz found, “second-generation migrants possessed a sense of rootedness that was based on Newfoundland being a parent’s place of birth” (Hiller and Franz 746). Whiteness, then, does not necessarily mean that individuals live easily as part of an ethnically neutral majority, as some critics and anti-racist activists have suggested.³⁷ As Grekul explains, in her study of Ukrainian Canadian literature,

What does ethnicity mean to us, the children of multiculturalism and the grandchildren of assimilation, who are many decades removed from our ancestral roots? We pass. We are not called upon to explain where we come from, as racialized minorities often are: it is assumed that we come from here. We are not 'read' as different, anything other than 'Canadian,' because we wear no outward signs of difference: most of us don't speak our ethnic languages, we don't speak accented English, we don't practice customs and traditions that make our ethnic identity visible. But many of us nonetheless *feel* different, and that feeling is legitimate. (xxiii, emphasis original)

This feeling of difference is often manifested in literary works, particularly, as Grekul’s study shows, family memoirs. David Macfarlane’s family memoir of Newfoundland *The Danger Tree* (1991) reveals that whiteness does not prevent a feeling of difference, of ethnicity, of being tied to a homeland by a strong “holdin’ ground.” Similarly to Wayne Johnston, Macfarlane

³⁷ Himani Bannerji’s claim, for example, that white ethnic groups such as Ukrainians merely “seek to be ethnics” because “the price to be paid is no longer there,” and that they vigorously participate in “white supremacist politics” (144) erases histories of marginalization and legitimate experiences of ethnic difference. Bannerji’s position, paradoxically, criticizes ethnic assimilation into a homogeneous and dominant category of “whiteness,” while simultaneously criticizing white groups’ claims to ethnic differentiation. See Keefer “The Sacredness of Bridges” for a measured response to Bannerji’s attack on Ukrainian-Canadians.

emphasizes the importance of story in the construction of his identity; story becomes his claim to a Newfoundland ethnicity. Like Buss/Clarke, his is a particularly postmodern ethnicity, characterized by metafiction, fragmentation, invention, and a constructed link between personal identity and national history.

Come-From-Away or Emergent Ethnic?

As a native of Hamilton, Ontario, Macfarlane's identification with his Newfoundland heritage is uneasy: "When Newfoundlanders resent the rest of Canada, they zero their resentment on exactly the part of Canada from which I come. Up-Along, they call it. And strangers, like me, are called Come From Aways. My uneasiness has never prevented me from feeling proud of my Newfoundland connection, however" (38). The American edition of the book was in fact published under the telling title *Come From Away*. But while southern Ontario is the place he grew up, and his father's birthplace, Macfarlane establishes his Newfoundland connection by outlining his maternal genealogy: "My mother was born in Newfoundland. Her maiden name was Goodyear. The eldest of four children, she comes from the very center of the island, from a town called Grand Falls" (20). The memoir devotes a lot of attention to Macfarlane's great grandmother, Louisa Goodyear, and the four generations of Newfoundland heritage seem to justify his position as a "well qualified" observer (Staveley 42). Throughout the book he is positioned as both insider and outsider to Newfoundland culture; he describes both personal memories, and events that happened long before he was born. Newfoundland is in fact first described in the book through the eyes of his ancestors on his father's side, the Scottish immigrants that he imagines coincidentally landing on the Newfoundland coast before making their way inland to settle in Ontario. Yet even as he takes on the perspective of the stranger, seeing Newfoundland for the first time, he pauses to let us in on an inside joke: "the lakes are

called ponds – the oldest joke about the Newfoundland accent being that a pond is an inland body of water, no matter how big; a leak, pronounced ‘lake,’ is what’s wet in your boots” (12). Like any inside joke, it loses something in the explanation; one must be able to imagine the Newfoundland accent, and to picture an outsider making the mistake of calling a pond a lake, to find it funny. Macfarlane thus occupies a liminal space between inside and outside, the liminal space of diaspora.

As Helen Staveley argues in her article on *The Danger Tree* for *Newfoundland Studies*, “[w]hile the discomfiture [of his dual heritage] does bring unease, apparently it also permits Macfarlane a certain clearness of eye. Raised with whatever advantages a metropolis can offer [...] if he can nevertheless passionately love a place and a people so seemingly different from his Hamilton home and its people, then it is implicit that this love must be a result of choice” (43). While Macfarlane’s decision to venerate his Newfoundland ancestors in his memoir is certainly a choice, his feeling of identification with his Newfoundland heritage, his feeling that parts of his personality can be easily traced to his Newfoundland roots, suggests that there is more at play here than simply choice. Macfarlane recalls first hearing as a boy the unlikely story of how his parents met, and feeling a moment of existential panic. He writes,

I realized suddenly that the odds stacked against my existence had been overwhelming. I stared from the window of our car and wondered whether I was actually a boy in the back seat of a turquoise Pontiac or somebody else. [...] How was I to know? And at that precise, unnerving moment I didn’t know, but over the years I learned the awful truth: it had been a long shot, but I was the boy in the Pontiac all right. I am who I am because inside me is wedded the discomfiture of two societies as distinct from one another as night and day (20).

The phrase “awful truth” emphasizes the fact that Macfarlane’s identity is not chosen, but is rather a hybrid identity composed of the reserved silences of the Ontario Scots on his father’s side, and the boisterous, dynamic storytelling of the Newfoundlanders on his mother’s side. As

Ang argues, the third space of hybridity can be a very creative space, and is key to her concept of postmodern ethnicity. Hybridity accommodates the heterogeneity of diasporic “imagined communities,” their “internal differences and particularities” (36). The recognition of hybridity is a recognition of the fact that while the diasporic subject can never return to his or her “origins,” “the cultural context of ‘where you’re at’ always informs and articulates the meaning of ‘where you’re from’” (35). For Macfarlane, hybridity is not an easy blending of two identities, but rather a state of constant tension between two parts. But this tension is what makes him “who he is,” and it locates him in a creative liminal space where Newfoundland and Canadian heritages meet. Throughout the text, then, these heritages remain in tension, and as we will see, reflect the ongoing tension between Newfoundland and Canada as a whole in the new federation formed shortly before Macfarlane’s own birth.

This negotiation between what is inherited and what is chosen, and between the new home and the old home, recalls Hall’s concept of “emergent ethnicity”:

If you ask my son, who is seventeen and who was born in London, where he comes from, he cannot tell you he comes from Jamaica. Part of his identity is there, but he has to discover that identity. He can’t just take it out of a suitcase and plop it on the table and say ‘That’s mine.’ It’s not an essence like that. He has to learn to tell himself the story of his past. He has to interrogate his own history, he has to relearn that part of him that has an investment in that culture (“Identities” 19).

For Hall, then, the position of the second generation necessitates that identity be imagined and constructed. But the idea that one may “relearn” something one has never actually experienced reveals that while emergent ethnicity may need to be constructed, it is also inherited. He writes, “[w]e tell ourselves the stories of the parts of our roots in order to come into contact, creatively, with it. So this new kind of ethnicity – the emergent ethnicities – has a relationship to the past, but it is a relationship that is partly through memory, partly through narrative, one that has to be

recovered. It is an act of cultural recovery” (19). The concept of emergent ethnicity, with its emphasis on processes of identification and the construction of narrative, links an Anglian postmodern ethnicity with the specific condition of the second generation. It is this process of recovering the stories of his Newfoundland roots – his “holdin’ ground” – that Macfarlane engages in in his memoir.

“The Stories Found their Way Back”

Macfarlane describes how one year, at the age of eleven, he modified the annual school social studies project on Hamilton to a comparison between Hamilton and Newfoundland. While his descriptions of the project are cute and amusing – “In a paragraph entitled ‘Recreation,’ Hamilton was credited with having the YMCA and an exceptional football team, while Newfoundland had the Atlantic Ocean” (38-39) – the anecdote reveals the equal importance of his hometown and his mother(’s)land in his young mind. It also marks the beginning of using the written word to mark a connection to place.

Macfarlane’s memoir does not concentrate on his own memories and experiences, but rather tells the stories of his grandparents, great-grandparents, great uncles and great aunt. All of these people have passed away; by giving voice to their stories he becomes their delegate, adopting their voices as part of his own. For Macfarlane, the biggest difference between the Ontario and Newfoundland sides of his family is that while his father’s family are famous for their silences, his mother’s are famous for their stories. Macfarlane takes this trait not just as differences in family personalities, but as representative of the cultures from which they originate. By becoming a storyteller himself, then, Macfarlane has assumed this all-important ethnic trait of Newfoundlanders.

The form that Macfarlane's stories take imitates the oral, circular form that his family used. He tells us

It was as if Newfoundland contained all the best stories in the world. [...] What I liked best was that they talked in great, looping circles. I was used to people who spoke in straight lines, darting from subject to subject like foxes looking for winter cover. But my Newfoundland relatives set their stories going and then let them roll from one tale to the next until I – sitting on the steps of the veranda – was certain they had no idea where they had begun. [...] Tales were abandoned in the telling in favor of other tales, but one story led seamlessly to another, spiralling like drifting pipe-smoke, farther and farther away from the conversation's beginnings. Yet somehow, without so much as a where-were-we, the stories found their way back, hours later, to where they had started. (41-42)

This spiralling form is a model for the chapters of Macfarlane's memoir. For example, chapter six begins with Macfarlane recalling that the last time he saw his great-uncle Roland was in 1973, when Macfarlane was working at a steel company for the summer. But instead of launching into this last meeting, Macfarlane digresses into a description of the job, and the two "Newfies" he worked with there. He goes on to inform us of the origins and connotations of the term "Newfie," which leads into the long history of the American influx during WWII. The tale spirals back to the two young steel workers, and several anecdotes about their time together at the plant, before he finally comes back, twelve pages later, to the afternoon that he last saw his Uncle Roland in 1973, by the side of his parents' pool. By imitating this spiralling structure, Macfarlane not only demonstrates his skill as a writer, but also employs the storytelling form that he has identified as a particularly Newfoundland trait. Storytelling, then, becomes a means of embracing his "emergent ethnicity" as a Newfoundlander, by, as Hall puts it, telling himself (and us) the stories of his roots, and doing so with a particularly Newfoundland voice.

But as Hall notes, the "recovered" stories of emergent ethnicities are necessarily invented and constructed, emphasizing the fact that identities are not biological or cultural givens, but always negotiated. Like Buss/Clarke, then, Macfarlane uses the postmodern technique of

metanarrative to highlight the construction of his text. In addition to retelling the stories of his family, he also writes about what he does not know. As he tells us the story of the last time he saw his Uncle Roland, then, he laments: “That afternoon, by the pool, I could have sat down with Kate and Roland and found out about Ladle Cove and Grand Falls and Ray and Stan and Hedley. Roland and Kate were both born when Queen Victoria was on the throne. [...] We could have talked for hours. They might well have enjoyed my curiosity” (167). He goes on to list the many questions that he could have asked, about the family business, the relationships between the brothers, the source of his great-grandparents’ money. For an entire page we are inundated with scraps of detail that lead only to mysteries and questions, not stories. But as a young man Macfarlane did not have the same interest in his family stories, and while it “haunts [him] now,” he recalls how he spent that afternoon long ago: “I am floating on an air mattress. I am listening to the radio, half asleep. I am doing my best to ignore the old people at the end of the pool” (168). The metanarrative points to the active recovery and (re)construction required in the making of postmodern ethnicity.

Elsewhere, he makes up for these lost stories by recounting events as though he has the first-hand knowledge required to tell the tale. He imagines, for example, the time that Roland took a stuffed caribou to London for the Exhibition of the Empire, to promote investment in Newfoundland:

He stood in the silent ranks on Pall Mall with the glass eyes of a dead caribou staring out from underneath his black armband, marvelling at the size of the crowds around him and dreaming of the pit props and the gold bullion and the acres upon priceless acres of Newfoundland that the Goodyears would some day sell to them. (49)

But Macfarlane interrupts this narration with a metafictional moment: “Or this, at least, is what I imagine, for these stories – the ones that precede the First World War – are almost completely

lost now” (49-50). While we know that Macfarlane cannot know what Roland was thinking as he stood on a London street, we get caught up in the fictional mode and accept the story. But Macfarlane does not allow us to easily accept his authority; rather, he upsets it in order to emphasize the negotiation required in the construction of his heritage. He lets us in on the research process:

Someone – my mother’s cousin – told me about the caribou only because he had come across it by accident, hanging above a door in a shop near Piccadilly after the Second World War. Someone else – my aunt – had heard the story of Miss Manuel and Susie Green. People I asked about those days could remember a stuffed white seal in Louisa Goodyear’s parlor, and her bell-jar. My great-uncle Roland left some notes in his trunk about his father’s adventures on the seal hunt. I could look at old photographs and guess at the stories. I could even use lines from an opera for dialogue if I wanted to: no one would know the difference. I called a dozen Manuels in the Newfoundland phone book. Up to my knees in snow and almost frozen by a coastal gale, I found Susie Green’s tombstone, near a white frame church with a single silver spire, one January afternoon in Newtown. But long before I became interested, there was almost nothing left to hold these relics together. They had become isolated from one another, like the remnants of memory left by old age. The family had lost the story. (50)

Here, Macfarlane reveals how he has reconstructed the stories from fragments of knowledge and family documents and artefacts. But he also informs us that his power of reconstruction also involves the power of invention, since “no one would know the difference.” While Macfarlane seems diligent about admitting the gaps in his knowledge and the luck involved in recovering the fragments, he also renders his reconstruction unreliable. We are not privy to all of the details that inform the memoir. The recovery of his heritage, then, is a creative, postmodern act, that invites us to question the ways in which we may tend to privilege ethnicity as the seamless inheritance of identity.

At other times the stories are fictionalized without metafictional comment. But the fragmented nature of the memoir, and the metafiction we have already read, mean that these moments simply emphasize the invention. The opening scene enters the head of Macfarlane’s

grandmother, suffering from Alzheimer's in a nursing home. The scattered and confused stream of consciousness is a fitting way to begin a book that emphasizes not only memories, but the gaps of forgetting between them. Between fragments of memory his grandmother is vaguely aware of the comings and goings of visitors: "they come in from somewhere. [...] They put in like schooners on a coast of arms and legs. She used to try to find out where inside her they belonged. Don't you remember? No, she doesn't. She's asleep. That's all" (2). The line "they come in from somewhere" is repeated several times throughout the scene, emphasizing the distance between the world inside her mind, and the visitors like her grandson who seem to belong somewhere else. From the opening pages, then, Macfarlane simultaneously attempts to enter the private space of his grandmother's mind and memory, and emphasizes the impossibility of doing so, of overcoming that distance.

"No Escaping Them": Narratives of Postmemory

The memories and histories that Macfarlane seems most interested in penetrating, however, are his grandfather and great uncles' experiences in the First World War. The memoir details the deaths of three of the Goodyear brothers, his great uncles, and the lasting impact that the deaths have on the family, including future generations: "It was the dead who would loom over the Goodyear family," he writes. "There was no escaping them" (292). For Macfarlane's Great Aunt Kate, the loss of three of her brothers during the war is a trauma that for another seven decades would still render her helpless against a "sudden avalanche of sadness" that "seared past her eyes, took her breath and her voice away, and then ended its descent in the same inconsolable hollow where the news had first settled years earlier" (245). But for Macfarlane, the trauma of his grandparents' generation is distanced by time and space; he can only begin to imagine it through the memories of his grandfather, and Aunt Kate's refusal to remember it. The

trauma of the war, then, is for Macfarlane reminiscent of what Marianne Hirsch calls “postmemory”:

Postmemory is distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection. Postmemory is a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation. This is not to say that memory itself is unmediated, but that it is more directly connected to the past. Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated. I have developed this notion in relation to children of Holocaust survivors, but I believe it may usefully describe other second-generation memories of cultural or collective traumatic events and experiences. (22)

The concept is evocative in the way that it legitimizes “imaginative creation” as a means of aligning oneself with one’s family history, and identifies the experience of hearing stories as a means of tapping into a collective form of memory. Macfarlane inherits not Aunt Kate’s trauma, but the postmemory of that trauma; he feels a “deep personal connection” to it that is nevertheless rendered distant. The postmemory of the war takes on a new significance in Macfarlane’s treatment of his great uncle Ray: “When I asked Aunt Kate about him, she said he’d been too young to have left many memories behind. ‘You’ll have to imagine him’ she said. ‘He was just a boy’” (136). Here, the imagination of postmemory takes the place of actual memory, since Ray was so young that he had hardly lived enough to leave memories behind for his family. Postmemory becomes the *only* way of memorializing him.

For Hirsch, the photograph plays a central role in postmemory: as representations of “what no longer is,” photographs “affirm the past’s existence and, in their flat two-dimensionality, they signal its unbridgeable distance” (23). Photographs bring the past into the present as a “ghostly revenant” (20), always referencing the past’s irretrievability. The family photos that mark the beginning of each of Macfarlane’s chapters, then, do not simply put faces to

the characters that he writes about, but also operate as signs of loss, of the “unbridgeable” disconnect between generations. In Macfarlane’s text the photographs of the family’s war dead haunt their survivors. We are told that “the photograph of Hedley Goodyear at Melrose Abbey stayed on his fiancée’s mantelpiece for fifty years” (264). After Hedley is killed, his fiancé remains unmarried for the rest of her life, frozen in a state of unresolved engagement, haunted by the photo that represents the loss of both her lover and her past. This was the case for an entire generation of Newfoundlanders, following the devastating battle of Beaumont Hamel: “Their fiancées waited for them forever, their mail went unanswered, their deals never closed. Their plans were left in rough draft, their sentences unfinished” (189). This uncanny state of perpetual stasis continues to haunt future generations: “After the war, their pictures hung in the homes of their parents and their surviving brothers and sister. Then, remarkably, they continued to hang in the homes of relatives who had never known them, and could only guess at who they had been. The photographs were kept up by the next generation and the generation after that” (190). These subsequent generations, then, preserve the photos as representations of a lost past, and as testimonies to an inherited postmemory that continues to impact their lives.

But while they represent an irretrievable past, Macfarlane comes to believe that

the photographs were as modern as I was. They were the pictures of our failures. Somehow, in our present – in the disappearance of an innocence, in the bankruptcy of an enterprise, in the dimming of a country’s political vision – I seem to know who these young soldiers are. They are the missing pieces. The three dead brothers kept their places in the family – gaps among the three brothers who survived them – and the century that carried on past the moments of their deaths was not what it might have been. (191)

Macfarlane writes that the balance upset in the family by the death of the three brothers is echoed in Newfoundland as a whole; while before the war “the island seemed to be on the brink of prosperity” (192), the war’s devastating losses for Newfoundland, both human and financial,

meant that “Newfoundland’s role in the great War led inexorably to bankruptcy, to an unelected government, to the colony’s abandonment by England, and, finally, to confederation with Canada” (193). WWI is often considered a defining moment of Newfoundland identity and nationalism; as Macfarlane reminds us, “[t]he raising of their own regiment was a source of great national pride to Newfoundlanders. [...] Newfoundland had claimed its place among the nations of the Empire” (143). The decimation of that regiment, in turn, created a collective trauma that reinforced Newfoundland’s national imaginary as a community in simultaneous mourning. But for Macfarlane, the war marks both Newfoundland’s “great moment of nationalism” (193), and, ironically, the beginning of the end for the Newfoundland nation. Macfarlane locates his narrative, then, at the pivotal moment of Newfoundland identity. He aligns himself genealogically with the soldiers who defined Newfoundland identity with their deaths, and as he laments their loss he also laments the loss of the Newfoundland nation.

This sense of loss, as well as the “discomfiture” between Macfarlane’s Ontarian and Newfoundland identities, are perhaps best captured in the final scene, as he visits Newfoundland on July 1st. Since WWI, July 1st had always been Memorial Day, in remembrance of the Newfoundland Regiment decimated in the battle of Beaumont Hamel. But July 1st, of course, is also Canada Day, and since Confederation the coincidence of the two dates has caused many Newfoundlanders consternation; for Macfarlane’s grandfather, veteran of the battle, it is “an appalling indignity” (193). Macfarlane visits his mother’s hometown of Grand Falls for Memorial Day ceremonies, only to find that they were held the week before. Instead, the town is hosting a Canada Day rock festival featuring the Beach Boys. Macfarlane’s account of the influx of cars and tents, and the signs announcing “Surf City Discounts” (296), is sharply juxtaposed with his account of the infamous battle at Beaumont Hamel, the morning after which a mere

sixty-nine soldiers from a regiment of eight hundred answered the roll-call. This juxtaposition provides a poignant commentary on Newfoundland's uneasy fit within the Canadian nation, and Canada's jarring disregard for one of Newfoundland's identity-forming tragedies. The image of Newfoundlanders themselves replacing memorial services with celebrations further complicates the idea of ethnicity; while Macfarlane, as an Ontarian, inherits a profound respect for Newfoundland's veterans and July 1st, Newfoundlanders born and raised in the province do not seem to place the same value on the rituals of commemoration. Their Newfoundland identities are secure, and do not necessarily clash with their Canadian identities in the same way. For Macfarlane, born "away," the two parts of his heritage are in necessary tension, and represented by physical distance, they cannot be easily resolved.

The memoir's final image is fittingly haunting: as Macfarlane makes his way to his grandmother's nursing home for a last visit before he returns to Ontario, he hears a train. Puzzled, since there have not been any trains left in Newfoundland for years, he stops to watch: "I looked down at the ground behind the wheels. The diesel was dragging two long, parallel lines of rusted steel along the railbed. The engine – perhaps the last in all of Newfoundland – was pulling up its own tracks" (304). These final lines of the book are haunting in their pathetic finality, and act as a synecdoche for a changing post-Confederation Newfoundland. The Newfoundland of the Goodyear family has gone; the "country," as Macfarlane's grandfather always stubbornly referred to it, has been replaced by "the province of Newfoundland" (29). The defining tragedy of Newfoundland's history has been forgotten in the shadow of a Canadian holiday and an American rock band. And Newfoundland's train system, shut down after Confederation by Canadian National, its new owners, is engaged in its own final self-destruction. The final tone is one of profound loss. But Macfarlane's Newfoundland identity is maintained

through postmemory; despite the loss of the Newfoundland nation, the death of his Newfoundland ancestors, and the threat of assimilation that his Canadian identity seems to pose to his Newfoundland identity, Macfarlane is dominated by the stories of his mother's family, of a place that seems to "sit at the center of the universe" (205), and he uses these stories to construct his own narrative of emergent ethnicity.

"Homebred Bumpkins": Out-Migration to the Mainland

While the Americans invented the term "Newfie" during the Second World War, the "Newfie joke," Macfarlane notes, was a "Canadian invention": "This was because Newfoundland was poor – a quality that American servicemen, interestingly enough, hadn't found particularly funny. It was because the province had the lowest per capita income, and the highest rate of emigration and unemployment. Probably it had the worst teeth" (158). For Macfarlane, Newfoundland's marginal place within Canada is a direct consequence of poverty and its accompaniment, out-migration:

In the 1950s, '60s, and '70s many young Newfoundlanders with gaps in their yellow grins were unable to afford educations or technical training, and they showed up in Toronto, in Hamilton, and in Alberta looking for work as laborers. And it was because Newfoundlanders had distinctive accents – Protestant West Country, Catholic Irish, broad, unintelligible expressions from the Bay, and thick colourful turns of phrase that were unique to St. John's – that Newfoundlanders became Newfies. Canadians needed a homebred bumpkin to emphasize their own prosperity and sophistication. (159)

To anti-confederates, like Macfarlane's grandfather, Canada was responsible for "kidnap[ing] the sons of Newfoundland families for labor in the automobile factories and the steel plants of Ontario. [...] People watched their sons and daughters leave for Ontario and Alberta, and they wondered whether confederation had actually made things better for Newfoundland, or, in fact, had made things worse" (31). Macfarlane internalizes this conflict, so that "[my] grandfather's opposition to confederation, and the fact that I was the first issue of a marriage that began not in

Newfoundland, where by custom it should have, but in Ontario – a wedding that was almost precisely coincidental with the island’s union with Canada – has made me feel a little uneasy all my life” (37). For Macfarlane, his parents’ marriage parallels the union of Newfoundland and Canada, and his own dislocation from his motherland seems to parallel the wave of out-migration that Confederation seemed to cause.

His affiliation with two such migrant Newfoundlanders, with whom he shares shifts at a Hamilton steel plant, is thus both natural and poignant. The two self-identified “Newfies” live up to the stereotypes that Canadians held of their province: “George and Danny knew the requirements. For starters, they were both hard drinkers. [...] They were also good fighters. [...] Still, they were nice guys. There was something gentle and friendly beneath all their self-destructive bluster. They shared a wry, fast-paced sense of humor, an instinctive distrust of authority, and an amazing inability to save money” (161-162). Macfarlane spends his shifts with the Newfoundlanders, smoking pot and telling stories, but his descriptions of them make it clear that his relationship to them is one of an outsider. He sympathizes with their circumstances:

The Newfies hated Hamilton and they hated the coke ovens, and they felt no particular gratitude to anyone for having to spend seventy hours a week in such a hellhole. They weren’t going to leave in September for sherry parties in the quad and seminars on *The Waste Land*. They were there forever – or at least until they were laid off – because they had car payments and pregnant girlfriends and because there was no work for them in Newfoundland. (163-164)

Macfarlane is acutely aware of his own class position here, as the son of a dentist who labours for the summer but is able to return to post-secondary education in the fall. While he is a product of out-migration, he is not a member of a family forced to leave by economic hardship; he is not the son of a George or a Danny, working their whole lives in the steel plant. But Macfarlane also reveals that while out-migration is often a class issue, it is also an issue of the uneven relationship between Newfoundland and the other provinces. By linking out-migration with the

failures of post-Confederation development, and with the condescending attitude of the rest of Canada towards Newfoundland “bumpkins,” Macfarlane hints at the way in which the entire island has been characterized as lower-class in relationship to the mainland, as an ethnic stereotype, rather than a class stereotype. Macfarlane’s liminal or hybrid position allows him to be both self-reflexive about his own class positioning, and indignant about the marginalization of Newfoundlanders, at home and abroad.

While neither Buss/Clarke nor Macfarlane use the term “ethnicity,” both play in their memoirs with the formation of diasporic identities that reference genealogical and cultural inheritances rather than place-bound identification. They address their simultaneous positions of both privilege and marginalization, using postmodern techniques to identify and reflect on hierarchies of class, race, and ethnicity. They show, therefore, not only how diaspora can be effectively applied to Newfoundland out-migration, but also how the diasporic position itself can be subjected to a useful postmodern interrogation.

Conclusion: Writing in Diaspora Space

It is January in Edmonton. My tiny office is draughty and the furnace pants to catch up. My cold fingers keep rewinding the tape recorder as I strain to catch my grandfather's words, to accurately transcribe every "um" and "well" in his low, accented speech. He tells me of the shipwreck his mother survived at sixteen, of his childhood on the farm outside St. John's, of the city during the war. And he tells me of Confederation, how the buildings in St. John's were draped with black flags on April 1st, 1949, of the conspiracy he swears was behind the referendum, and the dirty dealings of Joey Smallwood. (When we hear weather reports of storms and neck-deep snow in Newfoundland, and my mother phones to ask him how they're doing, he says the weather's not so bad, those damn mainlanders at the CBC are always making Newfoundland sound worse than it is).

I am writing a family memoir of Newfoundland, which collects the voices of my parents and grandparents and great-grandparents, from the sound bites I have recorded and the poems, letters and documents they have left behind. I don't know why I am doing this. Sure, their stories are fascinating – tales of shipwreck, war, the hardships of outport life during the Depression – but I feel as though I am writing towards something, staking claim to something. It is not just a memoir of my ancestors but a record of place itself. Newfoundland is more than the province my parents come from, it is an identity. In grade two when we all had to bring in a recipe that represented our family's heritage for a classroom multicultural cookbook, I was sent to school with fish chowder.

When I was a few months old in an Edmonton house just off the university campus, my uncle and his wife in Winnipeg flew home to Newfoundland so that my cousin would be born there, because that meant something. And growing up I was jealous of that, too.

I call my memoir *The Bosun Chair*, after the chair that my great-grandmother supposedly rigged to help transport people from a sinking ship to the shore, in the middle of a storm, in 1906. It is, as Wayne Johnston might put it, a good story. But I feel like I have to explain how it could be mine. If I am an Albertan, what does this book mean?

The word “diaspora” seems like an answer to this question. “Diaspora” seems to explain why I feel this connection to Newfoundland, why I am compelled to write about a place where I have never lived. It seems to explain how I could grow up in Alberta and never feel like an Albertan, or why David Macfarlane, a boy from Ontario, wrote a memoir not just of his family, but of Newfoundland itself. And it explains why I identify with Janice Kulyk Keefer’s journey in her memoir *Honey and Ashes* to reconstruct the home where her mother grew up on the border of Ukraine and Poland. Or with Denise Chong’s fictionalization of her family’s story in China and British Columbia in *The Concubine’s Children*.

As Lily Cho compellingly writes, “no one is born diasporic. Rather, one *becomes* diasporic through a complex process of memory and emergence.” This dissertation, then, does not insist that Newfoundland migrants are automatically diasporic subjects, but rather considers how literary texts construct diasporic identification through, in Cho’s terms, “a lateral engagement across multiple diasporic communities and identities and vertically through long histories of dislocation” (“Turn” 21). In other words, the concept of diaspora both enables and is enabled by an understanding of differences and of the losses “shared across geographies and communities” (21). Cho’s metaphorical spatialization of diasporic engagement suggests one way

of conceptualizing how history and collective memory construct diasporic subjects into the second and third generation, and how these subjects come to identify with other experiences that may be worlds apart from their own.

My parents are about to leave for a trip “home,” to visit my grandparents and the few siblings who have not left. They will return with a fresh supply of Newfoundland’s Mount Scio savoury, an essential ingredient in turkey stuffing. When my mother asks her cousin, who lives around the corner from her, if she wants anything from home, the reply is “just kiss the ground for me.”

This connection to the very ground has been passed on to me, often resulting in a melodramatic sentimentality. But it also appears in other ways, like when my husband laughs at the way a ‘t’ on the end of a word sometimes slips between my teeth.

I see my memoir, then, as part of a Newfoundland literary diaspora, a body of work by writers who write back to the place, including David French, Gordon Pinsent, Wayne Johnston, M.T. Dohaney, Donna Morrissey, and Carl Leggo. In his interview with Johnston, Herb Wyile suggests that “it is the fate of Atlantic writers more than most other Canadian writers to go down the road to write, to practice their craft” (“Afterlife” 119). Although he is one of those who has “gone down the road,” Johnston explains that he left for reasons of personal practice, rather than marketability, and argues that in fact “a lot of Newfoundland writers stay in Newfoundland now. In fact, Newfoundland is one of the few places where artists have tended to stay, again because of that so recent sense of nationhood” (119). But whether or not writers need to leave, many other Newfoundlanders do, and in their novels and short stories, even writers who have stayed or returned speak to this continual atmosphere of loss. Tom Dawe’s haunting verses in *In Hardy*

Country (1993) depict the gradual scattering of an outport's children, making the penultimate line of "Hide and Seek" – an offhand comment about "how small the world was" – painfully ironic. Bernice Morgan's novel *Waiting for Time* (1994) depicts a woman born in Ontario, who upon discovering her Newfoundland roots late in life is pulled to the place and her history. Morgan dedicates the book "to young Newfoundlanders who must go away," including her own children (no page). Paul Bowdring's short novel *The Roncesvalles Pass* (1989) follows a community of diasporic Newfoundlanders in the cold urban space of Toronto. Younger writers like Lisa Moore, Michael Crummey, and other members of the "Burning Rock Collective" write short stories in which out-migration is a natural part of everyday life. While these disparate authors write in all genres and depict a variety of settings and time periods, reading their work together illuminates the massive impact that out-migration has had on both those who have left, and those who have been left behind.

In his introduction to *Essays on Canadian Writing's* 2004 special issue on the literature of Newfoundland, Lawrence Mathews suggests that writers like those of Burning Rock constitute a separate "literary culture" from writers like Johnston and Morgan and an older generation of novelists:

the thematic preoccupations that link Horwood, Janes, the Johnston of *Colony*, Morgan, and Steffler seem to have disappeared. Neither writer [Moore or Bowdring] has any interest in developing an overview of Newfoundland identity, though for both the Newfoundland setting is integral to their artistic projects. It is as though the issues of collective identity addressed by the other writers have now been settled or become irrelevant, and the texture of their character's lives has taken centre stage. (12)

The binary that Mathews sets up here is reminiscent of A.J.M. Smith's 1943 claim that Canadian poetry can be divided into two groups, the "native" and "cosmopolitan." Writers like Moore do explicitly dismiss the "kind of writing that is self-consciously about nation building, [...] writing

that's about saying, 'This is who we are and this is where we come from'" (Dyer 17). But Mathews' old-fashioned dichotomy oversimplifies Newfoundland literary production and reveals similar colonial anxieties to those that concerned Smith in the early development of Canadian literary criticism. Moore's urban narratives and their global concerns do not explicitly deal with issues of "collective identity," but her characters and their lives cannot so easily be separated out from the cultural context in which their stories take place. The urban, contemporary settings do not mean that the stories are universal or that issues of Newfoundland identity are "irrelevant." Her short story "Azalea," in *Open* (2002), is an intimate portrait of Sara, a St. John's woman with a young son. The prospect of moving to Montreal when her husband is offered a job there is intertwined with other reflections and everyday movements through the urban space of St. John's. While the possibility of moving is not explicitly tied to a Newfoundland diaspora, the Newfoundland setting and the subtext of an ongoing migration problem makes Sara's dilemma culturally particular and poignant.

On the other side of Mathews' dichotomy, Johnston's *Colony*, as we have seen, does self-consciously address issues of Newfoundland identity. But his work is much more than an "overview of Newfoundland identity" whose immature thematic preoccupations obstruct artistic technique. Johnston's novel continually challenges the regionalist assumptions of his readers through postmodern play and revision, constructing Newfoundland as both an "imaginary homeland" and an "imagined community."

But Mathews' implied disparagement of what we might call "native" texts does point to legitimate concerns about the role of literature in constructing and maintaining identity. The close connections that I have examined between the Newfoundland diaspora, and the memory of Confederation and feelings of nationalism and "ethnic" difference, could easily lead to ethnic

absolutism, and a homogeneous, exclusive, national vision of Newfoundland. Does the concept of a Newfoundland literary diaspora bolster a dangerous neo-nationalism? Does my own memoir blindly laud the separatist impulses and romantic authenticity of identity politics? Does this dissertation privilege a falsely unified Newfoundland identity that stands in contrast and opposition to other Canadian identities, rather than in creative dialogue? The concept of a Newfoundland diaspora does come with these inherent risks. But I want to suggest that it is possible to engage in a critical cultural nationalism, that asserts difference without essentialism, and that constructs alternative narratives of history that resist appropriation into idealistic visions of Canadian unity. The concept of diaspora in fact moves Newfoundland nationalism beyond assertions of identity that are bound by territory, toward identifications that are dynamic and self-reflexive.

I have been called “Newfie” by well-meaning friends, and I get a feeling of intense discomfort, like I am impersonating a Newfoundlander and will be found out, though I have never claimed to be one. I am proud of my heritage, but am intellectually aware of the problems of appropriation, or worse, of allowing a white-washed “we-are-all-immigrants” Canadian multiculturalism to obscure the power differentials of a society that in many ways has been built on a deeply entrenched racism.

Lisa Grekul claims that for second, third and fourth-generation Ukrainian Canadians, despite the privileges of whiteness and unaccented speech, “many of us nonetheless *feel* different, and that feeling is legitimate” (xxiii). But Newfoundland is just a province of Canada. I am descended from colonial settlers complicit in the eradication of the Beothuk people. I can trace my family history back even further, to 17th century England, to an obscure connection with

the Lever soap empire. My feeling of difference is tentative, almost sheepish, and sometimes, perhaps, strategic.

Is diaspora, then, merely a dangerous “lure,” as Rey Chow puts it? Is it a form of cultural capital, a claim that obscures the privileges of economic migration, or that erases the class differences between my white-collar family members and the oil-rig workers of Fort McMurray?

Claiming diaspora without a detailed interrogation of the term’s histories, internal differences, and implications does risk erasing the important power differentials behind its dislocations. Yet restricting diaspora to a set of criteria including racialized subjectivity, a level of victimization, or lack of class privilege involves other risks, such as reducing identity to origins and territory, reifying ethnic and racial categories, and constructing bizarre hierarchies of victimhood. Such restrictions risk stratifying communities based on the conditions of migration, rather than recognizing the productive similarities and cultural and historical connections between the groups’ members. I follow the influential work of theorists such as Stuart Hall, James Clifford, and Avtar Brah who argue for definitions of diaspora as a concept involving complex and shifting processes of identification. As Brah puts it, “[p]rocesses of diasporic identity formation are exemplars *par excellence* of the claim that identity is always plural, and in process. [...] [T]he concept of diaspora refers to *multi-locationality* within and across territorial, cultural and psychic boundaries” (197, emphasis original). Considering diaspora in these more flexible conceptual terms does not mean that the term should be applied willy nilly to any movement of people. Rather, this usage of diaspora as a concept or a condition of subjectivity, rather than a concrete unit of study, accommodates a considered reflection of the conditions of diasporic movements, community formations, and identity construction, as these conditions relate to that of other groups.

Canada can therefore helpfully be considered what Brah calls a “diaspora space,” the “intersectionality of diaspora, border, and dis/location as a point of confluence of economic, political, cultural, and psychic processes,” which includes “the entanglement, the intertwining of the genealogies of dispersion with those of ‘staying put’” (208-209). Brah uses England as an example of a diaspora space, within which “African-Caribbean, Irish, Asian, Jewish and other diasporas intersect among themselves as well as with the entity constructed as ‘Englishness’, thoroughly re-inscribing it in the process” (209). Formed in part through colonial encounters and imperial rivalries, the diaspora space of England is continually reconstituted by border crossings and cultural “traffic.” Canada is similarly characterized by a multitude of colonial, indigenous and diasporic identities, further differentiated by various “axes” of class, race, gender, or sexuality. Brah’s formulation does not posit everyone within a diaspora space as necessarily diasporic, but rather articulates how diasporic identifications are constructed by interactions with other cultural identities within a given location, in turn constructing that location as a place of shifting identities, and continually reconfiguring received notions of “Englishness” or, in this case, “Canadianness” (210).

Much of this dissertation has considered Newfoundland in “national” terms, resisting the tendency to anachronistically appropriate historical representations of pre-Confederation Newfoundland into restrictive, thematically defined visions of Canadian identity or Canadian literature as an institution. But post-Confederation constructions of the Newfoundland nation are, ultimately, inseparable from the Canadian space of which Newfoundland has become a part. The concept of diaspora both highlights the vexed position of Newfoundland within the federation, and intimates the relationship between diasporic Newfoundlanders and other Canadian identities.

While Newfoundlanders do, of course, move to other countries, and in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries formed large diasporic communities in the eastern United States, the vast majority of Newfoundland migrants today move to other parts of Canada. This relationship between homeland and hostland informs the relationship of Newfoundland as a whole with the rest of Canada, contributing to feelings of difference, subordination, and sometimes resentment over Confederation. But as the concept of “diaspora space” suggests, Newfoundland identities also reconfigure notions of “Canadianness.” What Brah calls the “intersectionality” of the Newfoundland diaspora with other diasporic, “ethnic” and immigrant groups, with First Nations peoples, Québécois, white Anglo-Canadians from various regions, long-standing communities of Acadians or Japanese Canadians, and countless other identities, constantly challenges and redefines traditional representations of Canada as the home of “two solitudes,” as a place bound by a “survival” or “garrison mentality,” or as a multicultural “mosaic.”

Much of this reconfiguration occurs within the body of narratives that may collectively be termed “Canadian literature.” In 1990, Linda Hutcheon and Marion Richmond’s important anthology *Other Solitudes* attempted to revise the “two solitudes” vision of Canada by acknowledging the country’s “multiracial, pluri-ethnic nature” (Hutcheon “Introduction” 2). Yet invoking the image of “solitudes” further entrenches the old binaries at the centre, with “minority literatures” on the outskirts. As Donna Bennett puts it, “we assume a mainstream against which ‘other solitudes’ – a minority collectively struggling against a dominant culture – define themselves, and our official attempts to legislate more complexity into Canadian culture collapse back into the Us-Them dialectic these policies [ie. official multiculturalism] sought to escape” (11). More recent critical work draws on theories of diaspora, postcolonialism, and critical regionalism to formulate new paradigms for thinking through “Canadian Literature” as a

concept. Bennett, for example, in her 2005 article “Getting Beyond Binaries,” contends that “identity in Canada resides neither within some unitary construction of nation nor in the binary nature of the doubled immigrant experience but in the complex mixture that now arises when individuals from many groups come together” (14). She proposes the neologism “polybridty” as one way of getting at the “other ways of seeing” (12) offered by Canadian literature. In the preface to *Trans.Can.Lit*, the collection of papers from the first TransCanada conference in 2005, Smaro Kamboureli traces some of the problems of “CanLit” as a concept and an institution. She suggests that CanLit may

be instrumentalized by and concerned with the Canadian state, but it also contests the stateness, and boldly points beyond it, to an elsewhere that is not yet legible, that defamiliarizes the tropes that produce transparency and its accompanying contentment and complacency. An alternative cognitive space, this elsewhere demands epistemic breaks that require new tools to comprehend its materiality; it calls for an understanding of temporality and space that questions the assumption that knowledge is residual, always anterior to what has come before, the product of the same epistemological gestures that have cultivated the categories of ‘proper’ subject and ‘other’ in the first place. This elsewhere inscribed in CanLit intimates that Canada is an unimaginable community, that is, a community constituted in excess of the knowledge of itself, always transitioning. (x)

This evocative idea of Canada as an “un/imagined community” is the driving spirit behind the TransCanada project, which has now evolved into two conferences (with a third in the planning stages), the TransCanada Institute at Guelph University, and various publications. These projects respond to a demand for “developing new terms of engagement with CanLit” (x) as an institution which “evokes the entirety of the geopolitical space it refers to, but [...] also siphons off large segments of this space and its peoples into oblivion at worst, and circumscribed conditions at best” (ix). The ephemeral, dynamic images of “TransCanada,” “elsewhere” and the “unimaginable community” all suggest a space that is in motion and transition, refusing the “feigned plenitude” (ix) of CanLit as an institution.

Following this current spirit of revision and transition in the study of Canadian literature, I evoke Brah's concept of diaspora space as one way of articulating the way in which diasporic communities interact with each other and with other identities within a Canadian literature in constant flux. The concept of diaspora "delineates a field of identifications where 'imagined communities' are forged within and out of a confluence of narratives from annals of collective memory and re-memory" (Brah 196). The multiple narratives of imagined communities challenge the singularity of Canada as a united and "complacent" "imagined community" (Kamboureli x). The Newfoundland diaspora, then, is one in a "field of identifications" whose literature challenges regionalist assumptions by breaching the borders of a place-bound identity, resists racialized visions of diaspora that limit writers to "minority literature" and the role of native informant, and problematizes the very concept of Canadian literature and the national unity such a construct implies.

Frequently, when I have told people what my dissertation is about, I have been asked, "are you from Newfoundland?" or "what is your connection to Newfoundland?" My stock answer has been that my family is from Newfoundland, so I am a product of the Newfoundland diaspora. But it is, in reality, a question that for me does not have an easy answer. And it is a question that raises other questions, about the necessity of self-positioning in diasporic literary studies, about the way that Newfoundland identities are perceived within a multicultural framework, and about the way that second-generation identities are constructed in the absence of visible or audible markers like race, accent, or an "ethnic" last name. These are concerns to which some of this dissertation has gestured. But they are ongoing questions that I expect will follow me throughout my creative and academic careers.

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