

**LOST AMID THE FOGS:
TRAVEL AND THE INSCRIPTION
OF NEWFOUNDLAND, 1497 TO 1997**

John A. Harries

**PhD Social Anthropology
The University of Edinburgh
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I declare that this thesis is, in its entirety, my original work.

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John Harries
Social Anthropology
The University of Edinburgh

ABSTRACT

This thesis is about Newfoundland, Canada. It concerns the ways in which Newfoundland and its people have been authored by visiting strangers. The problem of authorship is situated within an ethnographic reflection on the politics of identity and resource management in rural Newfoundland. These politics are dominated by the rhetoric of development and underdevelopment. According to this rhetoric, Newfoundland is backward, and the job of government is to facilitate the region's progress. It is argued that the contemporary concern with Newfoundland's progress may be considered as a form of writing. The issue is, then, not how Newfoundland came to be underdeveloped, but how Newfoundland came to be authored as underdeveloped.

It is the exploration of the history of the writing of Newfoundland that forms the core of this thesis. This exploration is, in the Foucaudian sense, archaeological. Through a reading of travelogues published in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, an account is given of the ways in which visitors have created a knowledge of Newfoundland, and the *epistemes* of vision and representation that have constituted the possibility of that knowledge.

This archaeology of the inscription of Newfoundland is organised into five sections, which are distinguished both chronologically and thematically. The first discusses the ways in which Newfoundland was described by the merchantial adventures of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The second concerns the expeditions of "scientific" explorers of the late eighteenth century. Placing their accounts in the context of the emergence of empiricism and rationalism, it is shown that their visits represent a radically new approach to the authorship of Newfoundland, one that centred on the observing eye of enlightened traveller. The third discusses the writings of geologists who traversed Newfoundland in the beginning of the nineteenth century. The focus of this discussion is the aesthetics of time and how ideas of the primitive informed the envisioning of the landscape of Newfoundland. The fourth section examines how the idea of the wilderness was extended to the constitution of the Newfoundland "other" as a degraded European subject. Particular reference is made to the writings of missionaries and to their concerns with the regulation of desire as a cultivation of the wilderness within. The fifth and concluding section addresses the authoring of Newfoundland from a nativist perspective in the later half of the nineteenth century. For the nativist, travel was a means of rewriting colonial histories and spatialities and, in so doing, creating the location of an indigenous Newfoundland culture. It is emphasised that this process of rewriting was fraught with ambiguities. Even as nativists wrote against the misconceptions of missionaries and geologists they retained their imagining of progress, and even as the rural village was idealised as the place of the Newfoundland soul it was also deemed a place out of time. It is argued that these tensions inform the authorship of Newfoundland to the present day.

Dedication and acknowledgements

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Pius Power Jr.

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Chapter One

Lost Amid the Fogs

The Thesis

This thesis is about Newfoundland, Canada. It is not, however, about Newfoundland as a real place. It is about Newfoundland as a place inscribed: a place realized in the impress of black ink on white paper. The particular concern is with the ways in which Newfoundland as a real place has been represented by strangers who have visited the island and who have written of what they experienced during that visit.

The introduction to this thesis will consist of three sections. In the first we will briefly describe Newfoundland as a real place, giving an account of its geography and history. In the second we will define the topic of this thesis through a discussion of what it means to be lost amid the fogs. In the final section we will argue the significance of a study of the inscription of Newfoundland in relation to the politics of writing and the problem of regional underdevelopment.

Newfoundland, where and what is it?

The Newfoundland of which we write is an island in the Northwest Atlantic. It is a big island: 405,720 square kilometres to be exact, and 2001 this big island was home to an

estimated 533,800 people.¹ The majority of these people live in “urban centres.” These urban centres, however, are not very grand.

St. John’s, on the east coast of the island, is the largest town, with a population of almost 90,000, and the administrative capital. It is a port city. Two thoroughfares, Water and Duckworth Streets, run parallel to the harbor front. These constitute the city centre. There are banks, pubs and Chinese restaurants. Many storefronts are boarded up. Behind Duckworth Street there lies the old town of narrow lands and square wooden houses. At the top of the hill overlooking the old town is the great stone bulk of the Catholic Cathedral, or the Basilica as the locals call it. As the city continues down the other side of the hill the old town gives way to modern suburban developments of detached bungalows and cul-de-sacs. On the edge of St. John’s lie the Confederation Building, home to the provincial legislature, the Memorial University of Newfoundland and the Avalon Mall.

After St. John’s the next largest town is Corner Brook, with a population of slightly over 25,000. It is situated by the Bay of Islands on the west coast of the island. Its main feature is a paper mill that gives off noxious fumes. The only other communities to boast populations of more than 7,000 are, in descending order, Gander, which has an international airport, and the mill-towns of Grandfalls and Stephenville.

Beyond these towns much of Newfoundland is still a rugged wilderness of coniferous forests, boggy heaths and small lakes. Roads wind their way through this wilderness to villages of wooden houses built by the edge of the sea. These villages, “outports” as they are known in Newfoundland, are often home to no more than a few hundred people. They may have a general store or two, a church or three, perhaps a post

¹ The statistics concerning area and population are respectively from the Encyclopaedia Britannica Online (www.eb.co.uk:180/bol/topic/tmap) and Statistics Canada (www.statcan.ca/english/Pgdb/People/Population).

office, maybe a club or a bar. They all have a wharf. Many have a fish-processing plant or the remnants thereof.

Newfoundland is a province in the dominion of Canada. It was not ever thus.² Five centuries ago it was the domain of the Red Indians, the Beothucks. They wintered in the forest, hunting caribou, and summered by the sea, fishing and killing seals.

Towards the end of the fifteenth century men came from Europe. They came from Brittany, the Basque Country and from the West Country of England, to fish for cod on the banks that surround the island. Mercantile adventurers followed the fishers. John Cabot was the first. He arrived in Newfoundland in 1496 and, planting a cross on a shingle beach, claimed the island, and much else besides, for the English crown. For the next three hundred years most of Newfoundland was a possession of the British Empire.³ The fishermen came in the summer and left in the winter. Few stayed. The Beothucks went about their business, secreted in the vast wilderness.

By the end of the eighteenth century more Europeans began to settle in Newfoundland. In 1754 there had been approximately 3,400 people residing on the island. By 1774 there were 12,000. By 1804 there were over 20,000. These people came from Devon, Dorset and Hampshire, counties Wexford and Waterford in Ireland,

² There has been much written about the history of Newfoundland, but there exist only a few general histories of the island. One is *A History of Newfoundland from English, Colonial and Foreign Records* (1895) by Judge D. W. Prowse; another is the *History of Newfoundland and Labrador* (1980) by Fredrick Rowe.

³ Since its "discovery" in 1498 possession of the fishing grounds and harbours of Newfoundland was intermittently contested by the French and the English. Like their English counterparts, French fishers sailed to the banks of Newfoundland in the spring of the year and returned to the Breton ports with their (more heavily salted) catch in the autumn. In general the French fished off the southern and western coasts of the island, while the English fished the waters to the east and north of Newfoundland. In 1662 the French established a colony at Plaisance (present-day Placentia). They also had substantial settlements at Cape Ray and Codroy. After the signing of the treaty of Utrecht in 1713, the French had to quit their habitation of the island. The terms of the treaty, however, allowed the French to retain the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon (which remain a French possession to this day) and their right to fish off the southern and western coasts of Newfoundland (the so called "French shore"). The French retained their peculiar right to the French shore, with various revisions and renegotiations, until 1904.

and the Channel Islands. They settled close to the fishing grounds, creating a scattering of tiny villages. The men fished cod with hook and line from the waters close to home. The women and children split and dried the fish on the beach before their houses. The dried fish was sold to merchants, who in turn sold the fishers' catch to the people of Europe.

The influx of European settlers led to the extermination of the Beothucks. They died of foreign diseases or were shot by foreign men. The last of their people was a woman named Shanawdithit. She was captured and brought to St. John's. There she drew pictures of the devil and dancing women and maps tracing the capture and slaughter of her kinsfolk. She died of tuberculosis in 1829.

St. John's became the mercantile centre of the island. It may not have been much to look at. The town's streets were two irregular muddy paths. Wooden warehouses crowded along the waterfront. Behind these a scattering of houses straggled up the hill. There were no libraries, museums or churches of any completion or permanence. There were stores selling all needfuls, from clothing to nails to molasses, and a remarkable profusion of taverns and alehouses. This ramshackle town was home to some 5,000 people by 1804. Amongst these 5,000 was an emergent indigenous elite; a self-made aristocracy whose fortunes were inextricably linked to the work of the fishing families in the outports.

Fueled by a radical press, the feeling grew amongst the people of Newfoundland that they should have some measure of control over their own affairs. In 1832 the British Parliament passed the "Newfoundland Act" which, amongst other things, allowed for the creation of an assembly composed of the inhabitants of Newfoundland and responsible for the administration of the "public business" of the island. Effectively Newfoundland became a nation, albeit a nation whose elected officials were still subjects of the British Crown. It did the things of a nation. Its people elected their representatives, an occasion

often celebrated by sectarian riots. Currency and stamps were issued. A railway, that great symbol of modern nation-building, joined St. John's to Port-aux-Basques. An army was raised and sent to fight the First World War. The army and the railway, great symbols that they were, cost a lot, and with the depression Newfoundland was beset by financial and social crisis. The British Government intervened in 1934. No longer did the people of Newfoundland elect their representatives; rather, a commission of government administered them.

In 1948 it was decided that the people of Newfoundland themselves should choose how they were to be governed. A referendum was declared. Newfoundlanders were given three choices: they could remain a colony of Britain, they could become a nation again, or they could join Canada. The pro-confederation campaign was led by a one-time union organizer, newspaper reporter and pig farmer named Joey Smallwood. By a narrow margin Newfoundlanders chose to join Canada. In 1949 the island and the adjoining territory of Labrador became the tenth province of the dominion. Joey Smallwood was elected as premier of the new province, a position he held through successive elections until 1972.

After confederation Smallwood oversaw an ambitious program of modernization. New industries came to the island, lured by generous grants of money from the Canadian government. The fishery was industrialized. Offshore draggers replaced the small boats of the inshore fishermen. The fish these draggers landed was not dried on the beach but taken to fish processing plants, where the fresh cod was filleted and packed in ice for shipment worldwide. The outports were provided with running water, electricity and roads. Those communities that were considered too small or too isolated to be worth modernizing had their population resettled to "growth centers". Scores of villages were abandoned. The remnants are still there: gray ghosts of houses. Sometimes people visit in the summer, sleeping in tents and building fires on the beach.

In spite of the attempts of Smallwood and those that followed him, Newfoundland is still considered something of a poor relation within the Canadian confederation. Many of the bold attempts at industrialization failed. The industrialized fishery was more successful. Huge catches were pulled from the ocean and much money was made. But this too came to an end. By the early 1990s government scientists recognized what many of the fishermen knew already: cod stocks were declining rapidly. In 1992 a “moratorium” was declared. Until the stocks had recovered no one was to be allowed to fish for cod off the shores of Newfoundland. Some 30,000 fishermen and plant workers were laid off. At the time of writing the moratorium continues.

Lost amid the fogs

The title for this thesis is borrowed from a book. The full title of the book is *Lost Amid the Fogs: Sketches of Life in Newfoundland*. It was published in London in 1869.

The book’s author is an Englishman by the name of Robert Barlow McCrea. McCrea was born in 1823. At the age of sixteen he entered the Royal Military Academy in London. Four years later he was commissioned second lieutenant in the Royal Artillery. Over the years that followed McCrea lived the vagabond life of a servant of the British Empire. He was stationed in Ceylon, then Corfu, then Jamaica. He returned to England in 1859 and settled in Woolwich.

In 1861, following the “*Trent* Outrage”,⁴ McCrea was directed to join the garrison at St. John’s, Newfoundland. He lived in St. John’s for three years, before being relocated

⁴ The “*Trent* Outrage” (or for those of a more neutral historical disposition, the “*Trent* Affair”) refers to a diplomatic incident that almost precipitated Britain’s entry into the American civil war. The *Trent* at the centre of the affair was a British ship. On the eighth of November 1761 Union soldiers boarded the *Trent* and two Confederate commissioners were taken prisoner. This unlawful boarding of a neutral ship caused a storm of political and public outrage in Britain. The British Government sent an ultimatum demanding an apology and the release of the two prisoners. The American Secretary of State allowed that the freedom of the seas had been violated and the commissioners were released. Pacified, Britain remained neutral. <http://www.britannica.com/bcom/eb/article> “The *Trent* Affair.”

to Quebec. *Lost Amid the Fogs* is both a reminiscence of his years in Newfoundland and a more general account of the history, geography and politics of the island.

Why this title? This is a question asked both of McCrea and myself. Why “Lost Amid the Fogs”? Who or what is lost, and what are these fogs that something is lost amidst? We will address this question first by looking at the introduction to McCrea’s book, and then by considering how McCrea’s introduction defines the topic of this thesis.

A chart shop in Charing Cross

The story of Robert McCrea’s sojourn in St. John’s begins with our narrator, not long returned from Jamaica, enjoying the comfort of home life in Britain:

... how cheerily the fire sparkled as I lay back in my easy-chair one memorable evening in December 1861. My wife chatting and working was sitting opposite; the cat blinking at the merry blaze, purred on the hearth-rug; the kettle, the sweetest lecturer on social science in England was unburdening its view upon the hob; and on that low but genial throne of love I lay back comfortable and happy. (1869, 4)

In an oft-repeated cliché of Victorian writing a letter intrudes upon the domestic scene, heralding the beginning of an adventure.⁵ In this case it is a letter ordering McCrea to Newfoundland. The cosy home is shattered. “Household treasures are crushed into boxes or scattered to the four winds of heaven.” The “wife” returns to her

⁵ In the *Settlers in Canada*, by Captain Fredrick Marryat, the intrusion of a letter in the domestic scene similarly initiates a series of events that leads to the dissolution of the family home in England and the search for a new home in the North American wilderness. Unlike *Lost Amid the Fogs*, the *Settlers in Canada* is a work of fiction, but the description of the letter’s arrival is broadly similar to that in McCrea’s memoir. Our hero the goodly Doctor Campbell “had returned from his round of professional visits; dinner was over, and he was sitting at the table with his wife and children (for it was Christmas, and they were all at home), and the bell had just been rung for the nurse to bring down the two little girls, and the youngest boy, when the postman rapped at the door, and the parlour-maid brought in a letter with a large black seal”. (1909, 3) The letter does not send them to Canada but gives them title to a grand estate. Doctor Campbell leaves his home and practice to become a country squire. Unfortunately, the rightful heir to the fortune, thought to be dead, suddenly returns from India to lay claim to his title. Suddenly impoverished, the doctor and his family quit England to settle in the Canadian wilderness.

“maiden home” and McCrea prepares to move to a place where “home to an Englishman is still an unspoken word”. (1869, 4)

McCrea decides to find out more about his destination. He embarks on a voyage of discovery. This is not a voyage to faraway lands, but a voyage to the places where one can learn of faraway lands. This voyage takes him to the libraries, shops and private houses of London. There he hopes “to discover something, no matter how indefinite about Newfoundland”. (1869, 4)

His search for knowledge is in vain. People pretend to know something of Newfoundland, but this pretence is but a thin cover for profound ignorance.

“Newfoundland?” said one of my friends. “To be sure; know all about it. Fish you know: tremendous place for salt fish!”

“Newfoundland?” replied another travelled monkey. “Oh yes! certainly; know it very well. Banks you know — tremendous Banks of mud, and awful fogs. Take care of yourself — cold, cough, bronchitis, eh?”

“Newfoundland?” ruminated a third, more honest; “never heard anything of it except they cook everything in cod liver oil! Rather not go there myself. Good-bye; God-bless you.”

Then there was a fourth and a fifth, ay, a twentieth who knew only that it abounded in fish, fog and mud banks. The picture was, however, sometimes completed with ice, icebergs, stunted pines, seals, whales and other familiar items from the arctic picture. (1869, 5)

Frustrated, McCrea goes to a shop in Charing Cross “where they profess to have plans of all the civilized countries of the globe”. But even here he learns nothing.

“Newfoundland?” said the shopman, laying the accent heavy on the middle syllable; “certainly, sir. America, I think; Northern or Southern? Oh! British colony, is it? Then we shall find it in this lot.”

His index finger travelled down a goodly list, but no he didn't seem to hit it. He gave sort of sheepish, hesitating glance around the ample shelves of maps, and said —

"I'm half afraid, sir, we have not any maps of Newfoundland. I really don't think it has ever been inquired for until now. But stop — by the by, perhaps this will do." He pulled out, from an immense flat drawer full of charts, an Admiralty Survey of the coast line about the great banks, with soundings marked by hundreds all about it. What with the meridians and parallels compass marks and tracks of ships, it looked as if a spider had dipped his legs in the ink bottle and travelled leisurely about the paper. Moreover, it was a very likely thing to be useful to any one desiring a knowledge of the interior of the country: very!

"Ah well, sir," he said, "we've nothing more. I'm sorry I cannot accommodate you." It was clearly no use going further to ask for a "Murray's guide." (1869, 5-6)

Finally, "as the last card", McCrea visits an aged widow, who many years ago had lived in Newfoundland as the wife of a British officer. Again, he is disappointed.

She laughed at my calling it New-foundland, and said:

"Newfunlan"?⁶ oh yes; I was there several years. Colonel C——. was a captain then. It was when we first married."

⁶ The various pronunciations of Newfoundland are used by McCrea to differentiate those who have no experience of life on the island from those who do. The "travelled monkeys" and the seller of charts speak the word as it is written: "new-found-land", with the stress on the second syllable. The old lady, however, pronounces "Newfunlan" "correctly" in the manner of those who reside on the island.

Interestingly, the same distinction between Newfoundland as a word written and Newfoundland as a word spoken is still used by the island's natives to distinguish those who know the Newfoundland in the living from those who know of it only as marks on a page. In 1973, for example, Codco, a group of young Newfoundland performers, opened a show called Cod on a Stick at Theatre Passe Muraille East in Toronto. Amongst the sketches satirising life in modern Newfoundland and the strained relations between Newfoundlanders and mainland Canadians was "Marketplace". "Marketplace" is a national consumer affairs program aired weekly on CBC television. Codco's version of a "Marketplace" broadcast from Newfoundland began as follows.

Joan Watson: Hi, I'm Joan Watson.

George Finstead: And I'm George Finstead.

Joan: And this is ...

Together: ... The "Marketplace."

"Indeed. And did you like it?"

"Like it? — well yes very much. I was very happy there."

"And what did you do?"

"Do? — well I don't think we did anything."

"I mean how did you amuse yourself?"

"Oh! there are no amusements. It is quite out of all that sort of thing, except when the letters arrived once a month or six weeks."

"H'm! Are there good roads?"

"No. Scarcely any roads at all that can be called roads; but then in winter you may drive where you like in the sleighs."

"And the food?"

"Well the beef was not bad, and the bread good."

"Any fruit and gardens?"

"Oh no; nothing of that sort. Indeed, the summer is too short except for early vegetables. The cabbages I remember growing in the ditch of the old fort, were splendid."

"Well, but is there nothing else?"

"Yes; there's plenty of salt fish, and pork, and snow, and wild ducks and Irish Papists. Oh! I remember now, it's an awful place for wind." —

"Wind?"

"Yes. It blows terribly, and it was always blowing. We were often and often obliged to walk out tied two and two together." (1869, 6-7)

Joan: The "Marketplace" has come under some fire of late for devoting too much time to the consumer problems of Upper Canadians; so today, to counteract all that, we take you to the most Atlantic of our Atlantic provinces, the poorest of the poor provinces, *Newfoundland*. [The Italics are retained from Codco's script.]

Joan Watson, host of the "marketplace", repeats the same error of pronunciation as the proprietor of the map shop in Charing Cross. She calls the island Newfoundland, "laying the accent heavy on the middle syllable". The effect of the mispronunciation in Codco's script is remarkably similar to that in McCrea's memoir. In both cases the speaking of Newfoundland subverts the pretence of general knowledge and constitutes the island as a gap within the geographic consciousness of the nation and empire. In *Lost Amid the Fogs*, the map shop in Charing Cross purports to have maps of every land under British dominion yet Newfoundland is represented only as an incoherent tangle of lines. The "marketplace" supposedly gives voice to the consumer interests of all Canadians, yet the hosts cannot even pronounce Newfoundland properly. The sketch concludes with the befuddled Joan and George approaching a series of "typical" Newfoundlanders, who are either not Newfoundlanders, or, if they are, fail to conform to the wished for stereotype. (Peters 1992, 64-67)

To McCrea it was clear that the widow's knowledge of Newfoundland was circumscribed by "the home which she formed for her self and its secret inward joys." "[W]hat," he asks of his reader, "was I to make of" her recollections.

Why, nothing — really nothing. The spider's legs over the Admiralty chart were just as explanatory; and I knew no more if I was to take flannel shirts or strawberry jam, railway books of Victoria druggeting, than I did before. People do not usually travel about with barrels of salt pork, so a knowledge of the superabundance of that delicate viand by no means assisted or refreshed my musings. (1869, 8)

His voyage of discovery ends in failure. Newfoundland "appeared really to be what its name imparted, and not the oldest possession of the Crown, for scarce a syllable could I glean respecting it." (1869, 4) All that McCrea learns from his trips to London is that there is nothing to learn. "The first fish colony," as McCrea calls Newfoundland, "is a sealed book, an unknown land, a country almost undiscovered, at any rate on the shelves of Mudie⁷ or the parlour tables of English homes." (1869, 8)

It is because so little is known about the island that McCrea decides to write his *Sketches of life in Newfoundland*. Having lived there, the author "takes pity on future voyagers" and resolves to "relate what they will see, and taste, and hear within the rocky barriers which frown upon the white sails hurrying across the misty banks of black, inhospitable looking Newfoundland". (1869, 8)

⁷ The Mudie Lending Library was founded in London 1842. It was a private subscription library. Members paid annual fees for the right to borrow books. It was the largest such library in Britain, often accounting for the sale of up to seventy five percent of a novel's first edition.

Terra Incognita

By entitling his book *Lost Amid the Fogs* McCrea is referring to two things. The first is the position of Newfoundland within the “planetary consciousness”⁸ of the British Empire. The second is the experience of a stranger in a foreign land. We will take each in turn.

McCrea’s introduction narrates a search for facts about Newfoundland. This search is almost folkloric, for it is told in three parts. In the first part he talks to his learned friends. They profess knowledge but it is evident that what passes for knowledge is merely an assemblage of popular clichés uninformed by experience. In the second part he goes to a shop wherein are maps of all known lands. Here in this Solomon’s house of geographic wisdom there is no map of Newfoundland, save a sketchy chart that more confuses than enlightens. Finally, he visits the old widow. She has lived in Newfoundland many years. Yet her womanly perspective, which cannot see beyond the home and the private pleasure contained therein, renders her insights trivial and useless.

In his introductory narrative McCrea writes of two places. One is the site of inscription. The other is Newfoundland. There is a similarity between the two. Both exist, but this existence is more a matter of absence than presence. McCrea searches for things written to discover only the empty places where writing should be. The site of inscription is the gap on the library shelf where a book has yet to be placed. It is the blank expanse on a map where the rise of mountains and the course of rivers have yet to be drawn. There are traces – words and lines, the inky scribbling of spider’s legs – but

⁸ The term “planetary consciousness” is borrowed from Mary Louise Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. Pratt uses “planetary consciousness” to refer to “European elite’s understanding of themselves and their relation to the rest of the globe.” (1992, 15)

they are so partial and tangled as to merely hint at the existence of a terrain that remains unwritten.

That terrain is Newfoundland. Newfoundland is the gap on the library shelf, the blank expanse on the navigator's chart. Newfoundland is also a real place. It is an island in the north Atlantic where the wind blows and cabbages grow in the ditch of a fort. Yet, just as the place where Newfoundland should be written is empty, so the island itself is invisible or at best dimly seen. It is a place glimpsed in passing, a mysterious land shrouded in mists and bounded by rocky cliffs.

McCrea was far from alone in deeming Newfoundland to be a place partially inscribed and poorly seen. Since the late eighteenth century it has been the custom of those who have written of their travels to Newfoundland to preface their descriptions with some remarks on how little is known of the island and its people.

Captain William Robert Kennedy, for example, begins his *Sporting Notes in Newfoundland* (1881) with a chapter entitled "dim ideas about the island" in which he bemoans the general ignorance concerning Britain's oldest colony.

There are many persons living at home who know nothing whatsoever about Newfoundland; in fact it is not saying too much to aver that few besides a few naval officers and a sprinkling of colonial officials and diplomats are aware that there is such a place. Some may have heard of it in connection with the dogs of that name; but not one in ten thousand attaches any value to the island ... (1881, 2)

For Kennedy, as for McCrea, the "dim ideas about the island" are quite literally the result of a failure of imperial vision.

Those who form their ideas of the country from a hurried visit in an Allan steamer are apt to think of it as a land of fog, with a strong flavour of fish; and I must admit the first impressions on a bleak winter's day are not inviting. But to the one who, like the writer, has had the opportunity of

seeing more of the country, of mingling with its warm-hearted inhabitants, of sailing round its rocky coast, visiting its magnificent harbours ... of penetrating into the vast and almost unknown interior in quest of sport, Newfoundland presents a very different aspect. (1881, 7)

Like McCrea, Kennedy's authorial project is defined by this failure of imperial vision. To paraphrase J. D. Rogers, Kennedy's tour of duty had afforded him the opportunity to take a "prolonged look behind the veil" of "midnight" that covered the "mysterious country" of Newfoundland.⁹ By seeing more of the country and by writing of what he had seen it was the author's intention to give the people of England "a better idea of Newfoundland". (1931, 3)

An interesting variation on this introductory device is found in Beckles Willson's *The Tenth Island* (1897). In the preface Willson describes a correspondence between George F. Bearn, a native Newfoundlander, and Rudyard Kipling. The author and Mr. Bearn were "re-perusing" Kipling's "Song of the English" and were both struck that no mention was made of Newfoundland. Willson suggested, "playfully of course", that his friend write to the poet of empire "asking him for an explanation". So Bearn wrote to Kipling.

I really must point out to you how greatly disappointed we Newfoundlanders have been at your ignoring us in your stirring and eloquent 'Song of the English.' You speak of Montreal, of Auckland, of Victoria, of Halifax:¹⁰

⁹ The passage paraphrased is taken from J. D. Rogers' *Historical Geography of the British Colonies* (1931). It describes the exploration of the interior of Newfoundland from 1818 to 1910. "At the beginning of the period," writes Rogers

"Newfoundland, with the exception of the Peninsula, must have seemed to its inhabitants a husk without a kernel. Midnight wrapt once more the mysterious country, on which the Cartwrights had shed a momentary ray of light. The Peninsula of Avalon was already known from end to end, but outside Avalon nothing was known of the inner world, except what could be seen from the sea or from the Lower Exploits River, or what the Cartwrights were rumored to have seen when they peeped behind the veil." (1931, 159)

¹⁰ It would seem that Bearn was not describing "A Song of the English," which makes no mention of any the cities of the British Empire, but "The Song of the Cities" in which Calcutta ("Hail, England I am Asia – Power on silt"), Halifax ("The Warden of the Honour of the North, Sleepless and veiled I am!") and

and yet seem to pass purposely by that deserted and ruined citadel of the first-born of England's colonies, least blessed and most banned by the Imperial mother. ... Read our history sir ... Come amongst us and see if we to-day are less loyal or less ready to shed our blood for the land of our fathers. We too have a message to the Imperial mother, although the poet of Empire has not thought fit to transcribe it. ... We have long been accustomed to have our geography ignored and our policies and our resources misunderstood: but I beg of you sir, to repair this injustice you have done to our loyalty. (1897, v-vi)

Again, Newfoundland is the forgotten child: unknown, unseen and unloved by the imperial mother.¹¹ She is the "Cinderella of the colonies, who, somewhat lean and rather ragged, as yet, sits patiently in her corner of a hemisphere. Her sisters have flaunted her; and all her relations have heaped calumny and cod-fish upon her headlands. If she opens her mouth to speak, they have thrust a cod-fish down her throat. Did she smile? Then they taunted her with fogs". (Willson 1897, 1) And again, it is the author who will play godmother to poor Cinders. With a wave of the pen Newfoundland will emerge from the fog of ignominy and ignorance and once again be recognized as beloved member of the imperial family.

In short, to say that Newfoundland is "lost amid the fogs" is to describe the island as a "*Terra Incognita*": a country of rumour and dim recollection, a place fleetingly glimpsed and soon forgotten.¹² In one sense this *terra incognita* is quite literally lost

Auckland ("Last, loneliest, loveliest, exquisite, apart") all pay their respects to mother England. <http://www.worldwideschool.com/librarybooks/lit/poetry/VersesKipling/chap51.htm>.

¹¹ Kipling, it should be noted, denied the accusation of negligence. In his reply to Bearn, also quoted in Willson's introduction, the poet rather grumpily opines that it "is a rather large order to compress allusions to the whole of our Empire into two hundred lines of alleged verse". Kipling does promise to include "Newfoundland's voice" in any future edition his verses, but complains that the "task is not a pleasant one."

If I leave out all reference, I am taxed with 'injustice'. If I make a pointed reference, as I did in 'Our Lady of the Snows', I am, to put it mildly, supposed to be scaring away immigrants by misrepresenting the climate of the dominion. (1897, vi)

¹² Several authors describe Newfoundland, and particularly the interior of the island, as a *Terra Incognita*. In his report on the "Geography and Resources of Newfoundland" in the *Journal of the Royal Geographic*

amid the fogs. Newfoundland is wreathed in mists and buttressed by forbidding headlands. The passer-by cannot see the island for what it is and so, in the absence of clear and measured sight of land, composes fancies of a “fog-bound rocky isle, devoid alike of foliage, sunshine, and fertility” (Willson 1897, 11) and assumes this fancy to be Newfoundland.

More profoundly to be “lost amid the fogs” describes the place of Newfoundland within the “imperial archive”. The notion of the imperial archive is borrowed from Thomas Richards. The imperial archive is not a real place. It is not a museum or library. It is, rather, “a fantasy of knowledge collected and united in the service of the state and empire”. (1993, 6) This is, for Richards, a literary fantasy. The imperial archive features in Victorian accounts of travel and adventure, both factual and fictional. In these accounts, however, the idea of the archive is represented as a place, a site of knowledge where the whole of empire is held within a glass cabinet or the pages of a book or the mind of a learned man.

The chart shop at Charing Cross and the “Song of the Cities” are imperial archives. In their different ways they promise to represent the great chaotic expanse of Britain’s global empire as a single coherent unity. In the chart shop they “profess to have plans of all the civilized countries of the globe” and in the “Song of the Cities” the poet aspires to hymn the whole of Empire in two hundred lines of verse. These archival projects allow for the popular imagining of an empire upon which the sun never sets, where “before the evening ray leaves the spires of Quebec, his morning beams have shone for three hours

Society (1877), Alexander Murray wrote that until “within the last few years, the whole of the vast interior of this great island was as much a ‘*terra incognita*’ to the exterior world and even to the residents (who occupy the coast only) themselves”. (1877, 267) Similarly, Willson declares that Newfoundland is a “*terra incognita* to tourists”. (1897, 1)

on Port Jackson; and while sinking from the water of Lake Superior, his eye opens on the Ganges". (1836, 166)¹³

Yet, as Kipling himself points out, to encompass all of Empire in one poem or one shop is no easy task. There are gaps. Entire lands remain unwritten. Some, like the interior of Africa and Australia have yet to fully explored and charted. Others, like Newfoundland, have been explored and charted but these explorations have been forgotten and the charts have faded. Such lands are "lost amid the fogs," not the fog that rolls in off the sea, but the fog of popular ignorance and misrepresentation.

It is this blank space upon the map, this land behind the veil of fog, that is both the site of the author's adventures and the object of his writing. By depicting Newfoundland as a *terra incognita* McCrea, Kennedy and Willson are describing their own travels as journeys into a land beyond and before inscription: a land that does not exist on the shelves of Mudie or upon the parlour tables of English homes or in the chart shops of Charing Cross, but exists only as it is seen by the traveller who, pen in hand, ventures forth into uncharted terrains.¹⁴

By travelling to unwritten lands, and by writing of all they see and hear on their travels men like McCrea, Willson and Kennedy are doing the work of Empire. This is not the work of conquest or conversion, these men are not Conquistadors or Missionaries; rather, this is the work of knowledge. Those who travelled to

¹³ The quote is taken from volume XX (1836) of *The Youth's Instructor and Guardian*. It was reprinted from the "Entertaining Press". The name of the author is not given. *The Youth's Instructor* had pretensions of being a bit of an imperial archive. Amongst the articles in volume X are short essays on "Chinese Justice", "Koordish [sic] Surgery" as well as "Notices of Animate and Vegetable Nature" and "Brief Astronomical Notices".

¹⁴ This line of argument owes much to the introduction to Richard Phillips' *Mapping Men and Empire* (1997). Citing Joseph Conrad, Robert Louis Stevenson and Jules Verne, Phillips considers how Victorian tales of exploration, both factual and fictional, often began with the young narrator pouring over a "sketchy map": an indecipherable chart that hinted at the existence of places yet unknown "in which anything is possible and adventure is inevitable". (1997, 3) Of course, the Admiralty chart that McCrea looked upon with such dismay is a "sketchy map", though instead of having "few formal cartographic symbols" it suffered from a surfeit of lines and numbers.

Newfoundland in the nineteenth century went in search of facts, little nuggets of information, inscribed as lines on paper, collected as butterflies and stones, procured as human skulls and arrow heads, that could be transported back to England and placed within the Imperial archive – be that archive the British Museum, the Mudie lending library or the global consciousness of the literate Englishman.

If Richards is right in what he says about the imperial archive then this work was primarily ideological. The restless collection of facts was a means by which the possibility of Empire as a coherent geographic whole could be imagined if not realized. For the authors, however, their reasons for writing were much more practical. By writing of their travels to Newfoundland they hoped to make their readers “familiar”¹⁵ with the island and its inhabitants. In the future, with books and maps at their disposal, the English traveler would know Newfoundland even before he ever laid eyes upon its “barren rocky, iron-bound” coast. In the comfort of their homes, with the kettle boiling on the hob, the people of England could trace their imaginary voyages on unfurled charts, sure in the knowledge that, should they travel to Newfoundland, they would have no need for strawberry jam but would be requiring their flannels.

Polar bears and golden-haired lassies

To be “lost amid the fogs” not only describes the place of Newfoundland within imperial imaginings of global geography, it also describes the experience of the author, who, out of a sense of duty or desire for adventure, decides to voyage beyond the margins of the written world and into the uninscribed wilderness of *terra incognita*. Lacking good

¹⁵ Bruno Latour defines knowledge as a “familiarity with events, places and people seen many times over”. For Latour the creation of knowledge is a very practical enterprise. By accumulating and transporting facts, adventurers such as McCrea and Kennedy made it possible to be familiar “with things, people and events which are distant”. Future travellers would, therefore, not be travelling into the unknown but to a land already mapped and written. They in turn would add more facts thereby extending the intellectual dominion of empire over places and people far away. (1987, 219-223)

advice, a Murray's Guide or a clear and useful map, the nineteenth-century traveller to Newfoundland embarks on a disorienting journey away from his neat and comfortable home and into a riot of disorderly sensations and blurred images. He struggles to get his bearings, to see things clearly, to know things as they are.

These struggles are real. Accounts of travels to Newfoundland are replete with moments of blindness, confusion and fear when the faculties of the author fail and he is well and truly "lost amid the fogs".

Robert McCrea's reminiscence of Newfoundland are no exception. His home destroyed; he arrives in Newfoundland and is housed in grim quarters. Candlelight flickers. The paper is peeling from the walls. The wind howls and snow spirals from a leaden sky.

One night he falls asleep and dreams of home. The "stamping of heavy feet" wakes him. He goes to the door. Before him stands "a huge mass, like half a dozen Newfoundland dogs rolled into one, shaking clouds of snow from its exterior. Beneath an otter-skin cap shone a pair of bright eyes enveloped in a mass of whiskers and beard, profusely sprinkled with sleet and snow." This creature, part beast part human, speaks: "How are you?" it says, "Don't you know me?" (1869, 78)

"The voice," writes McCrea, "struck across the memory as that of an old friend though its echo was but faint at first." The figure speaks again. "Eh! Don't you remember Wolfe at the 'The Shop?' I remember you very well. I command the Incidentals here now. I missed you on landing, and only just found out where you were." (1869, 78)

Only then does McCrea recognise his old comrade.

Remember him! of course I did. Fellows who were cadets at "The Shop" never forget each other. But considering that Wolfe then was a thin slip of a smooth faced youngster, it is hardly to be wondered that a recognition of this

matured Polar bear, under the influence of a solitary government dip, did not immediately ensue. (1869, 78-79)

Wolfe invites McCrea back to his “den” for dinner. Together they grope their “way through the passage into the open air”. Outside a blizzard rages, and although the journey was but a short walk from one house to another it proves an ordeal.

Heads down, ram-fashion, we butted against the storm, — I following his figure dimly seen through the chilling drift. His garden gate, almost three hundred yards away, we reached sadly out of breath in about twenty minutes, and then expended several more in forcing it back against the fast increasing pile of snow, happily still soft and yielding. The gale too, fought stoutly at his house-door, and fain would enter with us. That last victory secured, the inner door opened on a bright vision of, to me, a well-frozen voyager, Paradise regained. (1869, 79-80)

This paradise was home: a home much like that he had rent asunder on his departure from England. He had stepped from the tempest, exhausted, cold and half-blinded, into an oasis of domestic order and civility.

A pleasant, roomy hall, brightly-lighted, with a staircase running, spirally round one to meet a gallery above, along which, up and down the stairs, little children were chasing each other, with merry laughter. White muslin dresses, bare necks, and hyacinths in blossom, with such an atmosphere outside! — it was truly bewildering; when to crown it all, just then a vision passed of an Anglo-Saxon, golden-haired lassie, with the neatest little cap, and cherry-ribbons to match, who tripped across the hall with tray, and completed a picture which said plainly to the heart — “English home! English home!” (1869, 80)

This English home is filled with light. Light flooded from gasaliers and was reflected “from varnished walls of creamy whiteness”. The “flickering shadows caused by a blazing fire, chased each other in merry mazes”. (1869, 81) In the dining room McCrea wandered from “brilliant chandelier to brighter hearth” admiring the crimson

curtains that festooned the walls and the table laden with all manner of fine and goodly foods. (1869, 83)

In this brightly lighted home, McCrea's impressions of Newfoundland begin to change. "Can this possibly be Newfoundland," he exclaims to his hosts. "Why, what do you expect?" they reply. "I suppose; like us, you could hear nothing of it in England, and thought it was all fish and fog." "Just what they said," McCrea concurs, "with ice and wind into the bargain. And here are heliotropes and hyacinths in blossom, and ladies with low necks in January!" (1869, 81) And, after enjoying a meal of boiled mutton, mashed potatoes, french beans (preserved in salt) and a grouse pie with mushrooms and kidneys, he proclaims that "I think there is no fear of an everlasting surfeit of salt-cod as I heard of in England." "Oh so did we," answered all, "we heard there was nothing else, in winter at any rate." (1869, 84) But as it proved the lady of the house kept a garden, and all of the dinner, save the pineapple from Puerto Rico and the melon from Spain, was grown or slain upon the fog-bound rocky isle.

At eleven McCrea left the sanctuary of the "bright porch" and plunged "into the dark, snow-driven night". The trip homewards was "anything but a joke".

The wind howled vengefully, the sleet slapped bitterly in the face, and the drifts caught me artfully in their deep soft traps. There were but three hundred yards to do, along a straight road, but that was the work of half an hour. It was a series of clinging to the fence, with half frozen hands, pitching headlong into the drift, or pausing to listen for the chance of a guiding sound. It came at last, just as I reflected on the chances of being found, like Lot's wife, at the break of day. A picket of soldiers, dragging a drunken comrade by the heels, came roaring around the corner. Stumbling after them, I scrambled through the gates, and groped my way into the den. The stove was all but out, and the place was so thick with smoke that one might have cut it with a knife. What matter? ... I was soon under the pile of cloaks spread upon my camp bed, and glad to be there. (1869, 88-9)

Like the story of his visit to London, McCrea's account of dining with an old friend is quite plainly about the relationship between travel and knowledge. The journey from his humble quarters, through a howling blizzard and to an "English home" is an enactment of the greater journey made by the enlightened traveller who leaves the comforts of civilized existence, travels through an uncharted wilderness and returns to his native land.

This is a voyage of enlightened vision. Again, we use the word "enlightened" both literally and figuratively. Literally, the experience of the travel is narrated the contrast between darkness and light. The unknown land, the *terra incognita*, is a place of fog and shadow where vision fails and things are not as they seem. Smoke wreathes from campfires and stings the eyes. Snow encrusts the ground obscuring paths and landmarks. Forbidding cliffs and dense woods interrupt the traveller's line of sight. Like children in the night, the stranger travels in fear. He is fearful of that which is unseen, or that which appears monstrous and distorted on the shadowy margin of light and darkness. He is also afraid for the integrity of his own faculties: that in the wilderness he may go blind or mad and never recover surety of his senses.

Through this fearful voyage through darkness and shadow the traveller arrives at a place of light: a place beyond the fogs, above the dense woods, away from the blinding smoke of the campfire: a place where things can be seen clearly and where all is revealed to be as it is. The Reverend William Wilson describes such a moment of revelation in a reminiscence of a journey from Hants Harbour to Old Perlican.

The day was calm and, the weather was beautiful and the walking excellent. Passing through the Hants' Harbour woods, we came to a lake seven miles long, called Pitten's Pond, crossed it, and a few miles further, we came to a high table-land, from whence we had a commanding view of the entire country. ... To the south were the waters of Conception Bay, calm and placid, with the high lands on the shore reflecting the sun's rays from their

snow-capped summits; to the north-west the waters of Trinity Bay, and the whole margin of its northern shore presented a similar appearance, although reflecting of light was less brilliant, owing to the indifferent position of the sun; while directly in our front the rocky desolate island, Bacalieu, dividing the waters of these two great bays, was distinctly visible; and in the far distant horizon were the waters of the great western ocean, without a billow or a breeze to agitate its glassy surface. We untied our 'nunny-bags' and took our repast on this elevated land, and, after enjoying the scenery for some two or three hours, began to descend to the shore of Conception Bay, when this beautiful panorama view vanished, leaving us the only pleasure of a retrospect and telling to other people the scenery we beheld and the pleasant journey we had. (1866, 330-1)

The journey from Hant's Harbour to a high-table land is, in its specifics, quite different from the journey that McCrea makes from his dark, uncomfortable quarters to the "English home" of the commander of the incidentals. Yet both are, in their different ways, journeys into lighted vision. McCrea gropes his way through a dim passage, and then stumbles through a howling blizzard, to arrive at a brightly lighted hall. Similarly, the Reverend Wilson leaves Hant's Harbour, travels through the woods that surround the village, and then ascends above the woods to come to a place that affords him "a commanding view of the entire country". And, just as McCrea describes the quality of light that illuminates the "English home", so Wilson describes the light that illuminates the landscape upon which he gazes, but instead of "a flood of light from gasaliers, reflected from varnished walls of creamy whiteness" Wilson writes of "the high lands on the shore reflecting the sun's rays from their snow-capped summits".

Figuratively, this voyage of enlightened vision is a way to knowledge. By arriving at a place where his sight is clear and unimpeded, the traveller comes to realise the true nature of the land and its people. In the sunlight that shines upon the snow-capped mountains and cliffs of Conception Bay or the gaslight that floods the bourgeois parlour

of the English home the proper form of things can be discerned and inscribed. Fact is separated from fiction, reality from rumour, and Newfoundland emerges from the fog of popular ignorance into the light of understanding. So it is that between the brilliant chandelier and brighter hearth McCrea begins to form a different impression of the island than that given by his friends in London who talked of nothing but fish and fog. And so it is that the countryside around Hant's Harbour becomes "distinctly visible" as the Reverend Wilson stands on high and looks out across a sunlit panorama.

What is narrated in the experience of the traveller is, then, a voyage of revelation. What is revealed is Newfoundland – not Newfoundland as it is glimpsed from a passing Allan steamer or inscribed as indecipherable scrawls and numbers on a naval map, but Newfoundland as it is envisioned by the enlightened explorer as he stands upon the bright porch having passed through a stormy winter's night or on top of a hill having ascended above the tangle of trees.

Such a voyage of revelation is described by Beckles Willson – he who thought the letter to Kipling to be a joke. Willson uses the device of a reminiscence of his arrival in St. John's to write the contrast between the public perception of Newfoundland and the true qualities of the island.

Just now we are approaching St. John's. No one would suspect that behind these dark frowning cliffs, these miles of rocky heights, whose bold promontories and headlands have been sculptured fantastically by the action of waves, there lie towns and villages and a habitable country. Newfoundland presents a stern exterior to the world; and this perhaps is not least among the causes which have retarded her advancement into the good graces of mankind. Dull lowering cliffs warn off the intruder, fogs in summer and ice in winter zealously guard its shores—how irresistibly it all reminds one of the fairy tale in which the dragons and their treasure so prominently figure? (1897, 16)

Willson, however, manages to pass through these dark frowning cliffs: “[a] brown mountain cleaves for us abruptly in twain, and with this great towering mass on our right and on our left we enter what is called the narrows”. Beyond the narrows “the city of St. John’s bursts out of its hiding place. It is on the right bank of a little oval harbour—a slim town of obviously greater length than breadth, yet looks compact enough as it sits smiling on the slopes of a hill with the forest of shipping at its feet.” (1897, 18) He then proceeds to take us on a tour through the city from the “Roman Catholic Cathedral with its twin towers” to the Parliament building with its “fine pillared portico” and down Water Street, which, although “ill-paved, ill-kept, and running parallel to the wharves” is, Willson opines, the most “amazing” of all the streets in all the world’s capitals. (1897, 19)

Willson’s recollection of his arrival at St. John’s is much the same as the Reverend Wilson’s narration of his walk from Hant’s Harbour to Old Perlican, or McCrea’s account of visiting his old school friend’s comfortable residence. Like McCrea and the Reverend Wilson, Willson writes of his travels as a voyage into visibility. At first “dark frowning cliffs” circumscribe his sight. These cliffs, along with the fog and winter ice, have rendered the true nature of Newfoundland invisible. He then penetrates this stern exterior (much in the same way that Kennedy penetrated “the vast and unknown interior of the island”), passing through a cleft in the “rocky heights”. With this passage the “city of St. John’s bursts out of its hiding place”, revealed and subject to the gaze of the author.

As with McCrea this voyage into visibility, be it through a blinding snowstorm or between dull lowering cliffs, allows the author to replace rumour and conjecture with a substantive knowledge of Newfoundland based upon what he has seen and experienced. The cliffs or the blizzard delimit the popular knowledge of Newfoundland. Most do not see beyond them, and because they do not see beyond them, they take the limits of their

vision to be the reality of the island. As McCrea writes when reflecting on his approach to St. John's, "[n]o one would suspect that behind these dark frowning cliffs, these miles of rocky heights, whose bold promontories and headlands have been sculptured fantastically by the action of waves, there lie towns and villages and a habitable country". (1897, 16) It is for those enlightened adventurers who transcend the limits of their vision, who pass beyond the cliffs or through the blizzard, to write the truth about Newfoundland.

The Rock Observed

This thesis is about being lost amid the fogs. It is about the place of Newfoundland within the imperial archive and experience of those who travelled to the island in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. More specifically, it is about the relationship between the imperial archive and the experience of travel, and how in this relationship Newfoundland and its people came to be inscribed as knowledge.

There has been much written concerning writings about Newfoundland. Since John Reeves published the *History of the government of Newfoundland* in 1792, scholars have attempted to discover the truth of the island's past through the interpretation of old documents. Historians have assiduously collected and studied census data, diaries, travelogues, admiralty charts, account books and newspaper articles in an effort to reconstruct the reality both disclosed and distorted by the inky scribbles of long-ago travellers.

However, although there has been attention paid to writings about Newfoundland, there has been little historical study of the writing of Newfoundland. Most histories of Newfoundland have been about either the governance or the economy of the island. Historians have written of the peopling of Newfoundland, the prosecution of the cod

fishery, disputes between nations over fishing rights and the play of power and interests that shaped the intentions and guided the deeds of political actors. More generally historians have interrogated how material circumstances influenced the formation of a distinct culture and society amongst the ancestors of the Europeans who settled upon the island of Newfoundland.

Popular versions of this history often amount to little more than a crude, if sometimes poetic, environmental reductionism. Cyril F. Poole, for example, sets off *In search of the Newfoundland Soul*. His literary excursion ends in a meditation on the formative relationship between the sea and the people who fish its waters. “We [Newfoundlanders]”, Poole observes “are all queer sticks, all bent the same way; for despite differences of origin, dialect and religion we are all children of the sea.” (1982, 91) The very being of the Newfoundlander – the “fighter,” “the warrior Viking of the sea” – is, like the island itself, sculpted by the effects of wind and waves. Poole writes, “[t]he carved and rugged headlands of this sea-worn rock witness to the might and fury of the tempest. The marks it has made on our souls are as deep, and perhaps as abiding, as the seams in the granite cliff.” (1982, 101)

Scholarly renderings of the history of the island, though less given to the mystification of the Newfoundland character, share Poole’s assumption that the course of this history is, in the words of Fredrick Rowe, “inextricably bound up with its environment”. “In fact”, Rowe declares, “without a knowledge of the physical and environmental characteristics of Newfoundland, no comprehension of our history is possible.” (1980, 1) Historians would perhaps think it excessive to write of the “stormy Atlantic ... sculpting into our souls dark caverns of fatalism”, (Poole 1982, 92) but they would agree that Newfoundland’s culture and society have been “moulded ... by our life on the island and in particular by the way we earn our daily bread”. (Poole 1982, 92) In

short, to quote James Faris, “the history of Newfoundland ... is the history of its fisheries”. (1973, 5)

Written documents have no place in this history of the fishery. Of course documents are important to the historian, for it is through the study of documents that they may reconstruct the material reality of the past. The document itself as an historical artefact is, however, only significant as a mirror of material history, either reflecting the external conditions of people’s lives or the internal workings of their dispositions (dispositions, which are, in themselves, a response to environmental circumstances). Writing is, therefore, not a historical event, but simply a way of transcribing historical events that are before or beyond the act of inscription. It is, therefore, not surprising that so little has been written concerning the history of the writing of Newfoundland and so much has been written about the cod-fishery. Cod is the history of the island. Writing is not.

There are, of course, exceptions. Concerning the pictorial representation of the island, Charles DeVolpi provides a survey of historical prints and illustrations of the province of Newfoundland (1972) and Shane O’Dea describes the “perspectives on Newfoundland seen through prints and engravings from the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries” (1985). Concerning the photography of Newfoundland, the Newfoundland Museum has published a selection of its collection of prints with annotations by Antonia McGrath (1980). Concerning the writing of Newfoundland there is a thematically organized selection of excerpts from nineteenth century travelogues assembled by R. G. Moyles and published as *Complaints many and various but the odd Devil likes it* (1975) and Patrick O’Flaherty’s study of the “literature of Newfoundland” entitled *The rock observed* (1979).

O’Flaherty’s work is, to the best of my knowledge, the only sustained scholarly investigation of the history of the writing of Newfoundland. His approach to the subject

both opens the possibility of an anthropological investigation into the history of travel as a way of writing about the people and landscape of Newfoundland and demonstrates the theoretical assumptions that have precluded this investigation.

For O’Flaherty the text of the written work is the product of the encounter between a subject and an object. The subject is the author, complete with the sentiments and passions, biases and abilities that inhere in their person. The object is Newfoundland. The task of the student of literary history is to describe this encounter and, in so doing, the degree to which the subjectivity of the author circumscribes their perception of Newfoundland, and, conversely, the ways in which the experience of Newfoundland transforms the author. The story of this encounter has to be read from the authors’ own accounts of their travels. This means that the scholar must disentangle those passages that describe the authors’ experience of Newfoundland from those that are the products of their peculiar interests and fancies. In so doing it becomes possible to assess the quality of the authors’ writing, not according to any aesthetic criteria but according to the relative clarity of the authors’ vision of Newfoundland – whether, in other words, they wrote things as they really were.

O’Flaherty’s discussion of William Epps Cormack’s *Narrative of a journey across the island of Newfoundland in 1822* (see chapter five) exemplifies this approach to the interpretation of the writing of the rock. At the beginning of his journey many of Cormack’s “excited observations” evinced a “boyish naiveté” (1979, 45) concerning the harsh realities of the Newfoundland interior. “The very imagery Cormack used in his early responses to the Newfoundland landscape, phrases such as ‘paps of granite’ and the ‘bosom of the interior’, betrayed his unrealistic expectation of the island’s sternly masculine terrain.” (1979, 46) As his journey progressed and he suffered from cold, hunger and fatigue, Cormack’s language changed. By the end he had become, by his own account, “callous” to the beauties of the wilderness. O’Flaherty concludes that “the

process we witness as we follow Cormack on his tramp is the bludgeoning of sensibility". (1979, 47)

For O'Flaherty this narrative of bludgeoned sensibility "dramatises another human encounter with Newfoundland's inhospitable hinterland, indicating ... that romantic sentiment, together with the stock phraseology about 'vistas', 'sylvan scenery', and 'heavenly objects', that accompanies it, seems singularly out of place in this still primitive 'frayed edge' of North America". (1979, 48) Simply put, in the course of his walk across Newfoundland, Cormack wised-up. He put aside romantic notions of the Newfoundland as a feminine and yielding land and came to know it for what it really was (and is): a primitive and manly terrain whereupon is clearly written the immense and primeval processes of its making.

O'Flaherty's approach often allows for a sensitive and sometime startling reading of the author's experience of the wilderness. There are, however, problems with this approach, problems that describe and delimit the place of writing in the historiography of Newfoundland. The most obvious problem is the status of Newfoundland as an object and relationship between that object and the text. O'Flaherty's method of interpretation requires that the true nature of the object being written about, while at once situated within the text, be alienated from that text so as to be used as the measure by which the accuracy of the author's description of Newfoundland may be assessed. At the heart of this method there is an assumption that there exists a quality to the experience of Newfoundland that, although it is disclosed in writing, exists beyond writing. In *The rock observed* it is quite clear that this experiential object, this Newfoundland-as-it really-is, is simply O'Flaherty's preferred version of Newfoundland. There is no *sui generis* quality to the Newfoundland wilderness that makes it a "primitive frayed-edge of North America" or a "sternly masculine terrain". These phrases have no greater claim to the truth than Cormack's talk of "sylvan scenery" and "paps of granite". Yet the

rendering of Cormack's journey as the story of a failure of romantic language in the face of the visceral realities of the Newfoundland wilderness rests on just such a claim.

The problem with this assumption of the existence of the "real Newfoundland" as the proper object of description is not simply that it privileges the scholar's version of reality over that of the author. More profoundly, by interpreting the writing as the product of an encounter between the author as subject and Newfoundland as object, O'Flaherty precludes the possibility of a historical study of inscription as a creative process in which the spatiality of Newfoundland and the subjectivity of the author are composed in the narration of travel. As with the histories of the cod-fishery, O'Flaherty's study of the writing of Newfoundland assumes that the story of the island has already been written, not by the hand of the author moving pen across paper but by the forces of nature and the labours of the men who have made their living from the sea.

To enable a study of the writing of Newfoundland we must take a slightly different approach to the sociology of inscription than that adopted by O'Flaherty. We must take an approach that does not simply study writing as a reflection of reality but rather considers writing as a means by which the reality of Newfoundland and the relationship between Newfoundland and the authorial subject are constituted in the act of inscribing the experience of travel. In short, we must consider the writing of Newfoundland as discourse.

This approach to the study of the writing of Newfoundland owes much to the ideas of Michel Foucault and even more to the writings of Edward Said who extended Foucault's theories to study the "Western" writing of the "Orient". Said begins with the assumption "that the Orient is not an inert fact of nature" (1978, 4); rather, "the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and a presence in and for the 'West'". (1978, 5) The study of the writing of the Orient for Said is, therefore, not a study of the relationship between the author as

subject and the Orient as an object. By examining Orientalism as a discourse Said proposes to describe the historical creation of the Orient as an object of Western knowledge and, in so doing, make possible an understanding of “the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively in the post-Enlightenment period”. (1978, 3)

What we are proposing is a study of the “discourse” of Newfoundland as a form of Orientalism. To paraphrase Said, we are proceeding from the assumption that Newfoundland is not an inert fact of nature but an idea imbedded within post-enlightenment *epistemes* of time, space and subjectivity and realized in the writing of experience. Our particular emphasis will be on what Bernard S. Cohn has called the “observational/travel” mode of creating and distributing a knowledge of Newfoundland. (1996, 6-7) Travel and the description of what was seen during the course of one’s travels became, it will be argued, integral to the project of the writing of the landscape and people of the island. Of course, as Nicholas Thomas points out, travel is universal to all human societies; however, he asserts that it “may be powerfully conceived as a peculiarly modern activity”, (1998, 7) which is essential both to the fashioning of the authorial subject and the inscription of faraway places as objects of knowledge and colonial administration. (Spurr 1993)

Our particular reading of the history of the writing of Newfoundland through the idiom of travel will be directed towards two problems. The first, more general, problem is a problem of knowledge. How is it, we will ask, and under what historical conditions did it become possible that the experience of travel could be written as a factual knowledge of the countryside through which one travelled and the people met during the course of one’s journey? Secondly, and more in keeping with Said, we will be enquiring into the ways in which Newfoundland and its peoples were inscribed through the

medium of a traveller's experience. Particularly following John Noyes' study of the German discourse of south west Africa we will be concerned with how, through vision and writing, European visitors to Newfoundland constructed the spatiality of the island and the identity of its peoples as articulated in social space. (1991, 19)

Our rendering of the history of the writing of Newfoundland proceeds from what can only be described as a double reading of stories of travel. In many ways this strategy is common to many studies of discourses, be they colonial discourses or the discursive production of sexuality. On the one hand we will be using narratives of travel to construct the historical facts of the journey. In doing so we will be making the basic assumption that there was indeed a real journey. Newfoundland is, after all, not just a written place composed in words. It is also a physical space composed in rocks, trees and water. And the people of Newfoundland are not just characters in a novel but real people of flesh and bone, possessed of the capability of speech and intentional action. It would be erroneous to attempt to reconstruct the author's experience of Newfoundland as something that exists previous to the writing of that experience, but as a context for interpreting the writing of Newfoundland some understanding of the course of the author's adventures is required. On the other hand, we will be reading narratives of travel as a means by which Newfoundland has become realized in certain historically and culturally specific ways. The texts that we will be discussing, therefore, do not simply tell the story of the author's real journey through the Newfoundland wilderness. They also tell the story of the possibility of their own writing and, by extension, the possibility of the writing of Newfoundland.

Accordingly, our selection of texts has less to do with their significance or the influence of the text itself upon future imaginings of Newfoundland, than it has to do with the significance of the text within the context of the historical emergence and transformations of the relationship between travel, vision and writing. Some of the texts

we will be discussing have largely been forgotten and ignored. Others have been more widely celebrated. None has had any great influence on the course of history. Yet, as will be argued throughout this thesis, the importance of these texts lies in the fact that they exemplify a conjunction between the changing ways of looking at and writing of the world around us. Through these texts, therefore, we can tell the story of the writing of Newfoundland.

It should also be admitted that there are many voices that will not be heard in our story of the writing of Newfoundland. The aboriginal peoples of the island, both the Beothucks and the Micmacs, appear only on the periphery of narratives of journeys undertaken by white travellers. The Micmacs guide the traveller through the wilderness, provide food and shelter and advice on how to walk with snowshoes. The Beothucks appear as rumours of a people just departed, their presence marked by the debris of passage: broken canoes, empty wigwams and the bodies of the dead. Without a doubt these peoples had their own way of knowing the land and themselves as historical actors moving across that land. Yet their stories of travel, and the ways in which they came to know and realise themselves through travel, will have no place in this thesis.

There are two reasons for this omission. The first is that there are very few documents that would allow the historian an intimate understanding of the aboriginal worldview. With the exception of the drawings penned by Shanawdithit, the history of the Beothucks has been inscribed solely by Europeans and the descendants of Europeans. What we have documented, therefore, is not the ways in which the “Red Indians” represented the world around them; rather, we have a collection of records (and even these are scant) of how visiting Europeans represented the “Red Indians”.

The fact that the Beothucks and Micmacs have written so few documents describing their travels through the Newfoundland wilderness brings us to our second reason for omitting the aboriginal “voice” from our story of the inscription of the island. In this

thesis we will be addressing the historical emergence of peculiar set of cultural practices. We are describing how it came to be that Europeans began to write of the experience of travel to Newfoundland and how this experience of travel, properly organized and disciplined, became a means by which Newfoundland could be made known and, in being made known, become an object of administration. Quite simply the aboriginal peoples of Newfoundland did not do this. They had this done to them by visiting whites.

Another set of voices which will be heard only intermittently will be those of the men and woman of outport Newfoundland: the descendants of immigrants from England and Ireland who settled in remote coves and bays to catch and make fish. We will address the complexities of incorporating the narratives of the fisherfolk of Newfoundland into a history of writing of the island more fully in the concluding chapter of the thesis. There is, however, a social, perhaps even sectarian, dimension to the absence of the voices of the people the rural working-class that needs to be briefly addressed at this juncture.

Historically, the settler society of Newfoundland has been ethnically and religiously divided. On one hand, there are the descendants of English immigrants, who are overwhelmingly Protestant. On the other hand, there are descendents of Irish immigrants, who are overwhelmingly Catholic.

A strong case could be made that this sectarian divide has had a subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, influence upon the writing of Newfoundland. For John Francis Campbell the Irish were a picturesque addition to the sublime outport scene. Visiting Quidi Vidi, near St. John's, he describes "wild-looking Irish girls clustered around a handsome dark-haired mother ... and a battered only Triton father" who "ought to have webbed feet and a forked tail, if he had not got them somewhere in his waterproof overalls." (1865, 147)

Similarly, for McCrea the Irish fishermen with their “Roman” superstitions and unthinking devotion to the priesthood provide a comic aside to his critique of the inequities of merchant capital. On the returning to St. John’s a fishing-boat and her Catholic crew are met by the priest, who expects a share of the catch in return for the blessing of their voyage.

“Well boys, glad to see ye all back again; and what luck?”

“Ah! But indade, father, sorra the much o’ that.”

“Well, now, I’ll be saying boys, that the blessing has followed you all; I’ll go to bail there’s seven thousand beauties under our feet now.”

Hark to the howl which runs round the deck, and the men begin to gather round the priest.

“Indeed, then, we have na’, father,” cry a score of voices, “and that’s the holy truth.”

“Now, to think of that, boys, after all we’d heard of the cratur’s this spring. Say, then, six thousand five hundred?”

“Begorra, and nothing like it father” shout the chorus again. (1869, 113)

And on the haggling goes, written in a burlesque of accented Irish, until “the clever ambassador tottles up his list” of offerings “for the Church and the Blessed Mother” from all on board, “down to the boy who serves as cook’s mate.” (1869, 113)

The missionary Edward Wix (refer to chapter six), in contrast, saw the influence of the Catholic Church as anything but amusing. On returning to St. John’s after a six-month tour of the Newfoundland outports Wix was “exceedingly grieved ... to find that a fractious party ... had, in my absence, occasioned much apprehension to the more orderly inhabitants of St. Johns and the island at large. They had openly declared from the altar that the sword of the church was unsheathed. Mr. Henry Winton the editor of one of the public newspapers, who had rendered himself obnoxious to the Right Reverend Bishop Fleming and his seditious political colleagues in the priesthood, by his simple remonstrance against their interference with the political rights of the people ...

had (besides other attacks on his person) been savagely assaulted in open day, and had his ear mutilated, to the danger of his life.” (1836, 225)

In a sense the Irish were the white “other” of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century accounts of travels to Newfoundland, alternately portrayed as picturesque fisherfolk or an unruly and ignorant rabble. This portrait of the Irish was, of course, penned by Protestant English authors. With the exception of John Cabot, all the works discussed in some detail in this thesis are written by Protestant English (and Scottish) authors. Given the sectarian nature of Newfoundland society, we must consider whether this selection of texts constitutes a silencing of the Catholic voice within our history of the writing of Newfoundland.

This is a difficult question to answer. It must be admitted that this “bias” was more a result of accident than intent. This accident, however, perhaps reflects the simple fact that the majority of works about Newfoundland that have been written in English have been written by Protestants. This is in some ways predictable. Newfoundland was a British colony and the writing of Newfoundland, as we indicated when considering the image of the imperial archive, was an extension of the British colonial project of inscription. Unlike the Beothucks, however, there certainly were nineteenth-century Catholics who wrote descriptions of the history, geography and society of the island. (Mullock 1860; Sears 1877) It would, however, be facile to presume that these represented a different tradition of authorship or that through their words the subaltern were able to speak. Bishop Mullock and the Reverend Sears were, like the Protestant authors to be discussed, educated men who in their descriptions of Newfoundland were attempting to transform the island and its people into objects of administration (in this case the administrative apparatus was the Catholic church).

Certainly there is a worthy study to be written concerning the deployment of ethnic stereotypes in the writing of Newfoundland and the ways in which Catholic clergy

described (and perhaps derided) the habits of Protestants. Such a study is, however, beyond the scope of the discussion that follows. Our concern is simply with how it came to pass that people came to write of their experience of Newfoundland and, in so doing, came to know Newfoundland as backward, degraded or underdeveloped.

Time, space and the Newfoundlander as Other

As with any history, my narration of the past is shaped by my view of the present. Specifically, the consideration of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century stories of travel is informed by two issues that are central to the social and political life of contemporary Newfoundland. The first is the politics of inscription. The second is the aesthetics of development. We will deal each in turn. The first issue will be introduced through that traditional anthropological medium of the fieldwork story. The second issue will be discussed with reference to two images that were published in *Maclean's*, a Canadian national newsmagazine.

Joseph the geologist and Jimmy the seal killer

I am no native of Newfoundland. My home is in New Brunswick. I came to St. John's in 1987 in order to study Folklore at Memorial University. I stayed for four years. During this years I lived the student life: rented rooms in the old town, borrowed furniture, frost on the inside of the windows, beer down at the Ship Inn, fish and chips with peas, dressing and gravy up at Leo's.

As part of my course of study I resolved to study the occupational culture of those who worked in fish-processing plants. As the locale of my research I chose a village called Codroy, on the southwest coast of Newfoundland.

There was (and still is) not much to Codroy. A road winds through a river valley. The road ends at the sea. Where the road ends and the sea begins there is a scattering of houses. On a headland overlooking the sea there is an Anglican Church. There are also three general stores (though one seemed to sell nothing but beer and cigarettes). There once was a school but this had closed long before my arrival. There was also a club, the Islandview Lounge, which burned down shortly after my departure.

Over three hundred people lived in Codroy at the time of my visit. Some fished for lobster and cod. Some worked in the little white processing plant down by the beach. Some would leave Codroy for a few months to find work in the lumber woods or doing construction. Most were unemployed for at least part of the year.

I stayed in Codroy for eight weeks. As is often the case, this first experience of attempting research in a small and insular community occasioned feelings of intense self-doubt and alienation. In an article written about fieldwork in Codroy I described my being in the village as “an experience of silence”:

I could not, it seemed, share in the quiet sound of community that those who belonged heard. In silence everything was sharp and bright, like colours when one has a fever, but far from touch. The village as I experienced it was etched in precise lines, every shape distinct, every sound clear like the crack of ice on a frozen stream, a whole discrete order of things that came together as place. But this place existed outside of me, or I outside of it. Even as I sat in the kitchens of the village and, as others did, look at the window at the passing of a grey day, or helped cut wet wood on a fall afternoon, I was not there, I was not with them. They knew it well and I felt it acutely. (1992, 24)

Put more prosaically, people were reluctant to talk to me, and when they did talk to me they seemed careful not to say too much.

Following Michael Herzfeld's advice that we should make sense of how our informant make sense of us, (1983, 153) I set myself the task of doing an "archaeology" of the stranger's experience of silence. The assumption was that the locals' reluctance to speak about their lives had something to do with how they understood my presence in their community. By reflecting upon this experience I could, therefore, arrive at a more general appreciation of the meaning of the stranger within the interpretative space of the village.

This archaeology began not with my own experience but that of two other men who visited the valley and the village by the sea in the nineteenth century.

The first was the geologist Joseph Beete Jukes. Jukes had been commissioned by the newly formed Newfoundland government to complete a geological survey of the island. At Codroy he "heard reports of coal having been seen by the Indians up the river". He "tried to get more exact information and persuade them to go as a guide," but his efforts were frustrated. The Indians promised to lead him up river but then recanted, and "Old Gale", the patriarch of the only English family living inland was, to use Jukes' words, "churlish and uncommunicative, not wishing to divulge any knowledge of the local landscape". (1842, 176)

Jukes concluded that the locals would tell him nothing because they feared government interference in the hitherto unregulated local economies:

They feared, it seems, that mines would be established, and thus the neighbourhood would be regularly settled, and not only their own trade and authority interfered with, but taxes and customs imposed. All along this shore [the southern reaches of Bay Saint George] I was met with great suspicion by many of the European residents as a government agent, and it was believed that my ultimate object was the enforcing of taxes and custom house duties. (1842, 176-7)

The second stranger was James P. Howley who visited Codroy in 1873. His intention was to survey the lands of the valley and draw legal boundaries around the small farms that had, since the time of Jukes' visit, proliferated on either side of the river. Although Howley's account of his relations with the locals is far less detailed than that of Jukes, it seems that he also had difficulty in completing his mission due to a reticence on the part of those who belonged to the valley to share any knowledge of traditional patterns of land tenure. In his reports he writes:

This [the defining of settled farm lots] was not an easy task to perform, as might be expected, owing to an irregular system of squatting on unoccupied lands, here as everywhere prevalent; the absence of defined boundary lines, and also on account of the unusual prejudices existing amongst squatters to anything like systematic surveys. (1884, 4)

Both Jukes and Howley had interpreted the uncommunicative attitude of the locals as a form of resistance. What was being resisted was administration by a distant government. The geologist and surveyor were perceived (rightly) as agents of this administration. Inscription, the mapping of the local landscape onto bits of paper, was the means by which these agents would enable a distant government to control local affairs. To prevent this from happening the locals simply would not assist this project of inscription. They would either lie or remain silent, so the maps would be wrong or incomplete and administration would be impossible.

Returning to my own experience of fieldwork I concluded that the people of Codroy harboured similar suspicions about me and had adopted a similar strategy of resistance through silence. Several incidents served to substantiate this conclusion. A fuller account of these incidents is given in the aforementioned paper, for the purposes of this introduction one will suffice.

While in Codroy I stayed with a couple, named Russell and Mary, and their two children. Jimmy was their next door neighbour. He was a man of indeterminate age with a wiry thin body and watery blue eyes set in a soft sagging face. He would visit in the afternoons, bringing with him some bottles of beer, and he and Russell would sit at the kitchen table drinking and talking of moose hunting and lobster fishing.

One day I found myself alone with Jimmy in the kitchen. His drunken talk stumbled to his years spent on the ice of the Gulf of St. Lawrence clubbing baby seals. Then he stopped and looked at me with unsteady intensity. "Hey," he growled, "yer not from Greenpeace are ya?" I assured him I was not, but he was unconvinced. He demanded that I produce identification. "And I don't want to see how fast you type either," he called after me as I went upstairs to find my driver's license. Holding my license in his scarred, blackened fingers, he quizzed me on its contents, probing for any inconsistencies that would expose me as someone other than who I said I was. He even checked behind my ears for cameras. In the end he was satisfied that I was not an anti-hunting protester and invited me to back to his house where he told me more of going to the ice in the spring of the year.

To understand this remarkable interrogation of my presence one must appreciate how important the seal hunt was to Jimmy. Back at his house he and his wife showed me photographs. There were family pictures: gatherings of children and teenagers, two old wedding pictures, their daughter (now away in Ontario) in a blue graduation gown. Jimmy showed little interest in these. It was over the pictures of him at work that he lingered most fondly. Pictures of him ploughing snow ("Do you have smow like that in New Brunswick?" he asked, showing me a picture of a plough scraping along a snowbank twice its height); a back and white picture of a teenaged Jimmy standing the doorway of a garage, his hand on a rope so as he looked to be lowering an engine into a car, a '58 Chevy I was told.

There were also pictures from the seal hunt: men making music in the close quarters below deck; a line of men standing against the railing of the ship with Jimmy in the centre wearing dark glasses and a rakish smile; Jimmy holding a struggling harp seal around the waist (and as I looked at the picture he slapped me hard on the back and, smiling, said "THAT'S JIMMY"). Finally he showed me a last picture, blurred and indistinct. In the foreground was a small corpse and beside the corpse was a man with a black rod in his hand, looking down at the seal he had just killed. Behind him a broken heaving sea of ice extended to the horizon and at the horizon was the shadow of a ship.

"BLOOD ON THE ICE," cried Jimmy. "Do you see Greenpeace anywhere in that picture?" he asked me. "No," I said. "NO, you don't. They weren't there. They had helicopters fly 'em in and fly 'em out. They weren't there for eight springs out on the ice. They weren't there, so how do they know?"

Jimmy's wife Iris agreed. She talked of how Greenpeace had cynically used the media to destroy the seal hunt by manufacturing outrage amongst those who knew nothing of the realities of going to the ice. She mentioned a seemingly famous picture of the actress Brigitte Bardot cradling a gentle darling baby seal. The point was, as they explained to me, that you could not hold a live seal like that. They would squirm and struggle and scratch with their flippers (Jimmy had held a live seal after all, so he knew exactly what it was like). This pretty and pampered star would not have put up with that, so the seal must have dead and stuffed and placed in her arms to look like a living creature.

So this is the story that Jimmy told: the story of how he no longer went to the ice to hunt seals because a bunch of strangers, strangers who visited the ice for only a few hours, had, through the artifice of images and the strategic use of information, created the seal hunt as a moral outrage that needed to be sanctioned out of existence. In Jimmy's account of the seal hunt the nature of the process by which strangers worked

through words to regulate the ways in which the people of Codroy lived their lives was embodied in the person of Brigitte Bardot. She managed to create a powerful fiction that obscured the reality both of the object they were attempting to administer, the seal hunt in this case, and the fact that their fiction was just that, a story of words and images disconnected from exigencies of everyday life.

It was this concern with the politics of inscription, with the relationship between the written word and quotidian existence that was at the heart of Jimmy's worries about my identity. Like surly and uncommunicative Old Gale, he believed that the visiting stranger, with notebooks and pens, may have been a spy,¹⁶ someone in the business of collecting and storing facts that then could be removed from their local context and used against the people of the village. Both he and Old Gale were not wholly wrong.

My argument was, and is, that this concern is not simply born of some small-town fear of strangers; rather, it is a practical response to the experience of being written about. For over two hundred years geologists, surveyors, missionaries, folklorists and a host of other learned strangers, have made it their business to "go around the bay" and to describe the places they see and the people they meet. Many go with the best or most harmless of intentions – to celebrate the "traditional" life of Newfoundlanders or to hymn the beauties of the rugged landscape – but regardless of the nature of their intent they are all in the business of creating an image of the place and its people that is represented as reality. Moreover, and again both Jimmy and Old Gale are right about this, this process of representation is intimately connected with the governance of the

¹⁶ People in Codroy talked often of "spies" and "spying." Mary told me that someone in the town quite literally thought that I was a Russian spy (brought to Codroy by the oil that was rumoured to lie under the seabed near the village) and accusations of spying were a regular feature of neighbourly relations. The spy, like the educated stranger, was thought to be someone who exposed the details of your everyday life, thereby rendering it beyond your control and occasioning misfortune.

island. Many of these visiting strangers, these experts and authors, are paid to write a reality that will be legitimate or become the object of administrative processes.

This brings us to development and to the ways in which Newfoundland and Newfoundlanders have been described as being underdeveloped.

The shape of the future

In 1999 Newfoundlanders celebrated (or mourned, depending on your view of matters) fifty years of confederation with Canada. The anniversary had come at an interesting time for Newfoundlanders. The cod fishery, the traditional mainstay of the island's economy had collapsed and many fishers were unemployed. On the bright side, however, two years previously a great big offshore oil drilling platform had been towed to the Grand Banks and was now pumping some 90,000 barrels of crude a day from the ground beneath the sea.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the fiftieth anniversary of Newfoundland's marriage with the mainland occasioned much reflection concerning the past, present and future of the island and its people. Newspapers in Newfoundland and, more sporadically, those in Canada published various articles concerning the province's society, economy and political history. Gwynne Dyer blamed confederation for the decimation of the cod stocks. Rex Murphy took a longer view of Newfoundland's history of "lost opportunity". And in the "Amazing facts" column of the *Globe and Mail* the reader was told "why Newfoundland's population seems headed for a terrific fall". In March *Maclean's* "Canada's national newsmagazine" published a special section devoted to the travails and triumphs of Newfoundland over the last fifty years (more of the former than the later it seemed).

"After a half century as a province," the reader is told, "Newfoundland is on the cusp of change." This point is illustrated with a pair of photographs. In the first

photograph a tug is shown emerging from the fog of the Grand Banks. It seems like early morning. The sky is murky yet the platform, a capitalist cathedral in wire and steel, is bespangled with lights. The tug is heading forward, moving towards us. The caption under the picture reads: "The shape of the future." (Demont 1999, 20)

The second photograph is immediately below the first. It shows a "typical" Newfoundland outport. It is a cheerful sunlight scene. Square wooden houses, brightly painted in blues and greens, cluster around a wharf. Small fishing boats lie at anchor, their forms reflected in the blue water. Curiously, all these boats are facing away from the viewer. The caption under the picture reads: "A disappearing way of life." (Dermont 1999, 21)

In these two pictures we have neatly described a vision of time in which the future takes the form of a great metal machine emerging out the sea mist and the past is the village of brightly painted houses. Such visions of time are common in the writing of Newfoundland. By and large they are articulated in the distinction between the traditional and the modern. Traditional Newfoundland is the outport. It is the Newfoundland of small boats and saltbox houses, songs and times, soup suppers and squid jigging. Modern Newfoundland, on the other hand, is the Newfoundland of paper mills and off-shore oil drilling platforms, of growth centres and hydroponic greenhouses.

Many people like traditional Newfoundland. For the "come-from-away" it is picturesque. For those from Newfoundland it is the locale of the Newfoundland soul. F. L. Jackson, for example, likes traditional Newfoundland. In *Surviving Confederation* he writes the following:

The Newfoundland outport may be to bureaucratic planners a problematic, obsolescent form of community; to those used to larger cities, cute to visit, but otherwise hardly a place to live. But to Newfoundlanders themselves, it is an image of the divine life, a perennial backdrop and enthusiasm, a design

etched indelibly on the imagination. It is fearsome brooding cliffs rearing out of the sea, with lonely drizzle-soaked marshes, spruce forests and lakeland stretching out behind. It is brilliant spring sunshine on grassy tors and headlands; the vast winter ice sheet, studded with ice-mountains; white spindrift ripped off black heaving breakers by the constant unchecked wind. It is coloured boats bobbing at mooring off a tangle of sheds and stages, under a frenzy of soaring, snowy gulls filling the misty sky with screaming. It is the disgorging of the limitless bounty of the sea from longliners tied up alongside wharves and premises, and on the slopes behind, the typical circle of fences and simple salt-box houses, white against evergreens and grey granite, nestled in patches of cabbages and currant bushes. It is the wooded hilltop church, home to the quick and the dead, looking over the bleak ocean where livelihood begins and lives are spent and lost. (1986, 12)

As Jackson argues, however, the outpost is, according to bureaucrats and planners, “a problematic obsolescent form of community”. Traditional Newfoundland, with its cabbage patches and currant bushes, its white houses against evergreens and granite hills, is an anachronism, a thing of the past that somehow, against the logic of history, has persisted into the present. It is, in short, “a disappearing way of life”.

The distinction between the traditional and modern is usually embedded in a discourse of development and underdevelopment. The question of development, or the lack thereof, dominates Newfoundland politics.¹⁷ The question of development also

¹⁷ The examples are many. Here are two of my favourites. Joey Smallwood, the long-time premier of Newfoundland was given to publishing little books describing his policies and lauding his achievements. One such was *To you with affection from Joey*. The whole book is about the development of Newfoundland. In it Joey tells us how he, with the help of the Canadian government has dragged the province into the modern age, bringing greater comfort and prosperity for all, and how he intends to make Newfoundland economically self-sufficient by attracting industry to the island. His narrative is one of increase: more jobs, more money, more teachers, more everything. The beginning of chapter three (“things to cheer your heart”) is typical.

84

Eight-four.

In all of Newfoundland and Labrador.

84.

84 what?

84 schools with indoor toilets.

That was Newfoundland on the day I became Premier.

preoccupies social scientists and historians who study Newfoundland. Even those who do not take the island's underdevelopment as the object of their analysis have invariably framed their studies by a presentation of Newfoundland as a place that somehow has lagged behind the pace of modern history.

This concern with the progress of Newfoundland and the assumption that villages of rural Newfoundland are backward are nothing new. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century visitors to the island described the landscape and its people as existing in a state that is somehow previous to that enjoyed by the citizens of civilized Europe. Negatively, this portrait of Newfoundland as an underdeveloped space has usually been drawn in terms of absence, rather than presence. Newfoundland does not have enough roads, fences, schools or churches; Newfoundlanders lack education, money and manners. In an article published in *Fraser's Magazine* (1845), for example, an anonymous author dismisses the Newfoundland outport as a degraded version of the English village.

Village! The word calls up visions of quiet hamlets embosomed in trees.
We see cottages, each with its own little garden, from which float upwards a
scent of wallflowers and stocks. The women are working at their open
doors; the children are rolling on the green, or sailing boats in the willow
shaded pond, or swinging by the old elm near the church. The church is half

Today: 838 schools have indoor toilets.

We have not, in those years, produced any new or original education theory,
philosophy or practice.

But we have put toilets in 744 schools that didn't have them.

That's progress. (1969, 37)

A more recent premier of Newfoundland, A. Brian Peckford, was also given to publishing his politics. In *The past in the present* Peckford provides us with "a personal perspective on Newfoundland's future." For Peckford that future lies with the oil under the Grand Banks for even though "Newfoundland's future is ... not tied up with oil and gas as such ... while oil and gas are being developed there will, if we have some say in the development, be a chance to build spin-off industries to assist other development." (1983, 104) This vision of the future is illustrated on the cover of *The Past in the present*. It is a pen and ink drawing, but the imagery is remarkably similar to that of the two photographs printed in *Maclean's*. In the foreground there is a fisherman in a small boat. He is facing away, looking toward the horizon. On the horizon is an off-shore oil-drilling platform.

hidden by two or three dark yew-trees, that throw deep shadows over the daisied graves above them; and there is a winding walk that leads to the very gate of a pretty parsonage. The old manor-house is near, with its noisy rookery in its rich woods, from whose shades flow forth all day a stream of merry song; and far away are yet statelier mansions and broader peaks.

Far other is the scene presented by the so-called village of Newfoundland. A few low wooden huts perched here and there among the rocks, with a rude path of communication between them; a small plain church, also of wood; and a building, generally of more pretension, surmounted by a cross, the Roman Catholic chapel — such are its component parts. No flowers; no gardens, save here and there a patch of potatoes; no parsonage, for a clergyman comes from a distance to perform divine service on Sunday. ...

The barefooted children, lying amongst the stones, raised their unwashed faces to watch the stranger with looks of stupid wonder. The women, if it be summer, sit basking in the sun; few alas! Great as the need may be, with needle in hand. (1845, 740)

The politics of inscription in Newfoundland is, then, structured by what Johannes Fabian, in his critique of ethnographic writing entitled *Time and the other*, has termed a “denial of coevalness”. (1983, 31) By this he means “a persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in a time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse”. One can read the images in *Maclean's* and *Fraser's* magazines in much the same terms as Fabian reads anthropological texts. The village pictured (as a photograph or in words) doubtless exists at the same time as the author, yet by juxtaposing that image with a picture of a drilling rig on the one hand, and a description of an English pastoral idyll on the other, the Newfoundland village becomes a vision of the past.

The thesis: an outline

Our presentation of the history of the writing of Newfoundland will, then, be organized as an investigation of two related issues. The first issue is the emergence of the first person account of travel as a way of creating and communicating a knowledge of Newfoundland. Harking back to the concerns of Jimmy and Old Gale, this is the emergence of the visiting experts: learned people who either take it upon themselves or are employed to inscribe Newfoundland's landscape and people through the medium of their visual experience. The second issue is the discourse of development, and the ways in which Newfoundland has come to be described as a backward or degraded place.

These issues will be explored over six further chapters. These are organized both chronologically and thematically. In the next chapter we will discuss the ways in which Newfoundland was inscribed by the mercantile adventurers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Through a reading of the voyages of John Cabot and Humphrey Gilbert it will be argued that the description of new-found lands in Tudor times was typified by a wholly utilitarian approach to nature and a corresponding silence concerning the visual experience of the author. The third and fourth chapters concern the expeditions of "scientific" explorers of the late eighteenth century. Placing their accounts in the context of the emergence of empiricism and rationalism, it is shown that their visits represent a radically new approach to the authorship of Newfoundland, one that centred on the observing eye of an enlightened traveller. The fifth chapter discusses the writings of geologists who traversed Newfoundland in the beginning of the nineteenth century. The focus of this discussion is the aesthetics of time and how ideas of the primitive informed the envisioning of the landscape of Newfoundland. The sixth chapter examines how the idea of the wilderness was extended to the constitution of the Newfoundland "other" as a degraded European subject. Particular reference is made to

the writings of missionaries and to their concerns with the regulation of desire as a cultivation of the wilderness within. The seventh and concluding chapter addresses the authoring of Newfoundland from a nativist perspective in the later half of the nineteenth century. For the nativist, travel was a means of rewriting colonial histories and spatialities and, in so doing, creating the location of an indigenous Newfoundland culture. It is emphasized that this process of rewriting was fraught with ambiguities. Even as nativists wrote against the misconceptions of missionaries and geologists they retained their imagining of progress, and even as the rural village was idealized as the place of the Newfoundland soul it was also deemed a place out of time.

Finally a few words of explanation are required regarding the dates given in the title of this thesis as the limits of our discussion of travel and the inscription of Newfoundland. 1497 is, of course, the year when John Cabot sailed across the Atlantic in *The Matthew* and “discovered” North America (though he did not know it at the time), effectively marking the beginning of the European writing of the New-found lands. 1997 marks the return *The Matthew* to the shores of Newfoundland. The Newfoundland that the crew of the *Matthew* rediscovered in 1997 was a very different place from the New-found lands discovered by Cabot. In 1497 Newfoundland was truly a *terra incognita*. Cabot did not even conceive of the existence of the island. In 1997 Newfoundland was an island mapped and measured and populated by the descendants of English and Irish settlers. It is the difference between these two places that provides that frame for our story of the writing of Newfoundland. This is not a difference between physical places (we assume the geographic form of the island did not change greatly over five hundred years); rather, this is a difference in the way in which Newfoundland has been inscribed. It is with these two voyages of *The Matthew* that we will begin our story.

Chapter Two

The Golden Fleece: the writing of the new-found lands in Renaissance England

The Matthew

On the 2nd of May 1997 a three-masted caravel named *The Matthew* left Bristol harbour bound for Newfoundland.¹⁸ At her helm was His Royal Highness Prince Philip. Aboard her was a crew of nineteen dressed in doublets, calico shirts and long hose. (Features, “Medieval Mufti”) Prince Philip’s position was purely ceremonial, and he quit *The Matthew* shortly after she sailed leaving the helm to Captain David Allan Williams. Captain Williams set a course for Ireland. On the 15th of May *The Matthew* docked at Bantry Bay. (Log, May 15th) She was taken out of the water and her propeller was replaced. Fresh and food and water were taken on. On the 16th they left Bantry Bay. More than a month would pass before they would see land again.

They travelled westward through Atlantic storms. The crew dined on beef, turnips and pea soup, washed down with cider and ale. (Log, May 26th) Wind screamed through the rigging. Waves swept over the deck. In his log entry of the 28th of May Captain Williams wrote of feeling “small and isolated in a big sea”. Yet the little ship survived

¹⁸ The account of the 1997 voyage of *The Matthew* is based largely on a series of articles published in the Bristol Evening Post. These are available on the *Bristol Evening Post Online* (www.thisisbristol.com). Two sections are particularly relevant: “the captain’s log” (194.105.70.15/standards/mattvoyage) and “features” (194.105.70.15/standards/mattfeature). For ease of referencing these will be distinguished in the text as “Log” and “Features.”

and sailed on. By the 6th of June the sight of seabirds, skuas and gannets, promised land. On the 24th of June Mark Chislet, the ship's carpenter, spied Cape Bonavista. (Features, "Ahoy for local boy Mark")

The Matthew sailed into Bonavista Harbour. Thirty thousand people greeted her. Amongst these were the loved ones of the crew, flown over to surprise the weary mariners. There were many dignitaries. Foremost amongst these was Queen Elizabeth, accompanied by Prince Philip. Brian Tobin, the premier of Newfoundland was also there, as were representatives from the governments of Ireland and Venice. Gordon Pinsent, the Newfoundland actor perhaps best remembered for directing *John and the Missus*,¹⁹ was the master of ceremonies. (Features, "She's made it!")

The dignitaries took turns speaking to the multitude. Brian Tobin saluted the captain and his company, saying that "like Cabot and his crew they sailed into the setting sun". Captain Williams, for his part, observed that "Cabot and his crew would have been overwhelmed by the reception". Finally the Queen spoke. "The voyage of *The Matthew*", she reflected, "represents the geographical and intellectual beginning of North America". Keeping with the theme of beginnings, she concluded that this "extraordinary voyage of discovery was the beginning of the affectionate relationship that has existed between Great Britain and Newfoundland ever since". (Features, "Right royal celebration") Of course, she was not talking about the voyage of *The Matthew* that had just been completed. She was talking about another voyage by a three-masted caravel named *The Matthew* that had taken place five hundred years earlier.

¹⁹ *John and the Missus* (1987) is one of the few movies to be set in Newfoundland. It is, to quote from the home page of lead actress Jessica Steen "the story of one man's passionate attempt to fight for the land he loves and the way of life he believes in. Set against the rugged beauty of Newfoundland's coastal landscape, a romantic drama unfolds during the early 1960s when the fate of an isolated mining community could be determined by the Government's resettlement program." (www.jessicasteen.com/jsp_johnmiss)

Not everybody came to celebrate the “extraordinary voyage of discovery” from Bristol to Bonavista. On the 28th of May, even as *The Matthew* was being buffeted by a terrific mid-Atlantic tempest, Chief Red Maloney of the Indian Brook First Nation stood up at the annual meeting of the Confederacy of Nations in Ottawa and moved a resolution of censure against *The Matthew* celebrations. His motion reads as follows:

Whereas there is currently a re-enactment of the historic voyage of John Cabot by a replica of his *The Matthew*; and

Whereas the governments of Canada and Newfoundland have invested major amounts to promote a “celebration” of their version of history; and

Whereas to the First Nations, John Cabot’s voyage represents an historic period of genocide and dispossession; and

Whereas to First Nations, the John Cabot “Celebration” perpetuates the European legal doctrines of “terra nullius” and “discovery”, which are concepts the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples has recommended to be eliminated, and

Whereas Queen Elizabeth is dishonouring the memory of the Beothuck Nation by greeting *The Matthew* on the shore of what is now “Newfoundland”;

Therefore be it resolved that the Confederacy of Nations requests the assistance of the Mik’maq and Innu Nations in preparing a strategic plan to intervene in challenging the arrival of the ship known as *The Matthew*.²⁰

The motion was seconded by Grand Chief Doug Maracle of the Iroquois and Allied Indians and carried by consensus. Accordingly, along with the dignitaries, loved ones, massed choir and orchestra, that waited to welcome the arrival of *The Matthew* to the

²⁰ The text of resolution number 9/97 may be located on the Internet at afn.ca/resolutions/1997/con-may/res7

shores of Newfoundland, was a small gathering of not so welcoming Innu, drumming and chanting their protest, in the company of a cordon of police.

Now, as has already been mentioned the voyage just described was not a real voyage of discovery but a simulation of a real voyage. Pains were taken to make this simulation as much like the original as possible. The crew dressed in old-fashioned clothes, at least when having their photographs taken. They ate much as sailors would have eaten five hundred years ago, though greater care was taken with hygiene and nutrition. And whenever possible *The Matthew* was powered by the wind alone, depending of the skill of Captain Williams, a veteran of several round the world races, and his crew to guide the ship through stormy waters and into safe harbours. Only when a rough crossing of the Irish Sea had put the voyage of *The Matthew* badly off schedule was it proposed that they fire up the Caterpillar 3116 Diesel Engine that lurked in the caravel's hold and motor their way across the Atlantic in time for the historic landfall at Bonavista. (Log, May 13th) Fortunately, things did not come to such a pass.

The story of the real voyage of *The Matthew* is much more difficult to tell than that of its simulation. This is because much less is known about the real voyage. The re-enactment of the journey was a modern media event. The sheer density of information about the 1997 voyage is incredible. Anything you may wish to know about the ship, the crew, the route and the ports of call from Bristol to Bonavista and all points in between is available in print or on the Internet.²¹ In contrast, the information about the voyage of

²¹ Besides the aforementioned coverage by the "Bristol Evening Post", the "Evening Telegram", the daily paper of St. John's also published updates as well as feature articles during the second voyage of *The Matthew*. The Cabot 500 celebrations had (or have) a website (www.cabot500.nf.ca) which gave (gives) information concerning the ship's itinerary and ports of call. There is also *The Matthew* home page (www.matthew.co.uk) that provided the opportunity to buy *The Matthew* teddy bear (no longer available) and still displays pictures of the interior and exterior of the ship. Unfortunately, the official Matthew website, which allowed the public to follow the voyage "live" over the Internet, has disappeared. PBS, the American public broadcaster, and the BBC broadcast a six-part documentary concerning the story of Cabot's journey as told in the building and sailing of a replica ship. Peter Firstbrook, the producer of the series, subsequently published a book concerning the 1997 voyage of *The Matthew*. (1997)

1497 consists the following: a letter from Lorenzo Pasqualigo to his brothers at Venice dated the 23 August 1487; two despatches from Raimondo di Soncino to the Duke of Milan, dated respectively 24 August and the 18 December; a letter from John Day to the Lord Grand Admiral of Spain (most likely Christopher Columbus); a legend on a world map of 1544; and, more dubiously, a Mappemonde drawn by one Juan de la Cosa around 1500.²²

Based on this scant documentation the story of the original voyage of *The Matthew* goes something like this. On the 5th of March 1496 a “Citezen of Venice” calling himself John Cabotto requested of King Henry VII that “gracious letters patentes under your great seale in due forme by made to the tenour hereafter ensuying”. (Williamson 1962, 103-4)

The letter patent was granted the next day. It allowed “our well-beloved John Cabot, citizen of Venice,” and his sons, heirs and deputies the “faculty and power to sail to all parts, regions and coasts of the eastern, western and northern sea, under our banners, flags and ensigns ... to find, discover and investigate whatsoever islands, countries, regions or provinces of heathens and infidels, in whatsoever part of the world placed, which before this time were unknown to all Christians.”

If any unknown lands were discovered the patent further declared “that the before mentioned John and his sons or their heirs and deputies may conquer, occupy and possess whatsoever such towns, castles, cities and islands by them thus discovered that

²² The full text of all discovered documents pertain to John Cabot’s life and voyage(s) to the New World have been reprinted by the Hakluyt Society (*The Cabot voyages and the Bristol discoveries under Henry the VII*, edited by James A Williamson). As well as the letters and map described above this collection also includes the text of Cabot’s petition to the king, the letters of patent granted by the king to Cabot and his sons, a passage from the diary of one Maurice Toby noting the departure and return of *The Matthew*, and the records of Cabot’s pay and pension. The text of the letter by Lorenzo Pasqualigo, and the despatches of Raimondo di Soncino are also available from the Modern History Sourcebook. (www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1497cabot-3docs.html) Reference to these three documents will be from this source. All other documents referred to (including the Day letter) will be from the Hakluyt Society publication and paginated accordingly.

they may be able to conquer occupy and possess, as our vassals and governors lieutenants and deputies therein” and that all these places, “however numerous they may be, may not be frequented or visited by any other subjects of ours whatsoever without the licence of the aforesaid John ...” (204-5)

It seems that later that same year Cabot made a first attempt at a voyage of discovery. The Day letter provides a terse summary of that voyage: “he went with one ship, his crew confused him, he was short of supplies and ran into bad weather, and he decided to turn back.” (211)

In 1497 Cabot tried again. This time he met with more success. Sometime at the beginning of May “he entrusted his fortune to a small vessel with a crew of 18 persons, and set out from Bristo[l]”. “Having passed Iberia ... and then shaped a northerly course, he began to navigate to the eastern part, leaving (during several days) the North Star on his right hand; and having wandered thus for a long time, at length he hit upon land.” On the feast day of John the Baptist (the twenty-fourth of June) Cabot went ashore, raised a crucifix and a banner with the arms of the King of England and took possession of this new-found land on behalf of the English Crown. He then cruised along the coast in an easterly or northeasterly direction, and, “having obtained various proofs of his discovery”, he returned to England, arriving back in Bristol by the tenth of August. (Di Soncino, 2nd despatch)

Where Cabot went and what he saw remains somewhat obscure. The sailing directions and descriptions provided by his contemporaries are cryptic and often conflicting. Pasqualigo gives the following account of the voyage of *The Matthew*:

Our Venetian, who went with a small ship from Bristol to find new islands has come back, and says he discovered, 700 leagues off the mainland of the country of the Gran Cam, and that he coasted along it for 300 leagues, and landed, but did not see any person. But he brought here to the king certain

snare spread to take game, and a needle for making nets, and he found some notched trees, from which he judged that there were inhabitants.

John Day's description of the voyage is the most detailed. He declares Cabot's landfall to be a cape 1,800 miles due west of Dursey Head in Ireland. There, according to Day,

they found tall trees of the kinds masts are made, and other smaller trees, and the country is very rich in grass. In that particular spot ... they found a trail inland, they saw a site where a fire had been made, and saw the manure of animals which they thought to be farm animals, and they saw a stick half a yard long pierced at both ends, carved and painted with brazil, and by such signs they believe the land to be inhabited. Since he was with just a few people, he did not dare advance inland beyond the shooting distance of a crossbow, and after taking fresh water he returned to his ship. ... They sailed along the shore and saw two forms running on land one after the other, but they could not tell if they were human beings or animals; and it seemed to them there were fields where they thought might also be villages, and they saw a forest whose foliage looked beautiful. (Williamson 1962, 212-13)

The legend on the 1544 World Map gives a less flattering account of the land discovered by Cabot.

The people of it are dressed in the skins of animals; they use in their war bows and arrows, lances and darts, and certain clubs of wood and slings. It is a very sterile land. There are many white bears, and very large stags like horses, and many other animals ... (1962, 207)

The one thing they all agreed upon absolutely was fish: there was a lot of it. Di Soncino reports that "the sea was full of fish, which are not only taken by a net, but also with a basket with a stone being fastened in order to keep it in the water." (2nd despatch) In his letter to Columbus Day relates that "[a]ll along the coast they found many fish those which in Iceland are dried in the open and sold in England and other countries, and

these fish are called in English 'stockfish'". (1962, 212-3) While the legend on the 1544 map states that "these is infinite fish, sturgeons, salmon, very large soles a yard long, and many other kinds of fish, and the greater number of which are called baccallaos." (207)

A pointed stick, a snare, some manure and a lot of codfish would not seem the stuff that imperialist dreams are made of, but back in England people were very impressed with the promise of Cabot's new-found land. For some the profusion of fish was wealth enough. Cabot, however, dreamed of the Indies. In his second letter di Soncino writes:

The said Englishmen, his companions, say that they took so many fish that this kingdom will no longer have need of Iceland, from which country there is an immense trade in the fish they call stock-fish. But Messers Zoanne has set his mind on higher things, he will keep on still further towards the east, where he will be opposite to an island called Cipango, situated in the equinoctial region, where he believes that all the spices of the world, as well as the jewels are found. (2nd despatch)

Cabot's ambitions were founded on some not wholly unsound geographic reasoning.

He further says that he was once in Mecca, whither the spices are brought by caravans from distant countries; and having inquired from whence they were brought and where they grow, they answered that they did not know, but such merchandise was brought from distant countries by other caravans to their home; and they further say that they are also conveyed from other remote regions. He adduced this argument, that if the Eastern people tell those in the south that these things come from a far distance from them, presupposing the rotundity of the earth, it must be that the last turn would be by the north towards the west. (2nd despatch)

King Henry clearly liked the prospect "of establishing in a greater depot for spices in London than there is in Alexandria", (di Soncino, 2nd despatch) and promised to finance another more ambitious expedition to the New World. In the meantime Cabot was granted a yearly pension of twenty pounds. He rented a property on St. Nicholas Street

in Bristol and by all accounts lived in fine style adopting the manner of a great Lord, which in a sense he was, though the land he ruled was a kingdom of conjecture and aspiration. “He is called,” Pasqualigo writes of Cabot, “the Great Admiral ... and he goes dressed in silk.” While di Soncino, slightly tongue in cheek I suspect, reports that he had “also spoken with a Burgundian who was a companion of Messer Zoanne ... who wishes to return because the Admiral (for so Mr Zoanne is entitled) has given him an island, and has given another to his barber of Castione who is Genoese, and both look upon themselves as Counts; nor do they look upon my Lord the Admiral as less than a Prince.” (2nd despatch)

So enthused was the King by Cabot’s discoveries, that it was rumoured that the mariner would take command of twenty ships on his next voyage of exploration. As it was, early the next year the King granted new letters of patent authorising Cabot “to take at his pleasure VI Englishe shipes in Portes or Portes, or other places within this, our realm of England”. Later that same year Cabot “caused the king to man and victual a ship at Bristow to search for an island which he knew to be replenished with rich commodities”. “In the company of this ship sailed also out of Bristow three or four small ships.” These were “fraught with sleight and grosse ware, as coarse cloth, caps, laces, points and such other”, with the expectation that these would be traded for spices and jewels. One of the ships turned back and put into an Irish port. The others carried on into the open Atlantic and disappeared from recorded history.

The discovery of Newfoundland

There was an earlier draft to this chapter. It began like this: “the description of Newfoundland has been a project undertaken by Europeans and their descendants for the last one thousand years.” It then went on to make brief mention of the Viking voyages

to Vinland, the voyage of *The Matthew* and the journeys of some more obscure adventurers in the early sixteenth century. Returning to this draft I encountered a problem. The problem was that Cabot was not describing Newfoundland. To assume that the documents pertaining to the voyage of *The Matthew* belong to a history of writing about Newfoundland is to assume that Newfoundland is the object being written about. This assumption is simply wrong.

There are two ways of reading these documents. The first is to read them as evidence. In this manner the historian studies the scant information about Cabot's journey across the Atlantic in an attempt to reconstruct what really happened. The second way of reading these documents is as cultural artefacts, episodes in a history of the European writing of the New World. If we approach these documents as evidence then to assert that they refer to a voyage to Newfoundland is not necessarily wrong, but highly problematic. If we approach these documents as cultural artefacts then to argue that they describe a voyage to Newfoundland is not simply contentious, but historically and theoretically false.

In his magisterial history of Newfoundland, Judge Prowse after briefly narrating the voyage of *The Matthew* declares that in "this colony an unbroken tradition points to Cape Bonavista, Newfoundland as the first land seen. This tradition is confirmed by an English map of Newfoundland made by John Mason, a distinguished captain in the Royal Navy of England about 1616; opposite to Cape Bonavista he writes these words, probably copying the wording of an older map: 'first found by Cabot _ A Caboto primum reperta.' On this ground, and for other reasons, as a Newfoundlander, I claim for Cape Bonavista the honour of being the first land seen in North America." (1895, 10)

If we assess Prowse's conclusions on the basis of historical evidence they are found to be suspect in a couple of respects. One problem is the assumption of discovery. Clearly, Cabot was not the first person to set eyes on Newfoundland or any other part of

North America. That “honour” belongs to some Neolithic ancestor of the aboriginal peoples of the Americas. Cabot was not even the first European to see Newfoundland. Archaeological investigations have irrefutably established that the Vikings briefly settled by the shores of Epave Bay on the Great Northern Peninsula sometime around 1000 AD.²³

One could qualify Prowse’s statement even further and claim that Cabot was the first European to see North America since the time of the Vikings, but even this is debatable. Perhaps Prince Madoc of Wales “discovered” the Americas in 1107. Dr. David Powell’s *The Histories of Wales*, published 1584 tells of how Madoc left Wales “in contention betwixt his brethren and prepared certain shippes with men and munitions and sought adventures by sea, sailing west”. Eventually “he came to a land unknown and saw many strange things”.²⁴

Or perhaps Henry Sinclair of Scotland “discovered” the Americas in 1398. According to Antino Zeno, who claims to have sailed with Henry, they voyaged westward through stormy seas until they reached a “quiet safe harbour”. The people of the island, however, “were contented with the state which God had given them, and would neither alter their laws or admit any stranger”. When Henry “saw he could do

²³ That the Vikings may have found North America long before Columbus has been a matter of conjecture since the nineteenth century. In the early 1960s conjecture became certainty when Dr. Helge Ingstad uncovered house sites at L’Anse aux Meadows. For a scholarly account of the Norse voyages to “Vinland” refer to *The Norse discovery of America*, edited by Anne Ingstad (1985). *West Viking: the Ancient Norse in Greenland and North America* by Farley Mowat (1965) is a more popular rendering of the same history.

²⁴ The passage from the History of Wales is quoted from *The Seafarers: Pre-Columbian Voyages to North America* by Frances Gibson (1974), pages 187-8. The “legend” of Prince Madoc’s voyage has been around since at least the sixteenth century if not before. John Dee drew a map of North America in 1580 and on the back of that map he wrote the “Lord Madoc, sonne to Owen Gwynedd Prynce of Northwales, led a Colonie and inhabited in Terra Florida or thereabouts”. (Williamson 1962, 201) During the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries a revisionist strain in American historiography has argued that the story of Madoc is supported by archaeological and ethnological evidence. The pre-Colombian forts by the Alabama River were thought to be constructed by Madoc and his crew, and the curious language, customs and appearance of the Mandan Indians indicated that these doomed people were the descendants of the Welsh colonialists. For an overview and bibliography see “A consideration was America discovered by Prince Madoc ab Owain Gwynedd of Wales” by Jane Wanner. (<http://www.barstow.cc.ca/wac/madoc.html>)

nothing ... he took a fair wind and sailed six days to the west.” A storm arose and the “winds shifted to the south-west”. After another four days they “discovered land.” They anchored in an “excellent harbour”, ate their fill of fish, “sea-fowl”, and birds’ eggs, and set about exploring the country. They found it to be an excellent place, with “a wholesome and pure atmosphere, a fertile soil and good rivers and so many other attractions”. So pleasant was it that Henry “conceived of the idea of staying there and founding a city”. The crew had other ideas and “began to murmur, saying that they wished to return to their own homes”. Zeno returned before the onset of winter. Henry remained until the spring.²⁵

More likely, if less intriguing, is the possibility that fishers from the West Counties of England, the Basque Country and Portugal had been sailing to the banks of Newfoundland a couple of decades before Cabot let down a basket into the teaming waters.²⁶

The other problem with Prowse’s conclusion is, of course, the contention that the bit of North America Cabot saw first was Cape Bonavista. This is, to say the least, a matter of some debate. To quote Peter Pope, “the limited and ambiguous documentation of Cabot’s exploration of 1497 has, paradoxically, encouraged luxuriant growth in the secondary literature on the topic of itinerary.” (1997, 7) The substance of the various positions need not be detailed. Suffice it to say that besides Cape Bonavista, Cape Bauld, at the northern tip of Newfoundland’s Great Northern Peninsula, Cape Breton

²⁵ The “Zeno narrative” was (apparently) written by Antonio and sent to his brother Carlo in Venice. The papers languished in a trunk until 1578 when Nicolo Zeno pieced the narrative together and published it in its present form. The text of the narrative quoted above is available on Website of the Grand Lodge of the Scottish Masons. (www.grandlodgescotland.com/website/zeno) For a fairly scholarly consideration of the story of Henry Sinclair refer to *Prince Henry Sinclair: his expedition to the New World* by Fredrick J. Pohl.

²⁶ The arguments for and against (mostly for) the possibility that Europeans were fishing the waters of the coast of Newfoundland before the voyages of Columbus and Cabot are presented by Ian Wilson (*The Columbus myth: did men of Bristol reach America before Columbus*) and David B. Quinn (“The Argument for the English discovery of North America between 1480 and 1494” (1961)).

Island, Labrador and Maine have all been, with varying degrees of plausibility, designated as site of Cabot's landfall.²⁷ The one thing that can be known with complete surety about Cabot's voyage is that we of the early twenty-first century do not really know where he went. We can make educated guesses, but we do not know.

The problem with reading old documents as evidence is a problem of translation. The aim of the historian is to map what happened long ago with as much precision as possible. Unfortunately, the people of long ago either lacked the technology or inclination to be as exact in their measures of time and space as we are today. There is no mystery to the voyage of *The Matthew* in 1997. We know when it left Bristol, the course it took across the Atlantic and when it arrived at Bonavista. We know this because we are able to fix the positions on the surface of the globe with great exactitude, and we know this because the coast of Britain, Newfoundland and every other continent and island has been named and charted. Historians would like to trace the original voyage of *The Matthew* on the same charted globe, to fix Cabot's course within the same grid of latitude and longitude. This, however, is impossible because that globe and that grid did not exist for Cabot in the same way they existed for Captain Williams. So the historian must attempt to translate the cryptic measures and descriptions of fifteenth-century writers into the prose of exact space and time, thereby establishing what "really" happened.

²⁷ Cape North, on Cape Breton Island and Bonavista have been competing for the honour of being the site of Cabot's onshore excursion since the nineteenth century. Proud Newfoundlanders such as Judge Prowse believed that Cabot came ashore at Bonavista, while proud Nova Scotians like William Ganong argued for Cape North. More disinterested students of early exploration have variously deduced that Cabot discovered Maine (John Juricek), Labrador (John Jackson) or Cape Bauld (Samuel Morrison). Peter Pope gives by far the best summary of the debates concerning Cabot's landfall himself in *The many landfalls of John Cabot*. Pope himself remains agnostic on the issue, although he does conclude that of the various possibilities Cape Breton is the most likely, while Bonavista is "relegated to the status of a tradition as opposed to a plausible historical scenario". Another review of the "Cabot Dilemma" is provided Dereck Croxton ("The Cabot Dilemma: John Cabot's 1497 voyage and the limits of historiography"). In spite of the title, Croxton is not so agnostic and firmly concludes the Cape Breton is indeed the place where North America was (re)discovered.

What we have then is a difference in writing. At the turn of the twentieth century we write of things in a way that is quite different from the way in which people of the fifteenth and sixteenth century wrote of things. To say that the documents pertaining to Cabot's journey describe the discovery of Newfoundland (or to Maine, or Cape Breton, or Labrador) is wrong, simply because Newfoundland did not exist for Cabot and his contemporaries. To assume that these documents describe Newfoundland without knowing it may or may not be true, but reading the accounts of Cabot's voyage in this manner transforms the study of difference into a study of insufficiency.

This, indeed, is the most common approach to the problem of historical translation. It is thought that di Soncino, Day and Pasqualigo are writing of a real voyage, unfortunately they do not have the wherewithal to write of it accurately. Their reckonings of distance are inexact because, although mariners could establish latitude by taking the measure of the stars, they had no idea how to calculate longitude. They could not fix or name the point Cabot came ashore because they had no sense of the outline of the coast *The Matthew* sailed along. The interpretation of historical documents becomes, therefore, an exercise of filling in the blanks and of crossing out or rewriting those passages which are patently at variance with the truth as we now know it (farm animals in Newfoundland in 1497, I think not).

Underlying the rhetoric of insufficiency is what Paul Carter in the introduction to *The Road to Botany Bay* calls the "illusion of the theatre, and, more exactly, the unquestioned convention of the all-seeing spectator". (1989, xv) According to Carter:

This kind of history, which reduces space to a stage, that pays attention to events unfolding in time alone, might be called imperial history ... rather than focus on the intentional world of the historical individuals, the world of active spatial choices, empirical history of this kind focuses on facts which, in a sense, come after the event. The primary object is not to understand or to interpret: it is to legitimate. This is why history is associated with

imperialism – for who are more liable to charges of unlawful usurpation and constitutional illegitimacy than the founder of colonies? Hence, imperial history's defensive appeal to the logic of cause and effect: by its nature, such a logic demonstrates the emergence of order from chaos. (1989, xvi)

Carter's comments pertain particularly to the historiography of Cook's "discovery" of Australia (see Chapter Four). For Carter the essential fallacy of this "diorama model of history" is that historians, as all seeing spectators, "take it for granted that newcomers travelled and settled a land that was already there". (1989, xxi) In these histories Australia already exists as a fully realized geography, all mapped and named, and the story of exploration and discovery is simply the story of the realisation of that geography. "The ironic result" of this version of history "is that those activities of exploring and settling, which nationalism elevates to an iconic status, become strictly superfluous. If a country was already there, laid out waiting to be found, why, anyone might have done it at any time." (1989, xxi)

For Carter this is the significance of the simulated voyage of discovery such as that undertaken by *The Matthew* in 1997.

By the same token, when we reverently trace the explorer's tracks, we can claim to be explorers no less than they, and writing up our own experiences pretend its history. A new genre is born, the explorer biography, where our own thoughts and feelings take an epic turn. Treating the historical space as "natural," passive, objectively there, has the effect of draining Australian history of its historical content. The uniquely spatial experience is replaced by a ritual of repetitions. Putative journeys are effaced by a cult of places. And another genre emerges: the local history. (1989, xxi)

Indeed, the simulated journey is in some ways more real than the original. The course of the original journey is obscured by cryptic and insufficient representations, by distances poorly measured and places badly seen. The simulated journey, in re-enacting

what the original journey may have been, where they may have gone and what they might have seen, lays claim to revealing the journey for what it really was.²⁸

Of course, the function of such a simulation is largely ideological. By re-enacting the voyage of *The Matthew* Cabot's journey becomes written into a narrative of national and regional identity and destiny. *The Matthew* celebrations were, in short, a celebration of Newfoundland.

This was true in 1997 and it was, perhaps, even more so in 1897, when Newfoundlanders gathered in their thousands to witness the dedication of Cabot Tower, a turreted stone edifice built on the top of Signal Hill overlooking St. John's. The tower was, indeed, more modest than that originally planned. The Catholic Bishop, Michael Francis Howley, imagined an elaborate castle-like building, the central tower of which was "to be adorned with a figure representing John Cabot pointing to a globe with his left hand, while in his right he holds aloft a cross staff bearing an electric light which will be visible to mariners far out at sea." (Pope 1997, 103) In the end financial constraints limited the Bishop's ambitions.

In addition to a stone building, the anniversary of the discovery of North America was marked by an issue of stamps celebrating Cabot's voyage as well as the scenic and industrial attractions of Newfoundland, and a "landfalls" billiards tournament at the Mechanics Hall. More than anything, however, the Venetian's voyage was celebrated

²⁸ The remarkable thing about the media coverage of the second voyage of *The Matthew* was the degree to which the distinction between the simulation and the original voyage was collapsed so as, effectively, the simulation became the original voyage. The documentary produced by Peter Firstbrook is a case in point. It is presented as the story of the original voyage of *The Matthew* in 1497, yet it is told through the medium of the second voyage of *The Matthew* in 1997. Such a representation of the voyage of *The Matthew* maps the "discovery" of North America on the map of a continent already discovered. This imagining of exploration allows the deeds of the past to be directed towards the realisation of the present. It was this reading of history that enabled Queen Elizabeth to state that the "extraordinary voyage of discovery [undertaken by *The Matthew*]" was the beginning of the affectionate relationship that has existed between Great Britain and Newfoundland ever since" even though at the time of *The Matthew*'s sailing neither place existed, and, as the Innu protesters remind us, the only outcome of this affectionate relationship for the then natives of Newfoundland was extermination.

with words. Words were spoken from the top of Signal Hill and in the public rooms of the city. Words were written as newspaper articles and commemorative supplements. Words were sung as anthems and satirical ballads. (Pope 1997, 102-109)

In these words the landfall of Cabot marked the emergence of Newfoundland as a distinctive place and Newfoundlanders as a distinctive people. There were two related aspects to the rewriting of Cabot's voyage as an episode in the history of Newfoundland. Firstly, to recall Prowse's words, by claiming for Newfoundland "the honour of being the first land seen in North America" the nativists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries sought to assert historical primacy for their modest and marginal homeland. In so doing the political expression of regionalism was grounded in a imagining of "an immemorial past" (Anderson 1983, 11) or at least a past that began at the very point at which the history of North America began. Secondly, the re-enactment of Cabot's "discovery" of Newfoundland rewrote the island as a "boundless space" (Noyes 1991, 163) upon which the history of the settler society of Newfoundland could be inscribed as a triumph of human will and endurance over the wilderness. Accordingly, Cabot's landfall, and the act of raising a cross upon the shores of Newfoundland, became the first lines in a story of progress that told of the emergence of a civilized society from a chaotic and savage land (a story that will be more fully examined in chapter six).

The small group of Innu drumming and singing their protest as *The Matthew* sailed into Bonavista Harbour were, of course, contesting this imperialist history of progress and the idioms of space that were being represented in the re-enactment of the moment of discovery. This act of contestation serves to highlight the degree to which the second voyage of *The Matthew* was not so much a simulation of the first as it was a means of inscribing Cabot's journey as historical act within a mythic imagining of New World spatialities and identities (an act of inscription that required the erasure of Aboriginal space).

Writing against “these mythic imaginings” Carter proposes a different kind of history: “a history of roads, footprints, trails of dust and foaming wakes. Within its domain fall the flight of birds, the direction of smoke, the lie of the land. Against the historians, it recognises that our life as it discloses itself spatially is dynamic, material but invisible.” (1989, xxii-iii) The subject of this history “is not a physical object but a cultural one. It is not a geographer’s space, although it comes into it. What is evoked here are the spatial forms and fantasies by which a culture declares its presence.” (1989, xxii)

This is, I would argue, how we may best read the early voyages to the new-found lands as a form of writing. They are not about Newfoundland as a fully realized space; rather, they are episodes in the history of the emergence of Newfoundland as a spatial entity within the European global consciousness.

Writing the non-discovery

Historians have long studied the Renaissance writing of the New World. Most of this study has been devoted to the reconstruction of what really happened. Some historians have, however, preferred to read the texts of discovery and conquest as cultural artefacts. J. H. Elliott, for one, argues that the “evidence of the texts ... can ... tell us something of interest about European society – about the ideas, attitudes and preconceptions which made up the mental baggage of Early Modern Europeans on their travels through the world.” (1970, 6) This is still an act of reconstruction, but rather than reconstructing what really happened, the work of the historian is to reconstruct how European explorers and scholars perceived America and its peoples.²⁹

²⁹ The literature concerning the Renaissance writing of the Americas is vast. Besides the literature referred to in the text of this discussion oft-cited works include Stephen Greenblatt’s *Marvellous possession: the wonder of the new and the shock of discovery* (1992), Tzvetan Todorov’s *The conquest of America: the*

One interesting thing that the evidence of texts tells us is that early modern Europeans were not that curious about the new-found lands on the other side of the Atlantic. To quote Michael T. Ryan, “[m]ost of them evinced little interest in or concern for the new worlds across the sea revealed by the great discoveries of the fifteenth and sixteenth century”. (1981, 519) This somewhat goes against the grain. Late modern scholarship recognises the discovery of the Americas as one of the pivotal moments of world history. Our expectation is that the explorers and scholars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries would have shared our sense of occasion.

Think of it: these were men who left their familiar harbours and after a perilous voyage of many weeks came to a wholly new world. They saw plants and animals that no European had ever seen. They met with people whose words and ways were utterly unfamiliar to them. We anticipate that their narratives would encompass and express this marvellous difference, that they would as best they may and to the very limits of their language describe in fine detail all that was remarkable and new. And even if the navigators and soldiers who sailed to the Americas were not so interested in the description of the new worlds, we would assume that scholars back in Europe would be. That just as scientists of today await the transmission of satellite circling some distant planet, so the educated men of the Renaissance would marvel at all that was unknown, and busy themselves discussing and debating the significance of the discoveries of Columbus, Cabot and the like.

question of the other (1984), and *Colonial encounters: Europe and the native Caribbean, 1492-1797*, edited by Peter Hulme (1986). Most of this literature is about the “discovery” of the Caribbean and the conquest of Mexico and Central America and the ways in which European discourses of otherness and appropriation informed the murderous encounter with the peoples of these lands. For example, Todorov’s critical project is explicitly defined by a concern with “what can happen if we do not succeed in discovering the other” and is dedicated to the memory of a “Mayan woman devoured by dogs.” (1984, i) Much less has been written about the Renaissance writing of North America in general, and Newfoundland in particular (exceptions are the aforementioned *The many landfalls of John Cabot* by Peter Pope, and David Quinn’s “Newfoundland in the consciousness of Europe in the sixteenth - and seventeenth-centuries” (1979).

Yet, curiously, the texts of the time do not reflect a great and scholarly interest in the Americas. "It is difficult," writes Elliott, "not to be impressed by the strange lacunae and the resounding silences in many places where references to the New World could be reasonably expected." For Elliot these "strange lacunae" are a general feature of European writing in the century that followed Columbus' landfall. He cites surveys of French and Polish literature (1970, 12-13) to demonstrate that, qualitatively, not much was written about the Americas, and, qualitatively, most of what was written merely evoked the idea of America as "a symbol of the exotic, or as a testimonial to the achievements of the church triumphant". (1970, 13)

For other historians "resounding silences" are a feature of the actual narratives of discovery and conquest. There is, in effect, something missing, or perhaps suppressed in these narratives. That something is description. According to Michael Ryan, the letters of Columbus "are remarkable not for what they say about the natives but for how little they do say about them". (1981, 519) Of the accounts of the conquistadors, Elliot remarks that "the physical appearance of the New World is either totally ignored or else described in the flattest most conventional phraseology". (1970, 19-20) Similarly, as Evelyn Page observes, "many of the early writers of northern America ... travelled through the spectacular landscape like blind men." (1973, 194) Samuel de Champlain, for example, simply describes the mighty Saguenay as a "fine river", and dismisses sublime vistas of forests and mountains as "mere wastes". "Of admiration or enjoyment of the wilderness," Page observes, "he shows not a trace." (1973, 194-5)

To account for this "deficiency in naturalistic observation" (Elliott 1970, 20) historians usually assume dissidence between experience and culture. The "discoverers" of the New World must have seen the extraordinary and spectacular landscapes through which they travelled. They must have been sensible to all that was different and strange. However, such were the cultural "obstacles to the incorporation of the New World

within Europe's intellectual horizon", (Elliott 1970, 17) that their accounts failed to reflect their visual experience of the Americas.

"How was," asks Ryan, "a traditional culture, suspicious of change and oriented to a mythic past, whose members fulfilled themselves in relationship to a divine reality outside of time, to incorporate novelty?" (1981, 523) The answer is, of course, that they did not, or did so only reluctantly. Instead of describing all that was new and marvellous, they attempted to write America into the "canonical" cosmologies and histories of Renaissance Europe. "Tradition" so constrained the vision of the early explorers (Ryan 1981, 222) that, to paraphrase Robert Paine, the imagined was as "real" as the real. Quoting Helder Macedo, Paine argues that amongst the sixteenth-century authors of America,

Expectation preceded knowledge, interpretation was superimposed on observation, and analogy neutralised difference. They recognised what they did not know, projecting onto the things and people they encountered their own desires, fears, ideas, phantoms, superstition – in short their own imaginary. (1996, 249)

The effect was that even as they looked upon difference they did not see it, and even as they sighted lands they knew nothing of, this discovery "is turned into a non-discovery through a mimetic process by which the unknown ends in a reflection of the imagined known". (1996, 249)

The most obvious example of this process is the very geography of discovery. As Edmundo O'Gorman (1961) famously argues the explorers of the late fifteenth century did not discover America because they did not conceive of the existence of another continent. Both Columbus and Cabot were convinced that the lands they found were either the east coast of Asia or some islands lying off that coast. They thought that because that was in keeping with how they imagined the world to be. "In 1492," writes

Paine, “it was accepted that the world was a solid sphere, but, also that the known inhabited earth of Europe, Africa, and Asia was an island: *Orbis Terrarum*.” (1996, 241) This image of the globe, based on Ptolemaic geography and biblical exegesis, provided the “theoretical basis for reaching the orient by sailing west from Europe”.

Cabot’s project was certainly both defined by and inscribed upon fifteenth-century cartographies of the rotund earth. On returning from his first voyage Cabot apparently “made himself a solid sphere ... on which he shows where he has been; and proceeding towards the east, he has passed as far as the country of the Tanais. They say that there the land is excellent and temperate, and they believe that brazil and silk grow there.” It is upon this globe, we will recall, that Cabot described his plans for further mercantile adventures to the King, proposing to “keep along the coast from the place he touched more and more towards the east, until he reaches an island which he calls Cipango, situated in the equinoctial region”. (Di Soncino, 2nd despatch)

The *mappis mundi* upon which Columbus and Cabot imagined their voyages were, according to Valerie Flint, was “not a creation of the observation of the coastline, but ideas of space created from various texts.” (1992, 30) The purpose of these maps was, to quote Flint, “not to take a Euclidean snapshot of the size and shape of the earth, but to convey a moral truth of sacred and political history”. (1992, 33) As the navigators charted the lands that they discovered upon this imagined geography of the *mappis mudie* they were, therefore, describing the presence of other landscapes and peoples within “authoritative canons of theological doctrine.” The Americas were, in effect, already written and the work of the explorers was to render the new-found lands legible within the network of similtudes and analogies that constituted the limits of their representational world.

So it was that the Europeans who travelled to the New World in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries came “to disbelief in things that were present ... and equally, to belief

in things that were not present". (Paine 1996, 50) Imagining that he was near the coast of Asia, Cabot looked upon the forests of Newfoundland (or some other place on the east coast of Canada) and saw fields, villages and the manure of farm animals and he assumed that just beyond the compass of his vision silk grew upon the trees, jewels lay in the earth and men with crossbows waited in ambush. Similarly, a few years later the Portuguese navigator Verazzano would sail along the same coasts and scented the "most sweat savours" promising "drugs, or spircherie, and other riches of gold." It is not that Cabot or Verazzano were blind, or did not wish to see the land before them. It is that their vision (and scent) of things was as much informed by traditional cosmologies and histories as it was by their sensual experience of the New World.

One of the more theoretically ambitious studies of the Renaissance writing of the Americas is that of Howard Marchitello in *Narrative and Meaning in Early Modern England*. For Marchitello the dissidence between experience and tradition or referential and canonical knowledge, may be considered as a tension between two modes of discourse: description and narration.

Narration is bad. For Marchitello, the European narration of the New World was (and is) "a particular and calculated social – or, more aptly, antisocial strategy conventionally evoked in the face of ... the 'mystery' of the other. It is this desire to procure the other as the same in the model of possession that serves to structure the New World encounter and the various discourses that arise out of it, including travel narratives, promotional literature, colonialist propaganda ... and, perhaps, even our own no doubt admirable but potentially appropriate historical and historicist attempts to (re)write the New World or theorise our relation to it." (1998, 94)

Description, by contrast, is good. As a way of writing the New World description "resists the appropriative nature of possession that comes to characterise narrationality in which the other always exists secondarily – after the fact, as it were, of the narrator's

own primary and privileged existence. Description localises and particularises and the contingent (or, say, the 'event') while the narrational universalises and totalities. Description is dedicated (more fully) to difference, to radically contingent, to alterity, while the narrational is dedicated to the eradication of difference and the (ideological) production of sameness. Hence the extreme danger associated with history, for example, when construed as any of a variety of possible narratives or meta-narratives." (1998, 94)

Somewhat curiously, considering the lethal effects of meta-narratives, Marchitello positions his own historical account of the European discovery of the Americas based upon this distinction between description and narration. According to Marchitello description came first. Then narration comes along and "inverts its own belatedness (sometimes violently) and proceeds to consume its predecessor, so that the narrational travel writing, say, of the early moments of European contact with the New World subsumes description, or re-creates description in its own possessive image". (1998, 95)

Marchitello's account of the inscription of the Americas "is offered ... on both a marco- and micro-historical level. On a macro-historical level "the occlusion or loss of description at the hands of the narrational can be charted roughly against the historical transformations in genre from medieval encyclopaedic texts ... that are clearly constructed on a faith ... in 'pure' description, to the Renaissance travel texts ... that have obviously abandoned or conscripted description in the ideological service of narratives of possession. On a micro-historical level "this trajectory from description to narrational can be enacted by a single individual whose first response to the New World (or, more generally, the other) can be simply a desire to describe, but whose initial desire can be replaced immediately ... by the appropriative desire to narrate." (1998, 95)

Sir Walter Raleigh was such an individual. Marchitello argues that in the *Discovery of Guiana* one can "detect the emergence of the narrational over and against the contrary politics of description". The passage that Marchitello cites in support of this

interpretation of Raleigh's text tells us much about the aesthetics of experience that inform late modern readings of early modern accounts of the Americas.

I never saw a more beautiful country, nor more lively prospects, hills raised here and there over valleys, the river winding into diverse branches, the plains adjoining without bush or stubble, all fair green grass ... the deer crossing in every path. The birds towards evening singing on every tree with a thousand several tunes. Cranes and herons of white crimson, and carnation perching in the river's side, the air fresh with a gentle easterly wind, and every stone that we stooped to take up promised either gold or silver by his complexion. (1998, 102)

Within this single passage, argues Marchitello, we can chart the "occlusion of description by the narratives of possession". "Raleigh's wonder at Guyana's natural beauty is not obviously possessive at the point of its first impression, but this moment ... can be a moment of extremely brief duration, and what follows it emerges by the end of the passage as the narrative of possession: the landscape itself holds the much-coveted gold that we know lured Raleigh to Guyana in the first place." (1998, 102)

Marchitello is not alone in relating the European history of discovery as an "occlusion of description" by narratives of possession. Explicit or implicit in most cultural studies of Renaissance travel writing is the argument that the primal experience of the new was distorted or dispelled by imperialist agendas of acquisition and conversion. "More and more," writes Pagden, "Europeans came to see America less as an exotic new land inhabited by innocent primitives and containing many wonders awaiting discovery than a vast field for exploitation and development by Europeans." (1995, 29) The explorers and conquistadors were both literally and figuratively more interested in "value-seeking" than "information seeking." (Paine 1995, 52) Even as their accounts hint at sensitivity to the wondrous difference of the Americas they are dominated by the search for gold and heathens. They are, therefore, less descriptions of

strange landscapes and peoples than they are narrations of individual aspiration, national destiny and the triumphal ascendancy of the Christian faith.

Now there are some problems with this interpretation of the Renaissance inscription of the Americas. These will be discussed at the conclusion of this chapter. First we will return to Newfoundland to consider the relationship between description and narration in the accounts of those who travelled to the island in the wake of Cabot.

The voyages of a nation

Much of what has been said about the discovery of the Americas holds true for the discovery of Newfoundland. If anything strikes one about the writing of Cabot's travels it is how little of it there is. Here was a man who set off into the unknown, and returned to much acclaim having "discovered two large and fertile islands." Yet almost nothing was written about Cabot's journey and the lands he found. We are told there was a lot of fish; some evidence of inhabitation and big trees suitable for shipbuilding and that is about it. Moreover, what writing there is was produced within the private domain, as letters written between men, rather than reports issued by governments or learned institutions. The documents that do exist in the public realm are all to do with legalities: patents, pensions and such like.

Nor did things change much during the years that followed the voyage of *The Matthew*. Until 1577 the historical record is almost completely bereft of writings concerning the England's new possession across the sea.

There is the account of the voyage of John's son, Sebastian, related in Peter Martyr's *De orbe novo decades*.³⁰ Apparently the younger Cabot "equipped two ships at his own cost ... and with three hundred men steered first to the north, until even in the month of July he found great icebergs floating in the sea." (Quinn 1979, 125) He then steered to the west and came to the lands of Baccallos, so called "because in the adjacent sea he found so great a quantity of a certain kind of fish like tunnies, called baccallos by the inhabitants." The men of that land were "clothed in skins and not anywhere devoid of intelligence" and "many say that they have seen copper in places in the hands of the inhabitants". (Quinn 1979, 125) As with the voyage of his father, it is impossible to deduce where exactly Sebastian went, and some think it likely that he never went at all (even Martyr admits that "Spaniards are not lacking who deny that Cabot was the first finder of the Baccallaos and do not allow that he went so far westwards"). (Quinn 1979, 125)

Besides Martyr's rather fanciful account of Sebastian's travels, there is not one surviving description of an English voyage to the new-found lands during the first half of the sixteenth century: no letter, no diary, no ship's log, nothing. All that does exist are legal documents: more patents and more court cases (these seem to have been litigious times).

One reason for this resounding silence is, quite simply, that the English were not terribly interested in overseas expansion. While Portuguese and Spaniards were busy sailing around Africa and slaughtering and negotiating their way to the conquest of Mexico, the English preferred to stay home, making the occasional foray to pirate

³⁰ There are two great sources for fifteenth- and sixteenth-century accounts of English voyages to the Americas. The first is, of course, Richard Hakluyt's *Navigation, voyages and discoveries of the English nation*, originally published in 1589 (reprinted in 1965) and David Quinn's monumental five volume *New American world: a documentary history of North America* (1979). Unless otherwise stated the passages quoted come from one or other of these two sources and will be paginated accordingly.

galleons laden with gold. So, although Bristol merchants had financed the voyage of *The Matthew*, a voyage that had, it seems, been considered as success, the two large and fertile islands discovered by Cabot were more or less ignored during the first half of the sixteenth century.

In the two decades that immediately followed Cabot's return there was a brief flurry of activity. In 1501 "The Company of Adventures to the New-found Lands" was formed, and a series of speculative trading expeditions was undertaken. These expeditions seemed to yield little save some exotic gifts for Henry VII, including "hawks," an "egle," "wylde cattis," "popynjays" and three natives "clothid in beastys skinnys" who "ete Rawe Flesh". The company collapsed in 1505. (Hakluyt 1589, 516)

John Rastall's journey of 1517 ended in Waterford Ireland, where the crew mutinied, declaring that they "were disposed by ther wyllys to seyle no ferther", and pillaged the ship. (Quinn 1979, 162-67) Another expedition of "divers cunning men" financed and lead by an unnamed Canon of St. Paul's did make it to Newfoundland. One ship was cast away, but the other successfully completed a tour of "those unknown regions". It seems, however, that no record was kept of this tour so it did little to make the unknown known. (Hakluyt 1589, 517)

The 1536 voyage of Master Richard Hore and "divers other gentlemen" was a mixed success. They did catch some fish, killed some black and white bears, and enjoyed the "good and nourishing meat" of the great auk. They also almost starved, were forced to "relieve themselves with raw herbs and roots", resorted to cannibalism and finally to prayer. Their prayers were answered in the form of a French ship "well furnished with vittaille", which the English captured and sailed back home. (Hakluyt 1589, 517-19)

In the meantime, and with considerably less publicity, fishers from Devon and Dorset journeyed across the Atlantic. Compared to the French and the Portuguese, however, the English involvement in the Newfoundland fishery was minimal. In 1519

three Portuguese towns were sending 100 ships to Newfoundland. While during the 1550s upwards of five hundred ships a year left the ports of Brittany and Normandy bound for fishing-grounds off Newfoundland. In contrast, only thirty English fishing-ships sailed to Newfoundland in 1574.

Towards the end of the century English interest in the Newfoundland fishery increased rapidly. The defeat of the Spanish Armada heralded, or perhaps consolidated, England's dominance of the North Atlantic. Subsequently, the Spanish presence off the shores of Newfoundland dwindled, while the English prospered. In 1593 the Newfoundland fleet was alone in making a profit for the merchants of West Country ports. By 1594 some one hundred ships sailed from the Southwest of England to the bays and banks of Newfoundland.

This was a migratory fishery. In the spring and summer thousands of men would arrive in Conception Bay and upon the southern shore of the Avalon Peninsula. They would inhabit coves adjacent to the fishing grounds. There they would build rough shelters, and the stages upon which the day's catch would be gutted, split and lightly salted, before being laid on the beach to dry. Come the autumn the fishers would abandon their encampments and return to Europe with the season's catch.

For the merchants of the West Country this was a fine and profitable arrangement. Others, however, envisioned a more grandiose future for the new-found lands. For some gentlemen a lucrative fishery was not enough. They looked at their globes and dreamed Cabot's dream of sailing west to the Orient. And they looked to the Spanish Empire in the Americas, and dreamed of overseas dominions endowed with all manner of rare and valuable commodities.

One such gentleman was Sir Humphrey Gilbert.³¹ Gilbert was the son of well-to-do Devonshire landowner. The young Gilbert went to Eton and then Oxford. On the conclusion of his studies he entered the service of Queen Elizabeth I. It was in service of the Queen that Gilbert joined an expedition to Le Havre in 1562. The expedition was failure. Gilbert acquired a wound and the respect of the Earl of Warwick, who declared that “there is not a vallyanter man that lyveth; and so his dedes well shewyd now at this time.” (Quinn 1940, 4)

In addition to a scar and a commendation, Gilbert returned to England with an idea. In Le Havre he may have met with French geographer André Thevet and come to hear of the adventures of Jean Rimbault, who had established a colony in Florida and returned to France in July, 1562. Whoever he met inspired the wounded soldier to argue for the existence of a navigable Northwest Passage from Europe to East Asia and to actively promote an expedition to discover that passage. In 1567 he presented a draft petition to the governor of the Muscovy Company proposing a voyage of Northwest discovery. Unimpressed by the grandiose privileges that Gilbert had accorded himself as leader of this venture, the company rejected the petition. (Quinn 1940, 5-11)

Gilbert’s colonial ambitions were then set aside in favour of a more local imperial project. In 1566 Gilbert had been in soldiering in Ireland, joining the siege of Derry. On returning to England he hatched a plan to establish an English plantation in Munster. Royal approval was given but the Irish were not so enthusiastic. Gilbert returned to Ireland in 1569 and was made colonel of the army in Munster. He prosecuted the war against the Irish with utmost cruelty and ruthlessness. Defeated noblemen walked between lines of severed heads to supplicate before their new English master. For his

³¹ The account of the life of Humphrey Gilbert is based upon that written by David Beers Quinn as an introductory essay to *The Voyages and Colonising Enterprises of Sir Humphrey Gilbert* (1940, pages 1-104).

good service he was knighted on the 1st of January 1570. By then he seems to have lost interest in the idea of an Irish colony and, complaining of an affliction of his eyes, returned to England that same year. (Quinn 1940, 12-19)

Projects came and went. He became involved in some scheme to transform iron into copper. He bought land in Kent, and prospered further by acquiring the right to tax individuals who played unlawful games and failed to keep their horses and armaments in good order. But by the second half of the 1570s Sir Humphrey Gilbert returned to the venture that had first taken his fancy on his return from Le Havre.

In 1576 Henry Middleton of London printed a tract written by Gilbert entitled “A discourse and discoverie for a new passage to Cataia”.³² In it Gilbert promotes the exploration of a westerly route to Asia. His reasoning was not much different to Cabot’s save that he recognises that between Europe and Asia there “exists a fourth part of the world, commonly called America, which by all descriptions I founde to be an Island”. (Quinn 1979, 9) The existence of this island is, Gilbert assures his reader, completely in keeping with classical geographies of the globe. Aristotle and Plato both knew of the fourth part of the world that, it seems, was once much closer to Europe than it is now. By reason of “a mighty earthquake, and the streamyng downe of the heavenly Fludgates” America “grew to be unknowen of long time, unto us of later ages, and was lately discovered again, by Americus Vespucius, in the yere of our Lord, 1497. which some say to have bene first discovered, by Christopher Columbus. a Genuest. Anno. 1492.” (Quinn 1979, 9)

Gilbert’s plan was to sail around the north coast of the island of America and then to Asia. Most of the tract is devoted to proving that, firstly, such a passage exists, secondly, that it is navigable, and thirdly, that it is the best and quickest route to the

³² Gilbert’s tract is reprinted in full in Quinn’s *New American World*, volume four, pages 5-23. Citations are paginated accordingly.

Orient. His arguments rely on the logic of classical cosmologies, Pliny's record of a mysterious appearance of a group of Indians on the shores of Germany, and the experience of previous adventurers. In particular he notes the discoveries of Sebastian Cabot who "affirming that he sailed very far westward, with a quarter of the North, on the Northside of Terra de Labrador, the eleventh of June, until he came to the Septentrional latitude of 67 degrees and finding the Seas still open, said, that he might, and would have gone to Cataia, if the Mutinie of the Maister and Mariners, had not ben". (Quinn 1979, 14)

Two years later Gilbert was able to put his plan into action. On the 11th of June 1578 Queen Elizabeth I granted the knight a patent for the "inhabiting and planting our people in America."³³ Like Cabot before him the patent granted Gilbert "free libertie and licence from time to time and at all times for ever hereafter, to discover, finde, search out, and view such remote, heathen and barberous lands, countreys and territories not actually possessed of any Christian prince or people." (Quinn 1979, 186) Once these lands were found, Gilbert was allowed to "hold occupy & enjoy to his, his heires or assignes, and every of them for ever, all soyle of such lands, countries, & territories so to be discovered or possessed as aforesaid, and all of the Cities, Castles, Townes and Villages, and places in the same." (Quinn 1979, 187)

In November of the same year Gilbert embarked from Plymouth in command of a fleet of seven ships and a company of almost four hundred men. They did not get far. Storms scattered the fleet. Most put into Irish ports before returning to England. One ship made it as far as the Cap Verde Islands. This disaster both damaged Gilbert's reputation as a mariner (Queen Elizabeth opined that he was "a man of not good happ at

³³ The text of the patent is also reprinted in Quinn's *New American world*, volume four, pages 186-7.

sea”) and involved him in the usual series of litigations that seemed to conclude any failed expedition to the Americas.

Undaunted the Devonshire knight tried again.³⁴ On the 11th of June 1583, “having a soft gale of wind,” five ships “forsoke the coast of England” (28) bound for the Americas. Aboard were about 260 men “of every faculty and good choice”. There were “Shipwrights, Masons, Carpenters, Smithes, and such like, requisite to such an action: also Minerall men and Refiners.” Also, “for the solace of our people, and the allurements of the Savages,” they provided “Musike in good variety: not the least toys as Morris dancers, Hobby horsse, and Maylike conceits to delight the Savage people, whom we intended to winne by any mean possible.” (29)

One ship turned back after two days. The others sailed on. After several misadventures Gilbert and the remainder of his company arrived in the harbour of St. John’s on Saturday, the 3rd of August. It was the height of the fishing season. Some thirty-six ships, Portuguese, English and French, lay at anchor. Confirming the Queen’s opinion of his nautical skills, the General, “by great oversight” managed to steer his ship upon a rock at the harbour’s mouth, although the weather was fair and the rock was “much above the water fast by the shore”. The fishermen towed the ship from the rocks and, “having taken place convenient in the road” the adventurers “let fall ankers”. (31)

On the following Monday, Gilbert “had his tent set up” and “sommoned the marchants and masters, both English and strangers to be present at his possession of

³⁴ There exist three first hand descriptions of Gilbert’s ill-starred attempt at establishing an English colony in Cape Breton. The first is a letter from Stephen Parmenius to Richard Hakluyt the younger, written in St. John’s on the 6th of August, 1583. The second is a short letter from Gilbert to Sir George Peckham, also written in St. John’s on the 8th of August. The third is Edward Hayes’ narrative of Sir Humphrey Gilbert’s voyage; originally published in Hakluyt’s *Principall navigations*. All are reprinted in Quinn, volume five, pages 21-42. Hayes’ narrative is by far the most detailed of these documents and all quotes will be from this source unless otherwise indicated.

those Countries.” He read the text of his commission to the multitude and “delivered three laws to be in force immediately”: “the first for Religion which in publique exercise should be according to the Church of England”, the second reaffirmed “her majesties right and possession of these territories”, and the third stipulated that “if any person should utter words sounding to the dishonour of her Majestie” then “he should loose his ears, and have his ship and goods confiscate.” (32) To mark the moment of possession a pillar of wood was erected upon which were engraved the arms of the English Queen.

Gilbert’s plan was to leave Newfoundland and sail southwards along the coast in search of a suitable ground on which to establish a colony. But he tarried in St. John’s. It seems that the company of adventurers enjoyed their stay overmuch. Evoking the Queen’s charter they taxed the fishing fleet, English and strangers alike. The return was generous. They were presented with “wine, marmalads, most fine ruske or bisket, sweet oils and sundry delicacie” and “wanted not of fresh salmons, trouts, lobsters and other fresh fish.” (31) Every week the appointment of an “admiral” of the fishing fleet was celebrated by a feast to which Gilbert and his captains and masters were invited. All in all, to quote from the narrative of Edward Hayes,

in our abundance at home, the intertainment had been delightfull, but after our wants and tedious passage through the Ocean, it seemed more acceptable and of greater contentation, by how much the same was expected in that desolate corner of the world: where at other times of the yeare, wilde beasts and birds have only the fruition of those countries, which now seem a place very populous and much frequented. (31)

Finally, after seventeen days, Gilbert left St. John’s. His company had been much diminished. Some had “caried away ... a ship laden with fish”. Many more “stole into the woods to hide themselves, attending time and meanes to returne home by such shipping as daily departed from the coast”. Others, including two ship’s captains, “were

sick of fluxes". Gilbert decided to leave one ship, the *Swallow*, to carry the sick back to England. (35) Three ships remained: the *Delight*, captained by Maurice Brown, the *Golden Hind*, captained by Edward Hayes, and the *Squirrel*, upon which Gilbert sailed. They set their course for Cape Breton the intended site of the first English colonies in the Americas.

They never made it. The *Delight* was castaway near Sable Island off the coast of Nova Scotia. "The wind blew vehemently at the South and by the east, bringing rain and thick mist." The ship ran aground and "had soone her sterne and hinder parts beaten at pieces". Men clung to barrels and spars. Fourteen leap into a small boat and "committed themselves to God's mercy". Eighty-five others perished, including Captain Brown, as well as the learned Hungarian Stephen Parmenius, and a Saxon refiner and discoverer of minerals named Daniel. (37)

Those that remained became mutinous. Winter was coming on. The seas were stormy. The coastline appeared hazardous and unapproachable. The men were hungry and near naked. They singled their distress to Gilbert, "pointing to mouths, and their clothes thin and ragged". Out of "compassion of his poore men, in whom he saw no want of good will, but of means fit to perform the action they came for," the General "resolved to retire". (38)

On the 31st of August they changed their course and sailed towards England. Despite the disease, the loss of a ship and the desperate state of the crew, it seems that Gilbert was still optimistic about the prospects of a plantation on the northern coasts of America. He described his plans to Hayes. He would return in the spring with two fleets of ships, "one for the South, another for the North". When asked how he would "compasse the charges of so great preparation as he intended", Gilbert replied that he would "aske a pennie of no man", for he expected that, on hearing his "glad tidings", the Queen herself would lend him 10000 pounds. (40)

This did not happen. The two ships struggled eastward through many storms and perils. By the time they neared the Azores the seas were terrible, “breaking short and high Pyramid wise”. An apparition of fire was seen amongst the rigging heralding misfortunes to come. On the next night, at about twelve o’clock, Captain Hayes lost sight of the *Squirrel*. They searched all that night and in the days that followed, but found no trace of the General’s ship. It seemed that the *Squirrel* and all aboard her had been “swallowed up of the sea”. (40-1)

The *Golden Hind* sailed into Falmouth on the 22nd of September. Captain Hayes entertained faint hope that the *Squirrel* may have preceded them to port, but there was no news. Many weeks later, however, the fourteen men who had trusted in God’s mercy returned to England. For six days they survived in an open boat, drinking urine and eating “weeds that swam in the sea”. (43) They came to the south coast of Newfoundland and found a brook of fresh water and berries, and sank to their knees and gave God praise so mercifully had he dealt with them. They were rescued by a Basque fishing ship and taken to France before making their way home.³⁵

The Path of Fame

Let us compare the voyage of Humphrey Gilbert with that of Cabot. This is not a comparison of two voyages as “real” historical events inscribed as the course of wooden ships through actual time and space. This is a comparison of two voyages as ways of writing the new-found lands.

On comparing the voyages of Gilbert and Cabot two big differences present themselves. The first big difference is that much more is written about Gilbert’s voyage

³⁵ The remarkable story of how Richard Clerk and fifteen others were castaway on the shores of Newfoundland was obtained by Hakluyt and published in his *Principall navigations* (1589). It is reprinted in Quinn (1979), volume V, pages 43-5.

than that of Cabot.³⁶ There are, as there were with Cabot, legal documents: letters patent, contracts between Gilbert and his financiers and a hefty file of depositions gathered during the trial that followed the Devonshire knight's first failed adventure. There are also, as there were with Cabot, private letters exchanged between those with an interest in navigation. Some of these letters are by the adventurers themselves, written in the Americas and sent back to England aboard fishing ships. We know of three such letters: one by Gilbert to Sir George Peckham, dated 8 August 1583, the other two by the unfortunate Hungarian scholar Stephen Parmenius, one of which is lost and the other of which, dated 6 August, was sent to Richard Hakluyt the younger.

There are also printed accounts of Gilbert's fateful journey to the Americas. This is wholly unlike Cabot's voyage. There were no descriptions of the voyage of The (original) Matthew published in the years shortly following Cabot's return. Of the voyage of the *Golden Hind* and the *Delight* and their sister ships there are three published accounts. The first is that of Edward Hayes, the captain of the *Golden Hind*. His "report of the voyage and the success thereof" was published in Hakluyt's *Principall navigations* in 1589. The second is that of Richard Clerke, a master aboard the *Delight*, in which he tells the story of being castaway on the coast of Newfoundland. This too was printed in the *Principall navigations*. The third is a tract written by the aforementioned Sir George Peckham and published in 1583 as a *True report of the late discoveries and possession, taken in the right of the Crown of Englande, of Newfoundland: by that valient and worthye gentleman, Sir Humphrey Gilbert knight*

³⁶ There are two excellent sources for primary documents pertaining to Gilbert's voyages to the New World, both edited by David Beers Quinn. The first is *The Voyages and Colonising Enterprises of Sir Humphrey Gilbert*, a two-volume work published by the Hakluyt Society in 1940. The second is volumes III and IV of *A New American World*. Unless otherwise indicate the documents quoted will be the versions published in *A New American World* and will be paginated accordingly.

(and so on).³⁷ To these three we may add a fourth, for Hakluyt also printed Parmenius' letter in the *Principall navigations*. In addition, Peckham's and Parmenius' descriptions of Newfoundland are quoted extensively in Richard Hakluyt the younger's *Discourse of Western Planting*, which was published in 1584.

The second big difference is that Gilbert and his contemporaries were writing about Newfoundland: not Newfoundland imagined as some island off the coast of China, but Newfoundland as an island lying off the north eastern coast of America.

The European globe had changed greatly since the time of Cabot.³⁸ In 1501 Amerigo Vespucci famously concluded that the land the Columbus had discovered was not Asia but a wholly separate continent bounded on both sides by vast seas. Over the decades that followed, as Portuguese and French navigators sailed westward in search of a route to the orient, the east coast of Vespucci's continent began to take shape, and as the continent emerged so did the island of Newfoundland. The Canto map, drawn for the King of Portugal in 1502, shows what David Quinn calls a "proto-Newfoundland, an Atlantic island well out to sea and southwest of what appears to be Greenland". (1982, 11) By the end of the decade, Quinn concludes, the four western countries of Europe had a clear concept of an island or a group of islands to which they went to fish and to which the name "Newfound Land" or "New Land" in one or other form could be attached. (Quinn 1982, 12)

³⁷ The full title of Peckham's short tract is extraordinarily long. In its entirety it is as follows: *A true report of the late discoveries and possession, taken in the right of the Crown of England, of the Newfound Landes: by that valiant and worthy gentleman, Sir Humphrey Gilbert knight. Wherein is also briefly sett downe her highnesse lawful title thereunto, and the great and manifold commodities, that is likely to grow thereby, to the whole realm in generall, and to the adventurers in particular.*

³⁸ Besides David Beers Quinn's "Newfoundland in the consciousness of Europe in the sixteen and early seventeenth centuries", which is quoted extensively in this section, two useful reviews of the emergence of the North American continent during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are "From Cabot to Cartier: the Early Exploration of Eastern North America, 1497-1543" by John L. Allen (1992) and Karl W. Butzner "From Columbus to Acosta: science, geography and the New World" in *The Americas before and after 1492: current geographic research* (1992).

The form of this place, this New-found land, continued to change. Some thought it to be a peninsula of the mainland; some thought it to be a single island, most thought it to be two or more islands. By 1569, however, when Mercator laid the globe upon a flat sheet of paper, the island(s) shown much resembled the shape and location of the Newfoundland we know today. And by 1583, when Hayes came to relate his account of Gilbert's voyage he could write of Newfoundland as a fully realized geographic entity.

That which we does call the Newfound land, and the Frenchmen Bacalaos, is an Iland, or rather, or rather (after the opinion of some) it consisteth of sundry Ilands and broken lands, situate in the North regions of America, upon the gulfe and entrance of the great river called S. Laurence in Canada. Into which, navigation may be made both on the South and North side of this Island. The land lyeth South and North, containing in length between three & 400 miles, accounting from Cape Race (which is 46 degrees 25 minutes) unto the Grand Bay in 52' degrees of Septentrionall latitude. The Island round about hath very many goodly bayes and harbours, safe roads for ships, the like not to be found in any part of the known world. (33)

In short, Cabot's voyages did not describe Newfoundland, Gilbert's did. One could indeed argue that the narratives arising from Gilbert's expedition were the first published descriptions of the island written in English. This is not wholly true. Anthony Parkhurst, a Bristol merchant and adventurer, wrote two letters relating the situation and prospects of Newfoundland, one to Edward Dyer in 1577 and the other to Richard Hakluyt the elder in November 1578. Hakluyt published the second of these letters in the *Principall navigations*. There were also translations of French descriptions of Newfoundland that predate the writings of Peckham and Hayes.³⁹ It is, however, true to

³⁹ Amongst these is *The New found world*, by Andre Thevet (1557) which was printed in English in 1568. Thevet clearly knows Newfoundland to be an island off the coast of American continent. "This Newfoundland," he writes

is a region, that is one the farthest partes of Canada, and in the same land there is found a river, the which because of its breath and length seemeth to be almost a Sea, and it is named

say that Hayes' narrative along with the letters of Parkhurst and Gilbert and the account of the castaway Clerke are the first descriptions of Newfoundland to be written by Englishmen who had actually visited the island.

How then did these men write of Newfoundland? To organise the answer to this question let us ask another, slightly more complex question: recalling Marchitello's historiography of the Renaissance writing of the Americas, how were the writings of these men informed by a tension between narrative and description? Did they manage to see Newfoundland and its natives as they were, or was their vision circumscribed, occluded, as Marchitello would have it, by their narratives of conquest and conversion?

First we will consider narratives.

To understand the way in which men like Hayes, Peckham, Parkhurst and Hakluyt wrote of Newfoundland, one must understand why they were writing. With the exception of the Hungarian Parmenius, all those who wrote of Newfoundland between 1577 and 1589 thought that the English should establish plantations in the New World. Indeed, they were all actively involved in Gilbert's misguided attempt at colonisation. Of course, Hayes accompanied Gilbert on his adventure. He was a fellow traveller not only in body but also in spirit. Hayes' report of the voyage is paeon to the virtues of plantations, and in the years following he tried (without success) to raise funds for another colonising venture. Peckham, a Catholic nobleman, was intimately involved with Gilbert's scheme, buying title to 8,500,000 acres of America in return for an unspecified sum. Parkhurst also subscribed to the venture.

the river of the three brethern, being distant from the Islands of the Azores foure hundred leagues, and from France nine hundred: it separateth the province of Canada from this Newfoundland. (67)

Thevet's description of Newfoundland is not that flattering. It is a country "full of hills and mountains, and very barren for because of the cold temperature of the aire, as of the condition of the lande smally inhabited, and ill tilled." And the inhabitants of this country are "barbarous men" clothed "all in beastes skinnnes" who are both "forward and untractable" in their relations with Europeans and warlike amongst themselves. (68)

The involvement of the Hakluyts younger and elder was more philosophical than material. In general, they promoted the colonisation of America in a series of tracts published both before and after Gilbert's journey. More specifically, as David Quinn argues, it "seems probable ... that from early in 1582 Richard Hakluyt, the younger, had been engaged in collecting documentary evidence on America in connection with Gilbert's project". (1940, 62) This collection was published in 1582 as *Divers voyages touching on the discovery of America*, and included both Gilbert and Hayes in a list of "certaine late travellers" (having, presumably, assumed that their expedition would be under way by 1582).

The description of Newfoundland was, then, part of a larger project. That project was the writing of the history of the English nation as a series of journeys.⁴⁰ This history consisted of a cluster of narratives. Taken together these narratives constituted a cultural schema, a meta-history of national destiny, within which the colonisation of the New World was written as a venture both right and virtuous. I use the word narrative quite literally in this context, for the Renaissance rhetoric of colonial enterprise was a rhetoric of stories: heroic tales of travel that both illustrated the benefits of planting in foreign lands and created the historical context within which the discovery of the New-found lands took place.

Consider, for example, Edward Hayes' report. As a preface to his account of Gilbert's voyage, Hayes presents a lengthy discourse justifying English schemes to colonise North America.

⁴⁰ Central to this writing of English history was, of course, the Hakluyts. *The Principal Navigations: Voyages Traffiques and Discoveries of the English nation* was, quite consciously, an exercise in recovering a lost history of navigation and deploying it to both justify and stimulate the overseas ambitions of England's merchants and gentry (particularly with a view to competing with hated Spaniards). Richard Helgerson, in *Forms of Nationhood* (1992) argues that Hakluyt's history of voyages was not written as a history of the discovery of the New World; rather, it was "a compilation charting the English diaspora through time and space". (1992, 55) The Hakluyts were, therefore, "uninterested in the natural history and humanity of the New World ... and accorded 1492 little significance". (1992, 57)

... the English nation onely hath right unto these countreys of America from the cape of Florida Northward by privilege of first discovery, unto which Cabot was authorised by regall authority, and set forth by the expense of our famous king Henry the seventh: which right also seemth strongly defended on our behalf by the powerful hand of almighty God, withstanding the enterprises of other nations: it may greatly incourage us upon so just a ground, as is our right, and upon so sacred an intent, as to plant religion (our right and intent being meet foundations for the same) to prosecute effectually the full possession of those so ample and pleasant countreys appertaining unto the crown of England: the same (as to be conjectured by infallible arguments of the worlds end approaching) being now arrived unto the time by God prescribed of their vocation, if ever their calling unto the knowledge of God may be expected. Which also is very probable by the revolution and course of Gods word and religion, which from the beginning hath moved from the East, towards, & last unto the West, where it is like to end, unlesse the same begin againe where it did in the East, which were to expect a world alike again. But we are assured of the contrary by the prophesie of Christ, whereby we gather, that after his word preached thorowot the world shalbe the end. And as the Gospel when descended Westward began in the South, and afterward spread into the North of Europe; even so, as the same hath begunne in the South countreys of America, no less hope may be gathered that it will also spread to the North. (Quinn 1979, 25)

In this passage Hayes locates Gilbert's voyage within two histories: one quite familiar, the other quite strange.

The first history Hayes describes is the history of the discovery of the Americas. Englishmen, he argues, have rightful dominion over lands north of Cape Florida because an agent of the English King first saw these lands. John Dee, scholar, mystic and visionary of the English Empire, had made a similar argument some years earlier. Upon his map of the North Atlantic, drawn in 1590, he wrote a

brief remembrance of sundry foreign Regions, discovered inhabited and partly Conquered by the Subjects of this Brytish Monarchie: And so the lawfull Title of our Sovaigne Lady Queen Elizabeth for the due Clayme and just recovery of the same disclosed. Which (in effect) is a Title Royall to all the Coasts and Islands, beginning at or about Terra Florida, alongst here unto Atlantis, going Northerly, and then to all the most Northern Islands, great and small ... (Quinn 1979, 201)

Curiously, John Cabot does not appear in Dee's history of discovery. Almost everyone else does. It begins circa 560 with the voyage of "Brandan, the learned man", who "discovered much of the western parts: but chiefly Islands" and concludes with the Arctic explorations of Martin Frobisher in 1576, during which he discovered the "Islands, and Broken land Easterly, and somewhat to the Sowth of Labrador". New-found land, according to Dee, was discovered in 1484 by "Mr. Robert Thorn his father, and Mr Eliot of Bristow".

This is a history we moderns can understand quite well. It is a history of discovery: of journeys of vision and possession inscribed on the emergent geography of the Americas, whereby, even as this geography is written it is inscribed as a chart of a continent claimed in the very act of realising its existence. It is, in Carter's terms, an imperialist history: a history which traces the course of past voyages, those of Brendan, Madoc and Thorne, onto contemporary imaginings of global geography so as that they may, retrospectively, become the story of the triumphal expansion of the English nation.

Unlike that of Cabot some ninety years earlier, Gilbert's voyage westward was then written in the idiom of national destiny. More practically, the rhetoric of English colonial enterprise at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth century was informed by prevailing sense of national crisis. According to the advocates of plantation Britain was an island in decline. Its resources were exhausted: the "salt of the earth" was "spent", "tinne, leade and coale-mines" began "to fail", and the woods were

“wasted” (Vaughan 1626, 4-5). It was also over-populated. Scotland, observed Sir William Mackenzie, “doth ... overswarmed with people” (Vaughan 1623, 2) and England, in the words of Master John Hawkins, “is pestered nowe and chokt for want of ground”. (Peckham 1583, i) “Truly,” remarks sagacious merchant Enrubie to the querulous farmer Respire, “it is a thing almost incredible to relate and intolerable to behold what a number in every town and city, yea, in every parish and village, do abound, which for want of commodious and ordinary places to dwell in do build up cottages by the highwasie and thrust their heads into every corner ...” (Eburne 1624, 9)

With neither room to live or work to do the people of this crowded and impoverished land were suffering a moral decline that mirrored the decay of their nation. “Idleness,” in particular, was considered to be an “evil disease of this land”. Lecturing Respire, Enrubie identifies idleness to be the mother of a whole family of evils: “filching and stealing, robbery and cozenage, adultery and incest, fornication and all kinds of wantonness and uncleanness, beggary and roguery, profaneness and idolatry, and a number more that on the sudden I cannot call to mind and with which this land of ours is defiled and filled, be none other, for the most part, than the fruits and offspring, the brood and increase of idleness, which alone taken away and weeded out these all would fall away and vanish with her”. (Eburne 1624, 11)

It was only through “navigation” that the realm would be revitalised. To the promoters of overseas enterprise the discovery, exploration, and possession of this New World was undertaken as an adventure of national renewal. Peckham, for one, described the benefits of westward exploration at some length:

... it [navigation] will proove a generall benefite unto our Country, that through this occasion, not onely a greate number of men which doo nowe live ydlely at home, and are burdenous, chargable and unprofitable to the Realm, shall heereby be sette on worke, but also children of 12. or 14.

Yeeres of age or under, may bee kept from ydlenes, in making of a thousand kindes of trifeling thinges, which will be good Marchandize for that Country. And moreover, our ydle women (which the Realm may well spare) shal also bee implied on plucking, drying and sorting of Feathers, in pulling, beating and working of Hempe, and in gathering of Cotton, and dyvers thing right necessary for dying. All which thinges are to bee found in those Countries most plentifully. And the men may imploy themselves in draging for Pearle, working for Mynes, and in matters of husbandry, and likewise in hunting the whale for traine, and making Caskes to put the same in: besides in fishing for Codde, Salmon and Herring, drying, salting, and barrelling the same, and felling of Trees, hewing and sawing of them, and such like woorke, meete for those persons as are no men of arte or science. (1583, 50)

Peckham also still kept faith with Gilbert's dream of finding a "passage by Grande bay, into the South sea ... leading to Cataia, the Moluccos and Spiceries, whereby may ensue as general a benefit to the Realme or greater, then yet hath beene spoken off ..." (1583, 50) In short, "trade, traficke, and planting in America" was recommended "as an action tending to the lawful enlargement of her Majesties dominions, commodious to the whole Realme in general". (1583, 43)

Hayes' preamble to his account of Gilbert's voyage westward does not, however, simply locate this voyage within a meta-narrative of discovery written as a project of national destiny. For Hayes the peaceful possession of the Americas by Christian kingdoms was also an episode in the history of the world, a history that would conclude once the Gospel had been preached to all the peoples of the globe. This history possessed a certain geographic logic for, as Hayes writes, "the Gospel when descended Westward began in the South, and afterward spread into the North of Europe; even so, as the same hath begunne in the South conutryes of America, no less hope may be gathered

that it will also spread to the North.” And once the Gospel had come to the North of the Americas Christ’s prophecy would be fulfilled and the world would come to an end.⁴¹

To the modern reader this history seems quite strange. It seems strange in a couple of ways. Most obviously, there is something a little curious about advocating a colonial venture that will not only benefit the nation and enrich the “forward man” who undertakes such an enterprise, but also hasten the end of the world. More profoundly, this apocalyptic prediction reveals a conception of history and the historical subject that is quite alien to post-enlightenment narratives of exploration and conquest. In Hayes’ story of the discovery of Americas, the navigators and adventures that sailed across the Atlantic to find a New World were not writing history; rather, they were enacting a historical narrative that had already been written.

To discover was not, in essence, to find something new and wonderful; rather, it was, in the words of Wilcomb Washburn, the “uncovering of a land that was hidden to us but known to exist”. (1968, 12) Certainly, this was the case with Humphrey Gilbert who, as previously mentioned, was convinced that the Americas had been known in classical times: citing the discourses of Plato and Philo (“the famous Jew”) who described how the continent of Atlantis had been inhabited “in ancient tyme by them of Europe” and the discovery “by the Spainardes, in the Gold Mynes of America, of America, certaine peeces of Money, ingraved with the Image of Augustus Ceasar” (Quinn 1979, 7) as evidence in support of his convictions.

⁴¹ Hayes was not alone in expounding this theory of world history. In a *Plain pathway to plantations* Richard Eburne, through his spokesman the merchant Enrubie, argued that “God desireth and willeth His name, His truth and Gospel by us to be published in those heathen and barbarian lands” and that “their conversion must be before the end of the world can be. For my own part, I am persuaded that God will instantly have them, either by us, or by others if we will not, called to the knowledge of His truth and turned darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that so the world of our Saviour may be fully fulfilled, who (Matt 24:14) hath fortold us that the Gospel, before the end shall come, must be preached throughout the whole world”. (1624, 6)

Not only had the land discovered already been described and indeed occupied by the Greeks and Romans; the voyage of discovery itself was, in a very real sense, a story that had already been inscribed as Biblical and Classical history. The journey of the Israelites to the Promised Land was a particularly popular parable of imperial enterprise. For George Peckham, this was the story of a people who “God chose out of the multitude”. To these people “hee made a grant to inherite the Land of Canaan, called the Land of Promise, with al the other rich and fertile Countryes adjoyning therunto.” Lead by Joshua and then Juda the Israelites set about claiming what was rightfully theirs. They “vanquished many Gentiles, Idolaters, and adversaries ... whose landes he caused Gods people to possess and inherite.” (1583, 45)

For Richard Eburne the stories of the Old Testament provided an answer to any practical objection that may have been raised against the settlement of the New World. If the credulous Respire complained that Americas were “wild and rude” with “no towns, no houses, no buildings,” the wise Enrubie replied that

Men must not look still, in such a case, to come to a land inhabited and to find ready to their hands, as in Israel in Canaan, great and goodly cities which they builded not; houses full of all manner of store which they filled not; well digged which they digged not; vineyards and orchards which they planted not, as Moses speaketh. (Deut. 6:10) (1624, 19)

And when the farmer questioned how men should find shelter until their houses were built, the merchant goes back to the Bible to speak of tents.

They may and must for a time dwell in tents ... So dwelled all Israel in the wilderness full forty years, as you may find (Lev. 23:42 and Num 14:33,34). Yea, was not God Himself content to dwell in a tent in the midst of Israel till the days of David and reign of Solomon, who found that favour in His eyes that he might build Him a house. (1624, 20)

On one level Bible stories served simply to legitimise the possession of other people's territory. It was, after all, both morally and legally suspect to claim dominion over lands that were obviously already occupied. If, however, the natives of these lands were heathens then planting would become justified as an act of divine history in which the adventurer becomes as Moses or Joshua: an agent of Godly will whose earthy mission is to increase the heavenly dominion.

On another level, however, Biblical narratives of conquest and conversion were a template upon which westward voyages of discovery could be inscribed as historical events. The way in which Newfoundland was described by the authors of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century may, therefore, only be understood in the context of these two related narrational projects: the first being the revival of the English nation through imperial expansion, the second being the enactment of history as it was written in the Bible and realized in classical knowledge.

Their particulars too tedious to relate, all good meate

As previously mentioned the first English man to write of his travels to Newfoundland was Anthony Parkhurst. Parkhurst was a Bristol merchant who, between 1575 and 1578, sent ships to the Newfoundland fishery. On four occasions he joined his fishers and spent the summer exploring the bays and coves of the east coast of the Island. On the basis of these explorations he wrote two letters describing the geography and the resources of Newfoundland, the first to Edward Dyer and the second to Richard Hakluyt the elder.

The Newfoundland that Parkhurst describes in these letters was a rich and fertile land. "I have seen," Parkhurst writes,

in sundry places sown Wheate, Barlie, Rie, Oates, Beanes, Pease and seedes of herbes, kernals, Plumstones, nuts, all which have prospered in England. The contrey yeeldeth many good trees of fruit, as Filberds in some places, but in all places Cherie trees, and a kind of Pearetree meet to graffe on. As for Roses, they are as common as brambles here: Strawberies, Dewberies, and Raspis, as common as grass. The timber is most Firre, yet plentie of Pineapple trees; fewe of these two kinds meete to maste a ship of three score and ten ... There are also Okes & thornes, there is in all the countrey plentie of Birch and Alder, which be the meetest wood for cole, and also willow, which will serve for many other purposes. (1578, 8)

In the “wood of firre” and upon fields of “good grass” lived all manner of useful animals. There were “Beares every where, so that you may kill of them as oft as you list: their flesh is as good as young beefe, and hardly you may know one from the other if it be poudred two days.” “Of otters” they took “great store”. There were “Sea Guls, Murres, Duckes, wild Geese, and many other kind of birdes store, too long too write”. (1578, 9) The seas around the island were blessed with an abundance of fish and shellfish.

[T]ouching the kindes of Fish besides Cod, there are Herrings, Salmons, Thornebacke, Plase, or rather we should call them Flounders. Dog fish, and another most excellent of taste call of us Cat, Oisters and Muskle, in which I have found pearles above 40. in one Muskle. (1578, 8)

Parkhurst’s description of Newfoundland is, in many ways, typical of the time. Hayes complained of the “extraordinary cold” (Quinn 1979, 33) but remarked that “Nature hath recomenced that only defect and incommoditie ... by many benefits.” (Quinn 1979, 34) He goes on to describe the various commodities of Newfoundland, first listing the fresh water fish (“Trouts, Salmons and other fish unknown to us”), then the salt water fish (“Cod”, an “abundance of Whales” and “Herring the largest that have been heard of”), then birds of the air (“Partridges most plentiful larger then ours, gray

and white of colour and rough footed like doves” as well as “blackbird, linnets, canary birds, and other very small birds”) and the animals of field and forest (“Beasts of sundry kindes, red deare, buffles or a beast, as it seemeth be the tract & foote very large in the maner of an oxen”). (Quinn 1979, 34) The soil, he admits, “is not deep of earth, yet it brings roses “passing sweet, like unto our muske roses in forme, raspases,” and “a berry which we call Hurts, good and wholesome to eat.” (Quinn 1979, 34) The mountains “generally make shew of mineral substance: Iron very common, lead, and somewhere copper” and Hayes would “not avere of richer metals”. (Quinn 1979, 34-5)

Even the long-suffering Richard Clerk, castaway upon some unknown shore of the Island, could not help but remark on the qualities of the country.

There were of sorts of berries plentie, & as goodly a Country as ever I saw: we found a very faire plaine Champion ground that a man might see very farre every way: by the Sea side was here and there a little wood with goodly trees as good as I ever saw any in Norway, able to mast any shippe, of pyne trees, spruce trees, firre, and very great birch trees. (Quinn 1979, 43)

Only the unfortunate Stephen Parmenius was less than enthusiastic about the qualities of Newfoundland. In a letter to Richard Hakluyt the younger he wrote:

... what shall I say, my good Hakluyt, when I see nothing but a very wilderness? ... the whole land is full of hilles and woodes. The trees for the most part are Pynes and of them some are very olde, and some young: a great part of them fallen by reason of their age, doth so hynder the sighte of the Lande, and stoppe the way of those that seeke to travell, that they can goe no whither. (Quinn 1979, 22)

He does allow, however,

... that the nature of the soil is fitte for corne: for I founde certayne blades the eares in a manner bearded, so it appeareth that by manuring and sowing, they may easilie bee farmed for the use of man: here are in the woodes

bushe berries, or rather strawe berries growing up like trees, of great sweetnesse. (Quinn 1979, 22)

In short, to paraphrase Evelyn Page, the description of Newfoundland in the sixteenth century was informed by a “single concept of nature that prevail[ed] over all others, that of usefulness”. “Nature” was considered “to be the provider of men in the cosmic scheme” (1973, 201) and, accordingly, “all creatures were made for man, subjected to his government and appointed for his use”. (Thomas 1983, 18-19) Hayes, for example, reflecting on the wealth of animals in Newfoundland writes:

We could not observe the hundredth part of creatures in those uninhabited lands: but these mention may induce us to glorifie the magnificent God, who hath superabundantly replenished the earth with creatures serving for the use of man, though man has not used a fifth part of same, which the more doth aggravate the fault and foolish slouth in many of our nation, chusing rather to live indirectly, and very miserably to live & die within this realme pestered with inhabitants, then to adventure as becommeth men, to obtaine an habitation in those remote lands, in which Nature very prodigally doth minister unto men’s endeavours, and for art to work upon. (Quinn 1979, 34)

Similarly, Richard Whitbourne describes the guileless great auk as a gift of the creator:

These are Penguins are as bigge as Geese, and flye not, for they have but a little short wing, and they multiplie so infintely, upon a certaine flat Island, that men driue them from thence upon a boord; into their boats by hundreds at a time; as if God had made the innocency of so poore a creature, to become such an admirable instrument for the sustentation of man. (1620, 9)

The philosophical basis for this conception of nature was, Keith Thomas tells us, the biblical account of creation. The Garden of Eden, argued Tudor theologians,

was a paradise prepared for man in which Adam had God-given dominion over all living things (Genesis i.28) At first man and beast had cohabited peacefully. The humans were probably not carnivorous and the animals

were tame. But with the Fall the relationship changed. By rebelling against God, man forfeited his easy dominance over other species. The earth degenerated Thorns and thistles grew up where there had been only fruits and flowers. (Genesis iii, 18). The soil became stony and less fertile, making arduous labour necessary for its cultivation. There appeared fleas, gnats and other odious pests. Many animals cast of the yoke, becoming fierce, warring with each other and attack men. Even domestic animals had now to be coerced into submission. (1983, 17-18)

Thus rendered, the story of Genesis created a conceptual geography that distinguished between two places: the garden and the wilderness. The garden was an Eden-like country, where the fruits of nature yielded themselves to man much as they had done at time of creation. The wilderness, in contrast, was a barren land that gave of itself grudgingly if at all.

Parmenius thought Newfoundland to be a wilderness: a barren land of rocky hills and rotting trees. He was, however, the exception. The other English adventurers all described the island as an Eden: a place where roses grew instead of brambles, where stupid flightless birds walked willingly to their death, where fish “commeth upon the shore” and where the soil was “so fruitful” that the “Summer naturally produceth out of the fruitful wombe of the earth, without the labour of man’s hand, great plenty of greene Pease and Fitches, faire and round.” (Whitbourne 1620, 6) Indeed, there was, according to Hayes, a place at St. John’s that the English merchants called “the Garden” where it which it was their custom to walk upon a Sunday morning. This “garden” was “nothing ... more then Nature it selfe without art: who confusedly brought foorth roses abundantly, wilde, but odoriferous, and to the sense very comfortable. Also the like plentie of raspis berries, which does grow in every place.” (1589, 32)

As in Eden, the wild beasts of Newfoundland were of a gentle and tractable nature, knowing no fear of man. Whitbourne, for example, tells of how in “the yeere 1615. It

was well knowne to 48 persons of” his “company, and divers other men, that severall times, the Wolves and beasts of the Country came downe neere them to the Sea-side, where they were labouring about their Fish, howling and making a noise: so each time my Mastiffe-dogge went unto them ... the one began to fawn and play with the other, and so went together into the Woods, and continued with them, every of these times, nine or ten days, and did return unto us without any hurt.” (1620, 9) “The beares” were also “harmeles” (Mason 1620, 8) and the foxes were so bold as to “take away our flesh before” men’s “faces within less than a halfe a paire of but length, where four and twenty people stood persons were turning of drie fish, and two dogs in sight.” (Parkhurst 1578, 9) Even squid were subject to the will of man. “These be fishes,” writes Parkhurst, “which ... I say, doe come on shore when I commaund them in the name of the 5. Ports, and conjure them by such like words.” (Quinn 1979, 8)

This utilitarian conception of nature realized in the images of the garden and the wilderness constituted the limits of the inscription of Newfoundland in the Renaissance. The whole country, its climate, its geography, its flora and its fauna were described solely in terms of whether or not it was useful or pleasing to man. The reader is told that there is “pleantie of Birch and Alder, which be the meetest wood for cole,” that the “berry which we call Hurts” is “good and wholesome to eat” and that the flesh of the bear is as good as young beef. And so it goes, all things written as they are good to the taste, sweet to the nose, tuneful to the ear or profitable if sold in the market place.

What is almost wholly absent from these accounts is any description of the appearance of things. We are provided with great lists of useful flora and fauna yet we are never told how these things look, only how they taste or smell. This is all the more curious when we are told of something new, something unknown in Europe. Hayes, for example, writes of “Cherrie trees bearing fruit no bigger than a small pease. Also peare trees, but fruitless” and “other trees of some sort unknown to us” (Quinn 1979, 34) and

leaves it at that. Similarly, in a passage used as the title for this section, John Mason tells of “Duckes of divers sorts and abundance, some whereof rare and not to be found in Europe, Their particulars too tedious to relate, all good meate.” (1620, 8)

It would wrong, however, to say that sight was unimportant in Tudor accounts of voyages to the New-found lands. Richard Clerk, for example, tells of how he and his ragged company “found a very faire plaine Champion group that a man might see very farre every way.” (Quinn 1979, 43) In a similar vein, Stephen Parmenius complains that the tangle of trees around St. John’s “doth so hynder the sighte of Lande, and stoppe the way of those who seeke to travel”. (Quinn 1979, 22) He even went so far as to suggest to Gilbert “set the woods a fire, that so we might have space and entrance to take view of the Countrey”. (1583, 22) The admiral demurred, mindful of “the great inconvenience that might thereof insue: for it was reported and confirmed by verie credible persons that when the like happened by chance in another Port, the fish never came to the place about it, for the space of 7. Whole yeere after, by reason of the waters made bytter by the turpentyne, and rosen of the trees, which ranne into the ryvers upon the firing of them.” (1583, 22)

Indeed, contrary to the assertions of some scholars, who would have it that the Renaissance authors of the Americas were little concerned with the discrimination between fact and fiction, the Tudor narration of the new-found lands evinced a considerable concern with the reliability of reportage, and the degree to which the author’s representation of reality was founded upon first-hand experience of travel to the New World. Richard Whitbourne, for one, introduces *his Discourse and discovery of New-found-land* with a rather lengthy account of his own travels to the island.

And first, for mine owne poor estate and condition, it is well knowne, that my breeding and course of life hath been such, as that I have long time set many people on worke, and spend most of my dayes in travell, especially in

Merchandizing, and Sea-voyages. I have been often in France, Spaine, Italy, Portugall, Savoy, Denmarke, Norway, Spruceland, the Canaries, and Soris Islands: and for the *New-found-land*, it is almost so familiarly knowne to me as my owne Country. (1620, B3)

Whitbourne goes on to tell of each journey he has made to Newfoundland, including “a Voyage to the Country about 36. Yeeres since” when “Sir Humfrey Gilbert, a Devonshire Knight, came thither with two good Ships and a Pinnance, and brought with him a large Patent, from the late most renowned Queen Harbour of S. John’s, whereof I was an eye-witnesse.” (1620, B4)

John Mason is similarly concerned with ensuring his reader that his *Brief Discourse of the New-found-land* is a truthful description of the island based upon sober first-hand experience rather than fanciful conjecture.

... there be sundrie relations of the New-found-land and the commodities thereof. Some to much extolling it, some too much debasing it, preferring the temperature of the aire thereof before ours, the hopes of the commodities thereof without paines and mireralles, as if they were apparent ... with other narrations dissenting from the trueth, the which although done out of a good affection, yet had they better been undone. I have therefore (gentle Reader) hoping of their favourable consideration, set downe in few and plaine tearmes out of that experience I have gained in three yeares and seventh monthes residence there, the trueth ... (1620, 4)

This concern with the truth as a representation based upon experience was exhibited even in the more fanciful discourses penned by those who had never been to the New-found lands. The *Golden Fleece* (1626) by the Welsh courtier William Vaughan⁴² is an

⁴² William Vaughan was yet another promoter of overseas plantation that was attached to the court of James I. To realise his dreams of expansion he bough a large piece of the Avalon Peninsula in 1616, which he called Cambriol and hoped to turn into a second Wales. Some men were landed at Renewes in 1617, but despite the efforts of his governor, Richard Whitbourne, Vaughan’s colony was not a success and by 1619 all the citizens of Cambriol had left. It seems that Vaughan never visited Newfoundland. (*Dictionary of Newfoundland Bibliography* 1990, 346)

ornate tract concerning the benefits of planting in the Americas written as a dialogue between Orphus Junior (clearly the author) and the mighty Apollo (also known as James I). The whole argument is clothed in an almost impenetrable classicism, whereby a basket load of codfish are likened to the Golden Fleece and a merchant adventurer becomes a later day Odysseus.

Within this unlikely format, however, Vaughan takes pains to assure the reader that his rather fishy Golden Fleece is not simply the product of his imagination, but a place realized in the experience of reliable travellers. In the third chapter of the third part of Vaughan's tract Apollo calls an "assembly of the company of the plantation". This fictional grouping of real people includes various merchants and navigators who in the preceding decades had travelled to the New-found lands. John Mason is amongst this company. Apollo "willed Captain Mason to break the Ice, in respect he had beene sixe years acquainted with ice and frosts at Cupert Cove,⁴³ one of the coldest places of those Countries, and boldly without partiality, feare, or sinister regard, to disclose the secrets of the Soile, the benefits of the Land, and whether this Plantation were such as inestimable jewell as Orpheus Junior has delivered ..." (1626, 21) What follows is a verbatim transcript of Mason's own, much less elaborate, discourse concerning the qualities of the New-found lands.

It was not, then, that visual experience was wholly disregarded by those who wrote of Newfoundland in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries. A true and accurate knowledge of Newfoundland and its commodities could clearly only be based upon the experience of someone who had travelled to Newfoundland, and who, moreover, was sufficiently sober and honest in his opinions so as that his report could be assumed to be

⁴³ "Cupert Cove" is Cupid's Cove on the southern shore of the Avalon Peninsula. In 1610 John Guy established an English colony at Cupid's Cove. John Mason was appointed as the governor of the colony in 1615 and likely lived there more or less continuously until 1619. He remained the governor until 1621. The colony lasted another eleven years. (Rowe 1980, 75-82)

a reflection of that experience rather than a fiction born of some narrational agenda. It was, rather, that visual experience had no place in the actual writing of the New World. In other words, it was also important for the author to ensure his reader that he had indeed crossed the ocean and had looked upon (as well as smelled, tasted and heard) the Americas. It was not, however, important for the author to actually write of what he saw.

It is this absence of a description written from the point of view of the traveller that we, as late modern readers of stories of adventure and exploration, find so disorienting. Accustomed as we are to travel being narrated as a series of visual experiences, we struggle to come to terms with adventurers who write nothing (or very little) about what they saw whilst travelling in strange and foreign lands.

Now there are a couple of ways of dealing with the problem of description (or lack thereof) in the Tudor discourses concerning Newfoundland.

The first way we have already discussed. We could, following Marchitello and many others, argue that the likes of Hayes, Gilbert, Parkhurst and Mason did not write of what they saw because their vision was circumscribed by what Douglas McManis describes as “a vague Elizabethan image of the New World which combined myth and fact into a utilitarian vision of an earthly paradise.” (1972, 49) Here again we have couple of choices as to how best to represent this failure of vision. On the one hand, Page and Paine (1995) argue that the Tudor explorers were so carried away by their mythic imaginings and utilitarian ethos that they simply did not see the landscape through which they travelled and so were unable to discern fact from fiction. On the other hand, Marchitello argues that the adventurers of the sixteenth century did indeed see other lands and people, but their will to describe what they saw was repressed, often violently, by narratives of national destiny and biblical prophecy.

At the heart of both these lines of argument is a basic assumption: that description is somehow natural and that an absence of description is the result of the oppressive effects of culture (or narration). This assumption leads to some rather curious reading of the history of the writings of the Americas. Marchitello's interpretation of Raleigh's account of Guyana is a case in point. The adventurer begins by admiring the country in a manner not dissimilar to a modern description of exotic lands. He writes of "hills raised here and there over valleys, the river winding into diverse branches, the plains adjoining without bush or stubble, all fair green grass" and "birds towards evening singing on every tree with a thousand several tunes" and "cranes and herons of white crimson, and carnation perching in the river's side". Imposing a chronological reading of Raleigh's discourse of discovery, Marchitello assumes that this passage somehow represents the author's unmediated experience of the other. It is only when Raleigh extends his musings to consider the possible presence of gold and silver does culture, in the form of acquisitive narratives of imperial expansion, intrude upon the experience of the author, blinding him to the wonderful scene before him.

There are several things that are wrong with this interpretation. For one thing, one could argue that the picturesque vision of winding rivers and singing birds owes much to the biblical narrative of Genesis and the Tudor imagining of the New World as an Eden. If this is true, then what is being called description is as much informed by the cultural templates of Renaissance England as what is being called narration. It also plays a rather curious trick by trying to impose a diachronic model on an essentially synchronic text. Raleigh himself is quite happy to include his appreciation of the landscape and his musings about the presence of gold in the same paragraph. There is no theoretical legitimacy to assume that these two passages are historically separated save for our own notion that description must somehow precede and be opposed to acquisitive desire.

More profoundly, the error that enables both these eccentricities of interpretation is the naturalisation of the aesthetics of late modern travel writing. To reprise the argument of Paul Carter, just as historians have tended to map journeys of long ago adventurers onto modern global geographies, so those reading the narratives of Tudor adventurers have tended to locate their travels within spectacular and marvellous landscapes. The Elizabethan authors' failure to write of these landscapes can, therefore, only be appreciated as just that: a failure of vision, a lack of ability to see what is simply and manifestly before them. Again, the question of difference becomes a question of insufficiency. Just as Cabot did not possess the instruments to accurately chart his way across the Atlantic, so the adventurers of the sixteenth century either did not possess the ability to see the New World around them or this ability was circumscribed by cultural constructions of space and history.

Following Carter, what I would like to do is to turn the problem of difference around so as to suggest another approach to the understanding of the writings of the Renaissance explorers. Rather than wondering why these men did not write of the visual experience of the Americas, we could ask why do we think it strange that they did not? In reversing the problem of difference in this manner a different historical question emerges: how and under what historical and cultural circumstance did the men who travelled to the New-found lands begin to write of what they saw in the course of their travels?

It is to this question that we will now turn.

Chapter Three

The Transit of Venus: Empiricism and the Monocular Gaze

Précis

This chapter tells a story. The story is about the universe, and the learned people who study the universe. Our particular story takes place in 1761. In this year scholars from the capitals of Europe left their homes and voyaged across the sea to faraway lands. Once in these faraway lands these scholars looked to the sky hoping to see the planet Venus pass across the face of the sun. The hero of our story is named John Winthrop. John Winthrop was a rich man from Boston, who decided that he too wanted to observe the transit of Venus. So he sailed to Newfoundland, and, standing on the top of a hill, looked across the grey Atlantic towards the dawning of the day.

In telling the story of John Winthrop and the transit of Venus we are also telling another story. This is the story of the ways in which European scholars know the world, and how these ways of knowing changed during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The hero of this story is the observer, the man of science, who is able to look upon things in such a way as to reveal the Godly order that underlies the chaos of appearances. The story of observer is told as a voyage of discovery. This is real voyage: a voyage aboard ships, across seas, and to exotic lands. This is also an imaginary voyage, one in which the scholar quits the traditions of classical learning, leaves the library, closing the tomes of ancient wisdom, and travels out into the world, there to read from the book of nature.

Like any traveller's tale these stories begin closer to home. The empirical investigation of the transit of Venus starts with a single ray of light shining into a shuttered room of a parsonage in Hoole, Lancashire.

In a darkened room

The year was 1639. In the parsonage of Hoole there lived the Reverend Jeremiah Horrocks. The parson was a young man, just twenty years of age. He had been born in the village of Toxteth, near Liverpool, and had studied Latin at Cambridge University, before being called to minister to the farmers of the Ribble Valley.⁴⁴

Towards the end of October the Reverend Horrocks did a most peculiar thing.⁴⁵ On a piece of paper he drew a circle of almost six inches diameter. He divided the circumference of the circle into three hundred and sixty degrees and the diameter into sixty equal parts. He then fixed this paper to the wall of narrow chamber within the parsonage.

Come the 23rd of the month he retired to this little room and closed all the windows against the light, leaving a tiny aperture through which shone the rays of the sun. Against this aperture he had placed a telescope, and he adjusted this telescope so that the image of the sun perfectly filled the circle he had drawn.

He then waited, watching the image of the sun reflected on the piece of paper. He waited most of the 23rd, and the whole of the 24th, interrupting his vigil only when called

⁴⁴ A biography of the short life of Jeremiah Horrocks (or Horrox) has been written by A. B. Whetton's as an introduction to Horrocks' description of the transit of Venus reprinted under the title *The transit of Venus across the sun: a translation of the celebrated discourse thereupon, by Rev. Jeremiah Horrox, Curate of Hoole (1639) near Preston; to which is prefixed a memoir of his life and labours* (London, 1859).

⁴⁵ The description of Horrocks' observation is based upon the account written by the man himself, translated and reprinted in 1859 (pages 117-27).

away “by business of the highest importance which, for these ornamental pursuits, I could not with propriety neglect”. (1859, 123)

He watched and waited. Clouds drifted across the sun. Then in late in the afternoon of the 24th of October something happened. “About fifteen minutes past three in the afternoon, when I was again at liberty to continue my labours, the clouds, as if by divine interposition, were entirely dispersed, and I was once more invited to the grateful task of repeating my observations. I then beheld a most agreeable spectacle, the object of my most sanguine wishes, a spot of unusual magnitude and of a perfectly circular shape, which had already entered the suns disc on the left.” (1859, 124)

The spot of unusual magnitude the Reverend Horrocks took to be the planet Venus. Faraway in black space, how far away the Reverend did not know, Venus was passing between the sun and the earth. In a little room in the parsonage of Hoole this passage was seen reflected on a piece of paper.

With the circumference of the sun described in three hundred and sixty degrees, and its diameter in sixty equal units, the Reverend Horrocks was able to precisely plot the course of the planet. “I found,” he writes, “that the shadow of Venus at the aforesaid hour, namely fifteen minutes past three, had entered the Sun’s disc about $62^{\circ} 30'$, certainly between 60° and 65° , from the top towards the right.” Reflected through the lens of the telescope, he knew that the image he gazed upon mirrored the true path of Venus. “This was the appearance in the dark apartment; therefore out of doors beneath the open sky, according to the law of optics, the contrary would be the case, and Venus would be below the centre of the sun, distant $62^{\circ} 30'$ from the lower limb, or the nadir, as the Arabians term it.” (1859, 124-5)

For a half-hour, the parson of Hoole watched in wonder as a black spot moved across the six-inch image of the sun. Then, before the transit was complete, the sun disappeared below the horizon, and all was darkness.

In 1639 the Reverend Horrocks was alone in taking the measure of the transit of Venus. In expectation of the event he had written to his younger brother in Liverpool, and a draper named William Crabtree, who lived in Broughton near Manchester, inviting them to be present at this "Uranian Banquet". They duly enclosed themselves in darkened rooms and waited for the shadow of Venus to appear on the disc of the sun. (1859, 127-8)

The younger Horrocks saw nothing, the sky over Liverpool being overcast throughout the 24th. (1859, 131) Crabtree, it seemed, would be similarly ill starred, the sky being "very unfavourable, being obscured the greater part of the day with thick clouds". Then, perhaps fifteen minutes before the setting of the sun, the clouds suddenly cleared. The draper saw Venus against the sun. (1859, 128) He did nothing. "Rapt in contemplation, he stood for sometime motionless, scarcely trusting his own senses, through an excess of joy." (1859, 129) Such was Crabtree's ecstasy that he neglected "to observe very minutely either the distance itself, or the inclination of the planet". In his memoir, the Parson forgives his friend's inattention, for, he opines, "we astronomers have as it were a womanish disposition, and are overjoyed with trifles and such small matters as scarcely make an impression upon the susceptibility of others." (1859, 129)

On the continent there were but a handful of men who possessed the instruments and mathematical expertise required to join Horrocks in recording the transit of Venus. None did. Even if they had attempted the observation, most would have been frustrated, for the sun would have set over much of Europe before the eclipse had begun.

Indeed only in America would the entire continuance of the transit be visible. That this observation was possible only where there were none of sufficient learning to

observe struck the Reverend Horrocks as a cruel twist of fate. In verse he addresses the planet in the manner of a spurned courtier, delighting in the fleeting glance of his beloved mistress, bemoaning that she more fully attends to those who cannot know her charms, and dreaming of the day she once more appears before her worshipful servants.

Why beauteous Queen desert thy votaries here?
Ah! why from Europe hide that face divine,
Most meet to be admired? on distant climes
Why scatter riches? or such splendid sights
Why waste on those who cannot prize their value?
Where dost thou madly hasten? Oh! return:
Such barbarous lands can never duly hail
The purer brightness of thy virgin light.
Or rather here remain: secure from harm,
Thy bed we will strew with the fairest flowers;
Refresh thy frame, by labours seldom tired,
Too much oppressed; and let that gentle form
Recline in safety on the friendly couch.
But ah! thou fliest! And torn from civil life,
The savage grasp of wild untutored man
Holds thee imprisoned in its rude embrace.
Thou fliest, and we shall never see thee more,
While heaven unpitying scarcely would permit
The rich enjoyment of thy parting smile.
Oh! then farewell thou beauteous Queen! thy sway
May soften nations yet untamed, whose breasts
Bereft of native fury then shall learn
The milder virtues. We with anxious mind
Follow thy latest footsteps here, and far
As thought may carry us; my labours now
Bedeck the monument for future times
Which thou at parting left us. Thy return
Posterity shall witness; years must roll
Away, but then at length the splendid sight

Again shall greet our distant children's eyes. (1859, 135)

With the setting of the sun on the evening of the 24th of October, Jeremiah Horrocks knew well he would never again see Venus during the day. As it was he died only two years later. For many years after that Venus could only be seen from earth as the brightest of stars in the night sky.

Eighteen minutes and twenty-eight seconds

On the 22nd of May 1761 John Winthrop arrived in St. John's, Newfoundland. St. John's was at that time "little more than a considerable fishing settlement". The wooden warehouses of merchants crowded the shore by the harbour. Behind these ran a muddy track. Behind this muddy track a scattering of two or three hundred houses ascended a treeless slope. On a knoll overlooking the town and harbour were the earthen ramparts of Fort William. Behind Fort William stretched a wilderness of spruce forests and bogs, through which were cut a few rugged paths to neighbouring villages.

Perhaps a thousand people lived in St. John's all year round. In the spring of the year several more thousand arrived from England and Ireland. They came to fish, or to trade with the fishermen. Few stayed. Most returned home with the onset of the storms of autumn. They were a rough crowd these fishermen, much given to "debauchery and every kind of excess and vice". They gathered in crude taverns drinking dark rum and claret, eating boiled pork with peas and gravy, and gambling on cockfights.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ The account of St. John's in 1761 is mostly based upon on sections of C. Grant Head's *Eighteenth Century Newfoundland* (particularly pages 147-153) and Paul O'Neill's *The oldest city: the story of St. John's Newfoundland* (which due to its eccentric organisation and lack of index provides a fine survey of the drinking habits of the town's residents but little else). The physical description of St. John's is based on the observations of Hugh Palliser, governor of Newfoundland from 1764 to 1768, Edward Langham, a long suffering Anglican missionary, who lived in St. John's from 1752 to 1784 and Joseph Banks, a gentleman naturalist who visited St. John's in the spring and autumn of 1766. The quote regarding the poor character of (Irish) fishermen is Palliser's, who felt that Newfoundland was "crouded with Poor Idle and most disorderly People, who are neither good Fishermen nor Seamen". (Head 1974, 149) A bit of artistic licence has been taken with the passage about claret, gravy and cockfights. Cockfighting was indeed offered as an

All in St. John's was about cod. The people fished for cod. The merchants traded flour, rum and molasses for cod. The garrison at Fort William was there to protect the cod-fishery. Between the houses split and salted cod lay on flakes, drying in the summer sun. Cod guts were strewn on the ground and left to rot. Pigs, chickens and cows roamed freely, eating the offal, so that pork, eggs and milk all tasted of cod. The town was permeated with fish. Fish was the economy, the society, the politics, the taste and the very atmosphere of St. John's.⁴⁷

It was to this place that John Winthrop came in the spring of 1761. By then the ships would have arrived from Britain and New England. "Sack" ships carrying peas and Indian corn, sugar and butter, lumber and wrought iron, and fishing ships carrying lines, nets and poor men. The wharves would have been teeming with soldiers, fishermen, drunkards and merchant's clerks.

John Winthrop was, however, a different sort of visitor. For one thing he was a man of education and refinement.⁴⁸ He was the son of one of the foremost families of colonial America, and a direct descendant of John Winthrop, the first governor of the

entertainment at the appropriately named Game-cock Inn (previously the Ship Inn, St. John's most famous eighteenth century pub, visited by both Horatio Nelson and William Bligh), but it is likely the Game-cock did not exist before the beginning of the nineteenth century. The bill of fare described is actually that of the London Tavern in Ferryland on the Southern Shore, which offered "a Boiled Leg of Pork, Fowls, Lamb, Ducks, Puddings, Green Pease and other Vegetable, served up with Sauces and Graveys.. (O'Neill 1975, 517)

⁴⁷ The fishy filth of St. John's was described by Joseph Banks:

For dirt & filth of all Kinds St Johns may in my opinion Reign unrivaled as it Far Exceeds any Fishing town I ever saw in England here is no regular Street the houses being built in rows immediately adjoining to the Flakes Consequently no Pavement offals of Fish of all Kinds are strewd about The remains of The Irish mens chowder who you see making and skinning and gutting fish in Every Corner. As Every thing here smells of fish so You cannot get any thing that does not Taste of it hogs can scarce be Kept from it by any Care and When they have got it are by Far the Filthyest meat I Ever Met with Poultry of all Kinds Ducks geese Fowls & Turkies infinitely more Fishy than the Worst tame Duck That Ever was sold For a wild one in Lincolnshire The very Cows Eat the Fish offal & thus milk is Fishy This Last Particular indeed I have not met with myself but have been assur'd it is often the case. (1766, 147 [110-112])

⁴⁸ The brief biography of Winthrop is based upon the entry in volume XX of the *Dictionary of American Biography* (1936), pages 414-16.

Massachusetts colony. As a boy he attended Boston Latin School and Harvard University. And he was now, and had been since 1738, a professor of mathematics and natural philosophy at Harvard. The other and even more curious thing about Winthrop was that he had no interest in fish. He had not come to fish, to trade for fish, to administer the fishery, or minister to fishermen. Instead he had come to look at the sky.

John Winthrop liked looking at the sky. Of all the phenomena of nature it was the movement of heavenly bodies that most captured his imagination. In Boston he had looked at the sky through a telescope to observe sunspots (the first such observations made in North America), and to follow the passage of Mercury as it crossed between the sun and the earth. The dance of the heavens that so entranced Winthrop was choreographed to strict mathematical rhythms. A student of Newtonian physics and Kepler's laws of planetary motion, Winthrop looked to the sky to discover a clockwork universe, whose movements were regular and predictable.

It had been predicted that in 1761 this clockwork universe would turn so as that once again Venus could be seen to pass across the face of the sun. Boston afforded no view of this phenomenon, but the east coast of Newfoundland would. So Winthrop wrote a letter to Francis Bernard, the governor of Massachusetts, explaining the wonderful import of the transit of Venus. The governor, being "a man who seizes every opportunity for advancing the sciences", (Winthrop 1764, 279) made an appeal to the House of Representatives for the finance necessary to support an excursion to St. John's. "You must know," wrote the governor, "that this Phenomenon (which has been observed but once since the creation of the World) will, in all Probability, settle some Questions in Astronomy which may ultimately be very serviceable to Navigation: For which Purpose,

those Powers that are interested in Navigation, have thought it their Business to send Mathematicians to different Parts of the World to make their Observations.”⁴⁹

The governor’s entreaty worked. The house voted to support Winthrop’s expedition, and commanded Captain Saunders “master of the sloop in the province’s service” to convey the astronomer “with the apparatus and other necessities” to Newfoundland.

On the 9th of May Winthrop left Boston. In his company were two students, Williams and Rand, both of whom “had made good proficiency in mathematical studies,” and Moses Richards, the college carpenter. He also took with him “such astronomical instruments out of the college apparatus as were necessary”. These included “an excellent clock; Hadley’s octant with nonius divisions; a refracting telescope with wire at half right angles, for taking differences in right ascension; and nice reflecting telescope, adjusted by cross levels, and having vertical and horizontal wires, for taking correspondent altitudes”. (Winthrop 1764, 279)

On arriving in St. John’s Winthrop “met with a very kind reception, and all the assistance” he “could desire” by the commander of the garrison and Michael Gill, “the chief judge of the courts”. There being no house in St. John’s that afforded an unobstructed view of the eastern horizon, Winthrop and his students camped “on an eminence at some distance, from whence” he “could see the sun perfectly after his rising”. (1764, 280)

“Hither,” writes Winthrop, “we conveyed our instruments, and secured the clock to a pillar set in the ground under a tent. Near the tent, and within the call of the clock, we fixed two pillars firmly in the ground; one, to mount the refracting telescope on; the

⁴⁹ The Governor’s message was printed, along with an account of the observation of the transit, in John Winthrop’s “A relation of a voyage from Boston to Newfoundland, for the Observation of the Transit of Venus, June 6, 1761” (Boston: Edes and Gill, 1761). It is quoted in Woolf *The transits of Venus*, page 92.

other, which was above 8 feet high, for a style or gnomon, having at the top a plate of lead with a little hole for transmitting the Sun's rays; and we laid a horizontal platform to receive those rays. The platform we kept covered to defend it from the Sun and the weather: and examined its position every time we made use of it, by a very long level. On this we carefully drew a meridian line, by correspondent altitudes of the Sun, taken both by the reflector by the Sun's image of the platform." (1764, 280) They "repeated these operations every fair day, and many times a day; and continued them with an assiduity which the infinite swarms of insects, that were in possession of the hill, were not able to abate, tho' they persecuted us severely and without intermission, both by day and by night, with their venomous stings".⁵⁰

"Thus prepared," Winthrop and his companions "waited for the critical hour". (1764, 280) On the 6th of June that hour came. "The morning was serene and calm." Low cloud obscured the eastern horizon. Soon the sun rose above the cloud, and at eighteen minutes past four they "had the pleasure of seeing Venus on the Sun, though dimly at first". (1764, 280) Winthrop followed the transit of Venus through the reflecting telescope, measuring altitudes and azimuths at different points in its passage. One student wrote down the measurements as Winthrop called them out, while the other counted the clock. "As Venus began now to draw near the Sun's limb," writes Winthrop, "I prepared to observe her egress. The interior contact did not appear so perfectly instantaneous, as Dr. Halley's papers led me to expect. I was not certain of it until 4h47'21", though I doubted of it at 17". The exterior contact I judged to be at 5h5'49". (1764, 81) And that was that. The transit was over. The entire event lasted eighteen minutes and twenty-eight seconds.

⁵⁰ This quote is again from Winthrop's 1761 relation of a voyage to Newfoundland and is again quoted in Woolf, page 133.

John Winthrop remained in Newfoundland for another week, making further astronomical observations in attempt to fix the longitude of St. John's. On returning to Boston he published the results of his expedition as a pamphlet entitled "A relation of a voyage from Boston to Newfoundland, for the Observation of the Transit of Venus, June 6, 1761". His findings were also communicated to the Royal Society in London, and were eventually published in their *Philosophical Transactions* of 1764.

An exquisite entertainment to an astronomical taste

Imagine, if you will, that you were one of the people who thronged the waterfront of St. John's in June 1761. An Irish fisherman perhaps, pulling the backbone from a gutted codfish, or an English clerk drinking claret and playing cards at the Ship Inn. Imagine you looked up to the top of the hill and saw Winthrop and his students working away through the day and into the night: building, measuring, adjusting, and all the time gazing at the sky. How mad and mysterious they must have seemed, these prosperous and privileged New Englanders who had left their comfortable homes and travelled to some stinking fishing village in the North Atlantic, there to spend their days atop a hill erecting tents, fixing pillars, making a perfectly level platform and swatting mosquitoes. And all for what? All for a view of the morning sun and a few numbers written on bits of paper. Nothing more than that.

More curious still is that Winthrop was not alone in this eccentric endeavour. Others like him, rich educated men, men of society and standing, chose to quit their civilized existence and venture to faraway lands. There they would erect a telescope, set a clock nearby, and await the dawning of the 6th of June 1761. As the sun rose on that morning they, like Winthrop, gazed through their telescopes, watched the clock, and scribbled down measurements. Then they, like Winthrop, packed their things and

returned to the centres of learning, to Harvard University, or to the Royal Academy of Science in Paris, or to the Royal Society in London, bearing their precious notes which recorded, with as much precision as their instruments and elements made possible, the transit of Venus.

If Winthrop had been somewhat daring to voyage to Newfoundland, then some of his fellow astronomers were downright reckless. These were dangerous times to travel, what with storms, disease, and a war between Britain and France. The stories of the expeditions to observe the transit are, indeed, replete with misadventure.

In December 1760 the English surveyors Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon left Plymouth on a ship bound for the Indies. They made it as far as the English Channel, before being attacked by a French man-of-war. They returned to Plymouth in the company of eleven dead men, and only resumed their voyage when the Royal Society threatened to bring them and to court and prosecute them to the “utmost severity of the law”. (Woolf 1959, 90-2)

While Mason and Dixon were exchanging angry letters with Royal Society, the French astronomer Alexander Gui Pingré was sailing away from Calais. His course was set for the Isle of Rodrique in the Indian Ocean. He made it to Rodrique without incident, observed the transit, and was peacefully conducting a general survey of the island when an English ship sailed into the harbour, bombarded the settlement, and left its inhabitants stranded. They subsisted on rice, flour and the meat of turtles for a hundred days before being rescued. After an arduous journey by sea from Isle de France, and overland from Lisbon, a weary Pingré crossed the Pyrenees into France exactly “one year, three months, eighteen days, nineteen hours, and fifty three and a half minutes”⁵¹ since he quit his homeland. (Woolf 1959, 112-15)

⁵¹ The calculation is Pingré's. It is quoted in Woolf, page 115.

More remarkable still is the account of Pingré's countryman, Guillaume Le Gentil. Le Gentil was directed to observe the transit from Pondicherry on the west coast of India. He arrived at Isle de France to be told that Pondicherry was besieged by the English. After some dithering, Le Gentil decided to accompany the troops that were hoping to lift the siege. A violent storm blew the troopship off course and Le Gentil found himself becalmed off the coast of Africa. There he learned that Pondicherry had fallen. With the time of the transit approaching, Le Gentil desperately tried to make it back to Isle de France, but come the morning of the 6th of June he was still at sea. It was a perfect day. The sun shone in a cloudless sky. Le Gentil had a clear view of the transit, but standing on the pitching deck of a ship he could make no reliable measurements. (Woolf 1959, 126-30)

The astronomer decided to stay in the Indies and await the next transit due in 1769. This time he made it to Pondicherry and set up an observatory on the ruins of the French fort. Again the weather was fine, but come the critical hour a cloud passed before the sun. It passed away a half-hour later, but Le Gentil had, once again, failed to observe the transit of Venus. He followed the footsteps of Pingré across the Pyrenees and into France. He had been away more than eleven years. His family thought him dead. (Woolf 1959, 155-6)

Of course, to us, dramatic stories though these may be, there is nothing mysterious about what these men were doing. We are not fishermen or clerks living in eighteenth-century St. John's. We are educated people living at the turn of the twenty-first century. We have been raised on *National Geographic* and the great myths of scientific conquest. We are familiar with the image of the intellectual explorer. We know him as the man in the white coat bent over a microscope, or standing before a blackboard covered in formulae. We see him pictured deep in the jungle surrounded by sullen natives, or crouched beneath a desert sun brushing the sand from fossils. We have watched as he

descends the black depths of the ocean, or bounds across the grey surface of the moon.

We may not know precisely what he is doing, but we know him for what he is. He is the scientist: the man of knowledge, who through his efforts hopes to gather data that will provide a better, more accurate understanding of the world in which we live.

This is how we would understand the curious doings of Winthrop and his fellow astronomers. This is also how Winthrop understood himself. Winthrop's mission was to improve our knowledge of the universe. The peculiar scientific importance of the transit of Venus was summarised by Winthrop in a lecture given before Holden Chapel in 1769:

On account of their rarity alone, they [the transits of Venus] must afford an exquisite entertainment to astronomical taste. But this is not all. There is another circumstance that strongly recommends them. They furnish the only adequate means of solving a most difficult Problem, – that of determining the true distance of the Sun from the Earth. This has been the principal object of astronomical inquiry. Without this, we can never ascertain the true dimensions of the solar system and the several orbs of which it is composed, nor assign the magnitudes and densities of the Sun, the planets and comets; nor, of the consequence attain a just idea of the grandeur of the works of GOD.⁵²

To the layman, or at least to me, the ideas that inform this statement are complex, but essentially what was at issue was the exact calculation of the solar parallax, that being the angle formed at the sun by lines drawn from the centre of the earth and from the observer's station at the earth's surface.

The determination of the parallax was of paramount importance in eighteenth-century astronomy.⁵³ The relative disposition of the planets in space could be deduced by applying Kepler's third law of planetary motion, but the absolute distance of one

⁵² The passage is from "Two Lectures on the Parallax and Distance of the Sun, as Deducible from the Transit of Venus" by John Winthrop (Boston: Edes & Gill, 1769). It is quoted in Woolf, page 173.

⁵³ For a brief history of the science of the solar parallax see Woolf, pages 3-22.

celestial body from another could only be guessed at. The solar parallax was the key to unlocking the problem of the dimensions of the solar system. If the parallax were known, then calculating the distance between the earth and the sun would be a matter of simple trigonometry. The mean distance between the earth and the sun would, in turn, become the standard unit of measure for the entire universe. Astronomers would then be able to survey the stars and the planets as geographers surveyed the mountains and the rivers of the earth, mapping their position in absolute and measurable space.

Theoretically, this is all quite straightforward. The philosophers of ancient Greece had attempted to estimate the distance between the sun and the earth on the basis of a rough reckoning of the parallax. Practically, however, with the sun and earth in motion, the exact calculation of the solar parallax was very difficult.

In 1663 the Scottish mathematician, James Gregory, posited a theoretical solution to this methodological problem. As an aside in a more general treatise on optics he suggested that the “observation of Venus and Mercury when they obscured a small portion of the sun” would provide a means by which “the solar parallax of the sun may be investigated”. The idea was that a minor planet, either Mercury or Venus, would act, in the words of Lord Henry Brougham, “as a kind of signal-post, by which the angle sought may be measured”. (1846, 203)

It was the renowned British astronomer, Edmund Halley, who proposed a method to put Gregory’s suggestion into practice. After watching the transit of Mercury from St. Helena in 1677, Halley concluded that by the observation of the transit of Venus, and “by this observation alone, the distance of the sun, from the earth might be determined”. His arguments were summarised in a hugely influential article entitled “A new method of determining the parallax of the sun, or his distance from the earth”, which was published in the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* in 1716. In this article Halley proposed that one could determine the parallax simply by precisely

timing the passage of Venus across the face of the sun from a number of observatories situated at different points around the globe. The idea was that the timing of the transit would vary according to the place of observation. The difference between these timings would allow scholars to calculate the parallaxes of Venus and the Sun and so the distance of the Sun from the Earth.

Technically, this was a beautifully simple solution. All that was required was a good telescope and an accurate clock. Logistically, however, the execution of Halley's plan required an immense and carefully co-ordinated scientific effort.

The transit of Venus is a predictable event. Thanks to Kepler again, the scholars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries knew to the very day when Venus would pass between the earth and the sun. The problem was that the transit of Venus is also a very rare event. It happens four times in a regular cycle of 243 years. During this cycle there are two short intervals of eight years, and two long intervals of alternately 121 and 105 $\frac{1}{2}$ years. Poor Halley wrote at a time between transits. There had been one in 1639, observed only and partially by the parson at Hoole. The next was expected in 1761. Another would follow in 1769. After that there would not be another transit of Venus until 1874.

The other problem with Halley's method of calculating the parallax was that it required the transit to be observed from different points on the globe. The farther apart these points the better; for, if Halley was correct, the greater the distance between observers then the greater the difference in the time of transit, and the greater the difference in the time of the transit then the lesser the possibility of error when it came to the calculation of the parallax.

To compare observations made in London, Greenwich and Chelsea, for instance, would be almost useless, as the difference between the timings would be so minuscule that even the slightest error would render the findings nonsense. What was required was

that scientists leave the metropolises of Europe and New England, taking with them all required equipment, and voyage to the limits of the known world, to the islands of Indies, to the wilds of America, to the steppes of Asia, and to arrange their travels so as that, come the time of the transit, all was in place to observe and record “the noblest” sight which “astronomy affords”.

This, then, is why Winthrop went to Newfoundland in 1761: to watch the sun rise over the Atlantic, and, by taking measurements and counting the clock, to produce a record which, when assembled with other records from other parts of the world, would allow the solar system to be mapped with a precision which had previously been impossible. So, while the people of St. John’s slept, or set out to the sea in the pale of the morning, Winthrop stood on a hill and looked eastward to reveal the mathematical order of the heavens.

Light and vision

This is all very good, but what, we may ask, does this have to do with the envisioning of Newfoundland?

On the face of it Winthrop’s visit to St. John’s is little more than a historical curiosity. The man himself has no great place in the history of astronomy. His findings were, on the whole deemed to be accurate and useful, but in general the expeditions of 1761 were considered to be failures, and the whole question of the parallax remained unresolved.

Neither has Winthrop any great place in the history of Newfoundland. After all he spent less than a month on the island and most of that time was spent fiddling with instruments and looking at the sky. His article of 1764 betrayed not the slightest interest in Newfoundland and its people. For Winthrop, St. John’s was merely a useful point

from which to observe the transit of Venus. It could have just as easily been St. Helena, St. Petersburg or St. Andrews, so long as the weather was clear and he could find a place that afforded an unobstructed view of the eastern horizon. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that histories of Newfoundland make no mention of the visit of this rather obscure philosopher of nature.

Yet, I would argue, that Winthrop's stay in St. John's is historically significant. Its significance lies not in what he achieved, or in the effect he had on the course of Newfoundland's history; rather, it lies in who Winthrop was, in what he was doing, and in what his being in Newfoundland represents.

We have described John Winthrop as a new kind of visitor to Newfoundland. He was a professor of mathematics and philosophy, a scientist, a man who sought the truth through observation and measurement. He was the first such visitor to Newfoundland. Many followed but Winthrop was the first. And not only was he the first scientist to visit the island, his article in the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* was the first scientific publication about Newfoundland. As such Winthrop's visit represents the beginning of a new chapter in the history of the inscription of Newfoundland.

In saying Winthrop represents the beginning of something new, it is worth asking how he was different from those who came before, and, indeed, what do we mean when we say Winthrop was the first "scientist" to visit Newfoundland. He was, doubtless, not the first to look upon a sunrise from a hill overlooking St. John's. Nor was he the first to take the measure of the stars and the planet; fishers and adventurers had been doing that for centuries. Nor was he the first to go to Newfoundland and return with an account of what he saw. There have been, as we discussed in the previous chapter, tales told of European travels to the island since the time of the Vikings. No, the difference in Winthrop's visit lies not in his seeing and writing of what he saw, but in the way he looked upon things and the manner of his writing.

We have used the word “science” to name that difference in seeing and writing. Winthrop was doing “science”. Those who came before were not. In making this distinction we are, of course, committing a Whiggish fallacy. Historians of Western knowledge tell us that scholars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries did not think of themselves as scientists, nor called what they were doing science.⁵⁴ The study of nature, be it the movement of the planets through space or the distribution of flora and fauna on the surface of the earth, was part of the more general study of the works of God and so considered as philosophy or theology.

In renaming this study science we are doing two things. Firstly, we are constituting a point of historical transition. We are saying that during the seventeenth century the way in which the learned people of Western Europe went about studying the world about them underwent a radical change. Secondly, we are saying that this change laid the groundwork for the emergence of modern science. The astronomers, mathematicians and geographers of the seventeenth century may not have been “scientists”, but their work constituted a new mode of inquiry that in the centuries to follow would become named and organised as science.

This change, this emergence of science (even if it was not known as such), has been the subject of an enormous amount of academic study. Almost from its inception the history of the “scientific revolution” has been written, often by the revolutionaries themselves. Indeed it is striking the degree to which scholars of the late sixteenth and seventeenth century were conscious of themselves as agents of history. Men like Francis

⁵⁴ In her book on *The Enlightenment* Dorinda Outram points out that the words science and scientist were not invented in England until the 1830s. (1986, 48-49) “In the eighteenth century science was not yet a defined body of knowledge separate from other bodies with its own subject matter”; rather, “it was still linked to other disciplines as natural philosophy”. (50) Similarly, in the introduction to *Science and Western Domination*, Kurt Mendelssohn (1976) argues for the use of natural philosophy instead of science when considering the emergence of the bundle of concepts and ideas that we, retrospectively, perceive to be the origins of modern science. (7-9)

Bacon and René Descartes styled themselves as radical thinkers overthrowing accepted regimes of learning, and inaugurating a new age of truth founded on wholly different systems of knowledge. Historians and philosophers have called this new age of truth “the Enlightenment” and these systems of knowledge “empiricism” and “rationalism”.

Any general review of what happened during the Enlightenment would, it needs hardly saying, amount to a gross simplification of a terrifically complex period of history.⁵⁵ As a way into this history we will explore two themes: light and vision.

Images of light and darkness were a commonplace of Enlightenment philosophies of knowledge. Francis Bacon, in the *New Organon*,⁵⁶ declared that new discoveries “must be sought from the light of nature, not fetched out of the darkness of antiquity.” For Bacon this difference between darkness and light was the difference “between the Idols of the human mind and the Ideas of the divine. That is to say, between certain empty dogmas and true signatures and marks set upon the works of creation as they are found nature.” (1965, 334) Amongst these empty dogmas were the “Idols of the Cave”, those being the idols of the individual man.

For every one (besides the error common to human nature in general) has a cave or den of his own, which refracts and discolours the light of nature, owing either to their own proper and peculiar nature, or to his education and conversation with others, or to the reading of books, and the authority of those whom he esteems and admires ... (1965, 336)

⁵⁵ General works concerning the Enlightenment include Peter Gay’s *The Enlightenment: an Interpretation* (1966); the aforementioned work by Dorinda Outram; Thomas Hankins’ *Science and the Enlightenment* (1985); and *The Enlightenment and its Shadows* (1990) edited by Peter Hulme and Ludmilla Jordanova.

⁵⁶ Quotes from Bacon are taken from *Francis Bacon: a Selection of His Works* (1965), edited by Sidney Warhaft, and paginated accordingly.

Similarly, René Descartes, in the fourth part of *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*,⁵⁷ insists on a “need of a method for finding the truth”, arguing that

... it were far better never to think of the truth at all, than to do so without a method. For it is very certain that unregulated inquiries and confused reflections of this kind only confound the natural light and blind our mental powers. Those who so become accustomed to walk in darkness weaken their eye-sight so much that afterwards they cannot bear the light of day. (9)

As with Bacon, the darkness that Descartes refers to is the darkness of the cave, where students reverently study ancient texts, rather than their experience of nature. “[H]ow often do we see,” he observes, “that those who have never taken to letters, give a sounder and clearer decisions about obvious matters than those who have spent all their times in schools.” He makes the similar distinction between the darkness and light when considering the best way to “behold the truth”. “Truly,” Descartes reasons,

we shall learn how to employ our mental intuition from comparing it to the way we employ our eyes. For he who attempts to view a multitude of objects with one and the same glance, sees none of them distinctly ... but ... people who do not allow their thought to be distracted by various objects at the same time, but always concentrate it in attending to the simplest and easiest particulars, are clear-headed.

But it is a common failing of mortals to deem the more difficult the fairer; and they often think that they have learned nothing when they see a very clear and simple cause for a fact, while at the same time they are lost in admiration of certain sublime and profound philosophical explanations, even though these for the most part are based upon foundations which no one has adequately surveyed – a mental disorder which prizes the darkness higher than the light. (1968, 29)

⁵⁷ Quotes from Descartes are taken from volume I of *The Philosophical Works of Descartes* (1968) and are paginated accordingly.

In short, to quote Peter Hulme and Ludmilla Jordanova, “there was a whole epistemology behind the uses of images of light in the eighteenth century, one that was boosted by the belief that all knowledge came from the senses and that vision was the queen among the senses, with observation at the heart of the acquisition of a solid knowledge of the world.” (1990, 3-4)

Light was, however, not only an image. The relationship between light and vision was at the centre of a profound reconceptualisation of the very nature of knowledge, and the ways in which people may acquire a knowledge of nature. That we moderns privilege sight above all other senses is virtually an academic truism. From Foucault on the gaze, to Ong and McLuhan on the technological extensions of the self, we are told that since the Renaissance and the scientific revolution vision and visibility have become the dominant modes by which we understand and control our environment.

As was suggested when considering the difference between Winthrop and those who had visited Newfoundland before him, what is important is not simply the fact of seeing, but the way of seeing. The dawn of the Enlightenment witnessed the inauguration and institutionalisation of what Martin Jay, following Christian Metz, calls a “modern scopic regime”. (1988, 23) The nature of this “scopic regime” or regimes and how it transformed the ways in which men like Winthrop went about knowing the universe will be the subject of the next few pages. In particular, following Jonathan Crary, we will address the “problem of the observer” and the question of observation as a “model of visuality” intrinsic to the very possibility of an empirical or rational understanding of the world.

To open this discussion let us take another look at the paper that John Winthrop published in the *Transactions of the Royal Society of London* in 1764.

The first thing that strikes one about Winthrop’s account of his visit to St. John’s is the importance of vision. The whole point of his expedition is, of course, to make an

“observation of the transit of Venus” “in this quarter of the world”. Accordingly, his article is all about visibility: what he could see and not see, how his sight was obscured by hills or cloudy weather and how he went about overcoming these obstacles in order to see clearly.

The second thing that strikes one is the use of the word “observation”. Including the title, Winthrop uses variations on the verb to “observe” fourteen times in a five-page article. In contrast he uses the verb to “see” three times, and he “watched” for something only once. So, Winthrop is not simply concerned with seeing, but with a certain mode of seeing which he terms “observation”.

For Winthrop seeing and observing were not the same thing. This distinction is best illustrated by a passage that is central to both his visit to Newfoundland and his account of that visit. On the arrival of the “critical hour” on the morning of the 6th of June, Winthrop writes of his having the “pleasure of seeing Venus on the Sun; though dimly at first”. As the “planet presently became distinct, and her limb well defined”, he then “applied” himself “to observe the passage of the Sun’s and Venus’s proceeding limbs, by the vertical, and of their lower limbs by the horizontal wires in the reflector, and made the following observations”. There follows a table showing the latitude and longitude of the Venus at different times during the transit across the Sun. These positions are represented by numbers, and very precise numbers at that. Time is counted to the second and latitude to the one hundredth of a degree.

To observe was, then, not to simply see the transit of Venus across the face of the sun, but to see it in such a way that it may be known objectively and with precision. In order to be able to do this Winthrop transformed a hill overlooking St. John’s into an observatory, a machine that, if it functioned smoothly, would allow the passage of Venus to be written as a series of accurate measurements.

This machine was composed of various smaller machines: Hadley's octant, an excellent clock, a reflecting telescope and so on. The most important of these machines within a machine was Winthrop himself. When he "applied" himself "to the observation of the Sun's and Venus' proceeding limbs", Winthrop became a part of the observatory, another instrument, which, when used in consort with his clock, quadrant and telescope, would create a reliable record of the movement of the sun and the planets.

Each of these machines did a different thing. The clock kept time, the quadrant measured angles, and Winthrop observed. Yet, in a more general sense, each instrument operated in the same way. The clock, the quadrant, Winthrop, indeed the whole observatory, were devices by which locally viewed phenomena could be mapped onto a universal grid of knowledge. The place of events in time and space was, thereby, no longer relative or approximate; rather, it became absolute and precise.

Here we pick up on another aspect of Winthrop's article, that being his obsession with the mechanics of observation. He could have, in theory, simply written to the Royal Society to say, "My observations are as follows", then have given the numbers and that is all. Instead, Winthrop describes the instruments he took with him, how he created his observatory, how he adjusted the clock, fixed his telescopes and constructed a platform, and how, on the morning of the 6th of June, everything worked together: the clock being counted, observations being made, notes being taken.

Winthrop gives this description because, as he makes clear, the accuracy of observation is determined by the method of observation. To map the local upon the universal is a difficult business, for it requires that phenomena be seen and recorded without distortion or confusion. To observe the transit of Venus, therefore, Winthrop had to create a space of pure visibility within which the sun and planets presented themselves in such a way that their appearance was not subject to variable local conditions or influences.

His account of the making of an observatory atop a hill outside of St. John's is an account of the creation of such a space. In the days before the 6th of June, Winthrop and his students worked to purify the place of observation. For instance, they did not simply make a platform on which they could measure the movement of the sun; rather, they made a perfectly level platform which they "covered, to defend it from the Sun and elements," and every time a measurement was taken they rechecked the platform to ensure that it was still perfectly level. Similarly, they did not simply set the clock; rather, they placed the clock in a tent, and checked it several times a day, adjusting according to their observation of the sun "with as much exactness as we could have done at home".

If, in spite of all their pains, local conditions had somehow conspired to corrupt the space of observation, if the morning fog warped the platform, or wind shuddered the telescope, or a drunken student misheard the numbers that Winthrop was shouting out, then the machine would have broken-down and the resulting measurements would have been useless.

Such a misfortune befell Winthrop when trying to calculate the longitude of St. John's. In order to measure longitude at that time one had to either observe the moons of Jupiter, or "the occultation of a fixed star by the moon". The moons of Jupiter were never visible throughout Winthrop's stay in Newfoundland. "The only observation" that he "could get" for the purpose of calculating longitude was "of the right ascension Moon," which he "endeavoured to find, by comparing with that of a fixed star". Sadly, as Winthrop reports, it all went wrong: "whether any mistake was committed in counting the clock, or in writing down the observations, or whether the position of the telescope was disturbed by any accident in the interval between the Moon's and the star's passing, I am not able to say. However, as I am sensible that observation is not to be depended on, I think it needless to insert it here." (1764, 282-3)

John Winthrop's article was, of course, about the transit of Venus. It may, however, also be read as a mediation on the nature of observation and ways in which one may produce a reliable, accurate (and therefore publishable) account of natural phenomena. The key to this account is the observatory: that assemblage of telescopes, clocks and quadrants that made possible the observation of the transit of Venus. The observatory was the difference between John Winthrop's sight of the transit of Venus and that of a layman, or, for that matter, a fellow scientist, such as the unfortunate Le Gentil, who had a perfect view of the transit, but, with no access to an observatory, could not, in the words of Harry Woolf, "observe in the astronomical sense of the word." (1959, 130)

Indeed, when it came to the observation of the transit of Venus the skill of the observer lay chiefly in constructing and maintaining the place of observation. In theory anyone could write a scientific account of the transit, so long as they had the proper equipment, knew how to work it, and followed a few simple instructions. A set of such instructions were produced by a group of anonymous academics at Cambridge University specifically with a view to their being transmitted by the East India Company to any enthusiastic amateurs who may have been stationed in the more remote corners of the Empire. The Astronomer Royal, James Bradley, wrote a similar set of instruction in order to guide the efforts of Mason and Dixon. He advised them to:

Locate the observatory where there is a clear view towards the northeast, north and northwest. Observe the first and second contacts of Venus with the limb of the Sun. Then measure the distance of Venus from the limb of the Sun to ascertain the nearest approach of Venus to the centre of the sun's disk. Measure the diameter of Venus. Set up a clock so that the observers at the telescope are immediately accessible to it. Observers must be careful not to prejudice one another in their judgements of events and times. Make a preliminary trial of the clock with its pendulum adjusted as it was at Greenwich to ascertain how much time it loses in a sidereal day. Then adjust it to solar time. Keep a record of the temperature in the clock case.

Record how much the pendulum must be changed in length to keep solar time. (Woolf 1959, 131)

If anything the observer, the actual man within the machine, was a record-keeper. The observatory, if all ran smoothly, transmitted an image of the transit of Venus that perfectly mirrored the real phenomenon, and, in so doing, revealed a cosmic order that had always existed, but had, hitherto, been invisible to the human eye. The philosopher of nature simply traced the appearance of this image within measurable time and space.

Now, there are a couple of ways to consider the place of the observatory within a history of vision. The first, and most obvious, way is to consider it as a piece of technology. Halley's system for calculating the parallax of the sun was only made possible by advances in both clock making and lens-craft. The expeditions of 1761 took with them state-of-the-art equipment. The importance of the apparatus is reflected in the chronicles of these expeditions. Each instrument is accounted for. We are often given the names of the craftsmen who made the instrument. Careful attention is given to the transport of the apparatus, and its condition on arrival. Great pains were taken to ensure that all was in perfect working order before the transit of Venus. Pingré, for instance, finding that his instruments had corroded while at sea, went as far as to render oil from turtles, there being no other lubricant available.

In more general terms, it could be argued that the emergence of an empirical astronomy was contingent on the development of new technologies of vision. Of course the telescope extended sight, allowing the astronomer to observe stars and planets that were invisible to the naked eye. More to the point, however, these new technologies enabled the mathematicisation of the vision of the universe. By fixing adjustable crosshairs to the eyepiece of the telescope, and by mounting that telescope on a quadrant, the astronomer could measure the size and movements of heavenly bodies with unprecedented precision. Indeed, reflecting on Winthrop's article, observation, as a

distinct mode of seeing, was equated with the empiricising gaze. The observer did not simply see things, but in the act of seeing plotted their position upon abstract grids of space and time.

Regarded purely as a gathering of instruments, the eighteenth century observatory may then be seen as a means by which men of learning improved their vision of the universe. The difference between seeing and observing would, therefore, simply be a matter of degree. Winthrop, with his telescope trained on the eastern horizon, saw further and with greater clarity and precision than had any previous visitor who may have paused to watch the sunrise over the western Atlantic.

The significance of the observatory is, however, not simply instrumental. The observatory, as the space within which observation is possible, was, to quote from Jonathan Crary, “embedded in a much larger and denser organisation of knowledge and the observing subject”. (1990, 27) The distinction between observing and seeing was then not a matter of degree; rather, observing was central to a fundamentally different set of representational practices through which European scholars created a knowledge of the natural world.

That the use of optical devices cannot, in and of itself, constitute the difference between seeing and observing is underscored by the fact that in many fields of study the scholar depended on the unaided eye as the means of knowing the world. The botanist, inspecting a flower in the field, or the anatomist peeling the skin from a cadaver, made no use of glass lenses, but they were still observing in much the same way as the astronomers who looked at the stars through telescopes. The “condition of possibility” for all these pursuits was not advance of technology but the emergence of, what Michel Foucault calls, “a new field of visibility”. (1974, 130)

Foucault discusses the nature of this new field of visibility in chapter five of *The Order of Things*. His comments pertain particularly to the study of plants and animals,

but may be taken as a more general thesis concerning the operation of the observing eye within seventeenth- and eighteenth-century regimes of knowledge. "Observation," writes Foucault, "is a perceptible knowledge furnished with a series of systematically negative conditions. Hearsay is excluded, that goes without saying; but so are taste and smell, because of their lack of certainty and their variability render impossible any analysis into distinct elements that could be universally acceptable. The sense of touch is very narrowly limited to the designation of a few fairly evident distinctions (such as that between smooth and rough); which leaves sight with an almost exclusive privilege, being the sense by which we perceive extent and establish proof, and, in consequence, the means to an analysis *partes extra partes* acceptable to everyone." (1974, 132-3)

Foucault concludes by asserting that "[t]he area of visibility in which observation is able to assume its powers is thus only what is left after these exclusions: a visibility freed from all other sensory burdens and restricted, moreover, to black and white. This area, much more than the receptivity and attention at last being granted to things themselves, defines natural history's condition of possibility, and the appearance of its screen objects: lines, surfaces, forms, reliefs." (1974, 133)

Within Foucault's historiography of visibility, lenses, be they the lenses of microscopes or telescopes, must be understood not simply as instruments that enabled the philosopher of nature to see further, but as apparatus imbedded in systems of knowing constituted by the restriction of sensory experience. Concerning the microscope, he writes:

... it was the same complex of negative conditions that limited the realms of experience and made the use of optical instruments possible. To attempt to improve one's power of observation by looking through a lens, one must renounce the attempt to achieve knowledge by means of the other senses or from hearsay. A change of scale in the visual sphere must have more value than correlations between the various kinds of evidence that may be

provided by one's impressions, one's reading, or learned compilations. Though indefinite confinement of the visible within its own extent is made more easily perceptible to the eye by the microscope, it is nevertheless not freed from it. (1974, 133)

In Foucauldian terms, therefore, the observatory, like the microscope, constitutes an "area of visibility in which observation assumes its powers". This is an area within epistemological space. It is also, as Foucault makes clear, an area within physical space. The darkened chamber within the parsonage of Hoole and the top of hill near St. John's were places transformed so that they could become sites of observation.

The composition of the physical site of observation was central to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philosophies of knowledge. The problem was perception. If, as both Bacon and Descartes asserted, we know the world only through our senses, then under what circumstances may individual experience provide the basis for an accurate and verifiable understanding of the phenomenal universe?

With sight privileged as the "queen among the senses", the problem perception was, above all, a problem of vision, and the relationship between vision and light. To recommend, as did Bacon, that we seek knowledge from the light of nature, begged the question of how this light was received within the human consciousness and the degree of resemblance between our vision of things and the things themselves. Underlying this concern with visual perception was a paradox that, according to Edmund Husserl, was inherent in the very constitution of the empiricist project: how can a "philosophy which seeks its ultimate foundations in the subjective" claim "objectively 'true' and metaphysically transcendent validity".⁵⁸

⁵⁸ The quote is from page 81 of Husserl's *The Crisis of European Science and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston, Ill, 1970). It is quoted in Crary (1990), page 41.

The passages from Descartes and Bacon quoted above allude to this paradox and its possible resolution. To both of them it was not enough simply to turn our attention to the study of nature. The frailties of the human condition – the idols that we worship, our mental disorders, and “the very nature of our intellect, which is more prone to error than sense is” – all these serve to “distort the rays of objects according to [their] own figure and section, so the mind when it receives impressions of object through the sense, cannot be trusted to report them truly, but in forming its notions mixes up its own nature with the nature of things”. (Bacon *The Great Insaturation*, 317)

What is required is a space of pure visibility, swept clean of “all theories and common notions”. Instead of an “uneven mirror”, warped and cracked by the “insidious action of the mind”, the intellect of the philosopher must become as a polished glass upon which the image of nature is reflected with perfect clarity and coherence. It is in the imagining of this space of pure visibility, and the relationship between light and vision is assumed, that the observer becomes a position of privilege and power, and it is to this imagining that we will now turn.

The Camera Obscura

Some decades after Jeremiah Horrocks had left Emmanuel College for the parsonage at Hoole, another young man of scholarly promise came to Cambridge. His name was Isaac Newton. Newton shared Horrocks’ interest in the movement of stars and planets. Newton was also interested in light itself and the ways in which the eye perceived light.

To pursue his study of light Newton enclosed himself in “a very dark chamber”. In this dark chamber there was “a round hole, about one third of an inch broad, made in the shut of a window”. At this hole Newton placed “a glass prism, whereby the beam of the

sun's light which came in at the hole might be refracted upwards towards the opposite wall of the chamber, and there form a colour'd image of the sun". (1952, 1)

Newton and Horrocks were doing the same thing. They were studying the sun. To study the sun they allowed a narrow beam of light to penetrate a darkened chamber. The sun they observed was not the sun in the sky, but an image of the sun created as the beam of light shone onto a sheet of white paper. Both Newton and Horrocks used glasses of different sorts to alter the image of the sun. Horrocks used a telescope to create a crisp and clear picture of the sun's disc. Newton used a prism to display the white light of the sun as a spectrum of colours. These different glasses are indicative of their different projects. Jeremiah Horrocks wished to see the sun clearly, so as to better observe the transit of Venus. Newton wished to see the composition of light, so as to better understand the perception of colours.

These two projects shared a common assumption. The parson of Hoole and the scholar of Cambridge were convinced that nature was orderly and that this order could be represented as mathematical formulae. For the Reverend Horrocks, the observation of the transit of Venus was a dramatic confirmation of Kepler's tabulations of planetary motion. This was a moment of revelation. What was revealed was nothing less than the presence of God, whose "hand divine" made "the worlds revolve by laws unchangeable". It was this glimpse of the sublime order of the universe that so enraptured William Crabtree that he could but stand in stunned wonder as Venus appeared on the face of the Sun.

Newton also saw God in the workings of a mechanical universe. In 1687 he published the *Principia mathematica philosophiae naturalis*, in which, standing on the shoulders of Horrocks amongst others, he demonstrated that motion in space was governed by a series of mathematical laws. Seventeen years later he finally published his findings on light and colour as a work entitled *Opticks, a treatise on the reflections*,

refractions, inflections and colours of light. In both the *Principia* and *Opticks* Newton attempted a mathesis of the phenomenal world. In the former it was a mathesis of motion; in the latter it was a mathesis of visual perception. In either case his researches were directed by an a priori belief in the essential mathematisation of nature and the utility of geometrical models as explanatory devices.

By closing the shutters against the light and fashioning a small hole through which an image of the outside world would shine onto a piece of paper, Horrocks and Newton were transforming their chambers into camera obscura. The fact that the same technique was employed both to observe the world beyond the chamber and to study the very nature of observation is indicative of the dual role of the camera obscura in sixteenth- and seventeenth- century philosophies of knowledge. On the one hand, the camera obscura, like the telescope or the quadrant, was a tool that enabled the astronomer to chart the heavens with greater clarity and precision than would be possible with the naked eye. On the other hand, the Camera Obscura became an analogy for the physics of vision and an organising metaphor within enlightenment metaphysics.

In 1620 a certain Henry Wotton wrote to Francis Bacon describing a visit to the astronomer Johannes Kepler and a “draft of a landscape on a piece of paper, methought masterly done,” which, though he was no artist, Kepler himself had drawn. Wooton revealed that the secret of Kepler’s landscape to be a “little black tent ... which he can suddenly set up where he will ... exactly close and dark, save at one hole about an inch and a half in diameter, to which he applies a long perspective trunk, with a convex glass fitted to said hole, and a concave at the other end ... through which the visible radiations of all the objects without are intromitted, falling upon a paper ... and so he traceth them with his pen in their natural appearance.” (Nicholson 1946, 78) Kepler called this apparatus a camera obscura, which is Latin for dark room.

The term camera obscura may have been new, but the idea of the apparatus was not. Back in fourth century B.C. Aristotle looked upon the form of the sun projected on the ground through the holes of a strainer. In the tenth century A.D. the Arab scholar Hassan ibn Hassan, described how an image may be created by allowing light through a small aperture into a darkened room, and in China the scholar Shen Kua wrote of burning mirrors and inverted images. Through the Middle Ages European alchemists and cosmologists used similar techniques for viewing eclipses. The Italian painters of the early renaissance employed the camera obscura as an aid to draughtsmanship. The Venetian Daniel Barbaro wrote:

Close all the shutters and doors until no light enters the camera except through the lens, and opposite hold a piece of paper, which you move forwards and backwards until the scene appears in the sharpest detail. There on the paper you will see the whole view as it really is, with its distances its colours and shadows and motions, the clouds, the water twinkling, the birds flying. By holding the paper steady you can trace the whole perspective with a pen, shade it and delicately colour it from nature.⁵⁹

The camera obscura as an apparatus may have been nothing new, but with the studies of Kepler it took on a new meaning. Kepler used the camera as Aristotle, to view eclipses. He also used the camera as Barbaro, to draw remarkably realistic landscapes. He also used the camera to investigate optics, that being the nature of light and the ways in which light is perceived by the eye. It was the study of optics that distinguished Kepler's use of the camera obscura from that of medieval cosmologists or renaissance painters. The camera was no longer just a tool with which to see the sun without burning ones eyes, or to transform a three-dimensional landscape into a two-dimensional image.

⁵⁹ The passage from Barbaro is quoted in "Adventures in Cybersound" a website maintained by Russell Naughton describing the history of the Camera Obscura "from Aristotle to Zahn". (www.cinemia.net/SFCV-RMIT-Annex/rnaughton/CAMERA_OBSCURA.html)

Instead, to quote Jonathan Crary, the camera obscura “became a model ... for how observation leads to truthful inferences about an external world”. (1990, 37)

The significance of the camera obscura was, in a sense, anticipated by men like Wootton and Barbaro, who exclaimed how remarkable was the resemblance between the two-dimensional image within the room and the real world outside. “There on the paper,” enthused Barbaro, “you see the whole world as it really is.” Similarly, Leonardo di Vinci wrote that “when images of illuminated objects ... penetrate through a small hole into a very dark room ... you will see these objects in their proper form and colour”.⁶⁰ However, the artists of the sixteenth century took the correspondence of image and reality for granted. It was a wonder, a marvellous trick and a useful tool, but it was not a phenomenon to be investigated. With the dawn of the Enlightenment this changed. In the sixteenth and seventeenth century the relationship between the outside world, “the world as it really is”, and the image projected within the closed interior of the darkened room became the object of much empirical examination and philosophic speculation.

Kepler and Newton may have not been terribly interested in the metaphysical implications of their studies. As Marjorie Nicholson points out, Newton preferred not to consider himself a philosopher. His prismatic investigations were solely concerned with the reflections and refractions of light. In the introduction to the *Opticks* Newton declared that his “intention in this book is not to explain the properties of light by hypothesis, but to propose them by reason and experiments”. It was left to philosophers and poets to read epistemological significance into the study of optics. Central to this reading was the camera obscura, the darkened room within which stands a man gazing upon an image of the outside world reflected upon a white wall. The image of the

⁶⁰ The passage from da Vinci is also quoted on Naughton’s website.

camera became a powerful metaphor by which scholars and laypeople alike could articulate and resolve the problem of perception.

Two basic assumptions informed the philosophical appreciation of the camera obscura during the Enlightenment. The first has already been touched upon. Empiricist and rationalists held that proper knowledge should be based upon the senses. Sight was considered the most discerning of the senses; therefore, a proper knowledge of the world should proceed from what we see. The second assumption was that visual perception functioned like the camera obscura. The camera obscura was, in effect, taken to be a sort of large-scale model of the human eye. Accordingly, if knowledge was based upon vision, and vision worked like a camera obscura, then the camera obscura could be considered as a model of cognition.

For example, in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* John Locke writes:

External and internal sensations are the only passages that I can find of knowledge to the understanding. These alone, as far as I can discover, are the windows by which light is let into this dark room. For, methinks, the understanding is not much unlike a closet wholly shut from light, with only some little opening left ... to let in external visible resemblances, or some idea of things without; would the pictures coming into such a dark room but stay there and lie so orderly to be found on occasion it would very much resemble the understanding of man.⁶¹

Similarly, Descartes considers the mechanics of sight to be much as those of a camera obscura.

Suppose a chamber is shut up apart from a single hole, and a glass lenses is placed in front of the hole with a white sheet stretched at a certain distance behind it so the light coming from objects outside forms images on the

⁶¹ From John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Alexander Campbell Fraser (New York, 1959), I, ii, 15. It is quoted in Crary (1990), page 40.

sheet. Now it is said that the room represents the eye; the hole the pupil; the lens the crystalline humour.

Possibly inspired by Christian Scheiner, who peeled the coat from the back of eyes (both animal and human) and holding objects before them demonstrated that the image of these objects was inverted upon the retina, Descartes takes the analogy between the darkened chamber and the eye one step further and recommends that one

cut away the three surrounding membranes at the back so as to expose a large part of the humour without spilling any ... No light must enter this room except what come through the eye, all of whose parts you know to be entirely transparent. Having done this, if you look at the white sheet you will see there, not perhaps without pleasure and wonder, a picture representing in natural perspective all the objects outside.⁶²

According to Crary the “structural and optical principle of the camera obscura” provides the philosopher with the “means of spatially visualising the position of the observing subject,” and, in so doing, mapping the relationship between reality and image. As such it provided a “precarious figurative resolution” to the problem of perception inherent in the empirical project. There are two aspects to this resolution. “First of all,” writes Crary,

the camera obscura performs an operation of individuation; that is, it necessarily defines the observer as isolate, enclosed, and autonomous within its dark confines. It implies a kind of askesis, or withdrawal from the world, in order to regulate and purify one’s relation to the “manifold contents of the now exterior world. (1990, 38-39)

“At the same time,” the author continues,

⁶² From René Descartes, the *Philosophy of Descartes*, vol 1, page 166. It is quoted in Crary (1990), page 47.

another related and equally decisive function of the camera was to sunder the act of seeing from the physical body of the observer, to decorporealize vision. The monadic viewpoint of the individual is authenticated and legitimated by the camera obscura, but the observer's physical and sensory experience is supplanted by the relation between a mechanical apparatus and a pre-given world of objective truth. (1990, 39-40)

By individuating and decorperalizing vision, the paradigm of the camera obscura allowed for the possibility of a human understanding freed from the idols of the mind and the confusions of the passions. This understanding was founded upon an unmediated envisioning of nature. To be able to see things as they really were required that one simultaneously enclosed oneself against the influence of the normal intercourse of society and liberated oneself from one's own embodied sentiments and desires. In such circumstances the individual is transformed into a dislocated subjectless subject, a transcendent all-seeing eye through which the universe is revealed in its true form and substance. Reflecting upon Descartes' fanciful suggestion that a proper perspective on the world may be gained by using a cow's eye as the aperture of a camera obscura, Crary writes:

By this radical disjunction of eye from observer and its instillation in this formal apparatus of objective representation, the dead, perhaps even bovine eye undergoes a kind of apotheosis and rises to an incorporeal status. If at the core of Descartes' method was the need to escape the uncertainties of mere human vision and the confusion of the senses, the camera obscura is congruent with his quest to found human knowledge on a purely objective view of the world. The aperture of the camera obscura corresponds to a single mathematically definable point, from which the world can be logically deduced by a progressive accumulation and combination of signs. It is a device embodying man's position between God and the world. Founded on laws of nature (optics) but extrapolated to a place outside

nature, the camera obscura provides a vantage point onto the world analogous to the eye of God. (1990, 48)

In this respect, the image of the world reflected upon the wall of the camera obscura was considered to be more accurate, more true to the godly order of things, than the world as seen by the untutored eye. Recalling the passage from Descartes quoted some pages previously; one of the problems with visual perception was it that could become “disordered” in the attempt to view a multitude of objects simultaneously. Therefore, as Foucault argues, a knowledge that proceeded from the study of appearance required that the visual field be limited and filtered (1974, 135) so as those phenomena appear as “screened objects: lines, surfaces, forms, reliefs”. (1974, 133) The camera obscura as an apparatus and an ideal of visualisation, both excluded all other sensory experience save sight and made “an orderly cut or delimitation” of the “undifferentiated expanse of the world outside”.

In essence then, the camera obscura presented a mathematised vision of the universe. In stating this, it should be underscored that the observer within the darkened room was not looking upon the world beyond his chamber, but upon an image of this world. It was this projection that allowed for the discernment of order in the chaos of representations. Theories of monocular vision based upon the model of the camera obscura characterised the things of the world as a series of points arranged upon a spatial grid. The lens of the eye was as the aperture in the shutters of a darkened room through which the rays of light emanating from or reflecting off these points were transmitted. The retina was as the sheet of white paper upon which these rays fell, so presenting a single coherent image composed of mathematically arranged points. Extending the metaphor of the camera obscura, human understanding was likened to the scholar within the darkened room. Our perceptions of the world were formed by the “mind’s eye” which regards the image of nature as it is imprinted by “globules of light” falling upon

the “optic nerves” of the retina. (Descartes, *The Principles of Philosophy*, CXCV, 293) According to Locke these nerves are “the conduits to convey” images “from without to their audience in the brain the mind’s presence room”.

Jeremiah Horrocks’ “observation” is a case in point. By projecting an image of the sun onto a sheet of white paper inscribed with a circle marked out in three hundred and sixty degrees, Horrocks allowed the movement of the planet to be written as a series of points upon measurable space. Indeed, all Horrocks had to do was transcribe the prose of nature as it was written upon the white page by nature herself. In order that he may do so, however, it was necessary that Horrocks’ both sequestered himself from the social world, attending only to “business of the highest importance”, and guarded against any excess of passion occasioned by the viewing of such a remarkable conjuncture. His friend the draper, we will remember, succumbed to the enormity of the moment, and standing “rapt in contemplation”, failed to observe the transit with due care and attention.

What has been said of the camera obscura may be said, more generally, of the observatory. The camera obscura was a place in which observation was possible. It was, of course, a real place. Newton and Horrocks transformed their chambers into camera obscura to observe the sun, and Winthrop employed a similar idea to trace a map of the transit of Venus from atop a hill above St. John’s. As Crary’s study makes clear, however, the analysis of the camera obscura as an instrument of observation presumes observation as an ahistorical mode of vision. In contrast, Crary argues that the camera obscura must be understood within the context of the emergence of a more general discourse concerning knowledge, light and vision in the seventeenth century. Within the writings of the empiricists and rationalists the camera obscura came to represent an ideal type of vision, one that regarded things truly and without confusion, and so disclosed the order of the universe to human understanding.

There was a curious paradox to this way of knowing the world. On the one hand, it was considered as a natural function of human cognition. Bacon and particularly Descartes emphasise that the capacity to see the world in such a way is latent within all of us. If we fail to see the world clearly and properly it is only because our understandings are based more on what we have read than our experience of things. What was required of the natural philosopher was simply that he learns the truth by looking to the light of nature rather than reading from the pages of a book. "A good man has no need for books, nor to have carefully learnt all that which is taught in schools," declares Descartes in the *Search after Truth by the Light of Nature*. (1968, 305) Jeremiah Horrocks came to the same conclusion. In the introduction to his *Observation of the Transit* he tells the story of how he came to study the stars in the way he did.

Soon after the commencement of my astronomical studies and whilst preparing for practical observations, I computed the Ephemerides of several years, from the continuous tables of Lansberg. Having followed this task with unceasing perseverance and having arrived at the point of its completion, the very erroneous calculation of these tables, then detected, convinced me that astronomer might be engaged upon a better work. Accordingly I broke off the useless computation, and resolved for the future with my own eyes see the position of the stars in the heavens.⁶³

Nothing could seem simpler. "Science," to quote from *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, "is true and evident cognition." All that one needed to do to be an astronomer was to put away Lansberg's useless tables, to cease bending over books and instead to turn one's gaze upwards to the stars in the night sky.

On the other hand, things were not that easy. Our senses could not always be trusted. Our vision of things may be distorted by ideas learned from books and opinions held by others. We may be dazzled by a surfeit of light or confused by the seemingly

disorderly excess of the universe. Our bodies may fail us, our eyes may be dim or too large for our head, or our emotions may overwhelm our sense, clouding and colouring the view of the world. In short, all may have the capacity to see the world as it is, but the chances are that most would be unable to do it. Descartes, for instance, sets great store by intuition as a mental operation “by which we may wholly and without fear of illusion, arrive at a knowledge of things”. However, lest we think this is some common everyday intuition he adds:

By intuition I understand, not the fluctuating testimony of the senses, nor the misleading judgement that proceeds from the blundering constructions of imagination, but the conception which an unclouded and attentive mind gives us so readily and distinctly that we are wholly freed from doubt about that which we understand. (1968, 10)

The possession of an unclouded mind was only possible under certain circumstances. The circumstances were like the camera obscura. The clear eye and the unclouded mind had to be separated from social intercourse, from the play of words and ideas, from the influence of others and from the effects of history. The clear eye and unclouded mind had to be disembodied. Literally, of course the eyes were not plucked from their sockets, but metaphorically the operation of vision must be liberated from the influence of the observer’s thoughts and feelings. Come the moment of observation, as we have seen with Horrocks, the subject must disappear and become a scribe within the machine transcribing the text of nature.

Hence the need for method. The methodical organisation of vision ensures that what is written is not some fantasy from a book, or some whimsy of the passions, or bears the trace of the social act of writing, but is simply and truly the prose of the world as it was written upon the empty page of the observer’s consciousness. So even as the discipline

⁶³ Quoted in Whatton (1859), page 10.

of textual study is done away with, it is replaced by the discipline of the methodical mind. The aim of method is to create a kind of space akin to the camera obscura into which the light of nature may shine unrefracted and undistorted. This may be a real space, like the chamber in the parsonage of Hoole, or the observatory on a hill above St. John's. More generally, however, it is a conception of space, a way of organising the relationship between light, vision and writing. The observatory may, therefore, simply be the consciousness of the scholar, who, suitably disciplined and trained, may master his passions and renounce social influence and so truly perceive the mathesis of nature as it is imprinted on his retina much as the seal leaves its impression on soft wax.

In the resolution of this seeming paradox one has the creation of the privileged gaze of the philosopher of nature, the scientist, as we would now know him. Most people do not perceive the world around them clearly. They are too much ruled by their desires, or their history, or the acts of others. Their writing of the world is therefore simply a transcript of their sentiments and social position. It is in short subjective, that is, an expression of their own subjectivity. Only the scientist, the man of true intuition and insight, is able to see the world clearly.

It is this assumption of privileged insight that informs Horrocks' hymn to the departing Venus quoted at the beginning of this chapter. To Horrocks the people of America are simply unable to see what he sees. In this he is right. No one in America, or anywhere else for that matter, pinned a piece of paper to the wall of darkened room and watched as the transit of Venus was inscribed upon that paper as a black point moving across the measured disc of the sun. But Horrocks is not only saying this. He is saying that only he and others like him, European men schooled in the methods of observation, could see Venus as she really was. "Why," he beseeches the planet, "scatter riches? or such splendid sights? / Why waste on those who cannot prize their value /

Such barbarous lands can never duly hail / The purer brightness of thy virgin light." Yet away she goes to enjoy "the savage grasp of wild untutored man".

All people may see the world about them, but for most, and particular savages, barbarians and wild untutored men, their vision is so hopelessly influenced by their superstitions and passions that what they see is not what really is. The "other" is no longer, therefore, simply a non-believer, a pagan or infidel. The other is now an imbecile, or at least a person lacking the discipline and instruction to be able to view the world methodically, and so doomed to ignorance.

Chapter Four

Crusoe Hall: Newfoundland and the Adventures of the Enlightened Traveller

Précis

In the previous chapter we told the story of John Winthrop and the observation of the transit of Venus. This was a little story. John Winthrop did no more than visit St. John's for a few weeks in order to observe the movement of the sun, stars and planets. In telling this little story we were telling a bigger story. This was the story of a transformation in the way in which Europeans and the descendants of Europeans who had settled in the Americas went about knowing the natural world. Following Jonathan Crary and Martin Jay, we described this transformation as the emergence of a new "scoptic regime". John Winthrop's visit was important because John Winthrop looked at things and wrote of the things he looked upon differently from those who had visited Newfoundland before him.

This new way of looking was termed observation. Observation was seeing subjected to a peculiar set of conditions. Both practically and rhetorically, to observe was to see things from within a camera obscura: a darkened room into which the light of the world shone through a narrow opening creating a perfect moving image of things as they are. The effect of these peculiar conditions was to remove sight both from social intercourse and the embodied subject, thereby allowing for the possibility of a vision of the world as object and an inscription of the true nature of things based upon that vision.

Now, in the previous chapter observation was directed towards the heavens. What was written was a mathesis of the cosmos, a physics of motion observed as a shadow across the sun. John Winthrop, we remember, came to Newfoundland, yet did not describe the island and its people. St. John's was important as a place of observation. He wrote of locality only as it impinged on his observation of the stars and planets. Newfoundland was a generous greeting, a clear morning, a band of cloud, fog from the sea.

In this chapter we will be discussing how the new ways of seeing and writing were applied to the envisioning and inscription of the landscape of Newfoundland. As in the previous chapter we will be relating the history of writing by telling the story of a visit to the island. Unlike the previous chapter, however, this is not the story of one man's visit but the story of two men who, unbeknownst to them, both toured the coasts and coves of the Newfoundland in the summer of 1766. One of these men was named Joseph Banks. The other was named James Cook. These two men did different things. Banks collected plants. Cook drew maps. It will be argued, however, that the coincidence of their respective visits marks the inauguration of the inscription of Newfoundland as an object of empirical knowledge.

In the country of the Esquimeaux Indians

On the 13th of June 1766 the H.M.S. *Niger* captained by Thomas Adams sailed into Croque Harbour on the Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland. Amongst the company of the *Niger* was Joseph Banks.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ The account of the early life of Joseph Banks is drawn from five sources: A. M. Lysaght's biographical introduction to his collection of Bank's writings on Newfoundland (1971, pages 42 -59); J. C. Beaglehole's introduction to the *Endeavour Journal of Joseph Banks* (1962, pages 1-15); the first chapter of H. C. Cameron's biography of Banks (1952, pages 1-5); the account of Banks included in Lord Brougham's *Lives of Men of Letters and Science* (1846, pages 201-202); and an entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* (1901, pages 1049-50).

Joseph Banks was a wealthy young man. He was the heir to the great estates at Revesby Abbey, near Boston, Lincolnshire. In 1764, at the age of twenty-one, he came into this inheritance, which provided him with an ample income for the rest of his life. Banks was also an educated young man, having gone from Harrow, to Eton, to Christ Church College in Oxford.

At Oxford he studied natural history. His particular passion was botany. It had been his passion since boyhood. He was a collector of specimens and names. The specimens he found while walking along country lanes or crawling through the ditches of London. The names he learned: first from the peasant women who gathered samples for druggists' shops; then from an old copy of *Gerrard's Herbal*; and finally from Israel Lyons, whom Banks recruited from Cambridge to give lectures in Botany and Astronomy at Oxford.

It was in order "to gratify" this "taste for Natural knowledge", this wealthy and educated young man resolved to travel "to the Country of the Esquimaux Indians".⁶⁵

His neighbours may well have influenced his choice of destination. Upon the death of his father in 1761, Banks and his mother moved to London, where they took up residence in Turret House on Paradise Row, Chelsea.

Their new home was adjacent to the Chelsea Physic Garden, which was under the direction of Phillip Miller. Like Banks, Miller was a collector of plants. Unlike the Banks', Miller's collection included plants from other lands, including specimens from North America.

Around the corner from Turret House, on Cheyne Walk, was the headquarters of the Moravian missionaries. The Moravians had been established in Greenland for some years and in 1765 they extended their mission to the coast of Labrador. It seems certain

⁶⁵ The quote is from a letter, dated February 1766, written to Banks by John Hope, who was a professor of Botany at the University of Edinburgh. (Lysaght 1971, 235)

that Banks had contact with Moravians. Indeed, amongst his botanical collection are specimens from Labrador, dated 1765 and attributed to the *Unitas Fratrum*, the United Brethren.

The opportunity to travel to Newfoundland may have been afforded by another Chelsea acquaintance, John Montagu the fourth Earl of Sandwich. Montagu and Banks were keen anglers and together they would often spend nights fishing on the Thames. Montagu was also the First Lord of the Admiralty, whose influence would have enabled Banks to secure passage aboard the *Niger*.⁶⁶

The *Niger* was a fisheries protection vessel. The main purpose of its cruise to Newfoundland was to ensure that the English and French fishermen were honouring the terms of the treaty of 1763. For Banks, however, this was to be voyage of scientific discovery, one from which, to quote from a letter written to Banks on the eve of his departure, “the Learned world may expect so much and Brittain an acquisi[tion] of many useful trees & pl[ants].”⁶⁷

⁶⁶ For a detailed description of the “patronage networks and political connections which made it possible for Banks to exercise his influence in government” (1996, 4) and, by extension, ensure state support his botanical expeditions refer to Chapter Three of *Science in the service of Empire* by John Gascoigne.

⁶⁷ Again, this is a quote from Hope’s letter. Hope wrote the letter in support of one Adam Freer, a student at Edinburgh who wished to join Banks on his trip to Newfoundland. It is unlikely that Banks saw the letter before leaving London, and Freer never went to the land of the “Eskimaux”. The full text reads:

Sir,

It being rumoured here that You was going to the Country of the Eskimaux Indians to gratify your taste for natural knowledge Adam Freer a young gentleman who for some time has distinguished himself in this University by his passion for Botanical knowledge was extremely desirous of having the honour of visiting that Country under Your Protection & has requested me to mention this to you.

The young man is extreamly diligent & indefatigable he is sensible spirited sober & has good & gentle dispositions. I have had the fullest opportunities of knowing him as of two years ago and being pleased with his Zeal for Botany I gave him an invitation to live in my house which he has done ever since and been extremely serviceable to me in collecting and preparing the indigenous plants and I dare to say if you have no other to relieve you of part of the trouble you would find him very useful.

His father is a Gentleman of the country who has a small Estate & numerous family and at present is not in a situation to defray his expenses on the expedition – he has had an excellent medical education and would be well qualified to act as Surgeon or assistant Surgeon – it would make him happy if the offer of his service were acceptable to you, he has not the most distant view to any other gain than that of improving his knowledge of Nature

Advised by Miller and the Swedish botanist Daniel Solander, Banks equipped himself for the task of collecting specimens. He packed a small library, which included works of Linnaeus and Catsby, the later being one of the first to make botanical observations in North America. He also brought with him plant presses, notebooks, butterfly nets, fishing gear, and a keg of spirits with which to preserve any animals that he wished to bring back to England.

Accompanied by an old school friend, Constantine John Phipps, Banks embarked from Plymouth on the 22nd of April 1766. Twenty days later the *Niger* sailed through the narrows and into St. John's harbour.

Winter lingered on the Avalon Peninsula. It snowed, sometimes heavily. The wind blew. Fog drifted in from the sea. (17)⁶⁸ In spite of the foul weather Banks busied himself studying the local flora and fauna. He gathered lichens, moss, and grasses from the barrens and bogs around St. John's, Petty Harbour and Kitty Vitty (17-8, 21-3, 26-8). He picked stones and seashells from the beach (25, 28). He shot birds (24, 26, 30), and "Killd a muskrat in Kitty Vitty Pond" (19). He trawled the harbour and found lobsters, crab and seaweed (19-20). He fished in streams for trout and stickleback (19). Fishermen gave him shellfish, and the "men of the ship" brought him "stone coral" and the shell of a "tortoise". (25).

Banks kept a journal as a record of his explorations. In his journal he sought to identify what he had observed and collected. He wrote of the appearance of living things and of the points of difference and similarity between the things of Newfoundland and the things of Britain. He wrote of "a Kind of Eel ... who instead of being round is

and having the honour of acquiring that under a person so distinguished for his knowledge of Nature and unsatiable desire of knowing more.

I very heartily & sincerely wish you everything good and happy & desirable in so spirited an expedition from wh the Learned world may expect so much and Brittan the acquisi[tion] of so many useful tree & p[lants]. (Lysaght 1971, 235-6)

compressed on both sides”, (24) of “a Kind of Golden Maidenhair ... Very little if at all Differing from the English Sort” whose “heads are angulated on two sides much more than the other two”, (23) and of “Strawberries which appear exactly Like those called Scarlets by the English Gardiners”. (30)

On the basis of appearance and resemblance, and with the help of Linnaeus and Catsby, Banks gave names to the things he found. These were Latin names, scientific names, names that transcended the local to signify the place of Newfoundland’s flora and fauna within the universal schema of nature. The eel was named “*Blennius Gatturigine*.” The golden maidenhair was labelled “*Polytrichum Alpinum*” and strawberries were identified “to be what Linnaeus calls a Variety by the name of *Pratensis*”. (30)

There were some plants and animals to which Banks could not give a scientific name. They had, as yet, not been incorporated within the Linnaean prose of knowledge and so, pending analysis, they retained their vernacular identities. There were shell fish “calld here Glams” which “the fishermen depend upon ... for their Baitts” (25-6), and a “Plant from the Berries of which Syrup of Capillare is made” which “is Calld here Maidinhair and drank by way of a substitute for tea”. (24)

The company stayed in St. John’s for a month. On the twelfth of June the *Niger* embarked on its tour of the West Coast and Straits of Belle Isle, arriving in Croque two days later.

Banks spent the summer on the Northern Peninsula. He made expeditions down the coast south of Croque, visiting Wild Cove, Englee, and Conche, and across the Straits of Belle Isle to Chateau Bay, Labrador.

⁶⁸ All citations refer to Banks’ “Journal of Voyage to Newfoundland” which was finally published in 1971, with an introduction and notes by A. M. Lysaght. The pagination is that of the original journal.

As Banks travelled he continued his scientific work. At Croque he gathered a "Kind of Butter Bur ... with Palmated Leaves", (33) "a small flower like a daizy", (35) and "Varities of a Beautifull Plant ... one of which had flowers of Clear white the other Blueish". (32) At Englee he discovered a "kind of willow with smooth leaves" (38) and "a beautiful Yellow Flower growing on the tops of Dry Hills". (37-8) At Hilliard's Arm he "found a most Elegant Plant with red flowers". (40) While in Labrador, he observed the habits of the curlew, (79) measured a huge halibut, (83) and studied a porcupine, which had been captured alive and brought to Banks by the Sergeant of the marines at York Harbour. (92)

Banks still kept a journal, but his entries became more sporadic. During the month of July he wrote nothing at all, as a fever confined him to his cabin. Afterwards Banks gave up carrying his book with him, complaining that he had could not do so "without submitting it to the inspection of Every Petty officer who chose to Peruse it". He did keep notes on scraps of paper, but these were never copied into his journal.

From August onwards, therefore, the journal became less of a scientific diary, and more of a general account of his travels on the Northern Peninsula and the coast of Labrador. Besides botanical and zoological observations, this account included a comparison of the French and English fisheries, (60-75) notes on the manners and customs of the Beothuks, (51-60) recipes for spruce beer (83-4) and fish chowder, (75-6) and the story of how Banks almost perished at sea during a failed attempt to explore the coast north of Chateau Bay. (88-90)

On the tenth of October, Banks left Croque for St. John's. Though St. John's was "the Most Disagreeable Town" he "Ever met", Banks took "great Pleasure in Returning to Society" after his time in the wilderness. (109) Amongst these pleasures was a ball hosted by Hugh Palliser, the Governor of Newfoundland, in celebration of the coronation

of George III. In the company of his washerwoman and her sister, Banks danced, ate an “Elegant supper” and drank “all Kinds of Wines and Italian Liqueurs”. (109-10)

Besides socialising, Banks continued to botanise, but “the Season was so far advanced” that he could find no plants in blossom and many “were so far destroyed by cold” that collecting them was pointless. (117) Though he considered his study of the flora around St. John’s to be incomplete, Banks was, on the whole, pleased with his efforts. On the eve of his departure from St. John’s he wrote: “I have vanity enough to believe that northward not many [plants] will be found to have Escapd my observation.” (117)

Joseph Banks left Newfoundland on the 28th of October. He took with him a box of earth with plants in it, another box of seeds and many more specimens dried between the leaves of the plant press. Preserved in the keg of spirits were the skins of birds: sparrows, ptarmigan, spruce grouse and teal. The porcupine also returned to England, possibly alive. (Lysaght 1971, 172)

Latitudes correct within a mile of the truth

On the 13th of July 1765 the H.M.S. *Niger* captained by Thomas Adams sailed into Croque Harbour. Joseph Banks was not on board. He was still in London. At Croque Captain Adams met with four men named John Hill, Christian Drachart, Jens Haven and Christian Andrew Schloozer. They were brothers of the *Unites Fratrum*, the same organisation whose headquarters were situated around the corner from Banks’ London home. The missionaries were on their way to the northern coast of Labrador where they

would be “promoting the knowledge of the True God & of the Religion of our blessed Lord & Saviour Jesus Christ among the heathen” (these being the Inuit). (187)⁶⁹

They had been in Croque for more than a month waiting on a schooner that was to take them to the heathens. Captain Adams was bound for Chateau Bay and, failing the arrival of the schooner, offered to transport the Moravians to Labrador. Three days later the *Niger* sailed with the missionaries on board.

That night brothers Hill and Darchart dined with Captain. Over dinner he proposed that two missionaries “should stay with him in Pitts’ Harbour to wait the coming of the Indians, while the other two went with the Schooner to explore the coast”.

This the brothers could not do.

Br Hill told him we could not separate; the intention of our expedition would be entirely frustrated thereby as each of us had our proper department, & it was not only expected that we should speak with the Indians but also make proper Draughts of those places we touch at. Sr Thomas said our making Draughts was needless the Government had employ’d Capt’n Cook for this purpose, Br. Hill told him, as he desired it, he would acquaint his Breth’n with it; but was pretty sure they were as much determin’d as he not to separate. (195)

The Capt’n Cook the Thomas Adams spoke of was James Cook, a Lieutenant of the Royal Navy. While brothers Hill and Darchart dined with the Captain of the *Niger*, Cook was mapping the coastline of Fortune Bay, on the south coast of Newfoundland.

Cook’s career was different from that of Banks. He was neither rich nor educated. He was the son of a Yorkshire agricultural labourer, and left school at twelve to work upon the merchant ships that plied the North Sea.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ The quotes are from an account of the voyage of four missionaries sent by the *Unitas Fratrum* to the Esquimaux on the coast of Labrador that was sent by the missionaries to the Lords for Trades and Plantations. The full text is published by Lysaght as a supplementary document to the “Journal of Joseph Banks” (1971), pages 193-221. The pagination is Lysaght’s.

In 1755, at the age of twenty-seven, Cook, anticipating being pressed into service, volunteered for the Royal Navy. He became an able seaman aboard the *Eagle*, a ship of sixty guns under the command of Hugh Palliser. This was the same Hugh Palliser who, eleven years later, hosted Joseph Banks at the coronation ball in St. John's.

In 1759, Cook was appointed Master aboard the *Mercury*. The *Mercury* was then directed to sail to Canada, where Cook took part in the British assaults on Louisbourg and Quebec. Afterwards he was promoted to the position of Master aboard the *Northumberland*, the flagship of the North American squadron. It was in this capacity that Cook first visited Newfoundland in 1762.

By this time Cook had become an accomplished mapmaker. He was introduced to military surveying techniques in 1758 by Samuel Holland, whom Cook met while walking along a beach in Cape Breton. During the summers that followed he developed his practical skills under the tutelage of Captain John Simcoe, surveying the shores of the Saint Lawrence River and the coasts of Nova Scotia. During the winters he lived in Halifax where he studied mathematics, astronomy and geometry.

In Newfoundland Cook applied these skills to chart the harbours of the Southern Shore and Conception Bay. He returned to England that winter, delivered his charts to the Admiralty, was paid off, married and settled in the dock-lands of east London.

He did not stay in London long. After the treaty of 1763, the problem of administering the fishery in Newfoundland became acute. According to Charles Graves, the then Governor of Newfoundland, the problem of effective administration was a

⁷⁰ The account of the early career of James Cook is based on the entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* (1901, pages 991-5), H. Carrington's *Life of Captain Cook* (1954, pages 1-35) and the Bibliographic sketch contained in Lysaght's introduction to Banks' journal (1971, pages 67-71). Details concerning cartographic work in Newfoundland come from R. A. Skelton and R. V. Tooley's bibliography in the *Marine Surveys of James Cook in North America* (1967), Skelton's *Captain Cook after two hundred years* (1969), the second chapter of Carrington's biography of Cook (pages 35-42), Chapter four of Beaglehole's (1974) biography of Captain Cook (1954, pages 60-98), and, in particular, William Whiteley's *James Cook in Newfoundland* (1975).

problem of knowledge, or, more precisely, a lack thereof. In March of 1763 Graves made a representation to the Board of Trade, arguing that:

the imperfect Returns hitherto made to the Governors of Newfoundland have been chiefly owing to their want of a Secretary, Surveyor, or other Person, capable of collecting Information, keeping regular accounts and making Draughts of Coasts and Harbours, for which services there has never been any allowances, and that such assistance is now become more necessary to the Governor of Newfoundland, by the enlargement of his Government, and his instructions to report as accurately as he can the conditions, fisherys, and other material particulars of a country at present little known. We beg leave to humbly submit to your Majesty, whether it may not be expedient that such an allowance should be made.

Graves already knew Cook's charts of the eastern coasts of Newfoundland and in early April the two men met to discuss the terms of Cook's employment as a surveyor. These arrangements were formalised by the Admiralty in a letter dated the 19th of April, which directed Cook "to go to Newfoundland ... in order to be employed in making surveys of the Coast & Harbours of that Island, and in making Draughts and Charts thereof" for which he was to "be allowed Ten shillings a day".⁷¹ Cook hired a draughtsman from the office of ordnance and supplied himself with all the instruments that he required, with the bill being sent to the secretary of the Admiralty.

There were delays. The wheels of bureaucracy turned slowly, and the crew of Graves' ship the *Antelope*, which lay at Spithead, mutinied. Finally, on the 15th of May, the *Antelope* set sail for Newfoundland with Cook amongst the company.

Once in Newfoundland, Cook was directed to "proceed without a moment's loss of time" to the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, which the English were on the point of "Delivering to the French" in keeping with the terms of the recent treaty. Upon finishing

⁷¹ "Representation of Charles Graves to the Board of trade", 29 March 1763, quoted in Beaglehole (1974), page 64.

this survey, Cook was made Master aboard the schooner *Grenville*, and sailed to the Northern Peninsula and the Straits of Belle Isle, visiting Quirpon, Croque, Noddy Harbour and Chateau Bay.

Graves was impressed. In a report to the Admiralty he lauded Cook for producing charts that would demonstrate “how extremely erroneous the present draughts are and how dangerous to ships that sail by them, and how generally beneficial to navigation the work now in hand will be when finished”. “Indeed,” Graves concluded, “I have no doubt that in a year or two more of seeing a perfectly good chart of Newfoundland and an exact survey of most of the good harbours.”⁷²

In 1764 Cook’s old commander, Hugh Palliser, succeeded Graves as Governor of Newfoundland. The Lords of the Admiralty ordered the new Governor to:

employ ... Mr Cook in surveying such harbours and parts of the coast, and in making fair and correct Charts and Draughts of the same as you judge most necessary during the ensuing season, and so as soon as the season for surveying be over, you are to direct him to repair ... to Portsmouth and to transmit the Charts and Draughts to their Lordships.⁷³

In keeping with these orders, Palliser gave Cook the title of “marine surveyor of the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador”. He also promoted Cook to “master of a 6th rate”, and gave him command of the *Grenville*. This was an important development. Usually the surveyor was simply a mate aboard a ship captained by another, as Cook had been aboard the *Mercury*, *Northumberland* and *Grenville*. Now Cook was both surveyor and master, with command over a ship and a crew of twenty men. Moreover, this ship and its crew were reserved exclusively for the project of completing a scientific chart of the entire coast of Newfoundland.

⁷² Graves to the Admiralty, 20 October 1763. Quoted in Whiteley (1975), page 6.

For the next three summers Cook toured the Island, surveying its bays and harbours. Much of this survey⁷⁴ employed traditional nautical methods, which involved the careful plotting of the ship's course, and then the measurement of coastal features in relation to that course. When possible, however, Cook would work from land, conducting a meticulous trigonometric survey of the area, in keeping with the techniques being developed by military engineers such as Holland, and the staff at the ordnance survey office.

Working from his charts and notes, Cook's method of surveying can be summarised as follows: firstly, a company would go ashore and make camp. Then Cook "Measured a Base line" while others "fix'd Flaggs on the Different Island, & c".⁷⁵ Then, using the theodolite, he would measure the distance and angles between the baseline and the flagged points, thereby transforming the landscape into what Beaglehole (1974) describes as "a net of triangles anchored to fixed positions". (70) This net of triangles would then be inscribed on field boards that were used for soundings, the outlining of the coast and topographic measurements. Finally, using the quadrant, Cook would calculate the latitude of various headlands and so position his charts precisely upon the surface of the globe.

Cook's duties extended beyond map-making. Part of his job was, quoting from the orders given by Palliser to Cook, to note "everything that may be useful to trade and the navigation of His Majesty's Subjects in those parts", particularly "the beaches and places fit for stages and other conveniences for landing and drying fish as well as such as have been or may be used for that purpose". (Whiteley 1975, 10)

⁷³ Admiralty to Palliser, 2 May 1764. Quoted in Carrington, page 38.

⁷⁴ The details concerning Cook's survey methods are taken from Beaglehole (1974), pages 69, 70 and 80; and Whiteley, pages 11 and 12.

Accordingly, Cook's survey of the coast of Newfoundland included a description and assessment of each bay and harbour visited. He wrote of the Southwest coast as being "almost everywhere of an uneven craggy barren surface distinguished by hills and vallies, of great variety of height, depth, and extent". He noted that La Hune had a large beach "exposed to the open air which is a great advantage in curing fish". He admired the country around Bay Despair, finding "many thousand acres of land well clothed in with all sorts of wood peculiar to this country, such as pine, fir, birch, witchchazle, and kinds of spruce, etc". He was enthusiastic about the prospects of Belloram whose harbour "is allowed to be as good as any in Fortune Bay" and where "it is certain a fishery might be carried on here to good advantage". In contrast, he decided that Rencontre "affordeth nothing that will induce either shipping or fishermen to frequent it". (Whitley1975, 14-19)

Besides surveying and assessing the qualities of the harbours of Newfoundland, Cook made an astronomical observation. On the 5th of August 1766, while Joseph Banks was gathering plants at Croque, Cook was "at one the Burgeo Islands near Cape Ray, latitude 47° 36' 19", the south-west extremity of New-found-land". "[H]aving carefully rectified his quadrant, he waited for the eclipse of the sun; just a minute after the beginning of which he observed the zenith distance of the sun's upper limb 31° 57' 00"; and, allowing for refraction his semidiameter, the true zenith distance of the sun's centre 32° 13' 30", from which he concluded the eclipse to have begun at 0h 4' 48" apparent time, and by like process to have ended at 3h 45' 26" apparent time."⁷⁶

⁷⁵ The quotes are from Cook's log entry of the 14th of July 1764, which was written while surveying Sacred Bay on the Northern Peninsula. They were taken from Beaglehole (1974), page 80.

⁷⁶ "An observation of an Eclipse of the Sun at the Island of New-found-land, August 5, 1766, by Mr. James Cook, with the Longitude of the Place of Observation deduced from it: communicated by J. Bevis, M.D.F.R.S." *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* (1767), 215-6.

Cook was employed on the survey of Newfoundland for three years. His summers were spent cruising the coast of the Island making measurements and notes. His winters were spent in London drafting the finished manuscripts. In the spring of 1768 the Navy removed Cook from Newfoundland survey, and gave him a new, more prestigious, assignment.

Though there is no record of any meeting, it is possible that Cook and Banks did cross paths in Newfoundland. The *Niger* and *Grenville* were both moored in St. John's on the 27th and 28th of October 1766. A. M. Lysaght argues that it would be likely that Cook and Banks, who, after all, shared an acquaintance with Governor Palliser, met during this time to discuss their respective tours of the Island's further shores. (1971, 47)⁷⁷

Even if they did not meet in person, it was through Newfoundland that Cook and Banks first came to know of each other. It seems that on leaving St. John's Banks entrusted some goods to one Andrew Wilkinson, who had succeeded Adams as the captain of the *Niger*, hoping that they may be traded for aboriginal artefacts. These artefacts, including some clothes and a canoe, were procured by Palliser, who in turn entrusted them to Cook for transport to London. Unfortunately, the *Grenville* ran ashore on her way into Deptford and some of the items were lost. Wilkinson wrote to Banks in December 1767 describing the tragic events, and suggesting that Banks visit Deptford to enquire whether any of his goods had been recovered.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Carrington and Beaglehole (1974) disagree on this point. Carrington notes the coincidence of both Banks and Cook being in Newfoundland at the same time, but simply asserts that "they did not meet". (41) Beaglehole, like Lysaght, deduces that Banks and Cook were both in St. John's of the twenty-seventh of October, but decides that it is "unlikely" they met at that time. (88)

⁷⁸ The full text of the letter from Wilkinson to Banks reads:

Sir, As my meeting with the Indians was very uncertain, The Cask of things you left on board of the *Niger* for Truck with 'em Mr Palliser took on board the Guernsey to Chatteaux, & I believe he has procure'd you some of their dresses & c. I'd got a Canoe for you which I sent home in the *Grenville* as she came to Deptford, but she Unluckily run on

It is not known whether Banks visited Deptford in search of his lost Canoe. It is certain that Banks and Cook did meet some six months later.

Taaro and Nuna visit the observatory

On the 3rd of June 1769 it was anticipated that Venus could, once again, be seen to pass before the Sun. On that day Joseph Banks awoke with the dawn. He was a long way from home. His town house in London and a country mansion were half a world away. On the 3rd of June Joseph Banks awoke to find himself upon an islet of white sand. This islet lay in the palm-fringed lagoon of a small tropical island, which in turn lay in the great blue expanse of the Pacific.

It was the transit of Venus, which had brought Joseph Banks to this place. The islet of white sand was an observatory. It had not been the night before. Then it had just been a coral rock in a blue lagoon. Then, soon after the break of day, Banks and Messrs. Gore and Monkhouse arrived, bringing with them a telescope and a clock. They placed the clock in a tent, pointed the telescope to the sky, and with that the islet was an observatory.

shore & it was wash'd over board & lost as I am told, tho I have not been able to see Mr Cook to ask him about it, nor I am afraid shan't as I am going into the Country but if you'll please to send to him he will let you know whether there are any hopes of getting it by Advertising which I thought off as it was drove ashore on the Essex coast I believe.

I am extremely sorry I have not been able to get you the Fish you gave me the drawing's off I've brought three of four Cappling of both sorts which have sent to your house in case bottle, the one which you sent was broke in coming down in the Chatham Boat the bottle they are in was full but the John's in coming round seem to have taken a fancy to the Liquor tho' the fish was in it. there is likewise two of the Roots of the Flowers you desir'd, & some of the Seeds of the Barren[s] Flower. All your Friends at St John's & on board the *Niger* desire to be remembered to you I was afraid we should have lost Mr. Blundell this voyage he was very ill. Mr. Williams come home in the Guernsey. I dined with him & Sr. Thomas the other day we were wishing for you, I hope you're a pleasant tour thro' Wales. I set off for [Yo]rkshire tomorrow. I am s[torn out? ailing] fore you come to Town, there [were--torn out] some dart etc. with the Canoe which I fancy can't be lost. Mr Cook lives I am told some where about Mile end, but the Vessel I believe is got up to Deptford [so] that I fancy it will be best to send to enquire on board her. Will any Essence of Spruce be acceptable if it please to send to Doctor Norton the Corner of Craven Street he will supply you. (Lysaght 1971, 55)

The transit of Venus may have been why Banks found himself so far from home, but he had little interest in astronomy. He was more interested in living things: plants, animals and people. So, even as the moment of conjecture approached, he bade farewell to his companions and “repaired to the Island” where he could, in his words, “do the double service of examining the natural produce and buying provisions for my companions who were engaged in so useful a work”. (vol. 1, 261)⁷⁹

He was not long at his morning’s labour when he received a kingly visit. This is the story of that visit as it is told in Banks’ journal:

At about eight a large quantity of provisions were procurd when I saw two boats coming towards the place where I traded; these I was told belonged to Taaro, the King of the Island who was coming to pay me a visit. As soon as the boats came near shore the people formd a lane; he landed bringing with him his sister Nuna and both came towards the tree under which I stood. I went out and met them and brought them very formaly into a circle I had made, into which I had before sufferd none of the natives come. Standing is not the fashion among these people, I must provide them a seat, which I did by unwrapping a turban of Indian cloth which I wore instead of a hat and spreading it upon the ground; upon this we all sat down and the kings present was brought Consisting of a hog, a dog and a quantity of Bread fruit Cocoa nuts &c. I immediately sent a canoe to the Observatory to fetch my present, an adze, a shirt and some beads with which his majesty seemd well satisfied. ... After the first Internal contact was over I went to my Companions at the observatory carrying with me Taaro, Nuna and some of their chief attendants; to them we shewd the planet upon the sun and made them understand that we came on purpose to see it. (vol 1, 261-2)

⁷⁹ The full text of the *Endeavour Journal of Joseph Banks* is available both in print and on the Internet. The print version is edited by J. C. Beaglehole. The version on the Internet is provided by the State Library of New South Wales, wherein are housed most of Banks’ papers (<http://www.slnsw.gov.au/Banks>). The passages quoted are from the version on the Internet that retains the pagination of the original journal.

Some few miles away, upon the island of Tahiti, James Cook also awaited the transit of Venus. He was now the Captain of the *Endeavour*, the ship that had carried Banks and ninety-five others from Plymouth to the South Pacific. Cook stood on a rocky promontory overlooking a beach of black sand. With him were two other men: Charles Green, who had formerly been an assistant at the Royal Observatory at Greenwich, and Daniel Solander, a young Swedish botanist.

The rocky promontory was an observatory. It had also been made into a fortress of earthen ramparts and wooden palisades. Two little cannons pointed towards the woods on the chance that the natives might emerge warlike from its green depths. Cook had named his little citadel "Fort Venus."

As an experienced surveyor and navigator, Cook was interested in astronomy. Unlike Banks, he watched the transit of Venus with great attention. This is his report of the event:

This day proved as favourable to our purpose as we could wish. Not a cloud was seen the whole day, and the air was perfectly clear, so as that we had every advantage we could desire in observing the whole of the passage of the planet Venus over the suns disk. We distinctly saw the Atmosphere or Dusty shade round the body of the planet, which very much disturbed the times of contact, particularly the two internal ones. Dr. Solander observed as well as Doctor Green and myself, and we differed from one another in observing the times of contact more than could be expected. (18)⁸⁰

There was only one other incident of note on the day of the transit. As Venus passed before the Sun some casks of nails were stolen from the hold of the *Endeavour*. A man named Archibald Wolf was found in possession of seven of the stolen nails. The next

⁸⁰ The full text of the *Endeavour Journal of James Cook* has been published by the Hakluyt Society (1955). J. C. Beaglehole is, again, the editor. The passages quoted come from an abridged version of the full text edited by Christopher Lloyd and published under the title *The Voyages of Captain James Cook around the world* (1959) and are paginated accordingly.

day he received two-dozen lashes. This punishment he bore “without impeaching any of his accomplices”. (Banks vol. 1, 263)

After the transit of Venus the *Endeavour* did not go straight home. Cook had secret orders from the Lords of Admiralty. These orders were to find “a continent, or a land of great extent” which it was believed lay somewhere in the South Pacific. Once this land had been found Cook was to

carefully observe the nature of the Soil, and the Products thereof; the Beasts and Fowls that inhabit or frequent it, the fishes that are to be found in the Rivers or Upon the Coast and in what Plenty; and in case you find any Mines, Minerals or valuable stones, you are to bring home Specimens of each, as also such Specimens of Seed and Tress, Fruits and Grains as you may be able to collect and Transmit them to our Secretary, that We may cause proper Examination and Experiments be made of them. (Beaglehole 1955, cxiv)

So the company of the *Endeavour* set off in search of *Terra Australis Incognita*, sailing westward upon latitude set down by the Admiralty.

At six in the morning on the 19th of April 1770 a “new land” was espied by one Lieutenant Hicks. In his journal Banks writes: “With the first light this morn the Land was seen at 10 it was pretty plainly observed; it had sloping hills covered in part with trees or bushes, but interspersed with large tracts of tress.” (Banks vol. 2, 237)

They sailed northward searching for a haven. To Banks the country they passed resembled “the back of a lean Cow, covered in general with long hair, but nevertheless where her scraggy hip bones have stuck out farther than they ought accidental rubs and knocks have intirely bard them of their share of covering”. On the night of the 21st five fires burned upon the land. On the day of the 22nd “we stood near enough to discern 5 people who appeard through our glasses to be enormously black”. (Banks vol. 2, 239)

On the morning of the 28th, Banks writes, “an opening like a harbour appeared and we stood directly in for it. A small smoak arising from a very barren place directed our glasses that way and we soon saw about 10 people, who on our approach left the fire and retired to a little eminence where they could conveniently see the ship.” Two amongst this company “were painted with white”. “Each held a wooden weapon about 2” long, in shape much resembling a scymeter.” “These two seemed to talk earnestly together, at times brandishing their weapons ... in a token of defiance.” On the beach men fished with spears. The *Endeavour* sailed by, “yet they scarce lifted their eyes from their employment”. Perhaps, mused Banks, “that attentive to their business and deafened by the noise of the surf they neither saw nor heard her go past them.” (Banks vol. 2, 243-5)

At one o’clock they anchored “abreast of a small village of about 6 or 8 houses”. An old woman carrying sticks appeared from the wood, followed by three children. “She looked at the ship but expressed neither surprize nor concern.” A fire was lightened. Canoes came in from fishing. “The people landed, hauld up their boats and began to dress their dinner to all appearance totally unmovd at us, tho we were little more than ½ a mile of them.” Looking through their “glasses” the Europeans saw the natives to be wholly naked. “Myself,” writes Banks, “to the best of my judgement plainly discerned that the woman did not copy our mother Eve even in the fig leaf.” (vol. 2, 246-7)

After dinner, Captain Cook resolved to lead a party ashore “in hopes of speaking with” the aborigines. Two men resisted their landing. The men threw rocks and spears. Cook fired balls of lead, hitting one man in the leg, and the natives withdrew. The village was deserted save one hut in which children cowered behind shields and pieces of bark. The Europeans “threw into the house to them some beads, ribbands, cloths & c. as presents and went away”. They returned to the hut to find the children had fled but

“every individual thing which we had thrown to them” had been left untouched. (Cook, 64-5; Banks vol. 2, 247-8)

In the days that followed Bank and Solander explored the country around the bay. They began by venturing “a little way into the woods” where, they “found many plants, but saw nothing like people”. Then they rowed to a small island to search for shells. Then, on the 1st of May, the two botanists “resolvd to make an excursion into the countrey”. They walked until they “compleatly tired” themselves. The land was swampy. Trees were sparse, but “every place was covered with vast quantities of grass”. They saw only one Indian, who ran away, but there were many “houses and places where they slept upon the grass without the least shelter”. There the explorers left “beads ribbands & c.”.

This was a place filled with wonders. Everywhere strangeness abounded: strange creatures and strange plants. Description failed. As the landscape itself, which “resembles something of the Moores in England,” the fauna of this country was similar to that of Europe yet wholly other. Things were identifiable only by analogy. They “saw one quadruped about the size of a Rabbit,” and “the dung of a large animal that had fed on grass which much resembled that of Stag; and the footsteps of an animal clawd like a dog or wolf and as large as the later; and of a small animal whose feet were like those of a polecat or a weesel”. Overhead the trees “abounded very much with Loryquets and Cocatoos”. These they shot and made into a pie. (Banks vol. 2, 252-3)

Banks and Solander spent their days collecting as many specimens of this marvellous flora and fauna as possible. Dead animals were stuffed or preserved in spirit. Dead plants were interleaved between the pages of a press. What could not be shot or pulled from the ground was painted by an artist named Sydney Parkinson.

Soon their collection had “grown so immensely large that it was necessary that some extraordinary care should be taken of them lest they should spoil in their books”.

Banks therefore decided to carry “all the drying paper, near 200 Quires of which the larger part was full, ashore, and spreading them upon a sail in the sun kept them in this manner exposed the whole day, often turning them and sometimes turning the Quires in which were plants inside out”. In the bay the Aborigines fished, seemingly without regard to the strange doings ashore. “One Indian, may be prompted by curiosity landed, hauled up his canoe and went towards them; he stayed about half an hour and then launched his boat and went off.” “Probably,” muses Banks, “that time had been spent in watching behind the trees.” (Banks vol. 2, 255-6)

On the morning of the 6th the *Endeavour* left the harbour. The Europeans had named it Stingray Bay, for the profusion of these fish that dwelt therein. It was a few months later that Cook diplomatically renamed it Botany Bay, in recognition of “[t]he great quantity of plants Mr. Banks and Dr. Solander found in this place”. (Cook, 67)

The first night at sea they dined upon a stingray and its tripe (the fish itself was adjudged “not quite so good as scate,” but the tripe was “excellent”), accompanied by “a dish of the leaves of *tetragonia cornuta* boiled, which eat as well as spinage or very near it”. (Banks vol. 2, 260)

The voyage of the *Endeavour* was to last yet another year. The ship was leaking, and the crew was so “far gone with the longing for home” that “the physicians have gone so far as to esteem a disease under the name Nostalgia”. They spent three months in the Dutch Port of Batavia, on the Island of Java, making repairs. The rain poured down. Malaria and dysentery were rife. Banks, Solander and most of the crew fell ill. They left Java “in the condition of a hospital ship”. Across the Indian Ocean to Cape Town they sailed. Below deck there was lingering death. Twenty-six bodies were lowered into the sea, including those of the artist Sydney Parkinson and Charles Green, the former assistant at the Greenwich Observatory. (Cook, 94-8)

A fresh gale blew from the Southwest and the *Endeavour* ran briskly up the English Channel. At three in the afternoon she “passed the Bill of Portland,” and “at seven Perverell Point”. At six in the morning she “passed Beachy Head at the distance of four or five miles; at ten Dungeness, at the distance of two miles,” at noon she “was abreast of Dover”. At three o’clock in the afternoon on the 13th of July 1771 she was anchored in the Downs. (Cook, 99)

Imagined geographies

We have then two sets of voyages: the first describing an island in the north Atlantic the second describing the islands of the southern Pacific. Of the two sets of voyages the second is much more celebrated. It is for their expeditions to the Pacific that Cook and, to a lesser extent, Banks are remembered. In contrast, their trips to Newfoundland are little discussed. Histories of the Island hardly mention the visits of Banks and Cook. Similarly, the biographies of these eminent men of Empire quickly pass over their time spent in Newfoundland as a mere preface to their greater exploits.⁸¹

The voyage of the *Endeavour* is historically significant; on this there is general agreement. There is less agreement as to the nature of its significance.

It was undoubtedly an important event in the lives of James Cook and Joseph Banks. Before the *Endeavour* sailed they had been men of some standing but little consequence. Banks had been a rich man about town with a fashionable interest in the study of nature.

Cook was a minor officer in the Royal Navy who had displayed a facility for navigation and map-making. They were nothing special. The voyage of the *Endeavour* made them special. On their return to England they were celebrities. In their different ways both parlayed their newly found celebrity into glittering careers.

In August 1771 Cook was promoted to the rank of commander. Less than a year later he was leading another expedition to the South Seas. This time he was away for four years. The coast of the Antarctic was charted, as were numerous Pacific islands. Cook was again promoted on his return and not another year passed before he volunteered to command an expedition in search of a northern passage round America. They never found the passage but did map the West Coast of North America. On the way back they stopped at Hawaii. The natives seemed friendly enough but this changed. Perhaps they thought him a god who broke the godly rules, perhaps they simply thought him over-fond of flogging Hawaiian thieves. Either way the locals became angry with the captain and his crew. The theft of a boat brought things to a head. Marines fired shots at a crowd of Hawaiians. The natives attacked the marines and Cook was clubbed and stabbed to death.

His martyrdom made Cook into a famous historical figure. If he was not a god to the Hawaiians he became a god within the pantheon of "Great British Explorers". Statutes were erected. Numerous biographies have been written. Anthropologists have argued over the cause of his death.

⁸¹ There are, of course, exceptions. R. A. Skelton, who confesses "an immoderate admiration for the Surveyor of Newfoundland" (1969, 12), has authored several works concerning Cook's mapping of the Island and there is Lysaght's monumental publication and annotation of all printed materials having to do with Banks' tour of Newfoundland and Labrador. Skelton himself, however, grumbles that the biographers of Cook have generally grossly underestimated the significance of Cook's tour of Newfoundland. He points out that when commissioned to the *Endeavour* he had been to sea for most almost twenty-two years, and had less than eleven years to live. Yet all the major biographies to date (1969) devoted only a few pages to the first two-thirds of his life, while discussing the last third at great length. (12) The same can be said of the biographies of Joseph Banks. The thirty-one page entry in Lord Brougham's *Lives of Men of Letters and Science* (1846), for instance, devotes all of four lines to Banks' visit to Newfoundland, less than a half of one percent of the total text.

Banks never achieved the heroic status accorded to Cook. However, the prestige of his South Seas adventure coupled with his great wealth and influence enabled Banks to become the most important British naturalist of his day. Banks' importance had little to do with his work as a botanist, for, although a tireless collector, he published little and made no contribution to the ongoing theoretical debates concerning the classification of living things; rather, Banks' importance lay in his organisational ability.

In the name of advancing the study of natural history, Banks created what David Miller calls, a "learned empire" (1996, 22). The provinces of this empire were many. Banks was president of the Royal Society from 1778 until his death in 1820. He was a trustee of the British Museum for the same period. He was founding member of the Linnaean Society. And, as a personal friend of King George III, he was charged with the transformation of the royal park at Kew into a botanical garden. At the centre of the Banksian empire was his house at Soho Square, with its herbarium, "noble library and precious collection of maps, drawings, and engravings, connected with botany, and various branches of natural history". There, "[f]oreigners as well as natives were ever his welcome guests, and it was delight to be surrounded by the cultivators and the promoters of science in all its branches". (Brougham 1871, 213)

This empire constituted a complex network for the collection, cataloguing, dissemination and exhibition of specimens of flora and fauna. Save for a trip to Iceland, Banks never made another voyage of botanical discovery. Others did the travelling for him, most of whom, it seems, were Scots with medical degrees. John Masson made several trips to South Africa collecting plants for gardens at Kew. Archibald Menzies went around the world as a ship's surgeon, gathering specimens according to Banks' instructions. Mungo Park was sent to Sumatra and then to Africa where he searched for the source of the Niger. They returned bearing sketches, dried plants and paper packages of seeds. These were taken to Soho Square where they were displayed, discussed and

distributed to the learned societies, museums and gardens of London. (Cameron 1952, 63-99; Miller 1996)

The voyage of the *Endeavour* has, however, taken on a significance that exceeds the careers of the “autocrat of the philosophers” and the great explorer. There seems a consensus that Cook’s entry into the south Pacific marked the beginning of something, and that after 1769 things were different from what they had been before. It is less clear, however, what exactly the voyage of the *Endeavour* marked the beginning of.

The popular perception of Cook as the discoverer of Australia and many islands of the Pacific has been repeatedly exposed as a historical “myth”. Various Dutch, English and French mariners had sailed these waters and touched upon these lands years, if not decades, before Cook rounded Cape Horn.⁸²

Amongst academic historians it is more common to write of Cook as “opening the Pacific”. (Williamson 1956) The idea of opening the Pacific is a slightly curious one. It would seem to indicate that Cook was at the vanguard of some fleet of European imperialists who followed shortly in his wake. This was not the case. There was no scramble for the Pacific. Seventeen years passed before the British returned to Botany Bay with a cargo of thieves and Irish rebels.

There was no scramble for the Pacific because there was not much that would inspire scrambling. While *Terra Australis* was still *Incognita* it could be imagined as a territory “as Rich, as fruitful & as capable of Improvement, as any which have been hitherto found out, either in the East Indies or the West”. The land like a back of lean cow did not measure up to such imperial fantasies. As J. C. Beaglehole observes:

If we contemplate these voyages of Cook against the background of geographic thought, or as exercises in the strategy of the empire, we may

consider their results as primarily negative. There was no continent. There was no northwest passage. There was to be no grand struggle for the domination of the lakes and forests and fertile plains of the *Terra Australis*, no deployment of armies or the corruptions of a massive trade of the disembowelment of gold mines, or the campaigning of humane men for first decencies. Europe must be satisfied with the exploitation of America and Asia and Africa. (1955, cxx)

When historians write of Cook opening the Pacific they are, then, referring to something other than conquest and exploitation. They are referring to knowledge. This knowledge takes a specific form. That form is the map. All writers agree that the most important thing to come out of the voyage of the *Endeavour* and Cook's subsequent trips to the Pacific was a series of accurate charts of this previously mysterious ocean. Before Cook the Pacific had been composed of fragments and conjecture, of islands discovered and lost, of mountains seen on the horizon, of coastlines that seemed without end. "With Cook," writes Beaglehole, "the islands solidified." The "vast lacunae were converted to essential form, on which positions were accurately laid down, in the context of which the errors and contradictions of two centuries could be co-ordinated and understood." (1955, cxxii)

Nor was it only coastlines that were mapped. The stars and planets, plants, animals and people were all given form as lines of black ink inscribed on white paper. In his biographical sketch of Joseph Banks, Lord Henry Brougham describes the significance of the voyage of the *Endeavour* as follows:

The results of the voyage were highly important. The observations necessary for ascertaining the solar parallax had been made with perfect success. The manner of the natives in the Society Islands had been

⁸² For a survey of Pacific exploration before Cook refer to Beaglehole's introduction to *The Journals of Captain Cook* (1955) pages i-c and the first two chapters of Williamson's *Cook and the opening of the Pacific* (1956).

examined, and the singular state of their society ascertained. Their products, vegetable, mineral, and animal, as well as those of New Holland, New Zealand, and New Guinea, had been fully explored, chiefly by Mr. Banks and his learned companion. The coast of New Holland had been thoroughly surveyed as well as the whole of New Zealand. (1846, 211)

Brougham's language is revealing. He writes of observations made with perfect success, natives examined, flora and fauna fully explored and whole coasts thoroughly surveyed. This was a knowledge without lacunae, a comprehensive cartographic project of vision and writing that left no terrain uncharted. The voyage of the *Endeavour* brought an entire exotic world into being and transported it back to London as words and drawings, dried plants and pickled fish, to be laid before the astonished gaze of the British public.

Generally, as Brougham or Beaglehole, we write of knowledge in terms of results. Accounts of Cook's voyages usually begin with a description of the state of "our" knowledge of the Pacific before 1769. The stature of Cook as a historical figure is then measured by what he added to that knowledge. James A. Williamson, for example, summarises the significance of Cook as follows:

After two hundred and fifty years the solved problems of the Pacific were little as compared to the unsolved. And then came a great practical genius, James Cook, who cleared up all the major uncertainties in ten years of effort, and left but little details to be rounded off by his successors. (1956, 5)

There is an assumption being made here. It is supposed that those who sailed to the South Seas before 1769 did so in order to solve the "problem of the Pacific". This assumption is culturally and historically situated. It is a uniquely modern assumption that informs a uniquely modern rendering of the history of exploration.

This is history narrated as the progress of knowledge. At the heart of this narration is the unknown. The unknown is constituted as gaps within "our" knowledge, a series of

empty spaces like blank pages in an encyclopaedia or uncharted terrain upon a map. The voyage into the unknown becomes, to quote Barbara Stafford (1984), a “voyage into substance” whereby, recalling Beaglehole’s words, “vast lacunae were converted to essential form”. The hero of this history is the individual, the “practical genius” possessed of the skill, bravery and imagination required to venture beyond the limits of what is known and in so doing extend the dominion of our knowledge.

This version of history is not wrong, but it does obscure an important point. The point is that not all who travelled to the South Seas did so in order to solve the problem of the Pacific. It is indeed likely that they did not even conceive of the problem of the Pacific in the way that modern historians do. The idea that an overseas voyage be undertaken in order to collect as much information as possible about an unknown region dates back to the eighteenth century. This is why Cook accomplished so much more than those who had preceded him. The specific and stated purpose of his expedition to the south Pacific was to gather facts. Originally the intention was to observe the transit of Venus; however, with the secret orders of the Admiralty and the addition of Banks and his entourage the voyage of the *Endeavour* was transformed into a more general mission of scientific discovery.

Recently geographers writing about the history of their discipline have argued that the voyage of the *Endeavour* was significant precisely because it inaugurated an age of scientific travel, thereby laying the foundations for the emergence of geography as an objective science based on direct observation.

David Livingstone, for example, declares that “the transformation of circumnavigation from hit-and-miss adventuring to orchestrated expedition owed much to the dedication of one man – Captain James Cook.” What distinguished Cook’s first voyage was a “passion for precision”: “mathematical precision in astronomical observation, in cartographic accuracy; and in scientific accuracy.” (1993, 125-6)

Similarly, Robert Stoddard and David Wishart, in a self-conscious exercise of historical revisionism, date the advent of a science of geography “to the year 1769 – when Cook first entered the Pacific”. “Suddenly,” they write, “empirical science displaced old concerns ... starting a great European naval expeditionary tradition, which has only begun to falter in the last few years.” (1986, 33)

Before all else this emergence of scientific travel as a mode of imperial enterprise was predicated upon and precipitated a transformation in the ways in which Europeans envisioned and inscribed other landscapes and peoples. The cartographic gaze, which sought to mathematize geographic features by describing them in two dimensions, was extended to the description of plants, animals and peoples. As Bernard Smith, in his seminal study of *European Vision and the South Pacific* (1960), argues, the significance of the “opening of Pacific” was not simply a matter of an increase in the quality and kind of knowledge that “we” Europeans possessed. More profoundly, the voyage of the Endeavour was emblematic of a shifting relationship between the individual and nature. For Smith, this shift was fundamentally a transformation in aesthetic categories and, by extension, styles of artistic expression. The “increasing knowledge” of the South Seas, Smith declares, “became a most enduring challenge to the supremacy of neo-classical values in art and thought.” (1960, 1) Prior to Cook’s first voyage to the Pacific “the empirical approach to nature, despite its standing in the philosophy of science, played little part in the theory and practice of landscape painting.” (1960, 3) With Cook’s voyage and the increasing employment of artists on scientific expeditions this changed. Smith describes this change as follows:

Neo-classical theory had stressed the supreme importance of the unity of mood and expression the highest forms of landscape art. Analytical observation, however, tended toward the disruption of such unity, forcing the artist to look at the world as a world of disparate things. But these

“things”, the rocks, plants and animals acquired a new significance under the pressure of scientific enquiry. ... it became increasingly clear that certain essential relationships existed in the world of nature between certain types of rocks, plants, animals and climates. These ecological relationships were quite different from the relationships imposed by the neo-classical landscape-painter in the search for a unity of mood or expression. They were only to be revealed by a careful empirical study of nature and were the object of scientific inquiry. Under the influence of science, however, ecological principles began to determine increasingly the forms of unity which the landscape-painter imposed on his material. (1960, 4)

Of course, neither Livingstone nor Stoddard and Wishart claim that Cook single-handedly invented scientific travel. “Certainly,” writes Livingstone, “Cook’s engagement in scientific mission had its predecessors,” amongst whom he mentions John Byron, “who was assigned the task of seeking for unknown lands in the Atlantic Ocean,” and Louis Antoine, the Comte de Bougainville, who entered the Pacific two years before Cook. “Still,” Livingstone argues, “it was with Cook’s three expeditions between 1768 and 1780 that the tradition of scientific travel became firmly established.” Regarding Stoddard’s history of geography, Derek Gregory remarks that “[t]he apparent precision of the date is deceptive, since in many ways the invocation of Cook is figurative: He is made to stand for a cluster of overlapping intellectual traditions.” (1994, 17)

The voyage of the *Endeavour* is, then, significant as a historical marker. What it marks is the emergence of new relationship between science, travel and empire. This relationship did not begin with Cook’s entry into the Pacific, but, to recall Livingstone’s words, it was with Cook’s expeditions that “the tradition of scientific travel became firmly established.”

It became firmly established in three senses. Firstly, in a practical sense Cook’s voyage became a template for subsequent scientific expeditions. In his wake of the

Endeavour sailed other floating laboratories. “These were provided,” as Bruno Latour describes:

as scientific satellites today, with all available scientific instruments and skill: they were given better clocks to keep the time, and thus measure the longitude more accurately: they were given compasses to measure the latitude; astronomers had been enlisted to mend and tend the clocks and to man the instruments; botanists, mineralogists and naturalists were on board to gather specimens; artists had been recruited to sketch and paint pictures of those of the specimens that were too heavy or too fragile to survive the return trip; all the books and travel accounts that had been written on the Pacific had been stocked in the ship’s library to see how they compared with what the travellers would see. (1987, 215)

Secondly, in an administrative sense, with the voyage of *The Endeavour* the work of the surveyor and the natural historian became integral to the governance of Britain’s expanding and increasingly unwieldy empire. James Cook’s marine survey of Newfoundland was an early instance of the British seeking to resolve the problems of imperial administration through the application of scientific techniques of observation and inscription. However, as John Gascoigne (1994, 1998) argues, Joseph Banks played a prominent role in weaving together the networks of influence that allowed the natural sciences to become a technique of British statecraft. In a time when, to quote Gascoigne, “[t]he responsibilities and aspirations of the State were ... often greater than its own formal bureaucratic resources” (1998, 4) a network of more informal connections, many of them created by or including Joseph Banks, allowed the gentleman-naturalist to become a key figure in directing and defining imperial policy. (Gascoigne 1998, 178-185) These networks enabled both the funding and organisation of scientific expeditions and, more importantly, they linked the knowledge created by these expeditions to the cause of colonial administration. (Gascoigne 1998, 112) The provinces of Banks’ “learned empire” – the house on Soho Square, the British Museum and, in particular,

Kew Gardens – were, to paraphrase Gascoigne, virtual laboratories of schemes for imperial improvement. (1998, 112) In many ways this was simply extending the “scientific” approach taken to the improvement of British agriculture (by, amongst others, Joseph Banks in East Anglia) and extending it to British possessions overseas with a view to improving their commercial viability. (Gascoigne 1994, 196-206)

Thirdly, in an ideological sense, accounts of Cook’s south sea adventures had a profound influence upon the popular imagining of Empire and imperial identities. Again one must be careful of being overly deterministic. As Livingstone points out “Cook’s seafaring ventures were neither conceived or executed in a ideological vacuum,” and, indeed, “the marriage of science and imperialism was so commonplace as to be conventional at the time.” (1993, 126) However, the voyage of the *Endeavour* seems to have been central in shaping new forms of colonial imagination and desire. Indeed, it is remarkable how often the voyages of Cook are cited as an influence upon the careers of nineteenth-century scientific adventurers. Again and again we are told the story of how the budding naturalists first came to dream of overseas travel after reading of the castaway Crusoe and the heroic Captain Cook.

With this in mind we will return to Newfoundland, where Cook and Banks may have crossed paths a few years before their voyage to the South Seas, to consider how these new forms of subjectivity and imperial practice were realized in the ways in which the Yorkshire sailor and the London gentlemen envisioned the landscape of the island.

Crusoe Hall

In chapter two we described the voyages of Tudor adventurers to the new-found lands. We showed that the narratives of these expeditions were marked by an absence of description. This did not mean, as some historians have argued, that a practical first

hand knowledge of the New World was unimportant. Quite the contrary, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century authors of discovery went to considerable lengths to ensure their readers that their accounts of the New World were based upon the sober and considered opinion of those who had actually surveyed these lands. What it does mean, however, was that this knowledge was not narrated as visual experience. In simple terms, Tudor adventurers and advocates of plantation may have told their readers what things were to be found in the Americas. They did not however tell their readers what they saw while sailing along the coasts and walking through the forests of these unknown and undiscovered lands.

In chapter three we said that something important happened in the years between the voyages of the *Golden Hind* and the *Niger*. That something was the enlightenment. We argue that during the enlightenment the ways in which European scholars went about writing a knowledge of the world changed. No longer did they know the world through ancient narratives, the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden or the Pliny's account of Atlantis; rather, they inscribed the world simply as it presented itself to the senses. At the centre of this mode of inscription was the act of observation, a process at once embodied and transcendent, whereby the objects of the universe reveal themselves to the eye of the scholar, who, cloistered from the influences of culture and history, and freed from the disorderly effects of the passions, was able to perceive the universe with a clear and unclouded mind.

In Newfoundland we marked this transformation in the inscription of knowledge with the visit of John Winthrop. We said that John Winthrop was a scientist: a man who came to Newfoundland not to make money or to extend the dominion of King or country, but to make an observation and to transport that observation back to Massachusetts. This observation was, in itself, a treasure. Not an object of value like gold and tree so straight and tall that they may be made into masts, but a piece of

knowledge the acquisition of which was of both practical and symbolic significance. Practically, it would allow for the creation of better and more accurate maps, which, in turn, would allow the sailors of the new colonies to exercise greater control over the waters of the northeast Atlantic. Symbolically, it would mark the former colony's status as a nation equal to those of Europe.

Returning to the coincidence of Joseph Banks and James Cook touring the coast of Newfoundland a few years before they embarked on their celebrated voyage to the South Seas, we may consider how the writing of Newfoundland changed in the wake of the emergence of empiricist and rationalist approaches to the study of the universe. In so doing it is important to realise that Joseph Banks quite self-consciously located his own endeavours within the history of European knowledge and adventure.

Joseph Banks never wrote an autobiography. In his high age, however, he was given to telling stories about his early years. These stories formed a corpus of Banksian folklore, passing by word of mouth between friends and from father to son, until they found their way into the biographies of Banks written after his death in 1820.

Three of these stories are of particular significance in the context of this discussion.

The first of these concerns the origins of Banks' interest in botany. Banks was fourteen at that time, and attending Eton. He had gone swimming with his fellow students. On returning to the riverbank he found himself alone. He dressed and strolled homeward along a country lane. It was a beautiful summer evening. Along the side of the lane bloomed a profusion of flowers. The sight of the flowers delighted Banks, and moved him to exclaim: "How beautiful! Would it not be far more reasonable to make me learn the nature of these plants than the Greek or Latin I am confined to." Thereafter Banks, who had previously been an indifferent scholar, applied himself with vigour to the study of nature, learning all he could from the scant sources that were available.

(Brougham 1846, 200)

The second of these anecdotes is set four years later, when Banks was a student at Oxford. Many considered Banks a poor scholar, for he cared little for the study the classics. When he entered a room where his fellow students were debating classical points, they would say, "Here is Banks, but he knows nothing of Greek." Banks would not reply, but he would think to himself, "I shall soon beat you in a kind of knowledge I think infinitely more important." He was soon proved right. The students of classics, when confounded by some point of natural history would say, "We must go to Banks." (Brougham 1846, 202)

The final anecdote is from 1768, when Banks was preparing to join the company of the *Endeavour*. Several of his acquaintances, it seems, were against the idea. The naturalist Gilbert White, for one, while "filled with wonder" at Banks' "contempt of dangers" and "love of excelling in his favourite studies" could not "divest himself of some degree of solicitude for this person". "The circumnavigation of the globe," White mused, "is an undertaking that must shock the constitution of a person inured to seafaring life from childhood: & how much more that of landsman?" Echoing these concerns, some advised Banks to forego his voyage to the South Seas, and instead undertake the more conventional grand tour of the capitals of France and Italy. To this advice Banks replied, "Every blockhead does that; my grand Tour shall be one round the whole Globe." (Beaglehole 1962, 23)

These three stories are variations on a theme. In each Banks contrasts two forms of study. The first practised by his tutors at Eton and his fellow students at Oxford, was the study of classical culture and literature. The second, as practised by Banks himself, was the study of nature. This contrast, moreover, was not simply between different areas of interest. It was a contrast between two kinds of knowledge. The study of the classics sought to understand the world through the careful decoding of ancient texts. The study of nature sought understanding through the dispassionate observation of the world as it

presents itself to the eye. And while the student of the classics would make a pilgrimage to the sites of ancient wisdom, the student of nature would begin his studies by observing the flowers that grew along a country lane, and extend them by voyaging around the world.

In Newfoundland, the site of transformation within which Banks' locates his own intellectual history is realized as a place at once real and imagined: "Crusoe Hall".

Crusoe Hall was the name that Constantine Phipps, Banks' travelling companion and fellow old-Etonian, gave to his habitation at Croque. Nothing is known of this habitation, except its name, and that Phipps was dedicated to its completion, working "night & day" and letting "the Mosquitos eat more of him than he does any kind of food all through Eagerness." (Banks 1766, 34)

The name itself, however, is suggestive. "Crusoe Hall" was, of course, named after Daniel Defoe's hero, Robinson Crusoe. Defoe's novel, one of the first written in English, was published in 1719. It was, by the standards of the time, immensely popular. By 1758, when Banks and Phipps were friends at Eton, some forty editions of the novel had already been printed.

The significance of Robinson Crusoe extended beyond the number of copies printed and sold. The story of the lone European castaway on an uncharted island was, to paraphrase Michael Seidel, central to the "collective mind" of Western culture, and its resourceful protagonist became, in the words of John Richetti, "an archetypal personage of the last two hundred and fifty years of European consciousness." (1975, 23)

The "myth" of Crusoe was, in other words, a template for the bourgeois imagining of the world and one's place within it. Reflecting on the popularity of Defoe's novel, Sir Walter Scott wrote that "there is hardly an elf so devoid of imagination as not to have supposed himself a solitary island in which he could act Robinson Crusoe, were it but the corner of the nursery." (Phillips 1991, 23)

Like any good myth, Robinson Crusoe was an adaptable story. It meant different things to different people. Karl Marx (1867) read Crusoe as a meditation on the relationship between value, labour, and needs. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762) selected Defoe's novel as the text that would "provide the happiest introduction to natural education". The nineteenth-century biographer Walter Wilson (1830) saw the story of Crusoe on his Island as a celebration of "the Almighty as the source from whence man derives his capacities". The novelist George Borrow (1851) lauded Crusoe as a book "to which, from the hardy deeds which it narrates, and the spirit of strange and romantic enterprise which it tends to awaken, England owes many of her astonishing discoveries both by sea and land, and no inconsiderable part of her naval glory." (Phillips 1991, 35)

What, then, may have Robinson Crusoe meant to Banks and Phipps? Or, returning to Sir Walter Scott's image of the child in his nursery, in what ways did these two rich and educated young men imagine Newfoundland as a desert island, and themselves as castaways living in "Crusoe Hall"?

Any answer is, of course, conjecture, but it is a conjecture that allows us to examine the relationship between the writing of Newfoundland and the imperial fantasies of adventure, exploration, and knowledge that emerged in the years that followed the publication of Robinson Crusoe.

Twentieth-century critics have often read Robinson Crusoe an "energising myth of British imperialism"(Green 1980, 3): a story that, recalling the words of George Borrow, awakened the "spirit of strange and romantic enterprise" (Phillips 1997, 35) which inspired generations of capitalist adventurers to seek their fortune overseas. James Joyce, for one, described Defoe's novel as a "prophecy of empire" and its rational hero was the "true symbol of the British conquest" (Seidel 1991, 54) that took place during the late eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries.

Defoe himself actually lived at a time when there was relatively little overseas exploration. The first great age of discovery, heralded by Columbus landing in the New World, was past. The next flurry of exploration, which arguably began when James Cook entered the Pacific, had yet to come. Yet Defoe's novel, in many ways, anticipated the dawn of a new age of British imperialism. Specifically, to paraphrase Richard Phillips (1997), *Robinson Crusoe* gave form to a new "geography of adventure" upon which subsequent writers would "map" the colonialist project and the subject positions of the coloniser and colonised.

This geography of imperialist adventure is the geography of travel and exploration. Defoe himself was, by the standards of the time, an experienced traveler, and, more importantly, a great reader of travel literature. To quote Pat Rogers, Defoe "took immense pride in his knowledge of geography; his library was well stocked with atlases and works of discovery and navigation; he was forever surrounded by maps and charts." (1979, 25)

As a merchant, Defoe travelled no farther than France, Spain and the Netherlands, but through books he travelled around the globe. Defoe's companions on these global travels were the explorers of the past two centuries, whose exploits had been chronicled in collections of adventures (of which Hakluyt's was but the first of many), and the routes of his imaginary voyages were drawn upon maps of that sketched the outline of the known world.

Robinson Crusoe is a story set at the limits of European global geography. *Crusoe* is possessed by the desire to travel. His "head began to be fill'd very early with rambling thoughts." Ignoring the "serious and excellent council" of his father he leaves England and sets out on a series of adventures that take him from the coast of Africa, to Brazil, and finally by chance to an island at the mouth of the Orinoco River which is completely unknown and unmapped.

Crusoe's voyage into the unknown was also a voyage away from the comforts of civilization. Born into the "middle station" of society Crusoe would have enjoyed the prospect of a life of "temperance, moderation, quietness" and "health" if he had remained in England. Instead he wandered the globe, and, in the end, his perilous wanderings cast him on the shores of a "dreary and desolate island", a place wholly without society and even the most basic amenities of cultured existence. (Defoe 1719 [1994], 1)

Possibly Banks and Phipps considered themselves to be possessed of the same rambling thoughts as Crusoe, and that their journey from the comforts of London society to the wilds of the Northern Peninsula to be like Crusoe's voyage at and beyond the limits of European knowledge and civilization. Certainly later biographers describe Banks' and his visit to Newfoundland in Crusoe-like terms. Cameron ascribed Banks' decision to travel to Newfoundland to "a spirit of adventure ... in his blood which could not be denied". (1952, 4) In a similar vein Beaglehole writes:

Other men might cross the Channel, and take by coach the well-worn road to Paris, Lyons, Venice, Rome; other men might call on Voltaire or hobnob with cardinals or collect medals and marbles and reputations as virtuosi. But Banks was original. He would go to Newfoundland and inspect Esquimaux, he would collect plants. If this be regarded as an extraordinary, as well as unexpected, step for a young person of wealth and comfort in 1766, the comment is that Banks was an extraordinary young person. (1962, 10)

It may, however, not only have been his biographers that regarded Banks as a latter-day Crusoe. There are passages in Banks' own account of his visit to Newfoundland that echo Crusoe's fictional travels.

Plainly, as Crusoe's upon his island, Banks regarded his visit to the hinterland of Newfoundland as a voyage beyond "society". On being washed ashore Crusoe bemoans that he is "divided from mankind, a solitaire, one banish'd from human society". On

returning to St. John's, after spending a summer on the Northern Peninsula and the coast of Labrador, Banks takes pleasure in "Returning to Society that we had so long been deprived of". (1766, 109)

More profoundly, as Crusoe upon his island, Banks' voyage beyond society was written as an adventure of vision in which an unmapped country is revealed before the gaze of the lone European explorer. There is indeed a remarkable, though doubtless unintended parallel, between Crusoe's account of his castaway life and Bank's diary of botanical exploration.

After ten months "in this unhappy island" and having now "secur'd" his "habitation" Defoe's hero is possessed by "a great desire to make a more perfect discovery of the island, and to see what other productions I might find, which I yet knew nothing of." (1719 [1994], 80) To this end he leaves his little fortress on the 15th of July, with the intention of making "a more particular survey of the island it self." He begins his journey at the mouth of the creek where he first brought his raft on shore. He walked for two miles until he came to a place where "the tide did not flow any higher", and the creek had become "no more than a little brook of running water". There our narrator stops to survey the scene:

On the banks of this brook I found many pleasant savanas or meadows, plain, smooth and cover'd with grass; and on the rising parts of them next to the higher grounds, where the water overflow'd, I found a great deal of tobacco, green, and growing to a great and a very strong stalk; there were divers other plants which I had no notion of, or perhaps many have virtues of their own, which I could not find out. (Defoe 1719 [1994], 80)

A few days later Crusoe again set out to explore the interior of the island. He followed the same creek inland. The "savana began to cease and the country became more woody than before." (Defoe 1719 [1994], 81) In the woods he "found mellons upon the ground in great abundance, and grapes upon the trees". He spent the evening in

the wood, sleeping in the boughs of a tree. The next morning Crusoe proceeded upon his discovery, “travelling near four miles” and “keeping due north, with a ridge of hills on the south and north-side”. (Defoe 1719 [1994], 81)

Finally, Crusoe emerged from the valley and, again, he stopped to describe what he sees. In his fictional diary the castaway wrote:

... I came to an opening where the country seem'd to descend to the west, and a little spring of fresh water, which issued out of the side of the hill beside me, runs the other way, that is due east; and the country appear'd so fresh, so green, so flourishing, everything being in a constant verdure or flourish of spring, that it looked like a planted garden.

I descended the side of that delicious vale, surveying it with a secret kind of pleasure (tho' mixt with my other afflicting thoughts) to think that this was all my own, that I was king and lord of all this country indefeasibly, and had a right of possession; and if I could convey it, I might have it in inheritance as compleatly as any lord of a manor in England. (Defoe 1719 [1994], 81)

In this vale there were cocoa, lemon and orange trees. Grapes hung from vines twined around the trees. Crusoe, in the manner of a true coloniser, built himself a fortress in this most pleasant and fruitful part of the island, erecting a strong double fence on brushwood, and in this fortress, his “country house” he called it he lay “very secure” for two sometimes three nights.

In October 1766, Joseph Banks left “Crusoe Hall” and made a journey into the interior of Newfoundland that, in its general features, was quite similar to that undertaken by Defoe's hero. “Whilst at Croque,” Banks writes, “I went up the River at the head of the harbour to Explore the Countrey Which I found Pleasanter than any part of the Island I had seen.” Like Crusoe, Banks stops to describe the country as it appears before him:

... tho the Thickness of the wood made it almost inaccessible in the Spot I mean the River Runs in the space of about a mile & a half through Six or Seven Distinct Pools some Very Large all Quite to the waters Edge ornamented with wood in some Islands Coverd also with Tall Firs the most of them winding among the hills So that You never could Command the Whole at one view but had a part Left for the Imagination to Supply the Water in Every one as Clear Tis Possible to Conceive in Short not one of them but was Well worth a place in the First improvements I have seen in England. (1766, 96-7)

And like Defoe's imaginary island, the interior of Newfoundland held the promises of riches.

... what better repayd my walk Even than the sight of these Beautiful Prospects was the Finding appearances of a Large & well Furnished stratum of Statuary Marble such as at Least Who had no opportunity of Examining more than Exterior Surface which was Perfectly white & Clear treating it however merely as Lime stone which upon Experiment it has Proved to be is not to be neglected in this Island where that substance has not before been discovered. (1766, 97-8)

He concludes the narrative of his journey by giving instructions to those who would follow, so as they may exploit the mineral wealth that Banks discovered.

I would advise a Person unacquainted with the Countrey to follow the Course of the Salmon River till he goes to the Pools I have just mentioned then turning to the right hand to search Carefully Between them & a Large tract of Burnt wood above them I say search Carefully as I did nowhere observe it bedding above the surface of the Earth The place where I most Particularly observ'd it and got my speciman was a gully through which winter water Passes but which in Summer is dry ..." (1766, 98-9)

If we compare the narratives of Crusoe and Banks with those of Tudor adventurers such as Gilbert, Hayes and Parkhurst, we find some similarities and a single striking difference. Like the Tudor explorers, Banks' and Crusoe's perception of their

description of their respective island was ordered by the distinction between the garden and the wilderness, a distinction which, at its heart, was informed by a utilitarian conception of nature. Like the “garden” near St. John’s in which Gilbert and his company walked upon a Sunday afternoon, the “delicious vale” into which Crusoe descended and river valley which Banks’ surveys are Edens: places of natural wealth and abundance provided by God for the sustenance and enrichment of man.

Indeed, both Crusoe and Banks play with the possibility that these valleys are not wildernesses at all, but cultivated lands where the hand of man has forced nature to yield her bounty. Looking upon the valley, Crusoe likens it “to a planted garden” and, on descending into the interior, he imagines himself taking possession of a great English estate. Likewise, when gazing upon the clear pools and tall forests of the Newfoundland interior, Banks opines that “Tis Possible to Conceive in Short not one of them but was Well worth a place in the First improvements I have seen in England.”

In keeping with this utilitarian ethos Banks and Crusoe, as well as Cook, looked upon the country with an eye searching for things useful or valuable. Crusoe, for example, writes of “mellons in abundance” and “grapes upon the trees”. He describes cocoa and orange trees, and green limes which “were not only pleasant to eat, but very wholesome”. (1719 [1994], 82) Likewise Banks writes of tall trees and the promise of marble that proved to be limestone.

Indeed, a major element of both Banks’ and Cook’s descriptive projects was the identification of things and places that may be either useful to British commerce or pleasing to a gentleman’s sensibilities. Banks, for example, writes of the land around “Chatteaux” (on the coast of Labrador) in manner remarkably similar to the narratives of Renaissance exploration.

The Country about this Place tho much more Barren is far more agreeable than Croque here you may walk for miles over Barren rocks without being

interrupted by a Bush or tree – when there you Could not go as many Yards without being Entangled in the Brushwood it abounds also in Game Partridges and 2 sorts Ducks teal in great abundance But Particularly at this season with a Bird of passage here called a Curlew from his Great Likeness to the smaller sort of that Bird found near England their Chief food is Berries which are here in Great abundance of Several Sorts with which they make themselves very near as fat & I think tho Prejudiced almost as good as our Lincolnshire Ruff & Reve. (1766, 46-7)

Similarly, although Croque may have been “the Place the Least agreeable of any we had Seen in the Countrey” due to the “Closeness of the situation” and “a Prodigious abundance” of gadflies and mosquitos, Banks still passes comment on the quality of the soil and its capacity for cultivation.

The soil about here is very different from & much superior to that at Chatteaux that being Light Sand Very unfit for Gardening This is a very strong Vegetable mould which with the Quickness of Vegetation in this Climate has such an Effect on our English Seeds that the[y] Run themselves out in stalk Producing little or no fruit Pea haulm we had 11 feet high & as thick as my finger which Producd scarce anything. (1766, 99-100)

The sailor Cook tends to be more spare with his words, but like Crusoe, Banks and the Renaissance adventurers he still sees fit to pass comment on the qualities of the harbours he visited during the course of the survey. He would write of “large beaches exposed to the fine open air which is a great advantage to curing fish” and “many thousands of acres of land with all sorts of wood peculiar to this country, such as pine, fir, birch, witchhazle, and kinds of spruce”. (Whiteley 1975, 19-20)

There is, however, one big difference between the journeys of Cook and Banks and those of the Renaissance travelers. Unlike Hayes, Mason, Whitbourne and their contemporaries, Banks and Cook described Newfoundland as it appeared to the observing eye of the enlightened European. There is, therefore, another way we may

think of Crusoe Hall. We may think of it as a site of writing, as the place where the individual author reveals the existence of an unknown place through the idiom of his own experience.

Amongst other things Crusoe was self-consciously a writer. From the wreck of the ship Crusoe recovered many useful things that allowed him to survive on his island: guns and gun power, briskets and bottles of wine, axes, saws and hammers. Amongst these useful things salvaged from the wreck to his island were “pens, ink, and paper ... three or four compasses, some mathematical instruments, dials, perspective charts, and books of navigation all of which I huddled together, whether I might want them or no”. In short Crusoe did not only equip himself with the instruments of survival, wine, axes and guns, he equipped himself with the instruments to compose a knowledge of the place: pens, paper and mathematical instruments. With these instruments he begins to write a journal. The journal is the story of his survival upon the island, but the journal is also the story of its own writing: the story of how the island and its products and its one mysterious native came to be realized in the experience of the European individual; and not just any European individual but a European individual equipped with the capability to compose a mathematised and methodical vision of the phenomenal world.

I would argue that Cook’s maps and Banks’ journal tell a similar story and to conclude we will briefly return to Banks’ journal to demonstrate how his way of writing Newfoundland was profoundly different from that of the travelers that preceded him.

Walking to Crusoe Hall

Much of Banks' narrative of his voyage to Newfoundland is written as a first person account of a series of walks across the bogs and barrens of the interior.⁸³

On the 15th of May, for example, Banks "walkd ... to a Small Lake north of the Town [St. John's]." On the way he "found ... another species of Club miss *Lycopodium complanatum*, a Shrub with ten Stamina, *Andromeda Calyculata*, which grew by the side of the Lake – upon a stoney Soil in great abundance a Kind of Moss, *Bryum*, with Pendant heads in our way home we Killd a musk Rat, *Fiber Moscatius* in Kitty Vitty Pond." (1766, 20)

Four days later he "[s]et out on foot to get as far into the Country as Possible". Soon it "began to snow". The snow "[c]ontinued all day but did not Cover the Ground deep enough to hinder our Observing Several Plants a Kind of Bilberry in full Blossom a kind of Juniper with white Berries The Larch *Pinus Larix*, which is here Calld Juniper with whie Berries which is said to make better timber for shipping especially masts than any tree this Countrey affords & a species of Moss with Bending heads & fine Golden footstalks. *Bryum* No: 19:6." (1766, 25)

On the following day the snow was "so incessant" that Banks and his companion were confined within doors at a small town calld "Petty Harbour" and did "have not opportunity to Stir out to make the Least Observation". Come the morning Banks awoke to find the snow "lying four & five feet deep upon the Ground" and the sky was hazy, portending more bad weather. Still he and his companion set out across the rocks and barrens towards St. John's. As they walked they found "that the wind had drifted the

⁸³ Again this changes after July when he chose to stop maintaining a diary of his daily activities and his journal became a more general description of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Snow Very Thin” and there they “observe[d] Some few Plants Fir Moss, *Lycopodium Selago*, Rhein Deer Moss, *Lichen Rangiferius*, A Kind of Horned Liverwort, Lichen, a plant that has very much the Appearance of Crow Berries *Empetrum* of which I have only got the female with has 10 Stigmata.” (1766, 26-27)

To walk across the interior of Newfoundland shooting and looking at things was not, in itself, remarkable or unusual. Cabot, of course, came ashore (in place they may or may not have been Newfoundland) and led a small expedition inland before the fear of attack by unseen natives caused him to turn back. The adventurers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were not adverse to the occasional stroll through the country surrounding the harbours of the eastern and southern shores of the island (though tellingly Cook and Banks were the first Europeans since the time of Cabot to penetrate some distance inland with the purpose of exploring the interior).

As with Winthrop gazing at the heavens, what was remarkable about Banks was, therefore, not that he walked and as he walked looked upon animals and plants, rather, what was remarkable about Banks’ discourse was the way he looked upon things and the manner in which he wrote of the things he looked upon. In particular there are two aspects to Banks’ narrative of travel that distinguish his account of a voyage to Newfoundland from those Europeans who traveled before him.

The first and most obvious thing that distinguishes Banks’ narrative from those of the Renaissance adventurers was the presence of visual descriptions of the flora and fauna of the island. The seventeenth-century authors of the New-found lands were, we will recall, generally content with listing useful animals and plants and, when necessary, giving a slightly more detailed account of their qualities. In contrast, much of Banks’ text is devoted to the detailed account of the things of Newfoundland as they presented themselves to the eye. We are told of a “species of moss with Bending head & fine Golden footstalks” and a “shrub with ten Stamina” growing from stony soil by the shores

of Kitty Vitty Pond. On a morning of thick fog Banks found a kind of Golden Maidenhair the heads of which “are angulated on two sides much more remarkably than the other two & the Stalks sometimes Branch.” (1766, 23) On a warm summer’s day he walked from the “watering place” to Crusoe Hall and on his way came across a kind of gooseberry “with Leaves very deeply Cut” which our author “should have taken for the *Oxcanthofolia* of Linnaeus If he had not described that as set thick with thorns this is very near without at Least the few there are very small.” (1766, 35)

Moreover, not only does Banks describe the plants and animals of Newfoundland but he describes them regardless whether they were useful or not. Again, in sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries discourses concerning the New-found lands, plants and animals that were neither useful nor curious are simply not written about. So it is, for example, Edward Hayes (1589) could write vaguely of “other trees of some sort unknown to us” and John Mason (1620) allude to ducks of divers sorts “their details all to tedious to relate, all good meat”. In contrast, Banks seems to make mention of everything he sees. Each blade of grass and leafy shrub, all insects, fishes and birds, every living creature that he encounters is described according to its form and colour. Those living things that are already well known to the European science of form may be simply described by their proper Latin name. Those things that are new or that seem to differ slightly from their European variety are described in greater detail. Those things already known within the square and spatialized realm of Linnaean taxonomy could simply be described by their proper name.

The second thing about Banks’ account of his journey to Newfoundland which sets it apart for Renaissance discourses of the New World is that his description of the island is located in the narration of visual experience as a traveller. In particular, like Winthrop, this is a visual experience. Banks writes of “*examining*” a small island near Croque which he found “Loaded with Plants I had not *seen* before” (1766, 37) and of

how he “*observd*” three sorts of fir tree (black spruce, white spruce and weymouth pine). (1766, 12) Like Winthrop he is concerned with conditions of visual experience, worrying about hazy air and snow obscuring the ground and so hindering their “Observing several plants”. (1766, 19) Despite these handicaps that may have obscured his vision or rendered his sight of this partial or incomplete Banks concludes the story of his journey by assuring his reader that “to the northward [of St. John’s] not many plants will be found to have escaped my *observation*”. (1766, 117)

To conclude, the journeys of Banks and Cook represent an extension of the project of vision that we introduced in our discussion of Winthrop’s observation of the transit of Venus. Each in their way sought to map Newfoundland upon the square and spatialized terrain of European knowledge. And each accomplished this through the inscription of the visual experience of travel. With Banks and Cook Newfoundland itself becomes an object of knowledge described through the eyes of the enlightened traveller: a man endowed with the capacity to rise above his own passions and local circumstances and so to achieve a clear and measured sight of the island.

Chapter Five

Sublime Horror: Science, Romance and the Authoring of the Newfoundland Landscape

Précis: a Young Man from Edinburgh visits London

On the 26th of August 1797 a young man from Edinburgh called upon the London home of Sir Joseph Banks.⁸⁴ It was ten in the morning and Sir Joseph was away. Nonetheless, the visitor received a warm welcome from Banks' librarian Dr. Jonas Drylander. In the company of Drylander and "some French gentlemen" he breakfasted in Banks' library watched over by a "very fine painting of Capt. Cook". (86) After breakfast the young Scot perused Banks' vast collection of dried plants, each closed in a single mahogany case (so "that they may be more easily removed in case of fire"), and leafed through Dr. Bloch's *Ichthyology* and Lewin's *British Birds*. After enquiring if he "could get a ticket to attend the British museum" (which it proved would be difficult "as the regulations were so absurd and antiquated that a naturalist could get no good of it"), the young man from Edinburgh took his leave. (87)

Banks' visitor was named Robert Jameson. Jameson had been in London for a week. He had come to London to go shopping and see the sights. His shopping and sightseeing were directed by a peculiar interest in the rocks, plants and animals. London was a city where it seemed that the whole of the natural world was for view or for sale. He went to the zoo at the Tower and gazed upon two "*Canis Hyaena*", one perfectly

⁸⁴ An edited version of Jameson's "Voyage from Leith to London 1793" was composed by Jessie M. Sweet and published in *Annals of Science* (1963), pages 81-116. The quotes are taken from this source and paginated accordingly.

tame and the other quite fierce. (82) He visited Lever's "celebrated" museum at the Surrey end of Blackfriars Bridge and paid two shillings and six pence to be allowed to see a "very fine specimen of the Labrador Stone", a "specimen of petrified wood" and "that remarkable fish described by Dr. Shaw". (83-4) He purchased a flamingo (priced at one pound eleven shillings and six pence) from a man in Little St. Mart Lane and specimens of minerals (including crystallized sandstone, fibrous gypsum, a crystal of aqua marine and turquoise) from a Mr. Humphreys. (113)

Besides shopping and sightseeing, Jameson met with others who shared his passion for the study of nature. Bearing a letter of introduction he was invited into the home of a worthy Dr. Gashore where, in the company of the ambassador of Sweden and nineteen other ladies and gentlemen, he enjoyed a light and elegant breakfast of Scottish shortbread, pears, grapes, beef, ham and dried fish. (93-4) The worthy Doctor in turn introduced Jameson to Dr. Walker (who had formerly been a Divine but had to quit that profession due to a speech impediment), and Dr. Walker in turn introduced the young Scot to Dr. Lettsoms (who possessed a particularly fine collection of dead birds). (104-6) And so it went: introductions begetting introductions. Doors opened and breakfasts were served. Men gathered and lectures were given. And everywhere he went the talk was of the things of nature – of insects found at Botany Bay and the plants of Japan, of the fish of Surinam and the people of St. Kilda. In this city, amongst these rich educated men, there was nothing beyond knowledge, nothing that could not be seen, touched or spoken of.

Though not yet twenty, Jameson was confident in the company of these august and learned men. He was, at least within the privacy of his diary, quite sure of his own knowledge and quite happy to weigh his understanding of things against that of his fellow naturalists. During a meeting of Linnaean Society some plants were shown. "Amongst these", writes Jameson, "was a new plant from Inch Keith which was found

there by Mr. Dickson in seed in the month of September. It was thought to by the gentlemen there to be either a *Sagina* or a *Cerastium*, but I am sure it is nothing else but a *Cerastium* and a variety of the *Vulgaris*. They seem,” he adds somewhat cuttingly, “to be very fond of making new species here.” (96)

The young man even had the fortitude to question the opinion of Joseph Banks’ librarian. During his visit to Banks’ house at Soho Square Jameson “let Dr. Drylander see a production” which he “had found on the Leith Shore”. (87) On inspection Drylander opined that this mysterious “production” was “likely some sand that formed in that manner by it being applied over a piece of madrepore [stony coral] and afterwards had been broken off.” (87) Jameson disagreed.

But this certainly could not be the case as we have no madrepores on our coast of that figure and even allowing this why should it happen that I always found them of hemispherical shape and gelatinous nature, surely if they were agglutinated sand which broke off from the surface of madrepores, they could not always be found of this regular figure. (87)

I introduce this chapter with Jameson’s tour of London, and in particular his visit to Banks’ home at Soho Square, because it provides both a link and a point of transition between the previous chapter and the discussion to follow. Superficially, of course, this is simply an authorial conceit. It is a pleasing coincidence that Jameson should make a pilgrimage to the home of Joseph Banks, who years before had toured Newfoundland in search of botanical specimens. It is pleasing because this chapter concerns the travels of a student of Jameson’s, who some decades later would emulate Banks and make a journey of scientific discovery into the wilds of Newfoundland. More profoundly, however, the young Scot’s visit to London allows us to describe a point of difference that will be explored more fully over the following pages. This difference may be found, I would argue, in Jameson’s slightly snide observations concerning the learned

discussion at Linnaean Society and his disagreement with Dylander over the provenance of the “production” found on the shores of Leith.

Like any good naturalist Jameson is concerned with the naming of things. The journal of his journey to London reads much like Banks’ account of the trip to Newfoundland. Everywhere Jameson goes, be it the museum, the zoo, the island of Shepney or the homes of his fellow naturalists, he observes and, on the basis of his observations, gives things their proper Latin names, names that identify plants and animals by fixing their place within the geometric space of the Linnaean universe. In the British museum he wanders from room to room as a naturalist would traverse the countryside. “The next room”, he writes, “contains plant, Insects, and Corals, Fishes &c. ... Among the most remarkable animals I observed were the following *Myxine Hag*. *Pennatula Argenticia*” ... “the Broad finned Sword fish described in the *Naturalist’s Miscellany*, and also the piece of the ship that was perforated by one of them” and “Corallins spread out on paper and put in glass frames by the late illustrious Ellis”. Though he found that this last collection was “far from being very finely done as would be expected from him who was so much engaged in collecting and examining these products of nature”. (99-100)

Yet, despite this adherence to the conventions of classical description and nomination, the young Jameson shows some signs of rebelling against the Banksian Empire of knowledge. His comment regarding the debate about the identity of the plant from Inch Keith betrays a slight degree of cynicism concerning the learned game of identification. To Jameson the plant is common and its nature self-evident. It seems to him that his fellow naturalists are perhaps too eager to find new species, to create new names, and so to extend the boundaries of the taxonomic gird. For the young Scot the Linnaean project had run its course, not because it was wrong, but because the natural world it sought to map had been fully surveyed.

More telling still is the difference in opinion between Drylander and Jameson regarding the nature of the thing found on the coast near Edinburgh. What is important is not that they disagreed; rather, it is the nature of their disagreement. What they debated was not the name of the thing but its origin. The true identity of the mysterious production lay, therefore, not in its appearance but in the process of its creation. A detailed description of its physical form was still necessary, but the aim of this description was not to discover the object's name by placing it in relation to other objects upon the squared and spatialized terrain of taxonomic classification. Instead, the aim of description was to discover the history of making made manifest in the physical form of the object.

It would, of course, be silly to argue that Jameson's comments concerning the proceedings of the Linnaean society and his disagreement with Drylander represent some Foucauldian moment rupture in this history of Western knowledge. Yet these two incidents hint at a significant transformation in the ways in which European naturalists went about looking at and writing of the world around them. Specifically, they introduce the possibility that the man of science may be able to use the techniques of empirical observation to reconstruct the history of things, and that these things – be they plants, animals, people or landscapes – may accordingly be described and identified as historical objects.

In this chapter we will be considering how this emergent historical consciousness changed the ways in which enlightened travellers experienced and described the landscape of Newfoundland. In particular our concern is with notions of the primitive. From the early nineteenth century onwards it became a commonplace to write of the Island as a savage and sublime terrain – a place where still can be seen the primal processes of creation that have long since been hidden beneath the civilized and cultivated countryside of Europe. Over the following pages we will be investigating the

historical possibility of this descriptive convention. How is it, we will ask, that someone can look upon a landscape and see the history of its making? And how is it that when looking upon the landscape of Newfoundland the European traveller felt himself to be looking back through time to a place more primitive, more primal than the place of his own being?

We will begin this discussion with another journey. This journey took place fifty-six years after the young Banks visited Newfoundland and nineteen years after Jameson breakfasted in Banks' library in London.

Across Newfoundland with one Indian guide

On the morning of the 5th of September 1822 two men disembarked from a ship moored at Random Bar, Trinity Bay.⁸⁵ (134) They were a curious pair. One was a white man named William Eppes Cormack. The other was a Micmac named Sylvester Joe or Joseph Sylvester.⁸⁶ Cormack was "an active and intelligent Newfoundland merchant."⁸⁷ He was born in St. John's in 1796, raised in Scotland, educated in the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh, and had returned to Newfoundland in 1822 to reclaim his father's place in the community of Scottish merchants residing in St. John's.

⁸⁵ The description of Cormack's journey across the interior of Newfoundland is based solely on his own account of that journey. This account has been published several times, but the version that is cited here is that included in James P. Howley's *The Beothucks or the Red Indians*, originally published by the Cambridge University Press in 1915 (reprinted by Coles Publishing, 1974). All quotes concerning the journey are, unless otherwise noted, drawn from this source and paginated accordingly.

⁸⁶ Throughout his narrative Cormack refers to his companion as Joseph Sylvester; however, as noted in the *Newfoundland Encyclopaedia*, Sylvester is unknown as a Micmac surname, while Joe is quite common. It is, therefore, likely that Cormack inadvertently reversed the names. Assuming Cormack to be wrong and the *Newfoundland Encyclopaedia* to be right we will refer to the guide as Sylvester Joe.

⁸⁷ This is how Robert Jameson, professor of Geology at the University of Edinburgh, described Cormack in a footnote to Cormack's article concerning "the natural history and economical uses of cod, capelin, cuttlefish and seal" which was published in *The New Edinburgh Philosophical Journal* of 1826 (32-41).

Sylvester Joe was “a noted hunter from the south-west coast of Newfoundland,” (130) most likely Baie D'Espoir.

They were a curious pair, undertaking a curious project. Their intention was to walk across the interior of Newfoundland from Trinity Bay to Bay St. Georges on the west coast of the Island, a journey that, as we are reminded throughout Cormack's narrative, had never before been undertaken by a European. The plan was, of course, Cormack's. His self-declared mission was “to penetrate the central part of the island” in order to obtain “a knowledge of the interior part of that country”. (130) In so doing he hoped to make contact with the Beothucks and to begin the process of “opening communication with, and promoting the civilization of, the Red Indians of Newfoundland”. (182)⁸⁸

Sylvester Joe's interest in the journey was more material. The original terms of his hire are unknown, but nine days into the trek the hunter was clearly considering abandoning the merchant in the midst of the Newfoundland wilderness and a new contract was hastily drafted. Amongst other things this contract obliged Cormack to give his guide's mother “one barrel of pork, one barrel of flour, and anything else that may be found suitable” and to arrange for Joe's passage to England, and thence to “Portugal or Spain in order that it might do his health good”. (237)⁸⁹

Alone on the shore of Random Bar the merchant and the hunter watched as the ship “disappeared into the gloomy gut” and listened until “the reports of” the “farewell guns were no longer echoed to each other along its windings.” (134) In this moment of vanishing and silence, Cormack writes, “an abyss of difficulties instantly sprang up in

⁸⁸ The quote is actually a motion advocating the founding of a “Beothick Institution.” The motion was moved by Cormack, seconded by Charles Simms Esq. and passed unanimously at the founding meeting of same institution, held at the courthouse in Twillingate on the 2nd of October 1827. The proceedings of the meeting were reported by the *Royal Gazette* of the thirteenth of November, and reprinted in Howley's *The Beothucks or Red Indians* (182-7).

⁸⁹ The contract between Joe and Cormack was found by Howley and published in *The Beothuks or Red Indians* (237). Weirdly, the contract is not only dated (4 September, 1822) but the place of its drafting is

the imagination between the point where we stood and the civilized world we had just quitted, as well as between us and *Terra Incognita*. That we might be eaten up by packs of wolves was more than probable to the farewell forebodings of the inhabitants we had last seen, if we should escape the Red Indians.” (134) Sylvester Joe “was also at this juncture sensibly affected; contrasting no doubt to the comforts and plenty he had of late experienced, to the toils and privations that were before us, the nature of which he could foresee.” (134-5) “But”, Cormack concludes, “we did not come here to entertain emotions from such circumstance”, and, shouldering their “knapsacks and equipment” the Scot and Micmac began walking inland “without regard to any track”. (135)

For days then weeks Cormack and Joe forced their way “fearlessly onward” in a generally westward direction. They trekked through “dense unbroken pine forest”, and across mossy “savannas”. (135) They skirted around marshes and ponds, and forded streams. The going was hard. Their way was impeded by “wind-fallen trees” and entangled thickets of stunted spruce. They struggled under the “great weight” of the packs, and were tormented by mosquitoes and black flies. At night they slept under the stars on beds of spruce boughs. Sylvester Joe “rolled himself up in his blanket, and evidently slept perfectly at home.” (135) But for Cormack “sleep” was “not looked for”, as “[a]pprehensions and thoughts of no ordinary kind occupy the mind unaccustomed to the untrodden wilderness”. (137)

On occasions they crossed paths with Indians. A “column of smoke issuing from amongst islands near the south shore” of a large lake led them to the camp of a “Mountaineer”⁹⁰ from Labrador, named James John, and his Micmac wife. (148) In this oasis of “abundance and neatness” Cormack and Joe were fortified by soup, excellent

also located by latitude and longitude (“done in the interior of Newfoundland in about 48 °20’ N. Lat. 54 ° 50’ W. Long”).

⁹⁰ Mountaineer is an Anglicisation of Montagnais. The Montagnais are a group of Indians native to eastern Quebec and southern Labrador. They are now part of the Innu nation.

venison, the flesh of young beavers and a cake of hard deer fat and scraps of suet. (149)
Some days later a line of marten traps lead them to a family of Micmacs who fed them a supper of boiled venison and pointed the way westward to Bay St. Georges. (150-1)

However, they never met with the Beothucks. Cormack looked for traces and evidence: tracks in soft peat, footprints on sandy lakesides. From James John they heard of Beothucks living on the northern shore of the "Great Lake of the Red Indians". (149-50) But no Beothucks were found. Nor were there any trails or tracks to mark their passage. They were like ghosts haunting Cormack's journey: an unseen threat, a silent presence secreted in the vast wilderness.

By the end of October Cormack and Joe had reached the western portion of the island. Winter had come. Snow lay thick on the ground. Their provisions were gone. They could not make a fire for want of wood, and could not sleep for want of shelter. Although, as Cormack reflects, they "could shoot deer every day, no supply of food was adequate to support the system under the exhaustion and load of painful fatigue" they "had to undergo". (156) Cormack figured that he had another two weeks left before his strength "would no longer obey the will and drag along the frame", but cheered himself with the "hope that that space of time would carry" him and his guide to the west coast. (156)

He was right. A few days later they climbed a "snowy ridge" and from its summit looked down upon Bay St. Georges. "It was threatening rain, and the sun was setting, but the sight of the sea urged" them "onward". They descended in near darkness, sliding down the courses of rills, crossing streams with stones upon their backs to prevent them from being swept away. By one o'clock they were at the bottom, "encamped by a good fire, but supperless". (158)

The next day Cormack and Joe reached St. Georges Harbour. Gales prevented them from crossing to the European community and, exhausted and hungry, they resorted to

breaking into the winter cabin of a Micmac. There they feasted on corn and potatoes, eels and pickled fish. Their unknowing host returned on the 4th, and escorted his guests to the other side of the harbour, where the two adventurers “were received by the residents – Jersey and English, and their descendants – with open arms.” (159)

A few days later Cormack and Joe parted company. Joe would spend the winter on west coast, before returning to Baie D'Espoir. There being no ships leaving St. Georges Harbour until spring, Cormack made the journey by foot and small boat down the southwest coast and across the south coast to Little Harbour, Fortune Bay, where he secured passage aboard the *Duck* bound for Dartmouth, England. (158-68)

We know little of the life of Sylvester Joe following his trek across the interior, save for the fact that another European explorer, the geologist Joseph Beete Jukes, tried to hire him as a guide in 1839. Joe refused the offer.

Of Cormack we know more. He returned to Newfoundland in 1823 and continued trading as merchant in St. John's. His interest in the Beothucks also continued. He was central to the founding of the Beothuck Institution in 1827, and, under the auspices of this institution, led another expedition into the Newfoundland interior with sole purpose of making contact with the remnants of the Red Indian population.⁹¹

In the company of three Indian guides, he entered the country at the mouth of the River Exploits and trekked up to Badger Bay Great Lake.⁹² There they “found traces

⁹¹ As previously mentioned the Beothuck Institute was formed on the second of October 1827. Its first meeting was in Twillingate. At that meeting Cormack was elected both president and treasurer. Cormack, it seems, was already set on his second excursion into the interior at the time of this meeting. By the 31st of that month the expedition was underway. The Institute continued to meet sporadically until 1829, by which time Cormack had left St. John's and the last of the people who were to benefit from the philanthropic concern of the Institute was dead and buried.

⁹² An account of Cormack's “journey in search of the Red Indians of Newfoundland” was read before the Beothuck Institution in St. John's on the 12th of January 1828, and subsequently published in the *Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal* of March, 1829. The full text of this article is given in Howley's *The Beothucks or Red Indians* (189-197). We will be quoting from the text as it appears in Howley and paginated accordingly.

made by the Red Indians”: a canoe rest, fragments of skin dresses, and the shaft of a spear “recently made and ochred”. (190) In spite of the onset of winter, the party pressed on to the shores of Red Indian Lake, “sanguine that at that known rendezvous”, they “would find the objects of” their “search”. (191)

After about ten days they “got a glimpse of this beautifully majestic and splendid sheet of water” but no “canoe could be discovered moving on its placid surface”. (191) Cormack “spent several melancholy days wandering the borders of the east end of the lake.” (191) Again there were artefacts: wigwams in ruins, a log house for drying meat and the wreck of a handsome birch bark canoe. But there were no people, save the dead found wrapped round with deerskins and entombed in wooden huts. The Beothucks, Cormack concluded, “no longer existed”. (191)

This, as it turned out, was not wholly true. The last living Beothuck was a woman named Shanawdithit.⁹³ She had been captured with her mother and sister by one William Cull in March 1823. After living for five years as a servant in the house of John Peyton, justice of the peace at Exploits, she was brought by the Beothuck Institute to St. John's, where she resided with Cormack. From her Cormack learned what little is known of Beothuck language, folklore and the history of their extinction. She died in June 1829 of tuberculosis. The obituary in the *London Times*, likely written by Cormack himself, called her “the last of the Red Indians”. On this occasion, it seems he was correct.⁹⁴

By the time of Shanawdithit's death Cormack was bankrupt and had left Newfoundland. For the rest of his life he was, to quote an anonymous biographer, “a

⁹³ The story of Shanawdithit told here is based upon contemporary documents published or republished in Howley's *Beothucks or Red Indians* (pages 169-182 and 219-232).

⁹⁴ *London Times*, 14 September 1829. The obituary is, once again, reprinted in Howley. (231)

regular rolling stone, a globe trotter, who could not remain long anywhere.”⁹⁵ In the years that followed Cormack was employed variously as a plantation owner and postmaster in the Dungog District of New South Wales, Australia; a representative of English land speculators on the North Island of New Zealand; a merchant in California; and the secretary to the Governor in Victoria, British Colombia.

His ramblings ended in New Westminster, British Colombia, where he was elected as a municipal councillor and served as the local superintendent for Indian affairs and chief librarian. He died in 1868.⁹⁶

From a high point looking down

Cormack’s narrative of his journey across the island of Newfoundland is particularly concerned with the description of nature. This description takes two forms.

The first way in which Cormack portrays nature is reminiscent of the writings of Joseph Banks. Like Banks, Cormack was a student of natural history. And, like any good student of natural history in the Linnaean tradition, Cormack was concerned with the careful observation, identification and loving description of specimens of flora and fauna.

He writes that the marshes of the interior “consist mostly of what is term marsh peat, formed chiefly of the mosses, *Sphagnum capillifolium* and *vulgare S.* or *S. glatile Mich.?*; and are for the most part covered with grasses rushes &c. of which the following

⁹⁵ The quote is from a biographic sketch of Cormack written in 1836 and reprinted in Howley (232-34). Howley is unsure as to either the author of the piece or where it was published, though he thinks it likely it was an excerpt of a larger article on the Beothucks that appeared in some Scottish or English magazine.

⁹⁶ has been little written about Cormack’s life. The best resource is Howley, which besides the documents pertaining to Cormack’s work on the Beothucks includes the aforementioned biographic sketch and an obituary, which had originally appeared in the *British Colombian* of 9 May 1868. (234-238) The obituary, clearly written by a close friend, gives a particularly detailed account of Cormack’s life and personality. A poor biography of Cormack has been written by Bernard Fardy (*William Epps Cormack: Newfoundland Pioneer*, 1985). Alan G. MacPherson’s scathing review of Fardy’s work is more informative (1986).

predominate: *Eleocharis sanguinolenta*, the roots of which are thickly matted in bunches; cotton grasses, *tenalla*, *C. stipata* of Mecklenberg, *C. folliculata* and *C. bullata*; sweet scented grass, *Anthroxanthum odoratum*, &c.” (136)

And we are told that “[u]nder the shade of the forest” the “thick carpet of green moss, formed principally of *Polytrichum commune*,” “is bespangled and the air is perfumed by the *Marchantia polymorpha*; *Trientalis Americana*, *Smilacina borealis*; *S. Canadensis*, *bifolia*, and *S. trifolia*; *Linnea borealis*; *Vaccinium hispidotum*, the white berry of which is convertible to a very delicious preserve; *Pyrola secunda*; *Cornus Canadensis*, bearing a cluster of wholesome red berries, sometimes called pigeon berries; *Malaxis unifolia*, *Habernaria clavellata*; *Biacuta bulbifera*, or cornuta; wild cherry, *Ligusticum Scoticum*; *Streptopus distortus*, bearing pendulous red berries under its large palmated leaves.” (137)

This is the wilderness of Newfoundland made into a botanical garden: a collection of species, laid before the eye of the enlightened traveller so as that he may delight in their variety, and entertain his intellect in the exercise of nomination through the comparison of visible features. The work of the observer in the wilderness is the work of close inspection: of locating, uncovering, disentangling and differentiating individual specimens of plants and animals so as to discover order in the seeming chaos of nature.

There is, however, a second way in which Cormack regards nature, one that, superficially at least, seems quite different from the disciplined labour of dispassionate observation required of the Linnanean natural historian. To begin the discussion of this second way of looking at and the wilderness of Newfoundland let us return to Cormack's narrative and pick out two passages, which effectively mark the beginning and end of his journey through the interior.

On the 10th of September, five days after leaving the shores of Trinity Bay, Cormack and Joe crossed a shallow river and began climbing. After an ascent of several miles

they reached the top of “a great granite ridge”. It was an idyllic place, covered with “scattered trees, and a variety of beautiful lichens or reindeer moss”. Grouse “rose in coveys in every direction, and snipes from every marsh. The birds of passage, ducks and geese, were flying over us to and fro from their breeding places in the interior and the sea coast; tracks of deer, of wolves fearfully large, of bears, foxes, and martens, were seen everywhere.”(139)

From on high the merchant and the hunter looked down upon the surrounding country. First they looked to the east, back towards Trinity Bay. Cormack writes:

... the scene was magnificent. We discovered that under the cover of the forest we had been uniformly ascending ever since we had left the salt water at Random Bar, and then soon arrived at the summit of what we saw to be a great mountain ridge that seems to serve as a barrier between the sea and the interior. The black dense forest through which we had pilgrimaged presented a novel picture, appearing spotted with bright yellow marshes and a few glossy lakes in its bosom, some of which we had passed close by without seeing them. (139)

Then they turned their gaze towards the journey that lay before them. Cormack’s prose purples as he conveys the effect this prospect had upon him:

In the westward to our inexpressible delight, the interior broke in sublimity before us! What a contrast did this present to conjectures entertained of Newfoundland! The hitherto mysterious interior lay unfolded below us, a boundless scene, emerald surface, vast basin. The eye strides again and again over a succession of every form and extent, a picture of all the luxurious scenes of national cultivation receding into invisibleness. The imagination hovers in the distance, and is lost. A new world seemed to invite us onward, or rather we claimed dominion and were impatient to proceed to take possession. Fancy carried us swiftly across the Island. Obstacles of every kind were dispelled and dispised. Primitiveness, omnipotence, and tranquillity were stamped upon everything so forcibly, that the mind is hurled back thousands of years, and man is left denuded of

the mental fabric which a knowledge of ages of human experience and of time may have reared within him. Could a dwelling be secured amid the heavenly emotions excited by the presence of such objects?

It was manifested on every hand that this was the season of the year when the earth here offers her stores of productions; land berries were ripening, game birds were fledgling, and beasts were emerging to prey upon one another. Everything animate or inanimate seemed to be our own. We consumed unsparingly our remaining provisions, confident that henceforward, with our personal powers, which felt increased by the nature of the objects that presented, aided by what now seemed by contrast the admirable power of our fire-arms, the destruction of one creature would afford us nourishment and vigour for the destruction of others. There was no will but ours. Thoughts of the aborigines did not alter our determination to meet them, as well as everything living, that might present itself in a country yet untrodden, and before unseen by civilized man. I now adapted, as well for self-preservation as for the sake of accomplishing the object of my excursion, the self-dependent mode of life of the Indian both in spirit and action. (139)

From thence Cormack (the white man become now become as an Indian) and Joe (the Indian who, presumably, remained as he was) “descended into the bosom of the interior.” They walked and walked until, on the 1st of November, they began to ascend another mountain. As he climbed Cormack found himself “suddenly overcome with a kind of delirium, arising” he supposed “from exhaustion and excessive exertion”, and, in his delirium, he “fancied” that he was “stronger” than he had ever been in his life. (158)

By evening they stood on the summit of a “snowy ridge” and looked down at the scene before them. They had come full circle. Two months ago they had gazed to the west and saw the journey before them. All had been hope and expectation. Now, delirious, starved, freezing and dishevelled, they gazed to the west and, with relief, saw the end of their journey. Of this moment, Cormack writes:

... we were rejoiced to get a view of the expansive ocean and St. Georges Harbour. Had this prospect burst upon us in the same manner a month earlier, it would have created in my mind a thousand pleasures, the impression of which I was now too callous to receive; all was now however accomplished, and I hailed the glance of the sea as home, as the parent of everything I held dear. (158)

Descriptions of landscapes as seen from on high are, of course, common in the travel literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Enlightened explorers would take any chance to get an overview of the country they were walking through. They would climb mountains, and, where there were no mountains, they would climb hills, and, where there were no hills, they would climb trees. They would climb, often with great difficulty and some suffering, and often for the sole purpose of attaining a perspective, a point of view, that would allow them to take in the landscape as an entirety.

Charles Darwin's narrative of his voyage aboard the *Beagle*, for instance, is punctuated by a series of climbs to the tops of mountains.⁹⁷ The *Beagle* anchored at Bay of Good Success, Terra Del Fuego, on the 17th of December 1832. The next day young naturalist resolved to "penetrate some way into the country." "Finding it nearly hopeless to push" his way through the woods that cloaked the sides of the mountains, he "followed the course of a mountain torrent" clambering up waterfalls and over fallen dead trees. For a painful hour Darwin slowly advanced "along the broken and rocky banks". His suffering was, however, "was amply repaid by the grandeur of the scene." (1839 [1997], 200)

The gloomy depth of the ravine well accorded with universal signs of violence. On every side were lying irregular masses of rock and torn-up

⁹⁷ The version of the Darwin's travels referred to is that published in 1845 under the title *Journal of Researches into the Natural History and Geology of the Countries visited during the Voyage of H.M.S. Beagle round the World, under the Command of Captain Fitz Roy*. We will be quoting from the Wordsworth Classics reprint (1997) and paginating accordingly.

trees; other trees, though still erect, were decayed to the heart and ready to fall. The entangled mass of the thriving and the fallen reminded me of the forests within the tropics – yet there was a difference; for in these solitudes, Death, instead of Life, seemed the predominant spirit. (1839 [1997], 200)

Finally, Darwin came to a spot “where a slip had cleared a straight space down the mountain side. By this road” he “ascended to a considerable elevation, and obtained a good view of the surrounding woods.” From this vantage he observed that “the trees all belong to one kind, the *Fagus betuloides*; for the number of the other species of fagus and of the winter's bark, is quite inconsiderable. This beech keeps its leaves throughout the year, but its foliage is of a peculiar brownish-green colour, with a tinge of yellow. As the whole landscape is thus coloured, it has a sombre and dull appearance; nor is it often enlivened by the rays of the sun.” (1839 [1997], 200-1)

Two days later, Darwin set himself a more ambitious task: to climb to the top of a 1500-foot high hill that formed one side of the bay. His intention was to collect specimens of alpine plants. The hill he was to climb was named after Joseph Banks. Sixty-two years ago Banks, Solander and others had attempted the same ascent. It was January. A blizzard came upon them. Two died, and Solander almost succumbed, sinking down to sleep upon the snow only to be revived and urged along by his companion.

Darwin followed the same watercourse as two days previously until it dwindled away. He was then “compelled to crawl blindly among the trees,” and struggle over “a compact mass of little beeches” until he “gained the peat, and then the bare slate rock.” Finally, he reached the summit of the hill. There he “obtained a fine view over the surrounding country.” (1839 [1997], 201) In his account, Darwin writes:

... to the north a swampy moorland extended, but to the south we had a scene of savage magnificence, well becoming Terra Del Fuego. There was a

degree of mysterious grandeur in mountain behind mountain, with the deep intervening valleys, all covered by one thick dusky mass of forest. The atmosphere, likewise in this climate, where gale succeeds gale, with rain, hail, and sleet, seems blacker than anywhere else. In the Strait of Magellan, looking due southward from Point Famine, distant channels between the mountains appeared from their gloominess to lead beyond the confines of the world. (1839 [1997], 201-2)

As we did in the last chapter, when we encountered the phenomena of wealthy and educated young men risking life and limb to observe and collect specimens of exotic plants and animals, we must ask the question - why? Why was it that these enlightened explorers felt the need to attain a panoramic view of the surrounding country? Or, more to the point, why was it that they felt such views merited inclusion in their accounts of expeditions to faraway lands?

In posing these questions it is worth noting that it was not ever thus. If we hark back to the descriptions of Newfoundland written in the seventeenth century we find no such painterly evocations of the Island's landscape. This is not to say that the early explorers and pamphleteers were blind to the features of the new world they found, or that their writings did not include some account of these features. It is to say, however, that these accounts did not take the form of a first person narration of the experience of looking at the terrain of Newfoundland.

As with the collection and identification of specimens of flora and fauna, the practice of gazing upon a landscape is then, an historical development. If, by some caprice, Cormack had been born two hundred years previously and had come to Newfoundland as, say, a member of Humphrey Gilbert's expedition, the narrative of his journey would not include his climbing to the top of a ridge and looking "over a succession of northerly and southerly ranges of green plains, marbled with woods and lakes of every form and extent, a picture of all the luxurious scenes of national

cultivation, receding into invisibleness.” Cormack saw these things, and wrote of what he saw in the way he did, because of who he was and the times in which he travelled.

The question as to why men such as Darwin or Cormack would write about the view from the top of a mountain is then a question of history. In Cormack's narrative, and in other travelogues written in the first half of the nineteenth century, we witness the emergence of a descriptive discourse of Newfoundland as a landscape. And not just any landscape, but a landscape of a certain kind. Newfoundland, like Terra Del Fuego, was conceptualised as a wilderness, a sublime and savage terrain, a primitive country bearing no trace of civilization or progress.

The remainder of this chapter will address the question of the emergence of descriptive accounts of Newfoundland as a wilderness. Returning to Cormack and examining possible influences on his writings about Newfoundland, it will consider the historical conditions of this emergence. Specifically, it will be argued that the authoring of Newfoundland as a wilderness in the early nineteenth century was made possible by two related eighteenth century developments: the first being the rise of geology as a historical science; and the second being the formulation of an ascetics of landscape.

To begin this examination we will return to Joseph Banks and further compare his view of the Newfoundland Landscape with that of Cormack. We will remember that Joseph Banks was a natural historian, a man of science who had a particular passion for plants. He was devoted to their description: plucking them from their habitat, writing of their delicate forms, hiring artists to draw them in all their fine and revealing detail.

Joseph Banks was not so given to panoramic views of nature as Cormack. He would climb hills, climb to the very edge of a cliff he would, and there pluck a single flower. But that is the thing. He climbed to pluck a flower. While perched on the cliff he may have looked out, but if he did, he did not bother to write of the view in his diary.

Therein lies the difference. For Cormack the view mattered. It was something worth writing about. For Banks it mattered not.

There is an exception that we have mentioned in the previous chapter. One autumn day Banks, as was his habit, left the encampment at Croque and walked inland in search of plants. He followed the course of the river that flowed into the harbour, and found a country that “was pleasanter than any Part of the Island I had seen.” Like Cormack and Darwin, he had to struggle through thick woods, but finally he attained a perspective that allowed him a partial view of the surrounding country. This is what he saw:

the River Runs in the space of about a mile & a half through Six or Seven
Distinct Pools some Very Large all Quite to the waters Edge ornamented
with wood in some Islands Coverd also with Tall Firs the most of them
winding among the hills So that You never could Command the Whole at
one view but had a part Left for the Imagination to Supply the Water in
Every one as Clear Tis Possible to Conceive in Short not one of them but
was Well worth a place in the First improvements I have seen in England.
(1766, 96-7)

Compare this to the Cormack's view westward from atop the great granite ridge. There are similarities. Both Banks and Cormack write of the imagination. Imagination plays at the boundary of the visible and the invisible, at the point where things are lost from sight. Looking across the interior Cormack writes of a land “receding into invisibleness” and an “imagination” that “hovers in the distance and is lost.” As for Banks, it is “left” to his “imagination” to fill unseen pools with clear water. And in their imaginings both Banks and Cormack appreciate the terrain of the interior as a pastoral landscape: a “luxurious scene of national cultivation,” according to Cormack; or, in the more prosaic words of Banks (who was an enthusiastic promoter of agricultural innovation), a site “well worth a place in the first improvements I have seen in England”.

There are also differences, and it is upon these differences that we will concentrate. Plainly, the big difference is in the way in which the authors write of their view of the interior. Banks takes a quite pleasure in walking through a pleasant country, and looking upon a river winding through pools “all Quite to the waters Edge ornamented with wood”. In contrast, Cormack's first sight of “the hitherto mysterious interior” is dramatically narrated as an intensely moving event. He writes in exclamations of “a boundless scene,” an “emerald surface,” a “vast basin”. He is a man transported to a state of descriptive ecstasy by the very grandeur of the Newfoundland wilderness.

There are two aspects to this difference of writing that will be discussed in more detail. The first has to do with a discourse of aesthetics that centres on the refined sensibilities of the observer. The second has to do with visualisation of progress.

Banks was not really one for going on about his emotions or his state of mind. He liked the country around Chateaux Bay not because it inspired his imagination, but because it was more open and so easier to walk across. Cormack, however, writes at length about his emotional and psychological response to the Newfoundland interior. The affect of the wilderness upon Cormack's consciousness is complex. It fills him with wonder and terror. He has fantasies of power: Adam in his own Eden with dominion over all nature. He also has fantasies of submission. He takes a fearful pleasure in the possibility of transformation, of becoming the primitive other, stripped of the trappings of civilization. What we have, in short, is a poetics of the Newfoundland landscape as a profoundly visual experience, an experience that has the power to move, even to transform, the European subject.

We will return to a more general discussion of the experience of wilderness landscapes in nineteenth century travel writing in a few pages. Before this, however, I want to talk about conceptions of time, and the ways in which the inscription of the wilderness was informed by aesthetics of history.

Primitive landscapes

Back to the top of the granite ridge with Cormack and his Micmac guide. Cormack looks westward, and what does he see? He sees fields and forests stretching to the horizon. Looking at these fields and forests he experiences some kind of time warp. He goes back in time. Not to a time within European history, but to a prehistoric time, a time before history. He writes:

Primitiveness, omnipotence, and tranquillity were stamped upon everything so forcibly, that the mind is hurled back thousands of years, and man is left denuded of the mental fabric which a knowledge of ages of human experience and of time may have reared within him.

Pause and consider. How is it that the landscape of Newfoundland can have this effect on Cormack? How is it that he can see the terrain of the interior as primitive? And, indeed, what can he possibly mean by the word primitive when using it to describe what he sees?

In dealing with these questions I will be developing the argument that the turn of the nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of a descriptive discourse of time that enabled the man of science to perceive the visible world as an effect of history.

It is commonplace to think this began with Charles Darwin and his theories of evolution. It is true enough that Darwin provided a powerful (and adaptable) account of the processes of change in the natural world. However, the idea that the world shared a history of progressive transformation, and that the present could be interpreted as a consequence of this history predates, and in many ways is the precondition for, Darwin's thought. So rather than considering finches, we will consider rocks and the rise of geology as a science of time.

William Eppes Cormack was, as educated people were at that time, quite the polymath. He was interested in the description and identification of flora and fauna. He also had an abiding interest in the study of aboriginal cultures. He was also interested in rocks and minerals.

The third of these interests was new to the writing of Newfoundland. No previous European visitor had bothered with the study of the earth of Island and the rocks and minerals contained therein.⁹⁸ Banks wrote about plants and animals. He also wrote about the Micmacs and the Beothucks. However, he had little to say about the rocks of Newfoundland.

In contrast, Cormack includes detailed descriptions of geological formations in the narrative of his journey across Newfoundland. Concerning the mineralogy of the interior he tells his reader that,

... the rocks of the savannas are granite quartz, and chlorite greenstone ... mica, clorite, and transition clay slates. The granite is pink and grey, and sienitic. It throws itself in low beds lying northerly and southerly, higher than the savannas, and also appears with the greenstone and slate rocks at the edges of the lakes and other water courses. (144)

And on he goes, writing of sheets of mica and of rose-coloured quartz, of clay slate rocks and of loose fragments of asbestos.

His prose is visual. As the natural historian delights in the beauty and variety of living forms, so Cormack the geologist is fascinated by “mineralogical appearances”. Granite outcroppings are described as “very ponderous, owing to much disseminated iron pyrites, the oxidation of which, externally, gave it a brown colour.” By contrast,

“the beauty and interesting appearance of some of the beaches” around Serpentine Lake “composed entirely of rolled fragments of those rocks of every kind and colour, the red, yellow, and green prevailing, may be fancied better than described.” (146)

Cormack does not only see colours and forms. Looking at the terrain of Newfoundland he sees the effects of time. A few days after leaving the coast of Trinity Bay he climbs some “paps” (small rounded hills) to view the country. The view of from atop the hills was “splendid”. The hills themselves were old. He writes:

These paps consist of pink and grey granite, very coarse grained. They lie northward and southward of each other, and seem to belong to a very primitive range that exhibits itself at distant spots above the transition clay slate formation. They stand like imperishable monuments of the original construction of the earth, over looking the less perfectly crystallised rocks around them mouldering into soil. (135)

Walking westward into the interior he comes to Gower Lake. Near Gower Lake the accumulated deposits of history have again been washed away to reveal rugged granite.

Here are displayed the features of a summit of an immense mountain mass, as if just peeping above the earth; huge blocks of red, pink and grey granite – often very coarse grained, and of quartz – but compact and granular, lie in cumbrous and confused heaps, “like the ruins of the world,” over which we had to climb, leap, slide, and creep. They sometimes lie in fantastical positions – upon an enormous mass of grey granite may be seen, as if balanced on a small point of contact, another huge mass of red granite more durable in quality, and this is crowned by a third boulder. Their equilibrium invites the beholder to press his shoulder to them to convince him of his feebleness. These masses seem to be the remaining nodules of strata or beds

⁹⁸ This needs some qualification. When we say study we mean study in a scientific manner. The sixteenth- and seventeenth-century adventurers to the New-found lands had an almost obsessive interest in the minerals of the country. A “mineral man and refiner” did accompany Gilbert of his voyage to the New-found lands and perished when the *Delight* was castaway off Sable Island. He was, however, a very different sort of “mineral man” to Cormack, a difference that will be discussed in more detail in the following pages. (Quinn 1979 (IV), 21-44)

that once existed here; the more perishable parts having long since crumbled and disappeared, thus evincing the power of time. (144)

As Cormack and Joe continue into the interior the country becomes “more dreary and the primitive features more boldly marked.” (156) In the east the ancient granite formations “occasionally peeped” through the overlying savannah, but to the west there appears “a high and entirely granitic country”. Here they come to the very beginning of time: an “entirely primitive” territory where “mountain succeeds mountain in irregular succession”; (155) “a rugged and chaotic land, where the travellers are forced to “climb and creep” their way “over confused heaps of granite and white compact quartz”; a country “still barren to the imagination as at the creation”. (147)

The narrative of Cormack’s journey across Newfoundland is, therefore, the story of an imaginative journey back in time. This is a story written in the description of the geology of the interior. Formations of rock, the rough surface of quartz, tortuous strata of gneiss, stones resembling burnt clay that lie light in the hand, it is these which allow Cormack to see the landscape of Newfoundland as primitive.

The question becomes, then, how is it that the appearance of rocks and minerals could constitute a descriptive account of landscape as history? To answer this question we must do a bit of our own geology and consider the philosophical strata that underlie and give form to Cormack’s vision of the Newfoundland wilderness.

Reconstructing Cormack’s intellectual genealogy is pretty easy. We can deduce who his mentor was because he names things after him.

Cormack, as befits an explorer discovering an unknown land, was big on naming. He named Serpentine Lake after a type of mineral. A conspicuous conical hill was named Mount Clarence “in honour of His Royal Highness, who, when in the navy, had been in Placentia Bay.” (140) Another hill was named “Mount Sylvester” after his Micmac guide. (144) Yet another hill was named “Mount Misery” (winter had come,

you can guess the rest). (150) And a large pond, all frozen over, was named “Wilson's Lake” in honour of “a friend at the bar in Edinburgh”. (156)

One man had two geographic features named in his honour. The first was a range of mountains “which forms the centre nearly of Newfoundland”. (146) The second was lake, apparently called Meelpegh or Crooked Lake, by the Indians, but renamed by Cormack. The man so recognised was Robert Jameson, Cormack's “excellent friend and distinguished promoter of science and enterprise”. (146)

Robert Jameson's importance is not only indicated by the naming of lakes and mountains. During the first meeting of the Beothuck Institution Cormack proposed that two “gentlemen be Honorary Vice Patrons” of the newly formed society. One was John Barrow, Esq., second secretary of the admiralty and promoter of geographic explorations, the other was Professor Jameson. And in Cormack's obituary, written by “one who had known him intimately as a cherished friend” (according to Howley), it is noted that while “[a]t Edinburgh he [Cormack] was fortunate enough to secure the personal friendship of Professor Jameson, the late celebrated Mineralogist, whose fascinating incitement to the study of the physical sciences he ever gratefully remembered.” (235)

We know Robert Jameson as the self-confident young man who visited the London home of Joseph Banks in August 1793. But who was Robert Jameson the “late celebrated mineralogist” the “distinguished promoter of science and enterprise?” And, more to the point, how may have this Robert Jameson influenced the way in which Cormack in looked upon and wrote about the interior of Newfoundland?

Robert Jameson

Robert Jameson was from Leith.⁹⁹ He was born in 1774 the third son of a wealthy soap-boiler. As a boy his fancies were formed by books. He read *Robinson Crusoe* and *Cook's Voyages* and dreamed of travel to faraway lands. He read Thomas Boreman's *A description of three hundred animals* and was entranced by the study of nature.

He attended Leith Academy. Like Joseph Banks at Eton, the young Jameson took little interest in the study of Greek and Latin, preferring to play truant and wander the countryside searching for birds and insects. Unlike Banks, however, Jameson's friends and family dissuaded him from travelling farther afield. Instead, he enrolled as a student of medicine at the University of Edinburgh and found employment as surgeon's assistant.

At Edinburgh he joined the class in Natural History taught by Professor John Walker. Jameson was inspired. He was also a favoured pupil. He accompanied Walker on expeditions, gathered specimens for him and worked besides him in the University's museum of natural history. The relationship with Walker allowed Jameson to fulfil his youthful ambition and eventually drop the practice of medicine in favour of the study of nature and, in particular, the study of rocks.

Professor Walker was an empiricist in the tradition of Bacon and Newton. He was sceptical of grand theories expounded by speculative philosophers. For him the study of nature required that "the objects of nature themselves must be sedulously examined in their native state, the fields and mountains must be traversed, the woods and waters must

⁹⁹ No book-length biography of Robert Jameson has been published. There is an unpublished manuscript written by Laurence Jameson, entitled *Notes for a Biography of his Uncle, Professor Robert Jameson (1774-1854)*. There is also the usual entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* (pages 671-2). The best bibliographic sketch, based largely on the aforementioned manuscript and other documents, is provided by Jessie M. Sweet as an introduction to the facsimile reprint of Jameson's *The Wernerian Theory of the Neptunian Origin of Rocks* (1976, pages xii to xxi). The description of Robert Jameson's life is largely based upon this sketch.

be explored, and ocean must be fathomed and its shore scrutinised by everyone that would become proficient in natural knowledge.” (Sweet 1976, xiii)

True to Walker's teachings Jameson donned a rough cloth coat, shouldered a stout leather bag, and began traversing fields and mountains. He never fulfilled his dreams of exotic adventure; instead he wandered across the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. There he collected and observed rocks and minerals. On the basis of what he collected and observed he wrote *An outline of the mineralogy of the Shetland Islands, and of the Island of Arran* (1798) and *Outlines of the mineralogy of the Scottish Isles* (1800).

Professor Walker was not the only influence upon Jameson's thinking. In 1793 the Irish Geologist Richard Kirwin published an article entitled *Examination of the supposed igneous origin of stoney substances*. This was a contribution to the ongoing and acrimonious debate concerning the creation of the earth's surface. On one side were supporters of the Edinburgh geologist James Hutton, who argued for a “Plutonian” account of the formation of crust. On the other side were the students of the German professor of mineralogy Abraham Gottlob Werner, who advocated a “Neptunian” version of events.

For the moment the particulars of Hutton and Werner's theories are not important. What is important is that Kirwin's paper supported the Wernerian view, and that this paper, in the words of J. M. Sweet, “appears to have been the greatest single influence in setting Jameson's future course.” (1967, 84) Joined to the pragmatic empiricism of Professor Walker was a grand theory: a theory which explained the very origins of the earth's surface, a theory of sediments settling in a primordial ocean, a “Neptunian” vision of a watery past.

Jameson became and remained an apostle of the “Wernerian” doctrine. In 1796 he presented two papers before the Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh, both of which employed a combination of chemical experiment and field observation to attack the

foundations of Huttonian theory. In 1797 he visited Kirwin in Dublin, and, in the company of Kirwin's pupil George Mitchell, spent days inspecting the vast Leskean collection of mineral specimens which had been arranged and catalogued under Werner's supervision. Two years later Jameson and Mitchell made the pilgrimage to the Bergakademie in Freiberg to study under Werner himself.¹⁰⁰

In 1802 Jameson returned to Edinburgh. Professor Walker was blind and seriously ill. For the next year Jameson assisted his mentor in the museum and classroom. When Walker died in 1803, Jameson, the favourite pupil, was duly elected to the chair of Natural History at the University of Edinburgh, more an act of succession than selection. He held this position until his death in 1854.

With the professorship came control over the museum of natural history. Walker's trustees had removed most of the museum's contents, and Jameson set about assembling a new collection. With the assistance of public money, and through a network of private influence a stream of interesting objects from around the world poured into Jameson's museum. By the time of Jameson's death the museum was considered to be one of the finest in Europe. In "a beautiful series" of five apartments in Edinburgh's Old College were displayed some 40,000 specimens of rocks and minerals, 800 skulls and skeletons, 8,000 birds, 900 fishes, thousands of insects and shells, as well as drawings, casts, maps, and surveying instruments. (Chitnis 1970, 88)

Jameson's activities were not confined to lecturing and managing the museum. In 1808 he and some other gentlemen created the "Wernerian Society of Natural History". Jameson was elected president-for-life, and made responsible for the publication of the society's memoirs. And in 1819 Jameson and one Doctor Brewster founded the

¹⁰⁰ Besides the aforementioned introduction to the *Wernerian Theory of the Neptunian Origin of Rocks*, two other sources describing Werner's influence upon Jameson are Alexander Ospovat's "Romanticism and geology: five students of Abraham Gottlob Werner" (1982), and Jessie Sweet and Charles D. Waterstown's "Robert Jameson's approach to the Wernerian theory of the earth, 1796" (1967).

Edinburgh Philosophical Journal, which, after a falling-out between the two founders, was renamed the *New Edinburgh Philosophical Journal* in 1824. Again, Jameson was editor-in-chief and remained so until his death.

In short, the inheritance of the chair at the University enabled Jameson to create and consolidate a “learned empire” in Edinburgh similar, in kind if not in scale, to that presided over by Joseph Banks from Soho Square in London. As with Banks, this was an empire of knowledge. Through his professorship, his management of the museum, his presidency of the Wernerian Society and his editorship of two learned journals, Jameson controlled (or attempted to control) the flow of ideas and objects that constituted the study of natural history in Edinburgh.¹⁰¹

It is fair to say that William Eppes Cormack was, during his years in St. John's, well within Jameson's sphere of influence. We do not have the class lists from the 1820's, but we may surmise that Cormack would have attended Jameson's class in Natural History during his years of study at Edinburgh.¹⁰² Cormack may have even been one of those “well-behaved” students who were invited to evening parties at Jameson's residence at 21 Royal Circus in Edinburgh's New Town. There he would have enjoyed the music of

¹⁰¹ Some, indeed, thought Jameson's attempt to control the flow ideas was less than ethical. In 1826 a Royal Commission was appointed to inquire into the state of universities in Scotland. The commission received numerous complaints about Jameson's management of the natural history collection. “The substance of these complaints”, to quote Chitnis, “was that Jameson restricted entry to the Museum and only exhibited in it materials and collections which supported the Wernarian hypothesis.” (1970, 91) The commission found that, although Jameson had done a great work to rebuild the Universities collection, “his private interests” did “interfere with the management of a great public institution.” (1970, 93)

¹⁰² Reconstructing Cormack's academic career from existing documents is difficult. The matriculation lists for Glasgow University records the enrolment of Gulielmus Cormack, filius of Alexander Merchatoris Newfoundland in 1811. The only official record of his studying in Edinburgh is in the matriculation list of 1832 which notes that a W. E. Cormack of Newfoundland has enrolled for the fifth year of study towards a degree in literature. Clearly, his relationship with Jameson predates Cormack's return to Newfoundland and we may only surmise that he had begun his studies at Edinburgh sometime before leaving Scotland in 1818, resuming them sporadically over the following years.

Handel, Beethoven and Mozart, partaken of an “extremely elegant supper”, and conversed and danced with the “elite of the city”.¹⁰³

On returning to Newfoundland Cormack, as befitted the dutiful student of natural history, extended his mentor's learned empire by sending words and things back to Edinburgh. An abridged version of Cormack's “Narrative of a journey across the interior of Newfoundland” was published in the *Edinburgh Philosophical Journal* in 1823. Another paper concerning the “natural history and economical uses of cod, capelin, cuttlefish, and seal at they occur on the banks of Newfoundland and the coasts of that island and Labrador” was read before the Wernerian Natural History Society in January, 1826, and published in the *New Edinburgh Philosophical Journal* a few months later.

Cormack also contributed to the museum, or, to be completely accurate, Cormack sent things from Newfoundland to Jameson who then presented them to the museum (effectively presenting them to himself). Amongst the acquisition lists from 1827 we find “two skulls of the aborigines of Newfoundland”, “a model of an indian canoe”, “two models of human figures” and a “model of bird” (the last three all removed from the “cemetery of the chief on the country of the Red Indians”), as well as a collection of “fire stones from Newfoundland”.

So it was that, through Cormack and his association with Jameson, bits of Newfoundland, as marks on a page, as words spoken before gatherings of gentleman, as the skulls of men and the rocks of the earth, found their way to the elegant apartments, the libraries and the classrooms of Edinburgh. In such places these objects and observations, laid beside or bound with objects and observations taken from other faraway lands, were incorporated into globalizing schemas of natural history. In turn,

¹⁰³ The passage quoted is from Laurence Jameson's notes towards a biography of his uncle.

and to complete this economy of knowledge, these schemas became integral to the ways in which the landscape of Newfoundland was seen and experienced by William Eppes Cormack and, in the years to follow, other visiting Europeans.

Which brings us to the question of what Cormack may have learned from Jameson. We know who Jameson was. We know that Cormack was a friend and, most likely, a student of Jameson's. The question that needs asking, indeed the question that lies at the heart of this genealogical exercise, concerns how the study of rocks, as taught by Jameson in the classrooms of Old College and on field-trips in and around Edinburgh, may have influenced the ways in which Cormack described the interior of Newfoundland?

In answering this question we will broaden the scope of our discussion, and consider the emergence of geology as a science of global history.

A short history of the earth sciences

For a man to wander across country, be that country the highlands of Scotland or the interior of Newfoundland, with a hammer in his hand and a leather bag across his shoulder, chipping away at stones and peering at formations of rock is a strange and curious thing. For this man to then take these samples and observations and, in conference with others like him, deduce the history of the earth is even more wonderful.

In the seventeenth century no one would have done such a thing. By the beginning of the nineteenth century there were many engaged in this curious pursuit. They climbed high mountains and explored vast caverns. Rich and educated men let go the trappings of cultivation and refinement. They dressed as peasants or savages and slept rough under the open sky. For sustenance they depended on the kindness of simple folk or the bounty of nature. They sweated and shivered, suffered from hunger and thirst, fatigue

and disease. They travelled widely. Not only to the hinterlands of Europe and the wilds of North America, but to the pampas of Argentina, the mountains of Tibet and the deserts of Australia. All this they did in order to study rocks. They called this study geology, and themselves geologists.

Now as I said people of the seventeenth century neither would think themselves geologists nor would they study geology. This was not simply because the word had not been invented.¹⁰⁴ It is because there was no observational science of the history of the earth.

In stating that there were no geologists we are not saying no one was interested in rocks. Quite the contrary: people in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries were very interested in rocks. The Renaissance adventurers to the New-found lands, for example, were intensely interested in establishing the whereabouts of valuable minerals.

Humphrey Gilbert, for one, was “most curious in the search of mettals”. He hired a Saxon mineral man and refiner by the name of Daniel to help him with this search. In St. John’s Daniel was commanded to be “especially to be diligent” in his work. Diligent he was. Daniel searched and brought a sample of “some sort of Ore, seeming rather to be yron than some other metall”. The next day he did better, finding ore “which with no small shew of contentment he delivered unto the Generall, using protestation, that if silver were the thing which might satisfie the Generall and his followers, there it was,

¹⁰⁴ A short history of the word “Geology” is provided by Dennis Dean (1979). According to Dean “the English word ‘geology’ makes its first appearance in Benjamin Martin’s *The philosophical grammar* ... (1735).” Martin employs the term to refer to the “philosophical view of the terraqueous Globe, in all its Parts and Productions: as Minerals, Metals, Stones &c.” (37) “From the 1780’s onwards”, according to Dean, “‘geology’ behaves increasingly as if it were an established English word.” (40) By 1790, John Walker, Jameson’s mentor in Edinburgh, was dividing his classes in the natural history of the globe into meteorology, hydrography and geology. (40) Jameson’s other mentor, the Irishman Kirwan, was amongst the first to designate himself as a ‘geologist’ and his field of enquiry as ‘geology’. (41) By the early nineteenth century the geological societies were being formed (the Geological Society of London, founded in 1807, was the first of its kind) and learned journals were published about matters geological (the Geological Society of London first printed its transactions in 1813), thereby confirming geology’s status as a branch of the natural sciences. (42)

advising him to seeke no further: the perill whereof he undertook upon his life ... if it fell not out accordingly.” Gilbert, having seen enough to satisfy his “own private humor,” secreted the ore aboard ship, lest any of the “Biscains or Frenchmen in the harbour came to learn of the discovery.” (Hayes [Quinn 1979], 35)

Daniel was, however, a very different kind of mineral man than Cormack. True, they both collected samples for transport back to Britain. Their reasons for collecting samples were, however, not the same. Daniel searched for bits of precious metals that Gilbert could show to his investors as proof of the potential profitability of his plantation. Cormack gathered shards of rock in order to describe the landscape of the Newfoundland interior. Put another way, Cormack was mapping the rocks of Newfoundland; Daniel was simply establishing whether any of these rocks were valuable.

In mapping the rocks of Newfoundland Cormack was engaged in a cartographic project similar to that of Banks and Cook. Indeed, the abbreviated account of a journey across the island of Newfoundland published in the *Edinburgh Philosophical Journal* of 1823 includes a map of Newfoundland. On this map is drawn the course of Cormack’s journey, a thin black line bisecting the island from east to west. The land is written around this line as geographic features named in bold print: Melville’s L.; Mt. Sylvester; Jameson’s Lake; Mt. Misery; Bathurst’s Lake and so on. In a finer script the rocks of the interior are also written from right to left: Granite, Syenite, Mica and Slate by Lake Melville; Granite traversed by Quartz veins on the eastern shores of Lake Jameson; and Grey Granite upon Mount Misery. So the rocks of Newfoundland became known in the same manner as the plants of Newfoundland and the very form of the island. They were named according to their visible features and in being named found their place within global schemas of European geology, botany and geography.

There was, as has been said, one big difference. The charts of Cook and the botanical drawings of Banks were inscribed on two dimensions. The relationship between forms, be it geographic or botanical form, was purely spatial, a geometry of distances described in latitude and longitude or upon the logic of Linnaean taxonomic grid. There was to Cormack's journey a third dimension. That dimension was time. Form, for Cormack, did not simply exist synchronically but emerged diachronically. By looking upon a landscape he, as a student of form could visualise the work of time. He looked upon the "hoary receding front" of Cape St. Francis, and saw "the thousands of years it has defied, and still defies more sternly the ever, the shocks and chafings of the hundred of square miles of ice." (131-2) He walked across the soft peat of the interior and saw the process of its formation "distinctly exhibited from the dying and dead roots of the green surface moss descending into gradual decay, until perfected into a fine compact peat, in which the organic structure is lost." (140) So it went, the work of time: a cycle of development and decay, seen vertically in the exposed face of a peat bog or strata of greenstone and grey quartz rock.

How then did the study of the earth change over the two hundred and thirty years that elapsed between the visits of Daniel, the Saxon mineral man, and Cormack, the Scottish student of geology?

In the last twenty years or so there has been a fair amount written about the history of the earth sciences in Europe. A partial list of useful works would include *Thinking about the earth: a history of ideas in geology* by David Oldroyd (1996), *A history of geology* by Gabriel Gohau (1992), *From mineralogy to geology* by Rachel Laudan (1987), *The making of geology: earth sciences in Britain* by Roy Porter (1977), and Stephen J. Gould's *Times arrow, times cycle: myth and metaphor in the discovery of geological time* (1987). All of these, with the exception of Gould's slim volume, provide a fine and detailed account of the emergence of modern geological science. The

following history is based on these sources, but will necessarily be a rather crude summary of a complex story.

In the previous chapter we discussed Foucault's history of the natural sciences. Foucault, we will recall, claimed that the study of living things in Europe underwent two periods of profound transformation. His history begins in the Renaissance. In the Renaissance nature was a text, a collection of signs and symbols woven into a complex web of similtudes and analogies. Then came the classical age. In the classical age nature was no longer seen as a text but as taxonomy of forms described upon a classificatory grid according their appearance. Finally, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, "the Linnaean metaphysics of the fixed form, the *forma formata*, gave way to the new field of the changing form, the *formata formans*." For scholars like Buffon and Darwin the "problem of form no longer entailed the study of synchronicities; it now began to be equated with the diachronic reconstruction of lines of development." (Richards 1993, 47)

Foucault's history of knowledge deals with living things not rocks. Rocks are different and the history of the study of rocks is different from the history study of plants and animals. Rachel Laudan, for one, dismisses Foucault's schema as being "so rigid as to hinder rather than help historical understanding." (1987, 86) "At least in mineralogy," she writes,

I do not detect sharp ruptures, certainly not at Foucault's proposed dates. Mineralogists from Aristotle to Agricola had classified minerals in part by their external, visible features. Some ... continued to do so into the nineteenth century, well past the date of the second purported rupture. If the evidence for Foucault's ruptures is slim, so, too, is the evidence for the exclusive use of "representation" during the classical period. Chemical mineralogy continued to flourish throughout the eighteenth century, arguably being the majority position. In short, the similarities between

different fields of inquiry and changes in theoretical orientation over time can be explained more simply by the historians' time-honoured concept of intellectual traditions than by resorting to vague Foucauldian theses about "the positive unconscious of knowledge" and ruptures in human consciousness." (1987, 86)

Others are less unkind. Albury and Oldroyd declare that "Foucault's enterprise opens up to the historian of science a vast terrain of exploration." (1979, 183) However, in extending Foucault's account of the order of things "from studies of the animal and vegetable kingdoms to studies of the mineral kingdom" (1979, 206) they find that, although there "are many parallels to be found", there "are also significant divergences". (1979, 206)

One problem with applying Foucault's schema to the study of the earth is that Foucault assumes there to be a singled unified field of knowledge. Of course, he allows that there are many different places where knowledge is happening: a plethora of classrooms, laboratories, theatres and gardens. Deep down, however, there is only one site of knowledge, a sort of pan-European subconscious which is "the basis or archaeological system common to a whole series of scientific 'representations' or 'products' dispersed throughout the natural history, economics, and philosophy of the classical period." (Foucault 1970, xi-ii)

This may be true for the study of animate nature, it is however not true for the study of the earth and the products of the earth. Until the advent of modern geology, the study of the earth was divided into two distinct realms of knowledge each with their distinct history. The first was cosmology: the study of the creation of the earth and the universe. The second was mineralogy: the study of the properties and whereabouts of stony substances. The crude thesis that we will be developing is that geology, as an observational science of the creation and transformation of the globe, is the product of a

merger of these two intellectual traditions. Moreover, in a rather unfashionable great man reading of history, we will argue that Abraham Gottlob Werner played an important part in making possible the visualisation of time.

Back in the Renaissance there were two types of people interested in the things of the earth. The first were scholars of the natural world. These men wrote of rocks in much the same way as they wrote of plants and animals. They wrote of the signatures and correspondences lodged in the stony being of things in which were revealed the prose of the world. Ulysse Aldrovandi, for example, not only wrote of the definitions, origins, nature and properties of minerals, he also wrote of their sympathies and antipathies and their presence in dreams, mysteries and miracles. (Oldroyd 1996, 29; Aldbury and Oldroyd 1979, 189-191)

The second group of people had more practical concerns. These were miners and metallurgists. They were not interested in the obscure meaning of stones; rather, they were interested in how to locate and distinguish valuable ores. Of course people had been finding such ores for millennia, but beginning in the early sixteenth century they began to write of their methods, describing simple chemical processes for assaying minerals and schemas for the identification of different products of the earth. (Oldroyd 1996, 68; Laudan 1987, 21-32)

With the dawn of the Enlightenment a couple important things happened. The first important thing has been discussed in chapter three: that sometime at the beginning of the seventeenth century the ways in which European scholars understood the workings of the cosmos underwent a profound transformation. No longer did they look to texts, either Classical or Biblical, to find the true nature of things; rather, they observed things in themselves so as to discover the Godly principles of order that were written in their appearance. The universe, it was assumed, operated according to mechanical principles that were revealed in the movement of objects through space. These mechanical

principles were imminent in all things, from the smallest flower to the stars in heaven. The earth was no exception. Throughout the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries philosophers and mineralogists applying the principles of Cartesian rationalism, if not the more rigorous disciplines of English empiricism posited various mechanistic theories of the history of earth.

Descartes himself was the influential author of one such history. Imagining that everything was composed of tiny particles called corpuscles, he formed a theory of earthly evolution based upon the rather fanciful laws of corpuscular mechanics. In the beginning the earth was a star, like the sun. Like the sun it was composed of large particles whirling around a vortex composed of smaller particles. As the earth approach the sun it developed three layers as blisters formed upon the vortex eventually covering it in a shell of solid matter which separating the fiery core from the atmosphere. A layer of metals then formed around this shell, and upon this a layer of water, and upon this another layer of air. Finally, a layer of soil and stones, the present crust of the earth was formed, dividing the air within the earth from the atmosphere without.

This was the original globe: a smooth hard surface covering successive layers of air, water and minerals, with the remnants of a star at its centre. Descartes imagined that in warm weather corpuscles of air and water might squeeze through the porous surface of the earth, leaving empty spaces below. The crust of soil and stones would then collapse into these empty spaces creating mountains and valleys. The waters from within the globe would flow through the cracks and fissures of the ruptured crust creating rivers, lakes and oceans. So the earth as we know it through observation came into being, not as miracle of creation but as the result of the functioning of laws of mechanical physics. (Laudan 1987, 41-4; Oldroyd 1996, 42-58)

A remarkable thing about this Cartesian history of the earth was its brevity. All this – the blistering of the fiery vortex, the formation of a succession of layers of mineral,

water and earth, the collapse of the earth's crust and the creation of mountains and oceans – happened over a few thousand years. The reason for this abbreviated time scale was the influence of religion. It is a curious fact that the emergence of rationalism and empiricism was, in the words of Oldroyd, accompanied by an “increasing emphasis on the literal interpretation of the Bible”. (1996, 48) The stories of the Bible were no longer read as allegories but as episodes in the history of the world. A close reading of this history, from the moment God brought light to the darkness to the resurrection of his crucified son, would, accordingly, yield a reasonably precise estimate of the age of the earth. The most famous estimate was provided by James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh, who, in a great feat of biblical scholarship calculated that the world came into being on the 23rd of October 4004 BC.

The second important development that took place during the enlightenment was the bureaucratisation of mining. In some ways this was simply a continuation of the work of the mineralogist and metallurgists of the Renaissance; however, during the seventeenth century and especially in the eighteenth century mineralogical knowledge became increasingly sophisticated and institutionalised. As the economy became the domain of the nation state, so the state became increasingly concerned with surveying its domain. In a manner similar to Cook charting the harbours and fish stages of the Newfoundland coast, mineralogists, schooled in the methods of empirical investigation, were asked to chart the whereabouts of valuable ores and clays.

Foremost amongst those states which had institutionalised the study of mining was Saxony in what is now eastern Germany. Silver had been mined from the Erz Mountains in Saxony since the twelfth-century. Towns grew around these mines. The largest of these was Freiberg. By the fifteenth century Freiberg had become the administrative and scholarly capital of the Saxony mining industry. These administrators and scholars were

not trained in mineralogy. They had been trained as doctors and chemists and applied their scientific training to the study of earths and minerals.

This changed in 1765. In that year a mining academy was established in Freiberg with Christlieb Gellert appointed as the first professor of metallurgical chemistry. Shortly thereafter a second academy was founded in the nearby mining town of Chemnitz. Five years later a Prussian mining official organised the Berlin mining school.

Unlike the rather abstract philosophical and moral speculation that dominated the curriculum of more traditional universities, these new institutions were devoted to the much more practical study of ways to identify valuable earths and metals, and how to best go about extracting those valuable earths and minerals once they had been found. As it turned out, however, the establishment of these mining schools did little to assist the development of mining but did much to stimulate the more theoretical study of the problem of distribution of rocks.

At the heart of this theoretical turn was a school of thought that Rachel Laudan has labelled “cosmological chemistry”. One of the foremost members of this school of thought was Johann Henckel. Henckel came to Freiberg as a doctor but he was soon was appointed as an official in the Saxon mining service. In this capacity he was charged with the task of surveying Saxony’s mineral wealth. In his spare time he taught metallurgical chemistry. Amongst his pupils were men who went on to become amongst the first professors of mineralogy in Saxony (and by extension the world), the aforementioned Gellert in Freiberg and A. S. Marggraf in Berlin.

To simplify greatly, Henckel, following his countryman the chemist Georg Stahl, was particularly interested in the solubility of earths and minerals. On a practical level the relative action of earthy substances in solution provided a means for identifying the differences between these substances. On a more metaphysical level the discovery that

water was not merely water but a chemical compound composed of the elements of air and traces of earths and minerals gave rise to a speculative but highly influential account of the formation of the globe. According to this theory water once covered the whole of earth. This primordial ocean was thick gelatinous soup of earths and minerals held in suspension. One by one, in accordance with their chemical properties these substances condensed as solids. The more insoluble substances, quartz and granite, were deposited first, forming the bedrock of the world. Then came the more soluble earths, limestone, sandstone and gypsum, settling in layers one on top of the other as the forces of gravity or the mutual attraction of like particles pulled them from the water and made them into earth. (Laudan 1987, 66-8)

So it was, as Laudan writes, that by

... the second half of the eighteenth century ... mineralogists perceived a nice fit between their genetic causal theories of earth development and the testimony of rocks they observed in the field. The former, based on the analogy of chemical experiments carried out in the laboratory, suggested that rocks (which were nothing more than extended masses of minerals, primarily earths) should have been deposited in inverse order of their solubility. The latter showed that, indeed, the primary rocks were composed largely of siliceous earths, and the secondary, stratified rocks of more soluble earths. (1987, 68)

Abraham Gottlob Werner was “steeped in the tradition of chemical cosmology.” He was born in 1747 into a family that had long been associated with the mining industry. He attended the academy in Freiberg and then went to Leipzig to study law with a view to joining the Saxon mining service.

While in Leipzig he wrote a handbook entitled *Von den ausserlichen Kennzeichen der Fossilien* (*On the external characters of minerals*). Superficially, the handbook he wrote was very much in keeping with the Linnaean tradition of taxonomy. In it Werner

attempted to identify and classify different kinds of minerals according to their appearance. (Oldroyd 1996, 98) However, even as he applied the Linnaean approach to identification to the things of the earth, Werner argued forcefully that a sharp distinction be drawn between living and nonliving objects. Living things, according to Werner, were distinguished by their “mode of association” between different parts while stony substances were distinguished by their chemical composition. In other words the botanist may create a system of hierarchical classification based on the manner of association between the parts of plant but the mineralogist may not do the same with rocks because even when ground to finest dust rocks retained their essential character.

The distinction between the living and nonliving things represented an important break with the classical tradition of knowledge. Linnaeus had assumed that all the things of the natural world existed on a single continuum from minerals to plants to animals. Accordingly, all the things of the natural world, from granite to geraniums to gerbils, could be incorporated within his system of taxonomic classification. Indeed, he attempted, with limited success, to extend his schema of nomenclature to the identification of minerals, sexualising salts, acids and earths so as to allow for the possibility of a hierarchy of nonbeing based on metaphors of procreation. (Laudan 1987, 73-5)

By arguing that minerals and earths were wholly different to plants and animals, and that this difference was not simply a matter of degree, but a difference in their essential nature, Werner was allowing for a sharp distinction to be made between identification and classification. To quote from Laudan,

Identification is the development of a repertoire of techniques for recognising further examples of an individual that has already been described and named. Classification is the process of assigning the entities of the world to a place in a conceptual network. (1987, 82)

For Linnaeans identification and classification were one in the same. The identity of an object, as defined by its physical appearance, defined its place in relation to other objects within the taxonomic grid. Conversely, it was the place of an object, its relative distance from other objects within the geometric space of the classical universe, which determined its identity. For Werner, however, the identification and classification of rocks were two very different projects. In keeping with the Linnaean tradition he assumed that earths and minerals could be identified according to their appearance. However, breaking with the Linnaean tradition and in keeping with the cosmological tradition of Henckel, he argued forcefully that the minerals must be classified according to their chemical properties. (Laudan 1987, 82) His treatise written in Leipzig was intended merely as an aid to identification. The problem of classification he dealt with in later life.

After his studies in Leipzig Werner returned to Freiberg as a professor of mineralogy at the Academy. While a professor at the Academy he refined his approach to the classification of earths and minerals. He decided that the essential differences between the various minerals and earths lay not in their place upon a taxonomic grid but in their time and mode of making. The key to this classificatory system was the idea of the rock formation. Rock formations could be identified according to their visible properties, but the true difference between the formations lay in their history. By looking at the form of the earth and the texture of rocks the mineralogist could, therefore, envisage the linear progress of time.

Werner's vision of history was more or less a refinement of the theories of the chemical cosmologists. Like them he assumed that there had once been a vast ocean sea formed around a primeval core of solid matter. Over time material from that ocean crystallised onto the irregular surface of this solid core according to their relative insolubility, first granite, then gneiss, then primitive limestone and so on. These he

called the primitive rocks. Then the ancient ocean receded exposing a hard primitive land. A process of weathering and erosion could now begin, and through this another class of rocks was created formed of the sediments deposited by water as it scoured away at the primitive crust. These sedimentary fossil-bearing formations Werner called *Floetz* rocks. Notoriously, Werner paid scant attention to volcanic rocks, supposing that they were formed by the combustion of flammable earthy substances such as coal and were, therefore, simply a rather anomalous transformation of existing formations. (Jameson 1808; Laudan 1987, 94-102; Oldroyd 1996, 99)

Even though he was very much writing within the tradition of Chemical Cosmology, Werner's concept of rock formations allowed for an important break with that tradition. For the chemist it was the mode of formation that determined the character of earths and minerals. Their version of the history of the globe was, therefore, simply a reflection of the order of things that had been discovered in the laboratory. For Werner and his disciples the classifications of rocks was first and foremost a historical science based upon field observation. As Linnaeus had done with plants, Werner provided the theoretical means by which an observer could identify and classify local phenomena by placing them within a global schema of order. Unlike Linnaeus, however, this was a historical schema. Working within a Wernarian tradition the observer could gaze upon a cliff face and in the strata of rock, each lying on top of the other, see the march of global time.

History has not been kind to Werner. By the early nineteenth century, especially in Britain, Werner's "Neptunian" theories had been widely dismissed as mere conjecture born of insufficient and parochial research. In his *Founders of Geology*, Archibald Geike thunders "never in the history of science did a stranger hallucination arise than that of Werner and his school when they suppose themselves to discard theory and build on the foundation of accurately-ascertained fact. Never was a system devised in which

theory was more rampant; theory, too, unsupported by observation, and how utterly erroneous.” (1897, 103)

More recent scholars such as Alexander Ospovat and Rachel Laudan have argued for a reappraisal of Werner’s legacy. Even if his theories of geological formation proved to be wrong or at least insufficient, his approach to the study of the earth was both revolutionary and influential. Essentially, by distinguishing between identification and classification and by integrating the field science of mineralogy with the cosmological speculation of mechanical and chemical philosophers, Werner (and his contemporaries) made possible a visual science of historical transformation. This new form of visualisation had, I would argue, a profound effect on the way in which educated Europeans, both geologists and lay people alike, perceived the world and their place within it. To describe this new visual science and the ways in which it transformed the European experience of the Newfoundland wild we will now return to the classroom of Werner’s pupil Robert Jameson.

Rocks upon a white table and walks by the water of Leith

In Edinburgh Robert Jameson taught natural history. In its broad outline, the course he taught was much the same as the course taught by Dr. Walker before him.¹⁰⁵ It was an ambitious series of lectures, embracing almost every aspect of the natural world. He would begin by lecturing on metrology, discussing the types of wind, fireballs and stones

¹⁰⁵ The description of Jameson’s course at the University of Edinburgh is based on a series documents deposited in the Special Collection section of the Queen Elizabeth Library at the University of Edinburgh. These include “A syllabus of Lectures on Natural History” (1827); “Lectures on Natural History taken down by J. Borthwick” (1806); “Students notes of Jameson’s Lectures on Natural History” (1813-14); “Students notes on Jameson’s Lectures on Natural History (1816-17) and “Students notes of Jameson’s Lectures on Zoology & mineralogy” (n.d., 1827?). To these may be added *The Edinburgh University Student’s Guide, or an account of the classes of the University arranged under faculties with details of what is taught in each* (1822). Most of the quotes in this section are taken from the 1827 notes or Borthwick’s lectures on natural history. In the text these will be distinguished by referring to them respectively as “1827” and Borthwick.

that fall from the heavens. He then moved to on to Hydrography, expounding on the colour of seawater and the magnitude of springs. He would conclude with lectures on Botany and then Zoology, discussing the species of man as well as all the other creatures that populated the globe.

Between his lectures on Hydrography and Botany, Jameson introduced his students to the study of Geology. He talked of “physiognomy of the earth” and “the different kinds of structures of the solid mass of the earth.” He described “materials of which mountains and volcanoes are composed”, the “history of marshes, morasses and peat bogs” and “the systematic arrangement of fossil and organic remains in the earth”. More practically, he addressed the “modes for searching for useful minerals”, how best to “conduct mineral surveys” and how to draw “geognostical sections and maps”.

Through his lectures on geology, and indeed through his entire course of lectures on the natural world, Jameson taught his students a visual prose of time. The theme he returned to again and again throughout his lectures was that the present day world, the visible surface of our existence, was actually the effect of a series of historical transformations and that by looking at the world, by closely observing the form and structure of things, an educated man may, quite literally, uncover the history which underlies appearances.

He taught this visual prose in two ways. In the classroom he lectured before tables “kept as free from dust as hands could keep them.” On these tables servants had laid “gems and delicate crystalline substances” each placed in relation to the other according to their nature. These were kept under bell glasses until professor appeared. Then the glasses would be lifted and Jameson would speak of what lay before him describing “the class order, genus and species of each specimen as well as the chemical and physical characteristics”. This would seem quite in keeping with classical traditions of natural knowledge. The white table, clean of all dust, painted once every two years to ensure its

pure whiteness, was like the white page in a botanical text, a blank empty surface upon which the visible form of things could be revealed so that the order of things could be written, not in words, for these were mere reflection of what was seen, but in the arrangement of objects in empty space.¹⁰⁶

But Jameson did not confine his teaching to the classroom. He took his students on expeditions in and around Edinburgh. He led them up Calton Hill and Arthur's Seat. He walked them along the banks of "Leith water from Stockbridge to the Bridge that crosses the Perth road". He did not take his students out in the world merely to find specimens that could be taken back to the classroom and laid upon his white tables; rather, he took them out into the world to show the layers of rock that underlay their city. Looking at the cliff face that rises above the water of Leith his students could see "a beautiful display of the rocks of the coal formation dipping to the west" and that "the slate-clay, clay-iron, stone and sandstone, & bituminous shale are traversed ... by a beautiful vein of greenstone, which runs directly under the bed of the water." (Borthwick) What was revealed in these field trips was a different kind of order, not the synchronic order of gems and crystals laid upon a white table, but a diachronic order of formations of rocks lying each on top of the other as they were deposited long ago. What was revealed was time.

In actuality, both in the classroom and in field, Jameson taught the aesthetics of time as revealed in rocks. For Jameson the individual rock bore the signatures of the history of its making as surely as did a landscape. An experienced observer, one who had learned to read the visual prose of history, could gaze upon a single stone sitting on a table or an entire mountain range and look into the past.

¹⁰⁶ The description of Jameson's classroom layout is quoted from "notes intended for a biographical memoir of the late Robert Jameson Regius Professor of Natural History and Lecturer on Mineralogy" as prepared by his Nephew. The memoir was never published and the pages of the manuscript are not numbered.

For example, concerning Primitive rocks, Jameson said the following:

Primitive rocks are the oldest of the crust of the earth & therefore the first formed ... we may observe that all these strata have a crystalline character & were deposited from a solution either aqueous or igneous. They contain no organic remains & were there for formed before organic beings were created. (1827, 91)

Later on in the course Jameson returned to the subject of things primitive, only this time he spoke not simply of the character of rocks but also of entire landscapes and indeed countries.

Primitive rocks constitute the higher & more rugged part of mountainous countries. ... An experienced geologist can discover at first sight of what class of the five formations a country is composed: and it requires very little previous observation to be able to detect a country formed of primitive rocks. The valleys are more extensive, they are narrow & rugged, & the whole face of the country has a majestic & awful appearance. (Borthwick)

He goes on to conclude that,

[t]he aspect of the country in Scotland & everywhere else is quite sufficient in the eyes of a geologist to distinguish a transitional from a primitive country: in the former the mountains are less bold & rugged, their sides less abrupt, their valleys less deep, than in the later. (Borthwick)

The character of the rock and the character of a landscape were, for Jameson, simply reflection on one another, for appearance of each was determined by the history of their formation. To visualise this relationship between history and form, both on the page and in the field, early nineteenth-century geologists such as Jameson would juxtapose panoramic views across the horizontal expanse of a landscape with vertical cross-sections that would cut the landscape open revealing the structure of historical events that gave rise to its present appearance. On the page this juxtaposition was achieved by

alternating pen and ink depictions of famous wilderness scenes as viewed from on high (often with a little man, either a geologist or a shepherd, in the foreground) with imaginative reconstructions of the layers of strata that lay beneath the surface of this scene. In the field one could achieve the same juxtaposition by climbing trees, hills or mountains to overlook the expanse of the landscape, then descending into ravines or caves, places where nature had cut into the surface of the land to reveal the underlying order of time.¹⁰⁷

What his juxtaposition made possible was the experience of the past. This was most obviously and importantly an analytical experience. The experienced geologist, Jameson told his students, can “discover at first sight the age of the country” he is looking upon, for even as he gazes upon vistas of high mountains and narrow valleys he is imaginatively cutting into that scene to reveal the circumstances of its formation. He sees hard granite rock settling to the bottom of a primordial and lifeless ocean. He sees the ocean receding. He sees water carving and etching the face of the rock, creating peaks and valleys. In some places, in the green and pleasant countryside of southern England for example, these primitive rocks have become hidden under layers of sediment, but in the highlands of Scotland and the rugged wilds of Newfoundland the presence of an ancient world is revealed naked to the eye of the learned man.

To observe the immensity of history upon the face of the land was not, however, a merely analytical experience. It was also a profoundly moving aesthetic experience. Primitive lands were, to quote Jameson, “majestic and awful”. To gaze into the dark abyss of time was simultaneously terrifying and uplifting, for in so doing we were both glimpsing our own mortality and transcending the limits of our existence.

¹⁰⁷ For a detailed description of the “Emergence of a Visual Language of Geological Science 1760 –1840” refer to Martin J. Rudwick’s article in the *History of Science* (1976, pages 149-195).

From a high point looking down (again)

In the summer of 1798 Robert Jameson visited the Island of Skye. During his stay Jameson and his travelling companion, Charles Bell, resolved to climb Ben-na-callich. Early in the morning they left their house in Cory and began to walk up the mountain. As they walked they observed the work of time. "The first object which attracted our attention," writes Jameson,

was a fine white calcareous marle, which forms a bed of considerable thickness. Upon examining particularly, I observed mixed with it, masses of white and grey marble; and these were seen in all the stages of decomposition, until they formed a substance not distinguishable from the marle. This fact renders it probable, that the whole bed is formed by the debris, which has been washed from the neighbouring marble strata. (1798, 92)

As they "continued their ascent, the mountains became more steep", and from beneath the "brown burnt-like aspect of the heath" there appeared outcrops of blue and white coloured marble." (92) From the mountainside Jameson could not "discover how these marble strata were deposited", so he descended into "one of the numerous ravines which furrow the side of the mountain". (93) The bottom of the ravine was of white marble. Its sides were composed of strata of marble overlaid with hornblende rock ("which had much the appearance of basalt") and masses of greenstone and porphyritic rock ("which has a basis of quartz penetrated with hornblende, and immersed in it a few crystals of feldspar"). (93)

On and on they climbed. "The marble disappeared and also the heather." (93) They scrambled over loose stones, formed, thought Jameson, "by the breaking down of the granitel which forms the hill to its summit." (94) They then reached a patch of grass and

with “eager step” they followed this green path to the very top of Ben-na-callich.

Jameson was impressed with the view.

... our most sanguine expectations were more than realized, every faculty seemed arrested, until we could burst into an exclamation on the vastness of the scene, and on the mighty and eternal power of him who framed so great a work. Before us, were many great vallies bounded by lofty mountains, whose steep sides were red, owing to the powerful influence of the elements, and furrowed by the many torrents which collect during the dreadful storms that often reign in these wilds. At a greater distance the dark, lurid and terrible summits of the Cullin mountains retiring in majesty among the clouds; thus dimly see, adding much to the sublimity of the scene. (94-5)

They stood “enraptured by this wonderful scene” until “the darkening of the sky admonished” them to shorten their stay. (95) Down the mountain they came as the storm gathered and then broke over them. In the eyes of Jameson the tempest changed the very aspect of the landscape.

The clouds were now seen driving through the glens, and covering the mountains with a dark veil; soon all was lost in grand confusion; what a few minutes before was clear and distinct, was now a troubled scene of tremendous mountainous peaks, shooting above the dark clouds, and redden valleys dimly seen through the driving mist and rain. (95)

Through the confusion of mist and rain the geologist and his friend descended, until they came off the mountain and into the village of Cory.

It hardly needs stating that this passage, written twenty-four years before the first white man traversed the interior of Newfoundland and thirty-four years before the voyage of the *Beagle*, greatly resembles both Cormack’s description of the Newfoundland interior and Darwin’s vision of Terra del Fuego. In all three cases our narrator struggles to climb a mountain. Once they gain the summit they look at the scene. In all three cases what they see is remarkably similar. Of course they are looking

at different places, one is looking at the Cullin Mountains of Skye, the other is looking at the interior of Newfoundland and the other is looking towards the very tip of South America. But, though these places are thousands of miles apart, each of these enlightened travellers looks upon the same landscape – “a sublime scene of savage magnificence” and “mysterious grandeur” where “primitiveness, omnipotence, and tranquillity were stamped upon everything so forcibly, that the mind is hurled back thousands of years.” In looking upon these scenes they look towards the very limits of their knowledge, to the place where their vision fails and their “imagination leads them beyond the confines the world”. (Darwin 1845 [1997], 202)

It is no coincidence that these three passages resemble one another, for Jameson was the teacher of both Cormack and Darwin. Jameson, I would argue, taught them a way of looking at landscapes. At its simplest Jameson taught them the habit of describing scenes viewed from on high. More profoundly, however, Jameson taught them a visual aesthetic of time that enabled his protégés to envision and inscribe landscape as history.

This “geological” way of seeing both influenced and was influenced by Romantic sensibilities. “Romanticism,” Roy Porter argues,

extended the Enlightenment projection of the powers, activity, unity and the grandeur of Nature. To the Romantic mind the preoccupation with identifying isolate specimens, which typified long-established natural history and mineralogical studies was artificial and petty-minded. It put human systems before Nature’s realities. The Romantic mind wished to take the Earth as it was in Nature, not in the laboratory. Geology was to be precisely that kind of knowledge. The geological vision hinged upon the belief that to read the story of the strata was to read an autobiography of great revolutions, decay and restoration, the struggle of titanic earth forces. (1977, 142)

“By the early nineteenth century”, Porter concludes, for the practitioner and the general public alike, Geology was assuming the image of a more popular, profound and spiritual science, than mineralogy or orthodox natural history.” (1977, 142) Accordingly, even those travellers who were not schooled in methodology of the geological sciences could see things in a “geological” way. They may not have wandered with hammer and bag in hand collecting specimens of minerals and charting rock formations, but they did look from on high upon landscapes and, in so doing, they did write these landscapes as history.

This emergence of this romanticised “geological” gaze brought about a significant transformation in the way in which Newfoundland was inscribed as a landscape. Beginning with Cormack’s journey in 1822, expeditions to the hinterland of the island were no longer simply journeys through space, they were voyages through time. Travel became an idiom by which Newfoundland was inscribed upon a global history of form, a history that could be read in the very texture of rocks and the shape of the country.

In the chapter to follow we will be discussing the effects of this transformation in the writing of Newfoundland. In particular we will be addressing the ways in which the geological envisioning of time was employed as a meta-narrative that informed not only the description of the landscape of Newfoundland, but also the inscription of the moral and social condition of the people who lived within this landscape.

Chapter Six

Women smoking pipes and men who look like Indians: degeneracy and transgression in the Newfoundland wild

Précis: Youth's Instructor

I have beside me Volume twenty of *The Youth's Instructor and Guardian*. It was published in 1836 by J. Mason of City Road, London. It most useful work, containing many short articles on a wide variety of subjects, both scientific and devotional. On page 112 there is "Advice to Youth" which warns them to beware "of the pernicious influence of much of the light literature now obtruded on the country". On page 131 there is an excerpt from Brown's *Anecdotes of the Animal Kingdom* describing the habits of the Australia Cockatoo. On page 186 begins the story of how two African slaves of the colony of St. Martin's were moved to come to Jesus by the preaching of Rev. T. Jeffery. On page 203 Joseph Banks himself describes of the "Banksian Ray" "which he found in the West Indian Seas" and "is sometimes so large that it requires seven train of oxen to drag it along."

A few pages later, between an "Epitaph of Bishop Horne" (228) and meditation of "The Moral Character of the Monkey" (which is not good) (230) we find a short account of "A Fishing Excursion in Newfoundland". (229-30) It is a both a lyrical and finely detailed description of fishing for salmon by night. "The scene", writes the author, "was an animating one."

A brilliant moon hung over the hills, which were finely wooded, to the very cliffs and sand at the edge of the water. Bunches of birch-bark were packed together, a dozen in each packet; these were struck one at a time, as required, into a stick which was cleft at the top to let in this rude flambeau, to which a light was applied. The stick with the ignited birch-bark was then put upright at the bow of the canoe; there, also, the man stood up, most insecurely balanced, as would seem, with his nighok, or eel-spear, a pole cleft at the bottom with a spike inserted. ... The sandy or stony bottom of the river in the shallows ... was seen as clearly as in the day, and every fish in it. The fish seemed at least bewildered, if not attracted by the light; the quickness of eye, and adroitness, of the man who used the nighok, impelling, as he did, the canoe with the thick end, and every now and then reversing it to strike were surprising. He struck successfully at eight out of ten of each of the fish at which he aimed, and shook them off into the boat with a sudden turn of his arm, which left him at liberty to strike at two fish within a second or too. ... The light of the flambeau in the other canoes, as they came round the projecting points of leafy green; and shade, as we again lost view of them behind the trees or rocks in the distance, was most imposing. (229-30)

The article is an excerpt from a "Journal of a Missionary". Who the missionary is, or where and when he made his fishing excursion we are not told.

The Youth's Instructor is like a museum. It is a compendium of facts gathered from around the globe and brought to London to be displayed before the British Public. In the Leverian Museum on Blackfrairs Bridge the young Jameson gazed upon a fine specimen of Labrador Stone, a specimen of petrified wood about a foot in diameter, a Patagonian penguin and a great collection of south sea dresses. (Sweet 1963, 83-4) In *The Youth's Instructor* we may read about the Banksian Ray (203), a Chinese Duck (278), surgery in Kurdistan (165) and salmon fishing in Newfoundland.

Of course, the nature of the facts and the manner of their presentation are different. In the Leverian Museum facts are objects laid in glass cases. In *The Youth's Instructor*

facts are descriptions inscribed as words and drawings upon the page. The effect, however, is the same. *The Youth's Instructor*, like the Leverian Museum or the Banksian Herbarium, is an expression of the global dominion of the British Empire. On page 166, between a meditation on Elisha and Elijah and a description Chinese Justice, the very extent of the Empire is celebrated.

The sun never sets on the dominions of our King. Before the evening ray leaves the spires of Quebec, his morning beams have shone for three hours on Port Jackson; and while sinking from the waters of Lake Superior his eye opens on the Ganges. (166)

As the Leverian Museum or the Banksian Herbarium, *The Youth's Instructor* describes empire as an assemblage of bits of information. This is a rather odd and haphazard assemblage, an article concerning the remarkable "vegetable phenomena" of the Indies, is followed by an excerpt from the "Life of Lord Cobham", which is turn followed by an account of "Sport in the East". But the important thing seems not to be coherence but scale. The sheer crazy extent of things discussed and described gives the impression that between the now battered and torn covers of volume twenty, the whole world is contained and that on turning its pages the world is revealed to the young scholar.

The Youth's Instructor is, however, not *The Transactions of the Royal Society* for children. It is not simply about facts. It is about religion too. Indeed the majority of the articles are moral tracts. There are little stories of salvation such as that of the two Negro slaves. (186-9) There are spiritual biographies, such as that of Lord Cobham and Blind Alick. (200-3) There are many pious poems such as "Power and Goodness of God" (216) and "The Sunday School Anniversary". (178) Above all there is much good and Godly advice dispensed to the young readership. They are variously instructed to rise early (190); avoid novel reading (301), gambling (93) and drunkenness (129) (the effects of which are demonstrated by the "sad experience" of an Ohio tavern-keeper)

(60-1); be cautious of jesting; and, if they are “young ladies”, to “combine amusement and utility” by devoting themselves to knitting and cooking (although it is best to avoid “high-seasoned dishes” that “tempt the palate” but “induce indigestion”). (371-5)

Now all these various biographies, instructions, meditations and poems are about the same thing. They are about the individual as a moral subject. The range of subjectivities is vast. We are presented with a whole cast of characters variously corrupt and unfortunate, virtuous and blessed. There is the monkey, a “saucy and insolent” creature of “invincible selfishness” and “impertinent curiosity”. (231) Somewhat monkeyish were Thomas Woodhall and William Edge who went “to take young rooks by climbing trees” upon a Sabbath Day, only to fall to their deaths. (276) There are the “sons and daughters of poor neglected, degraded Africa” transported as slaves to Brazil, their manner bestial, “[t]heir appearance degraded and unnatural, and in some instances highly disgusting”. (337) Not at all like a monkey or a Negro slave is “the good child” who “observes his parent’s lawful commands, and practiseth his precepts”, (20) and the “good servant” who “out of conscience serves God in his master; and so hath the principle of obedience in himself”. (123)

The most important moral subject is, of course, none other than the reader. The clear purpose of *The Youth’s Instructor* is to influence the development of the child into a good and God-fearing adult. The little stories of salvation, bits of good advice and musings about the workings of the passions and the instincts all go together to constitute a master narrative of moral progress. The recurrent themes of this narrative seem to be: obedience to higher authority, be that authority a parent, a master, or God; the control of wayward desires, which if unrestrained would dissipate our energies and deform our appearance; and a humble and modest concern for others, regardless of their station and situation. Above all else this is narrative of personal redemption achieved through the acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. This act of redemption is, however,

realized in the minutiae of everyday life. A neatly set table, a day's honest labour, a gentleness of manner, all describe the moral ascension of the individual over his or her animal nature.

To our tastes the juxtaposition of religious discourses and scientific descriptions seems a little curious. Science and religion are, after all, distinct, perhaps even opposed, ways of thinking about the world. One could perhaps allow that this odd mixture is the expression of the pedagogical purpose of *The Youth's Instructor*, which seeks simultaneously to provide useful knowledge and religious guidance. A couple of articles do indeed recommend the study of science as a complement to the moral education of the individual. "The General Scholar" is advised to raise "his studies to the knowledge of physics, the great hall of nature; and metaphysics, the closet of that hall". (78) And in "Considerations for Young Men" the author praises knowledge as "the sceptre which gives us our dominion over nature; the key that unlocks the storehouses of creation, and opens to us the treasures of the universe." (17)

In this chapter we will be reading accounts of travel such as that given by the mysterious missionary. In so doing we will be advancing the argument that narratives of missionary travels in the nineteenth century were a means of writing a moral geography of the colonial hinterland. Far from being opposed to the work of sciences, this moral geography applied the aesthetics of time that the informed the gaze of the geologist and the natural historian to the inscription of Newfoundlanders as moral and social subjects. We will begin our discussion with the sufferings of Edward Wix, who was indeed the mysterious missionary whose account of salmon fishing by night appeared in pages of *The Youth's Instructor*.

Around Newfoundland with one Irish Guide

On the morning of Thursday the 2nd of April 1835 Edward Wix “officiated to a very attentive congregation in the loft of a merchant premises in Gaultois on the south coast of Newfoundland. It was a very nice loft. So neatly fitted it was that the missionary “regretted being obliged to leave this place before Sunday.” But leave he did. (1836, 82-3)

By ten in the morning he was aboard a small open boat rowing through the passage between Long Island and the Main. Winter lingered on the land and the sea was choked with ice. It was a hard passage. “With great difficulty”, writes Wix, “[w]e got round Bremner’s Head to Cape St. Mark, on opposite shore of Bay Despair. Besides a drizzling rain, the salt spray was thrown over us, and deposited so much salt upon our faces and clothes, that we were whitened like millers.” (1836, 83)

Soon they met with so much ice that they had to leave the boat and walk. For nine miles they walked across the frozen sea. At ten at night, “after great difficulty”, they reached the tilt of Messrs Newman’s winter crew. The crews were asleep. Wix and his companions made a fire of “wich-hazel sticks”, two yards in length, and thick as their bodies. The crew awoke, and it seemed to Wix that “by the fire’s red glare, the men in their blue woollen shirts, as they came forward to welcome us, and could be discovered through the smoke, presented a very grotesque appearance.” (1836, 83-4)

Wix had come to this desolate spot for a reason. He had a plan. As it turned out it was unfortunate plan, but it made sense at the time. In his journal Wix described his plan thusly:

My intention being to visit the southern and western shore of Newfoundland, as far as the Bay of Islands, or at least, St. Georges Bay, I had thought that it would economise time, if I went through the interior from the Bay Despair, a journey of eight or nine days overland, and so return by

settlements along the coast. By this arrangement, I should, after visiting the extreme point of my intended cruize, have been proceeding nearer to St. John's by each day's journey along the shore, and should not have to touch twice at any one place. (1836, 84)

Wix was well aware that in walking inland from Bay Despair he was following in the footsteps of none other than William Eppes Cormack who less than eight years ago had entered the country at the mouth of the River Exploits in search of the last of the Red Indians. He writes:

Many have compared my own visitation to the excursion of Mr. Cormack, an enterprising individual whom I remember having seen at St. John's, when I visited Newfoundland in 1827. It has not, I should imagine, been very dissimilar; and it would indeed be a matter of great regret, if the zeal of the Missionary could not induce him to make as much exertion, and to endure as much privation, as others would brave in the pursuit of philosophical research or the gratification of mere curiosity. (1836, 85)

Wix even hired one of Mr. Cormack's suite, a Micmac by the name of Maurice Louis, to guide him through the woods. His only other companion was an unnamed "Irish pilot" who had been with Wix since his departure from St. John's. The Irishman had, "some time back, lived four years with the Micmac Indians", which, Wix hoped, "must have given him ... some acquaintance with the mode of travelling in this untractable island." (1836, 85)

On the afternoon of the 3rd the missionary, the Irishman and the Indian set off. That night they found shelter in the wigwam of a family of "the Banokok tribe, or Six nations, from Canada." Wix was most struck by the piety and asceticism of his host, who, despite the arrival of strangers, maintained his Lenten vow of silence, exhibiting "a degree of impassiveness and of nervous control (as he lay there smoking his short blackened pipe, with his feet towards the central fire), which were quite wonderful."

(1836, 86) He was also struck by the Indian women who chanted their devotions in “a soft melodious hum” and deported themselves most correctly and modestly. The missionary laid himself upon spruce boughs spread like feathers towards the fire and covered himself with the softest cleanest deerskin and so “passed the night very comfortably”. (1836, 87-8)

The next day they walked in the company of two of the “squaws” and two other Indians. In the forest the snow lay deep. As night fell they dug a hollow in the snow and lay beneath the stars covered only by the shadows of trees. (1836, 91-3) So peaceful and beautiful was the scene that Wix was induced to “creep out a little distance from the fire, that I might enjoy the picturesque effect of our little group, as the stars were twinkling in the broad arch of heaven, and smoke was curling through the evergreen branches which were enlivened by the redly glare of the brisk fire.” (1836, 96-7)

This was the last beautiful scene. The next morning the “young squaws” took their leave. Wix felt “that when they left us, I should retain all the privations and lose all which probably might have given charm to such a tour.” (1836, 96) He was right about the privations. For three days they had been favoured by “very brilliant weather, and made so much progress on the hard snow” (1836, 97) that Wix thought that they were one third of the way to Bay St. Georges. But the very brilliance of the weather was beginning to blind them. In his journal Wix writes:

A field of white paper, varied only by an occasional blot of the pen, with the full glare of the bright sun upon it all day, and the red fire all night, to say nothing of the effect of the wind by day and of wood smoke, or “cruel steam” by night, may give some idea of the constant trial to which our eyes were subjected. (1836, 98)

By Tuesday all three “were affected with a gritty, gravely sensation in the eye, and were, at length, completely deprived of the power of sight.” (1836, 98) The near-blind

men struggled onwards. Their provisions were running out. They had hoped for game, and indeed game abounded. They glimpsed many fresh tracks of deer and heard many partridges, but none could see to aim a gun or bear to look to the sky. (1836, 98-9)

They dug another pit in the snow and built a smoky fire of wet wood. In their icy chamber they prayed. Their plea that God grants them “this our daily bread” and “lighten our darkness” took on a new resonance. Wix neared despair.

Some natural tears may have mingled with the water which the acrid vapour from the smoke of the damp wood (for it had now rained) forced from my eyes, as I thought of the probable anxiety of my dear wife, and of the likelihood that all my dreams of the future useful labours in the church might thus be fatally dissipated. (1836, 100)

The next morning they turned back. “It was,” as Wix writes, “literally a case of the blind leading the blind.” The missionary held a veil of black gauze against his eyes and so could see dimly. Maurice Louis “would open his eyes now and then and look at the compass.” “[H]e would fix on some object as far as the eye could reach.” Then he would shut his eyes again and Wix would lead him forward. They ate crumbs of biscuit and frozen partridgeberries. They drank water supplied by snow melted over a smoky fire. The noise of woodpeckers hammering on the bark of trees portended rain. (1836, 102-3)

Finally, on the 9th, they found a place where the Micmacs had buried a large quantity of venison. (1836, 106) Fortified, they pressed on. The next day they returned to the winter crew’s tilt. “There”, writes Wix, “throwing myself into a dark linny, or ‘lean-to’, I sought some repose for my eyes, and availed myself of opodeldoc for my excoriated face – a salutary, but very painful application, which happened to be the only one that was accessible.” (1836, 108)

There too Wix found a cracked mirror and gazed at his reflection. He had been gone but a week but his travails had transformed him. The sun, the wind and the cold melt-water had, writes Wix,

the effect of parching and cracking my swollen lips to such a degree, that, when on getting out of the country on the 10th, I again saw my face, after an interval of eight days, in a piece of broken glass, I had some difficulty in recognising my own features. The most scorching heat in summer does not tan and swell the face more than does the travelling in the snow at this season. Under the combined influence of the wind and sun, the skin peeled off from my nose and ears, and exposed parts of the neck, as in the summer. (1836, 104-5)

That night it rained heavily. The next day Wix remained in bed. The wind blew from the south. An old Indian had told Wix that with the wind would come the geese. So it was. They flew over in their thousands. The noise of their passing reminded Wix of Homer's description of the sound of an army of cranes.

As when the inclement winters vex the plain, With piercing frosts, or thick descending rain, To warmer seas the Cranes embodied fly, With noise and other through the midway sky. (1836, 109)

Two days later Wix and the Irishman were on their way back to Gaultois. They carried with them a goose intended as a present for "my hospitable friend Mr. Gallop." The rain and warm weather had melted the ice. They hopped from pan to pan, waded waist deep through rivers and rafted down the streams upon pieces of ice. They arrived at Gaultois on Tuesday the 14th. In the harbour a ship from Torquay lay at anchor. Wix hoped for news from England, but "to my disappointment the captain, being no politician, had brought no papers, or accounts by which I might be informed of the movements in the political world at home." (1836, 110-1)

In many ways Wix's expedition into the interior of Newfoundland was very similar to the journeys of Banks and Cormack. Like these students of nature Edward Wix was a man of some standing and education.¹⁰⁸ He was born in Faulkbourne, Essex in 1802, the eldest son of Samuel Wix "a well-known and controversial writer on behalf of the high church party, president of Sion College, London, and rector of Isleworth." (Jones 1991, 846) The young Wix was educated at Merchant Taylor School in London and then Trinity College, Oxford. He graduated in 1824 and was ordained and licensed as curate to his father. Then, like the botanist and geologist before him, Wix chose to quit his civilized existence and undertake a perilous journey along the coasts and through the forests of a wild and wintry land.

His travels to North America began in 1826 when Wix "moved to Halifax as a missionary in the dioceses of Nova Scotia whose bishop, John Inglis, was a friend of his father." (Jones 1991, 847) It was in the company of Bishop Inglis that Wix first visited Newfoundland.¹⁰⁹ They arrived in St. John's on the twenty-fourth of May 1827, where they were received "with every possible mark of respect from the navy, army and civil authorities". While in St. John's the Bishop Inglis (and presumably Wix) met with Cormack "a merchant of St. John's" and "the only person who has penetrated through the centre of the island". (Inglis 1828, 1) The merchant told the Bishop that the interior was a "rocky barren land, with many lakes and extensive swamps, but without forests or any land fit for cultivation, except in the neighbourhood of rivers. The journey occupied two months; during which time, Mr Cormack and his only companion, a Mic-Mac

¹⁰⁸ The details of Wix's life are taken from Fredrick Jones' entry in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (1991, pages 846-7), and the entry in the *Encyclopaedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*.

¹⁰⁹ The account of Bishop Inglis' tour of Newfoundland was originally printed as an appendix to the *Annual Report of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel* (London: S.P.G. and C. & J. Rivington, 1828, pages 62-104). The quotes are taken from a copy of the letter provided on Hans Rollman's website concerning the history of religion in Newfoundland (www.mun.ca/rels/ang/tests/). The page numbering corresponds to the text on Rollman's website, not the original.

Indian, suffered much from fatigue and privations, and were nearly exhausted at the close of their journey. They saw many herds of deer (cariboo, or rein-deer) and innumerable wild fowl.” (Inglis 1828, 2)

On the 7th of June the Bishop left St. John’s and embarked on a journey of visitation to the bays and islands of northern Newfoundland. Wix did not go with him. “Having secured the attendance of Archdeacon Coster through the whole of the northern parts of the island, and of the clergy through the whole extent of his individual charge,” the Bishop, “considered it a duty to release Mr. Wix, who returned immediately to the urgent calls for his services in Nova Scotia.” (Inglis 1828, 3)

Wix returned to England in 1828 to recover from an attack of typhus. He completed an M.A. at Oxford and married Fanny Brown, before returning to Nova Scotia in 1830. He was transferred to Bonavista and then to St. John’s, where he succeeded George Coster as the archdeacon of Newfoundland.

It was in this capacity that Wix undertook his journey along the southern and western coasts of the island in the company of an Irishman from Trinity Bay. He left St. John’s on the 17th of February, his departure being delayed by the late arrival of his guide. They then followed a rather haphazard course down the southern shore of Conception Bay, over to Placentia Bay, then along the south coast of Newfoundland and up the west coast as far as the Bay of Islands.

Unlike the Bishop of Nova Scotia the Archdeacon had no naval vessel at his disposal. So Wix, his guide and his beloved dog had to make their way as best they could. They begged passage across winter seas in small open boats. Where there were roads they went by sleigh. Where there were no roads (and beyond the vicinity of St. John’s there were few) they walked from village to village and house to house. They walked through snow and gales. They scrambled around headlands, slipping from icy rocks into the freezing water (and ruining Wix’s watch in the process), and climbed

sheer cliffs. For the most part they were wet, cold, half blind from smoke and near fainting with fatigue.

As he and his companions travelled from place to place, Wix would tend his neglected flock and admonish those who had strayed from the path of righteousness. There were no churches, so he held his services where he could. He ministered to families in their winter tilts – crude huts of logs and moss built back from the coast amongst the sheltering trees. He preached before an attentive congregation of twenty-one in a net-minders room on Mr. Tucker's Wharf by the shores of Placentia Bay. (1836, 39) He ministered to all who would accept his ministry, fishermen and their wives, the men of whaling boats, the dying and the newborn, merchants and people so poor that they could not leave their house for want of clothes.

His torturous travels through the wilds of Newfoundland continued until the 25th of July when he sailed from Sandy Point, St. Georges Bay on a schooner bound for St. John's. On the 4th of August he landed at Petty Harbour and walked through the woods upon a new line of road, arriving at St. John's that evening. (1836, 224-5)

Like Banks and Cormack before him, Wix had managed to keep a diary of his travels. As Wix relates, this was no easy task.

It was under great difficulties that I had kept even the slightest diary of my journey; my ink would frequently freeze, in spite of all my precautions; my supply of paper was always necessarily scanty, and it occasionally altogether failed me, in districts where it would have been as reasonable to have expected a gas-lamp for my convenience at night, as a sheet of letter-paper by day. Had it not been for some boxes of paper, which had been dispersed along the shore from different wrecks, I might have failed entirely in procuring this convenience in some place where my application was successful. (1836, 183)

The notes Wix “succeeded in keeping, under all these disadvantages, were, moreover, very slight.” “They were,” writes Wix,

... intended merely to furnish me with brief particulars of dates and journeys, and duties performed, for the information of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, under which society I have had the honour to be a missionary in British North America nearly ten years. They are, therefore, destitute of information respecting the population and other particulars ... (1836, 4)

Nonetheless, Wix, following the example of the scientific travellers of the early nineteenth century, decided to transform his scant notes into a fuller account of his journey through the Newfoundland wilderness. The resulting document, entitled *Six months of a Newfoundland Missionary's Journal, from February to August 1835*, was published in London in 1836. An extensive selection of excerpts from the journal were also published in *The Christian Observer* of 1836, published in London by J. Hatchard and Son.

Wix's reasons for writing and publishing his journal are familiar ones. In the introduction to his journal, written as a letter to his wife, he explains that

Many of my friends, who like yourself, take a deep interest in the spiritual condition of the scattered members of our protestant episcopal church, pressed me, upon my return from my late visitation to the southern and western shore of this island, to furnish them with an opportunity of perusing the notes of my journal. Our remote settlements, and the interior of the island, are so difficult to access, that many who have been all their lives resident in Newfoundland, have not so much knowledge of our settlements along the shore and of the interior, as they have of the more distant provinces of North America, which have been accurately described to them by different travellers. Those, therefore, who felt a curiosity to learn something of these parts of their own Terra Nova, which to them are still a *Terra Incognita*, urged upon me a compliance with the same request; they

expressed, too, the desire that I would included in my journal the notice of matters beyond the more immediate field of the Missionary's inquiry, which I might have found interesting upon my tour, and might have thought worthy of being recorded. (1836, 1-2)

Like Cormack (and, for that matter, most who wrote of their travels to Newfoundland) Wix represents the southern and western coasts of the island as a *Terra Incognita*: an unknown land. The land was unknown because, unlike the other provinces of North America, it had not been "accurately described" and inscribed by an educated traveller. So Wix takes on this project of accurate description and inscription. He writes of his experiences, of what he saw, heard, tasted and suffered during his arduous mission to the isolated villages of the Newfoundland hinterland. In writing of his experience he fills a gap within the geographical consciousness of both native Newfoundlanders resident in St. John's and those in England who "take a deep interest in the spiritual condition of the scattered members of our protestant Episcopal church". (1836, 1)

The resulting document possesses more than a passing resemblance to Cormack's *Narrative of a Journey across the Island of Newfoundland*. Like Cormack, Wix juxtaposes lyrical descriptions of picturesque and sublime landscapes with painful accounts of misery and deprivation within a harsh and forbidding wilderness.

Indeed, there are some remarkable coincidences in the two narratives. Both include an idyllic sojourn in an Indian wigwam. In Cormack's narrative he describes the encampment of the "Mountaineer" James John as place of "neatness and abundance" where "[s]ylvan happiness reigned". (1915, 148-9) In Wix's journal the author passes a comfortable night in the wigwam of Jean Michael, the "ascetic Indian" of Conne River, reposing upon a bed of spruce boughs and wrapped in the softest cleanest deerskin.

In contrast to these Edenic scenes of simple contentment, both Cormack and Wix write of moments of delirium when their sufferings were so extreme that they near lost

their senses. For Cormack that moment came while ascending the snowy ridge that separated the interior from the West Coast of Newfoundland. "I felt myself suddenly overcome with a kind of delirium, arising I suppose from exhaustion and excessive exertion, but fancied myself stronger than ever I was in my life." (1915, 158) Wix was similarly overcome and strengthened when attempting to walk down the western shore of the Port-au-Port peninsula.

My nerves had become so shattered by my late exertions, that on the sight of dizzy precipices in my way, I would sometimes burst into most involuntary tears, and experience all the premonitory symptoms of fainting. On one of these occasions, when hanging by fingers and knees on the edge of a steep cliff, from which a fall, which seemed inevitable, must have been fatal, these sensations came on, and I felt as though I was just fainting! I closed my eyes to the danger, and in the kneeling posture in which of necessity I was at the time, I put up an ejaculatory prayer, and I felt the blood revisit my heart; my nerves were instantly reinvigorated, and, supported by an invisible hand, I was enabled to reach the bottom in safety. (1836, 185-6)

In short, both Cormack's narrative and Wix's journal are typical nineteenth-century tales of wilderness adventure. Sublime landscapes and horrific suffering, peaceful repose in an idyllic woodland encampment and despair and delirium at the brink of icy death – all these are features of the European writing of the American wild, be that writing factual, as in the case Wix or Cormack, or fictional as, for example, in the *Young Fur Traders* by J. M. Ballantyne. (Phillips 1997, 36-40)

There is, however, a big difference between the travels of Wix and Cormack. This difference has to do with their reasons for travelling. It is a difference that Wix himself notes when he compares his journey into the interior to that of Cormack, for, although he admits that their journeys were not dissimilar in terms of the exertions made and privations endured, Wix travelled as a missionary while Cormack travelled "in pursuit of

philosophical research or [for] the gratification of mere curiosity.” In other words, Wix was not a scientific traveller in the tradition of Winthrop, Banks and Cormack. He did not journey into the Newfoundland wilderness to gaze at the heavens, collect plants, observe rock formations or make contact with Beothucks; rather, he journeyed into the Newfoundland wilderness to shepherd the much neglected Anglican flock of island’s southern and western coasts back into Christian fold.

This difference in purpose is reflected in a difference in writing. Wix did intend his journal to be a more general description of the unknown coasts of Newfoundland, and indeed the published narration of his travels includes some observations concerning the zoology, botany and geology of the Island.

In the account of his stay near Crabbes Brook on the southwest coast of Newfoundland there is an entire section (all of two pages) devoted to a description of the natural history and minerals of the area. We are informed that Wix purchased the “skin of a very fine bear, which had been shot in the winter within sight of the house” and also “the tusk of a walroos, or morse.” (1836, 192) “These marine animals”, Wix the naturalist observes, “used to be very common on the coast of Newfoundland, but they are now supposed to be extinct here.” (1836, 192-3) “Here too”, he continues, “I picked some specimens of a coarse coal from the cliff close to the sea. There is, however, a little distance up the river a bed of coal, the vein of which may be seen in the bank, and under the bed of the river in the clear shallow water.” (1836, 193) It is while at Crabbes that Wix also makes the one and only botanical observation of his journey, describing “a flower here resembling the English *auricula*, but smaller” which “is the precursor of the salmon, and, in consequence, called the salmon flower.” (1836, 190)

The main reason Wix wrote the story of his travels was not, however, to describe the flora and fauna of Newfoundland. For every mention of walruses, flowers and veins of coal there are pages upon pages describing baptisms and conversions, bible readings and

prayer meetings, pious silences and tearful confessions, as well as drunkenness, swearing, Sabbath breaking, licentiousness and all around wanton behaviour. In short, Wix's journal is not about Newfoundland as a landscape, it about Newfoundlanders as moral subjects. Through the medium of travel, the missionary Wix writes a description of the moral and social condition of the white settlers of the southern and western coasts of Newfoundland. In so doing he writes of himself as a moral actor – a man of God, a man who, through his good works, attempts to bring about the improvement of the moral condition of those amongst whom he travels.

Over the following pages we will be discussing the ways in which Wix and other nineteenth century missionaries wrote of themselves and the people amongst whom they travelled. In so doing, we will be developing two basic points. Firstly, as with writing of the plants and rocks of Newfoundland, the inscription of Newfoundlanders as moral subjects was a historical development. Secondly, this historical development was closely linked to the emergence of the visual prose of the time that we discussed in the previous chapter. The first point we will address through a brief overview of ecclesiastical visits to the New-found lands. The second point we will address through a close reading of Wix's missionary journal as well as the stories of other missionary adventures to consider the ways in which, through the narration of travel, the Newfoundlander was inscribed as a moral and historical subject.

Like spies into the land of Canaan

Men of God travelled to Newfoundland centuries before men of science. John Winthrop was the first scientist to visit the island, arriving in St. John's on the 22nd of May 1761. It is a pleasing coincidence of history that his illustrious ancestor John Winthrop Jr., Governor of the Massachusetts Bay colony, also visited Newfoundland, arriving at one

of the harbours of the Southern Shore on the 17th of June 1641. Amongst Winthrop's company were two ministers, Hugh Peters and Thomas Welder. They stayed a little while on the southern shore, waiting for transportation on to England. While they waited the ministers "preached to the seamen, etc., at the island, who were much affected with the word, and entertained them with all courtesy."¹¹⁰

Peters and Welde were not the first ministers of the Christian God to travel to Newfoundland. As with its "discovery", the particulars of early missions to the island are somewhat hazy. A Milanese cleric by the name of Giovanni Antonio sailed with John Cabot on his fateful second voyage, perhaps dreaming of becoming a bishop in Cabot's imaginary kingdom. What became of him we do not know. A Canon of St. Paul's was amongst a group of "divers cunning men" that set forth out of the Thames on the 20th of May 1527. One ship was lost. The other ship, shaping her course towards Cape Britton ... and sometimes putting their men on land to search the state of those unknown regions, returned home about the beginning of October." Again, nothing more is known of this voyage. (Hakluyt 1589, 517)

More ministers came with the establishment of colonies on the Avalon Peninsula in the seventeenth century. Tracts advocating planting in the New found lands contained much pious rhetoric about significance of religion. In *A Plaine Path-Way to Plantations* (1624) the interminable conversation between the querulous farmer Respire and the sagacious merchant Enrubie turns to the question of "[w]hat sort of persons are those whom you take to be necessary that without them there can be no good plantation." (Eburne 1624, 63) Enrubie answers by giving an exhaustive list of useful professions, including fishers and fowlers, hatters and husbandmen, parchment makers and pewterers,

¹¹⁰ The account of the Puritans visit to Newfoundland is from John Winthrop's the *History of New England from 1630 to 1649*, volume 2, page 32. It is quoted in Hans Rollman's "Anglicans, Puritans and Quakers in sixteenth- and seventeen-century Newfoundland", page 11.

sailors and salt makers. More important than all these, however, were ministers of the word.

For all these hitherto mentioned, though they be a multitude indeed and enough to make a very large plantation out of hand, yet without other conjoined with them will they be for the most part but a rude and silly multitude. You have forgotten, it seemeth, and so had I too almost – and no marvel, for I find them of other but little remembered – one sort of people most needful of all others to be had, I mean ministers of the Word of God, for whom, if care be not taken that they may be had and, being had, that they may forthwith and condignly be provided for ... in vain may we look for any notable blessing from God upon the attempts. (Eburne 1624, 64)

Such fine intentions were not fully realized in practice. The plantations in Newfoundland were more secular than spiritual undertakings. Fishers and sailors took precedence over ministers of the word (and, for that matter, parchment makers and pewterers). There was, however, some call for a ministerial presence in the new colonies. In 1610 John Guy requested that a “godlie minister” be despatched to Cupids Cove for the “greate comferte to us all and a credit to the plantation”. Richard Wynne, the first governor of Lord Baltimore’s colony at Ferryland, made a similar plea in a letter dated the 28th of August 1621.

... praying your Honour, that I may be furnished with all necessary Tooles and provisions of Victuals the next yeare, and if your Honour may, with about the number of twenty persons more, whereof a Surgeon, and a learned and religious Minister: that then your Honour may be pleased by God’s assistance, not to doubt of a good and profitable successe in every respect, and a flourishing plantation, women would also bee necessary heere for many respects.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ The letter is reprinted in a number of sources. The version quoted was found on the Heritage Newfoundland website (www.heritage.nf.ca/avalon/history).

Men of God answered the call; of this there is no doubt. However, reconstructing the history of seventeenth century missions to the Avalon is a tricky business. Popular opinion has it that the first minister to reside in Newfoundland was the Reverend Erasmus Stourton, who is said to have accompanied Guy on his second voyage in 1612. Historians dispute this, noting that Stourton would have been nine years old at the time. (Rollman 1999, 2-3) Hans Rollman claims that the first minister on the island was actually the Reverend William Leat. His claim is solely based on a document of 1622 that refers to Leat as having previously “beinge heretofore in Newfoundland”. Where he was and how long he stayed is unknown. (Rollman 1999, 3)

A little more is known about Richard James, described by Rollman, as “a much-admired scholar, world traveller, and future first librarian of the famous Cotton library in London”. Mention is made of James in a letter from Wynne to Lord Baltimore dated the 30 June 1622. The minister does not appear in Wynne’s census of the colony’s inhabitants drafted on the 17th of August. (Rollman 1999, 4) It seems, therefore, that the peripatetic James was not long on the island. It seems also that he was not over-fond of Newfoundland. In a letter from the Reverend Joseph Mead to Sir Martin Stuteville written in 1630, James is quoted as remembering Newfoundland as a place where he had “found between eight and nine months’ winter, and upon the land nothing but rocks, lakes, or mosses, like bogs, which a man might thrust a spike down to the butt head in.” (Rollman 1999, 5)

The aforementioned George Stourton certainly did go to Newfoundland sometime in 1627, joining Calvert’s colony at Ferryland. Robert Hayman, the poetic former governor of Guy’s Bristol Hope Colony, makes fond mention of Stourton’s good works in his Quodiblets.

To my Reverend kind friend, Master Erasmus Sturton,
Preacher of the Word of God, and Parson of Ferry Land

in the Province of Avalon in Newfound-Land.
No man shall be more welcome in this place,
Then as you, Angels of Peace, and Grace;
As you were sent here by the Lord's command,
Be you the blest Apostle of this Land;
To Infidels doe you Evangelise,
Making those that are rude, sober and wise. (1628, 18)

Not all found Stourton such a welcome presence. George Calvert, Lord Baltimore, had converted to Catholicism in 1625. Two years later he came to Ferryland in the company of two priests, Anthony Pole and Thomas Longville. Longville returned to England in the autumn but Pole stayed. The next year Calvert returned with another priest named Hackett and forty Catholic settlers. Calvert was of an ecumenical disposition. Stourton, however, was not. He and Calvert fell out, and Stourton was banished from Newfoundland, departing on the 28th of August 1628. Arriving in England the aggrieved minister brought a case before the Justices of the Peace in Plymouth, complaining that "Hackett and Smith every Sunday saith mass and do use all the other ceremonies of the Church of Rome, in an ample a manner as 'tis used in Spain," and, more damningly, that they had baptised the son of a Protestant settler "according the orders and customs of the Church of Rome".¹¹² For his part Calvert, in a letter to King Charles I, named that "audacious man" Stourton amongst those "persons notoriously lewd and wicked" "who go about trying to supplant and destroy me".¹¹³

As with the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century voyages of discovery, the striking thing about the early ministerial visits to Newfoundland is how little writing they produced. The documentary record consists of a few letters and a case brought before

¹¹² Stourton's statement was made before the Justices of Peace at Plymouth in October 1628. The excerpt quoted was, again, found on the Heritage Newfoundland website (www.heritage.nf.ca/avalon/history).

¹¹³ Calvert's letter to the king was written in Ferryland and dated 19 August 1629. Again, a full text of the letter is provided on the Heritage Newfoundland website (www.heritage.nf.ca/avalon/history).

the Justices of the Peace in Plymouth. We have not one word written by the ministers themselves. Nor do we have any descriptions of their experiences in Newfoundland save for the letter of 1630, which relates James' impressions of the island. Even those letters that make mention of ministers visiting Newfoundland do so only in passing. For example, we only know James spent some time on the southern shore because Wynne refers to him as carrying a letter from Renouse to Ferryland.

There seems something of a contradiction to the writing of Newfoundland before the eighteenth century. In tracts and letters the project of plantation was represented as a Godly work. The settling of the New World was likened to the Israelites journey to the Promised Land. This was the story of a people who "God chose out of the multitude". To these people "hee made a grant to inherite the Land of Canaan, called the Land of Promise, with al the other rich and fertile Countryes adjoyning therunto." Lead by Joshua and then Juda the Israelites set about claiming what was rightfully theirs. They "vanquished many Gentiles, Idolaters, and adversaries ... whose landes he caused Gods people to possess and inherite." (Peckham 1583, 45) Yet, in spite of these devout sentiments, almost nothing was written about the actual works of ministers of the Word in the new-found lands. They came and they went, presumably praying, preaching and baptising, as well as carrying letters and causing offence, but no one, least of all the ministers themselves, felt the need to write of their travels or the effects of their pious labours upon rude fishers and heathenish savages.

This may well be because religion was not as important to the colonial enterprise in Newfoundland as its advocates liked to make out. The noble project of "encreasing the true flock of Christ, by reducing into the right way those loste sheepe which are yet astray" (Hayman 1628, 28) was secondary to baser merchantile ambitions. Certainly, publications like *A Discourse and Discovery of Newfoundland* (1620) or *A Breife Discourse of the New-Found-Land* (1620) are more concerned with the natural resources

of the island and the possibility of their profitable exploitation than they are with the salvation of savages and the expansion of the true church. Similarly, letters reporting the progress of the colonies tell the reader more about “cocks of good hay” and “berries wholesome to eat” than the moral condition of the nascent communities of English settlers.

The lack of writing by or about ministers in Newfoundland is, however, not simply a reflection of their relative unimportance. The reverse is also true. Ministers did not write about their travels to Newfoundland because writing was not important to their work. Like Wix and the other missionaries of the nineteenth century, Leat, James and Stourton made a perilous journey across the Atlantic to minister to the inhabitants of isolated little settlements situated upon the edge of a great and mysterious wilderness. Yet, unlike Wix and his fellows, writing played no part in the labour of these early ministers. There was no one in England awaiting a report concerning the progress of their flock. Nor did they think to write a memoir describing the joys and sufferings experienced while ministering upon these barren and ungodly shores.

This changed. At the beginning of the 1700’s ministers residing in Newfoundland began to write of their ministries. The reasons for this change are complex and interconnected, but basically they are threefold. Firstly, there was the rapid increase in number of English speaking peoples residing in Newfoundland. Secondly, there was the establishment of missionary societies. Thirdly, there was the emergence of new discourses of travel and description that we have discussed in the previous two chapters. Let us take each of these in turn.

A minister needs someone to minister to. Newfoundland during the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries was populated by notoriously shy aborigines and a migratory mob of West Country fishermen. With the exception of the short-lived colonies on the Southern Shore and Conception Bay, there was no resident flock that required

shepherding into the Christian fold. It is hardly a coincidence that no clergy visited English Newfoundland after the collapse of plantation at Ferryland in 1632. Indeed, as far as we know, Stourton was the last Protestant minister to reside on the island in the seventeenth century.

During the first few decades of the eighteenth century the population of Newfoundland began to rise. This was not a smooth and steady growth. Even the “resident” population of Newfoundland was highly transient. The number of people who chose to live on the island fluctuated greatly depending of the success of the fishery and the possibility of a peaceable existence. Yet the overall trend was upwards. According to C. G. Head, about 1,200 hundred people wintered in Newfoundland during the last quarter of the seventeenth century. By the 1730s this number had almost tripled. By the 1750s it had more than doubled again, with a total of 7,300 people living on the island year round. (1976, 92-99)

More people meant more clergy. The requirement for ministers of the Word was articulated in much the same terms in the eighteenth century as it had been in the seventeenth. Without a clergyman the settlers of Newfoundland would become “a rude and silly multitude” much given to wanton and licentious behaviour. This is precisely how the inhabitants of St. John’s are described by B. Lacy, the Chaplain of His Majesty’s ship *Kinsale*, in his *Miscellaneous Poems Compos’d at Newfoundland*, which were published in 1729.

Most that inhabit are a frightful Tribe,
Whose Characters I cannot well describe;
Who, like Siberians, lonely here reside,
And, in a willing Banishment, abide.
It is this sottish People’s common use
To warm their Veins with an Infernal Juice,
Both Men and Women do this Liquor choose,

And rarely keep the Bottle from their Nose,
In both those Harbours many, I dare say,
Do drink some Quarts of Spirits in a Day;
For with confounded Rum they ever stink
Far worse than any filthy common Sink:
Thus all their aim is merely to delight
The Cravings of a naughty Appetite. (1729, 13-14)

In a tract published in 1700 entitled “A Memorial Representing the Present State of Religion on the Continent of North-America”, the Reverend Thomas Bray makes a most forceful argument in support of an Anglican mission to minister to the people of Newfoundland.¹¹⁴ In his introductory paragraph Bray declares that the Anglican church in the colonies was “at a Crisis, when, as many Thousands are in a happy Disposition to embrace it, so Infidelity and Heresie seem to make their utmost Efforts to withdraw and to fix those People at the greatest distance from it.” (1700, 5)

His pamphlet goes on to describe the state of the church in the various English possessions in North America, discussing Maryland, New York and the Bermudas before turning to Newfoundland. Bray had never visited the island. He had, however, been driven near its coast whilst sailing from England to Maryland, and would “have been very glad if, with the Safety or our Ship and Lives, we had been thrown into it, that I might personally seen the Condition of the Place and People.” As it was, his “[c]uriosity was in a great measure satisfy’d, by the Account I received from the Master of the ship on board of us, who had made many Voyages there.” The master gave Bray the following “account of the Island, so far as it is possession of the English:” (1700, 9)

That there are Harbours in it belonging to us, 26; Families, 274; Inhabitants,
as well Winter as Summer, on the Island about 1120; Workers, about 4200;

¹¹⁴ Bray’s article was printed by William Downing of London in 1700. The edition quoted is from Hans Rollman’s website regarding the history of religion in Newfoundland and Labrador (<http://www.mun.ca/rels/ang/texts/bray.html>). The pagination is that of the original.

Ships Crew, in the Fishing Season, 3150; and men in the Ships, sent at latter end of the Year to carry home the fish, 1200. (1700, 9)

The religious condition of these inhabitants was pitiable and bespoke a shocking neglect of England's oldest colony by "a Nation professing Christianity". "Can any one believe it", writes Bray,

when he is told, that from such a Nation, so little Care has been taken, with respect to such a Colony, that there never was, nor yet any Preaching, Prayers, or Sacraments, or any other Ministerial and Divine Offices, performed on that island; but that they should be suffered to live as those who know no God in the World! Are Rome and Mecca, whose Sons are so apt to compass Sea and Land to gain Proselytes to Superstition and Folly, so regardless of their own People? And will it not then be more tolerable for that Tyre, and this Sydon, than for us, in the Day of Judgement? For if they had known the things which we do, the most rude and uncultivated of those Parts, which we possess, should not have remained uninstructed in the Best religion of the world. (1700, 9-10)

What were required were missionaries. These missionaries must be singularly well qualify'd than that they should at all be sent." They must be men of "nice morals" and "good Prudence and an exact Conduct". They must be "well experienced in Pastoral Care" and possessed of a true Missionary Spirit". Finally, they must be young active men as well as "good, substantial, well-studied Divines". Each missionary also required a library of "necessary Books, to be fix'd in those places to which they shall be sent, for the use of them, and their Successors for ever." In all Bray felt that "no less than Forty" such men should be sent "into all these Colonies", two of whom should be stationed in Newfoundland. He was "not sanguine enough to hope for any publick Funds for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge" and so could only pray that "the pious clergy themselves, and such particular Persons amongst the devout Laity, whose hearts are

inflamed by the love of God” would provide the monies required to support such a missionary effort. (1700, 10-11)

Bray’s pamphlet is important not only because it identified the need for missions to Newfoundland, but also because the tract and its author were central to the establishment of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, an organisation which over the next one hundred and fifty years would finance the Anglican ministry upon the island.

Religious societies were, it seems, all the rage in late seventeenth-century England. According to C. F. Pascoe,

the existence in England of ‘infamous clubs of Atheist, Diests, and Socinians’ ‘labouring to promote their pernicious principles,’ excited some members of the National Church, who had a true concern for the honour of God, to form themselves into Societies, ‘that so by their united zeal and endeavours they might oppose the mischief of such dangerous principles, and fortifie both themselves and other against the attempts of those sons of darkness, who make in their business to root out (if possible) the very notions of Divine thing and all differences of Good and Evil.’ Encouraged by several of the Bishops and Clergy, who, as well as Queen Anne, inquired into an approved of their methods and orders, these Religious Societies soon spread throughout the kingdom increasing to forty-two in London and Westminster alone. (1901, 3)

Thomas Bray was amongst the promoters of this movement. In 1697, after parliament refused to give financial support to a mission to Maryland, Bray drew up a plan to form a society, incorporated by charter, for the spreading of the Gospel in the English colonies of North America. On the 8th of March 1699 the first meeting of the Society for the Promoting Christian Knowledge (S.P.C.K.) took place.

As Pascoe relates, “[t]he foreign branch of the design of this excellent institution – at the outset to be ‘the fixing of Parochial Libraries throughout the Plantations

(especially on the Continent of North America)' – had not been extended to the employment of Missionaries, when it devolved.” (1901, 4) So it was that when Bray returned to England in the summer of 1700 he began to lobby for the establishment of another society that would fund the Anglican missions in the New World. By May 1701 a draught of a “Charter for the Erecting a Corporation for Propagating the Gospell in Foreign Parts” was read before a meeting of the S.P.C.K. On the 16th of June of the same year King William III granted the charter, establishing a co-operation “for the receiving, managing and disposing of the Charity of our Loving subjects” provided in order to promote the “Glory of God, by the instruction of Our People in the Christian Religion.” (Pascoe 1901, 4)

The first meeting of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (S.P.G.) was held at Lambeth Palace on the 27th of June 1701. The Archbishop of Canterbury was the President of the Society, and many bishops, ministers and other eminent and learned men were in attendance. (Pascoe 1901, 6) Two weeks later the society met again. During this meeting they settled on the design of their seal. It was to be “a ship under sail, making towards a point of Land, upon the Prow standing a Minister with an open Bible in his hand” with “people standing on the shore in a Posture of expectation.” (Pascoe 1901, 6-7) In March 1702 a Committee was appointed by the S.P.G. “to receive all proposals that may be offered to them for the Promoting the design of this Society, and to prepare matters for the consideration of the Society.” (Pascoe 1901, 7)

In April of the following year this committee considered the “the deplorable situation” of John Jackson “a painful minister in Newfoundland”. (Pascoe 1901, 88) Jackson had first visited Newfoundland as a Naval chaplain in 1697. In 1701 he was persuaded to become the chaplain of the garrison at Fort William on the promise of income of £50.00 per annum and the construction of a church and glebe. He moved to

Newfoundland, bringing with him his wife and eight children, thereby becoming the first Protestant minister to reside on the island since the departure of Stourton. In 1703 Jackson's income was due to cease. (Pascoe 1901, 8-9; Christensen 1951, 38-9)

On the recommendation of the committee, the S.P.G. adopted the unfortunate minister as their first missionary in Newfoundland, with "£30.00 being voted him 'by way of benevolence,' and £50.00 per annum for three years as a salary." (Pascoe, 1901, 89) Jackson remained in St. John's until 1705, when he was recalled to England either out of pity for his circumstances or due to an acrimonious dispute with the garrison's commander Lieutenant Thomas Lloyd (who, amongst other things, was accused by Jackson of consorting with strippers on the Sabbath: "he has chosen such companions who have been so audaciously impertinent as to dance all stark naked together for the shame of modest persons"). (O'Neill, 227; Pascoe 1901, 89; Christensen 1951, 39-40) Whatever the case, the society saw fit to instruct subsequent missionaries to "take special Care to give no offence to the Civil Government, by Intermeddling in Affairs not relating to their own Calling and Function." (Christensen 1951, 40)

There is no need to detail the comings and goings of the various S.P.G. missionaries who followed Jackson across the sea to Newfoundland.¹¹⁵ Suffice it to say that as the population of the colony grew so did the missionary presence. In the years shortly after Jackson's departure ministers came and went. Some years there were none at all wintering on the island. The arrival of Reverend Henry Jones at Bonavista in 1725 marked the beginning of continuous S.P.G. missions to Newfoundland. (Christensen 1951, 43)

¹¹⁵ Good historical reviews of the S.P.G. missions to Newfoundland are provided by C. F. Pascoe (*Two hundred years of the S.P.G.: an historical account of the Society of the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1700-1900; based on a digest of the Society's records*, 1901) and Ruth M. Christensen ("The establishment of S.P.G. Missions in Newfoundland, 1703 – 1783", 1951). Reverend William Wilson's *Newfoundland and its Missionaries* (1866) is also a good source for more information on the trials and tribulations of Anglican preachers in the wilds of Newfoundland.

With this increased presence of missionaries came an increased number of accounts of the missionary experience in Newfoundland. Besides Wix's *Journal*, we have *Some accounts of a sowing time on the rugged shores of Newfoundland* (1857) by the Reverend J. G. Mountain, the story of Reverend Julian Moreton's *Life and work in Newfoundland* (1863); several volumes describing Bishop Edward Feild's voyages of visitation and discovery to the southern and western shores of Newfoundland (1845 and 1848) and the coast of Labrador (1849 and 1850); as well as the Reverend William Wilson's more general history of *Newfoundland and its Missionaries* (1866), which includes some his own recollections of ministering to the people of Conception Bay. Besides this short shelf of book length memoirs, the experiences of S.P.G. missionaries found their way into print as articles in journals (for young and old alike), reports in newspapers and, most curiously, a novella for children.¹¹⁶ All in all, although one could hardly describe this as a literary outpouring, there was throughout the nineteenth century a steady trickle of writings concerning missions to Newfoundland composed and published for a popular readership.

The increase in writings about missionary travels to Newfoundland was not simply a reflection of the increase in the number of missionaries. The very nature of the Society of the Propagation of the Gospel fostered a culture of inscription amongst those who had been charged with nurturing the Anglican faith in the colonies. In some ways the S.P.G. was like the Royal Society. Like the Royal Society it provided funds for overseas

¹¹⁶ In 1872 J. B. Knapp of London published a novella by Cecil Lucy Brightwell entitled *Georgie's present, or Tales of Newfoundland*. In it George, a pious little boy, listens attentively as his Grandmother relates the story of her dear departed husband. Grandfather Ward, for that was his name, had given himself to God at the age of fifteen and had spent the remainder of his life ministering to the less fortunate. The story Grandmother Ward tells is of her husband's "tour of visitation to the southern and western shores of Newfoundland". (23) During his journey Grandfather Ward attempted to traverse the interior of Newfoundland on snowshoes. He had walked a third of the way to St. George's Bay when they "began to suffer severely from the state of their eyes". (34) Snow-blind, they were forced to slowly retrace their steps until they returned to the cabin from where they began their journey. (34-43) Grandfather Ward is, of course, the Reverend Edward Wix and the account of his travels to Newfoundland are a very thinly disguised retelling of Wix's own narrative of his travels.

expeditions. And like the Royal Society it liked to know how its money was being spent. As Wix makes clear in the published version of his Journal, the notes he managed to keep during his perilous journey were “intended merely to furnish me with brief particulars of dates and journies, and duties performed, for the information of the committee of the Society of the Propagation of the Gospel.” (1836, 3)

There was an aspect of accountancy to the missionary’s writing of their travels. This accountancy was important because, far from the close scrutiny of their superiors, the missionaries of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Newfoundland were open to accusations that they were spending their time and other people’s money in a less than Godly and productive fashion.

A circular from the Anglican Bishop of Nova Scotia, dated 6 March 1834, raises such concerns, quoting “malevolent reports, industriously circulated against their [the S.P.G.] missionaries, representing them as inefficient, worldly, idle, and unevangelical. ... and also, stating them to be fully, if not over paid for all their services.” (Wix 1836, 206-7) To vindicate the clergy of Newfoundland the Bishop asks them to respond to a survey of his design. Amongst the questions are: “How many Sundays were you present in you mission during the year 1833?” “How many services did you perform in the same year, and how often did you preach?” “How many miles did you travel in the same period, in every way, by land and by water, in the performance of your missionary duties?” (Wix 1836, 208-9)

Amongst other things, Wix’s narrative of his journey through the wilds of Newfoundland may read as a response to this survey. By enumerating the number of services held, how many attended each service, how many children were baptised and how many adults were confirmed as Anglicans, as well as describing the hardships and privations he suffered in the discharge of his duties, Wix is quantifying his own worth as a missionary and satisfying his employers that their money has indeed been well spent.

Writing was important to S.P.G. in another way. It was, after all, a charitable organisation and therefore dependant on the generosity of benefactors to finance its worthy projects. Publicity was, therefore, important. The public had to be made aware both of the good works of the society and the requirement that these works continue.

Being a missionary society, the S.P.G. was particularly concerned with promoting the view that the more isolated populations of the British colonies were in an unfortunate condition of religious and moral decline, a decline that could only be arrested through the continued efforts of the S.P.G. It was this sad state of affairs that had originally inspired Bray to create the society, and it is a feature of the writings of Wix and his colleagues that, even as they described all their good works, they also bemoaned the “the mass of of ignorance, superstition, idolatry, and various wickedness by which” they were surrounded. (Wix 1836, 257)

In sense then, the missionaries of the S.P.G. were in the business of producing immorality. Of course, they did not seek to do so in their preachings and ministrations. Through these they hoped to bring those perishing in the wilderness to the land of righteous, “Emanuel’s land” where follows the milk and honey of God’s selfless love. (Wix 1836, 256-7) In their writings, however, the nineteenth-century ministers of God composed the wilderness as surely as they composed the land of milk and honey. These two places constituted the imaginary geography upon which Wix and his contemporaries wrote of their travels and, in so doing, inscribed the moral subjectivities of themselves and the people of Newfoundland.

Red like Indians, whitened like millers

To begin unravelling the relationship between landscape, history and the writing of the Newfoundlander as a moral subject, let us return to Wix’s account of his unfortunate

expedition into the interior. One aspect of this account is the prevalence of incidents of misrecognition or distortion. As Wix travels deeper and deeper into the wilderness the appearance of things becomes increasingly confused and unclear. Coming around Bremner's Head, for example, he and his companions have so much salt spray over them that they become "whitened like millers". (1836, 83) And that very night "by the fire's red glare, the men in their blue woollen shirts, as they came forward to welcome us, and could be discovered through the smoke, presented a very grotesque appearance." (1836 83-4)

One did not have to venture far from one's station in life to be taken for another. Joseph Banks, for instance, was fond of telling of how in his youth he had been mistaken for a footpad. He had been botanising in a ditch by Houslow Road, London. A man had recently been robbed in the neighbourhood. The police found Banks crouching in the ditch and took him to be the thief. In spite of "indignant denials and struggles" he was brought before the magistrate. A search of his pockets found plants rather than a stolen purse and Banks was exonerated. (Brougham 1846, 202)

A similar story appears in the memoir of Robert Jameson written by his nephew.¹¹⁷ The story begins with Jameson and a friend bidding "adieu to Auld Reekie" and embarking on a walking tour "through the wilds of Scotland". They wandered down river courses and along the "cliffs of deep ravines, that had been laid bare by the devastating process of time: the one occupied in conveying the anatomy of the Earth crust to paper by his pencil, the other filling his bags with the necessary specimens, that entered into the structure and composition of the tract of country under consideration."

On the first evening the only lodging the two travellers could find was a crofter's house situated in a nook off the roadside. "They hailed the old wife aged between eighty

¹¹⁷ The manuscript has never been published. It has been deposited in the Special Collection of the University of Edinburgh Library. Its pages are not numbered.

and ninety.” Taking the two gentlemen to be, “honest pedestrian tradesmen in search of a job”, the good woman offered “them to take shelter for the evening in her domicile.” They spent the night in simple comfort sleeping upon straw mattresses laid on an earthen floor. In the middle of the night Jameson’s companion, who “was not accustomed to anything below high fashionable life”, awoke complaining of a curious noise. This, Jameson informed him, “was the grunting of the pigs, from which they were separated only by a cloth partition.”

The next day they moved on, “noting down all the important topographical features” as they went. “Jameson now informed his companion that he expected in several hours to arrive at the Castle of a friend who had invited him to pay a visit on the first expedition he made in this direction.”

By the evening they had arrived at the castle gates. They rang the bell. “The servant made his appearance. Jameson gave him his card and enquired if the Lord of the mansion was at home.” The servant “went through the form of conveying the card and message” and returned to say that his “Master was particularly engaged”. Mistrusting the servant, Jameson asked for pen and paper to write a message. These were refused and they “were told to go about their business or he would take steps with them that they would find far from being agreeable”. Jameson and his companion left in “a highly indignant mood”.

“Perchance one of the Ladies discovered on the Hall table Jameson’s card.” The Lord “read it with amazement,” and called on his servant for an explanation. He “informed his Lordship that two peddlers with hammers had called in search of a job about an hour ago and he did not consider it necessary to trouble his Lordship.” The servant was reprimanded and told to “saddle one of the horses and to endeavour to overtake” Jameson and his companion “as speedily as possible”. They were found and returned to the castle to be welcomed as gentlemen.

That night there was a ball. There the two naturalists “showed that they were something beyond the capacity of common peddlers, not only in dress and fashionable etiquette but also in fashionable conversation of the highest standing, because Jameson and his friend were above the common calibre of men, and had that power of bringing themselves within the range of any grade of Society, and moving in any sphere that fell to their lot to move in.”

If trips through the ditches of London or the countryside of Scotland may give a gentleman the appearance of a thief or peddler, then the effect of traversing the hinterland of some faraway country could be more profound. And indeed, nineteenth century accounts of travels through the wilds of Newfoundland are replete with instances of transformation and mistaken identity.

We may, of course, recall the narrative of William Eppes Cormack, who, on his descent into the island’s interior, “adopted, as well for self-preservation as for the sake of accomplishing the object of my excursion, the self-dependent mode of life of the Indian both in spirit and action.” (1822, 139) Cormack was not the only European to become as an Indian in the Newfoundland wild. In his account of the voyage of His Majesty’s Ship *Rosamund*, Lieutenant Edward Chappell tells of an encounter with “Crusoe-looking being”.

In the morning, we again stood into the Bay of St. George; but had scarcely entered the gulf, when we perceived someone in a small canoe paddling towards us. For some time, we were eagerly endeavouring, by the assistance of our telescopes, to ascertain what sort of stranger the canoe contained. The reader may then conceive our surprise, when, upon coming alongside, he inquired if we *plaised* to buy any salmon. His country could no longer be a secret to us; and presently the genuine Paddy stood confessed, although disguised by an olive complexion, a dark red beard and red mustachios, deer-skin jacket and breeches, red cloth greaves on his legs, embroidered

sandals, and a head covered with a profusion of hair that it resembled the fur cap of a Russian. (1818, 65-6)

There are other examples. Cormack writes of a man named William Windsor who lived at Cape Ray. Windsor was another Crusoe. He was found “in his winter hut in a spruce wood three or four miles eastward of the cape. The most perfect contentment, cheerfulness, poverty and hospitality were the characteristics of the monarch of Cape Ray. ... He wore no covering on his head when exposed to inclement weather – Nature, aided no doubt by habit, provided him with an extraordinary mat of hair, as she does ordinary animals with fur.” (1822, 164)

We will recall from the introduction that similarly animal-like was an old school friend of Robert McCrea. Newly stationed in St. John’s McCrea fell asleep dreaming of his English home. He was awoken by the “stamping of heavy feet at the door.”

I could barely distinguish them; a huge mass, like half a dozen Newfoundland dogs rolled into one, shaking of clouds of snow from its exterior. Beneath an otter-skin cap shone a pair of bright eyes enveloped in a mass of whiskers and beard, profusely sprinkled with sleet and snow.

“H’m!” said the figure advancing; “how are you? don’t you know me.” (1869, 78)

It turns out the advancing figure was Wolfe at “The Shop”, and McCrea remembered him well.

Remember him! of course I did. Fellows who were cadets at “The Shop” never forget each other. But considering that Wolfe was a thin slip of a smooth-faced youngster, it was hardly to be wondered that a recognition of this matured Polar bear, under the influence of a solitary government dip, did not immediately ensue. (1869, 8)

John Peyton, the Magistrate of Twillingate, recalled a similar encounter with an old friend transformed into a hairy beast. The friend in question was none other than

Cormack, who returned to Peyton's home at the end of November 1828 after completing his second journey into the Newfoundland interior. "At first", Peyton, "could scarcely recognise in the tall, gaunt, shaggy individual who stood before him the man whom he saw a couple of months previous start off full of life and vigour, clean, kempt and well kept. His appearance now betokened what the man had gone through in the interim." (Howley 1915, 236)

Finally, in a particularly telling episode, we will recall that on returning from his misguided attempt to traverse the interior of Newfoundland, Wix experienced some difficulty in recognising himself. After he had recovered his sight, he picked up a cracked mirror and gazed into it. The face he saw gazing back at him seemed not his own. The effects of the wind, sun and cold had transformed his visage into a swollen mask, with cracked puffy lips and red peeling skin. He was, of course, still himself, but for a moment, as he looked into the cracked mirror at battered face it seemed as if the wilderness had etched itself into his very being, creating a new and horrible man.

What are we to make of these incidents of transformation and misrecognition? Well, on one level these passages are descriptive. What they describe is, quite simply, how people have been changed by, or adapted to, the wilderness. As they walk the highways and byways of Scotland, or struggle through a winter storm, or descend into the trackless forests of the Newfoundland interior, men take on a different aspect. They become encrusted with snow or powdered with salt. They become bearded and their hair grows thick. They become gaunt and haggard from "excessive toil and privation". They become as peddlers or millers, Indians or polar bears, not because that is who they are but because that is who they appear to be.

Central to these accounts is a dissidence between appearance and reality. The man paddling towards the *Rosamund* appeared to be an Indian but when he speaks he is revealed to be an Irishman. The man at McCrea's door appeared to be a Newfoundland

dog or a polar bear, but his voice is that of the fondly remembered Wolfe from “the shop”. The men at the castle gates seemed to be peddlers, but the calling card found on the table proves them to be gentlemen friends of the Lord. Adventurers emerge from the wilderness as men disguised. This may be a disguise that they have donned themselves, as the Irishman in his skin jacket and breeches or Jameson in his good cloth coat, or they may be disguised by the elements, such as smoke from a campfire or clouds of snow swirling from a night sky.

On another level, these stories of confused and obscured identities may be read as a discourse concerning, what Homi Bhabha calls, “processes of subjectification,” (1994, 67) and in particular the processes of subjectification at and beyond the margins of European civilization. There is a tension inherent in this discourse. It simultaneously “connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition”. (1994, 70) This is from Bhabha again. His dense argumentation about ambivalence and the colonial stereotype is beyond our abilities to decipher, so let us put this in more concrete terms. On the one hand a cadet from the shop is always a cadet from the shop, and a polar bear is always a polar bear. For a moment, however, standing cloaked in blizzard darkness of a St. John’s winter the cadet from the shop seemed a polar bear. Of course he had not become one. He pulled back his hood, shook off the snow, and revealed himself to be Wolfe restored to his rightful station and personhood. This is true for all the travellers. They became as others when they descended into wilderness and return to themselves when they emerged again. Jameson and his companion may have seemed as peddlers after a hard day’s walk across moors and through ravines, but given a bit of time in the castle’s bedroom to dress themselves in “tip top fashion” and they emerged to take their proper place among the “elite of the country”.

Yet this seeming fixity is haunted by the possibility of transformation. The possibility that the master may become the servant, that our friends may become bears and that at the edge of light and darkness men may become grotesque and misshapen. At the heart of this fear of transformation was the assumption of a relationship between the wilderness, as a primitive landscape, and the European subject. We will now turn to the question of how this assumption informed the authorship of the Newfoundlander as a degraded European subject. In particular, we will consider the writing of the west coast of Newfoundland, an area which nineteenth- and indeed twentieth-century authors, considered particularly wild and primitive.

Missionaries and the writing of the Newfoundland hinterland

What is striking about the writings of nineteenth-century visitors to the west coast of Newfoundland is the degree to which they narrated their travels as a voyage through an alien and unknown land. These people wrote in the voice of explorers travelling in darkest Africa, a space upon which the light of European, and particularly English civilization, had not yet shone. This sense of difference, of separation, a separation in space, and, more importantly, a separation in time, was, and I would argue still is, integral to the composition of Newfoundland as an underdeveloped space and Newfoundlander as a moral degenerate, and I will return to this theme shortly.

But to begin a few general points should be made about the social and political distance between the west coast of Newfoundland and the rest of the province. Firstly, the period between 1830 and 1880 was a period of rapid growth on the West Coast of Newfoundland. English from Devon and Cornwall, Scots from Cape Breton, and Newfoundlanders from the eastern coasts of the Island all came and settled in the Codroy and Humber Valley's and Bay of Saint Georges, adding to, or in some places replacing,

the pre-existing population of Mimmacs from the Maritimes and French from Acadie and Saint Pierre. In a sense then, unlike darkest Africa or Tibet or the South Sea Islands, this was, save for the few Mimmacs, a European space, or at least a space populated by the sons and daughters of European civilization.

Secondly, though the West Coast may have been remote from what the writers perceived to be the centres of commerce, culture, and administration, the west coast was far from being isolated from these centres. There seems to have been a regular trade in timber, herring, fresh meat and vegetables both with local merchants and the large French schooners that prosecuted the seasonal cod-fishery along this coast. This, coupled with the in-migration, and the semi-regular tours of ships of both the English and French Navies, indicated that Western Newfoundland, though perhaps very much a frontier, a space on the edge of the map of European culture, was neither unknown nor unexplored.

Finally, and this point is of particular importance, though the west coast was not isolated from the Western European society, in as much as its population was mostly of European descent, it was isolated from the administration of both civil and ecclesiastical authority. This may have been partially to do with the sheer physical remoteness of the west coast from the places from which authority emanated. It also had to do with the peculiar political status of the area, where, until 1904, the French possessed fishing rights by treaty, and, therefore, the colonial government in Saint John's could not legally exercise dominion over the affairs of the people who lived on the farther shore of the Island.

In short, the west coast was a space in which everyday life was unregulated by the formal and formalizing discourses localized in the institutions of church and state. It was this lack of administration that made the west coast a wilderness, a darkness beyond the compass of English civility and cultivation, a place that, for a lack of any institutions

of civil authority, was worse – more backward, more underdeveloped – even than those lands that had existed outside the history of Western culture and society. In his *Report to the Central Council for the Propagation of the Faith* of 1877, Father Thomas Sears wrote:

In event of the diffusion of Christianity among the barbarous tribes, the missionary could avail himself of the system of government that already exists among themselves. There was never a tribe how savage so ever, I believe but had some form of order of subordination among them, modelled more or less imperfectly on the patriarchal order, and by making this the basis of a future system he could thus introduce the germ of a future civil organization. But take the adventurous members of various civilized communities and place them together and leave them without any order, any authoritative influence, and you can at once imagine the result. (1877, 19-20)

It is these “consequences” of leaving a group of people “without any order or authoritative influence” that concerned the missionaries on their travels to the remoter coasts of Newfoundland. These were stories of a descent, a passage not only through space but through time, an encounter with the “other,” not the utterly foreign other, the “savage” of savage lands, but with the self as other, the civilized self, stripped of civility, and so become the savage.

The encounter with the savage other was written as both the landscape and the people of the west coast. The landscape was the wilderness: a “dungeon” as Thomas Sears said of the Humber Valley, lying in darkness “between two great ranges of mountains towering into the clouds” (1877, 14-15); a “barren coast” and an “interminable forest” as the reverend Edward Wix described it; or the expanse of “rocks and dreary woods” that the geologist Joseph Beete Jukes traveled through for months on end.

This wilderness was consistently contrasted to the English pastoral countryside. As the exception to the vistas of “rock and dreary woods” Jukes wrote of a small settlement by Crabbes Brook in the Western Interior as a:

... pretty little spot, with green meadows on each side of it, and two or three neat clean houses clustered under the shelter of a rising bank covered with green turf. Geese were feeding on the grass, ducks and poultry were scattered about, and a few cows and sheep gave it all the appearance of a pastoral scene at home. There was actually a fence and a stile to get over onto a small foot path across it . . . It really seemed a little paradise . . . The little rich-looking valley of the brook, with its bright waters winding away into the woods, completed a most lovely, almost English appearance. (1839, 160-1)

Wix also found comfort in the ideal of the English pastoral landscape, imagining a trip past vistas of “scattered farms”, “numerous churches”, “neat cottages”, “substantial yeoman’s residences”, and the “occasional seat” and declaring that: “No one can enter more fully than myself into the beauty of the English landscape. No one can enjoy analysing its various attractions, and admiring them each in detail, more than I do,” and that, “the whole ride would seem to be a delicious saunter through paradise” – a trip that contrasted sharply with Wix’s description of the hellish discomfort that he experienced while travelling through the wilderness of the west coast. (1836, 183-4)

The aesthetics of landscape that informed the description of the west coast was an aesthetics of cultivation, of the creation of domesticated spaces. The scenes of cliffs and mountains, of dreary woods and barren shores, were contrasted with vistas of fenced fields, grazing cattle, neat cottages and clean houses. This same aesthetic, this same distinction, was written on the bodies of the people of the West Coast of Newfoundland. Just as their land was a wilderness, a place unbounded by fences, unmarked by the

ordering intention that was the essence of civility, so the people were savages, undisciplined, unrestrained, and uncultivated.

Bishop Edward Feild, visiting the Codroy Valley in 1845, wrote that “a more wretched set of people could hardly, I think, be found – the houses were dirty and desolate; the inhabitants ignorant to the last degree.” (1846, 84) Similarly, the Reverend Wix wrote of the people of the Bay of Islands as being like the “untutored Indian”, “ignorant of decorum and delicacy” and darkly alluded to “acts of profligacy . . . at which even the Micmac Indians expressed their horror and disgust”. (1836, 169)

The horror and disgust that the authors and even the Indians expressed when faced with the savagery of some of the Europeans on the west coast was particularly directed towards the figure of the undisciplined woman. Wix wrote despairingly that he “met with more feminine delicacy . . . in the wigwams of the Micmac and Canokok Indians than in the tilts of many of our own people.” (1836, 170) The indelicate manners of the women of the West Coast were a subject that Wix dwelt on at some length. He wrote of women “among them positively girls of fourteen” who “may be seen, under the plea of it helping them in their work, habitually taking their ‘morning’ of raw spirits before breakfast.” And of how these same women, “the girls among the rest,” were “also smoking tobacco in short pipes, blackened with constant use.” He told of one woman in particular, a “monster” as Wix described her, who “in her haste to attack a quantity of rum,” had left her baby on the beach to find it the next morning drowned by the tide, and how this woman was now “shamelessly cohabiting with her own nephew”. This monster, far from being the exception, was the embodiment of the monstrous figures lurking in the darkness of the wilderness, the bad mother, the incestuous lover, the unspeakable sins with which Wix was “unwilling to pollute his journal”. (1836, 170-2)

Just as the “howling wilderness” was contrasted with the pastoral landscape, so the monstrous women, the woman of unrestrained appetites and desires, found her contrast

in the “excellent wife”, the woman demure and delicate, silent and selfless, the woman as servant, who in her servitude, in subjugation of her own desire, made possible civilized society. The excellent wife appeared in various guises in the journals of the visitors to the Newfoundland hinterland. She appeared as the wife of Charles Vincent, whose “humane attentions”, “soon restored” the Reverend Wix after a particularly arduous trip through deep snow and freezing water. (1836, 162) She appeared again as Mrs. Forrest who, at “sacrifice of personal comfort”, “had taught some children daily”, her efforts bearing fruit in the form of the “manner in which the children made their responses in the church service” held by Reverend Wix. (1836, 165) The excellent wife could be an Indian such as the wife of the crippled Micmac who Jukes met on the shores the Great Codroy River, an “exceedingly pretty woman, with a Grecian countenance, dark but ruddy complexion, and a sweet smile” who “spoke no English, and was very modest and reserved”, (1836, 170) a woman who was taken by Jukes to be indicative of the nature of the Micmacs whom he considered to be “a very moral people, being especially strict with regard to their women and marrying them at an early age”. (1839, 175)

Time, Space and the Newfoundland Other (again)

In their writings these authors were composing rural Newfoundland within a discourse of “civilization”: a discourse which turned on the opposition of the wilderness, a realm of the undisciplined and uncontrolled play of natural will, and the cultivated, a space created in the act of discipline, in the subjugation of the natural. The discourse of civilization was, above all, a discourse of human nature. The wilderness was embodied in the person of the savage, the inhuman human (the monster), who lived as an animal according to the will of nature, while civilization was incarnate in the Christian, the

“favored child refinement”, who dominated, rather than being dominated by, their natural instinct.

Imminent in this discourse was a colonial vision of space. In this colonial vision Europe, and in particular England, was seen as civilized, while those places at the periphery of European hegemony, Africa, the South Seas and the hinterland of North America were composed as savage lands. As argued by Johannes Fabian (1983), this vision of space, this discursive geography of human nature, was, essentially, a vision of time, and of human progress through time. This was the story of an ascent from the state of nature to the state of civilization, of the progressive domination of natural will both within landscape and within the body of society and the individual. The story of this ascent was narrated both as the natural history of human society, and the development of the human individual. The child was as the savage, both were uncultured, both were creatures of nature whose passage towards adulthood, towards civilized society, was marked by the acquisition of self-discipline through subjugation of the natural self to the disciplining will of the parent.

In short, the discourse of civilization amounted to a nineteenth-century theory of development and underdevelopment. It allowed those who employed this discourse to situate all places and all peoples upon a single scale of absolute progress, and, thereby, to compare any place and people to any other in terms of their relative position upon this scale. Savages were, therefore, not simply different from the European, but backward, primitive, and underdeveloped, and to travel to savage lands was, therefore, not simply to travel through space, but to travel back through time, as Cormack had done when trekking westward across the Newfoundland interior, to discover a state which European society was considered to have long surpassed.

The rhetoric of development inherent in the discourse of civilization was principally a rhetoric of moral character, of the quality of good and evil, and of the ascendancy of

good over evil. The savage was, virtually by definition, morally degenerate, or effectively amoral, and the progress away from the state of savagery was narrated as a moral history of the emergence of the Christian self. This being said however, the rhetoric of moral advancement was closely intertwined with notions of economic development, and with colonial agendas for the domination and transformation of local economies. It has been convincingly argued that such was the case in Africa (Noyes 1991) and the Near East (Said 1978), and such was certainly the case with the west coast of Newfoundland. A consistent theme that ran through all of the nineteenth-century writings about west coast was that, though this place was at present an utter wilderness, it did hold the potential to be transformed into a cultivated rural landscape, similar to that of the English countryside, a potential that had already been realized in the pockets of civility, such as the homestead in the valley of Crabbes Brook that Jukes visited.

In a sense there was a divergence of voices in the description of the West Coast: the authors experienced the wilderness subjectively as horror, it assaulted their body, and offended their eyes, but they evaluated it objectively, weighed and measured it, in terms of the possibility of it becoming a civilized place, and, in this civilization, a place from which wealth could be produced in the form of surplus commodities. It was in these terms that Wix wrote of the potential of the West Coast, when he observed that:

the soil is so much improved that it is quite capable of being brought into cultivation; cattle are very numerous here already. Between Cape Ray, indeed, and the Bay of Islands, there is decidedly more land capable of being brought into cultivation, than in all parts of Newfoundland with which pretty extensive tours had made me previously acquainted. (1836, 188-9)

In much the same terms Jukes sung the praises of Saint Georges Bay:

as far as its natural capabilities and resources go, St. Georges Bay and its neighbourhood is by far the most inviting part of Newfoundland. It is indeed the only part where agriculture could flourish so as to become

part of the resources of the country, and likewise the only part with any mineral wealth to boast of. Had the Western Shore of the Island been the Eastern, it would before this time, have contained a populous and flourishing community. (1839, 165)

There was, then, in the descriptions of the wilderness of the West Coast, a vision of the future, in which the wilderness became domesticated, in which the vistas of dreary woods and barren shores were transformed into a landscape of flourishing communities and farmed fields. In this there was congruence between the aesthetics of the landscape and the rhetoric of economic development. The wilderness was not only horrific, it was uneconomic, and the people who lived within the wilderness were not only savages, but, in their savagery, also unproductive, in that they did not realize the full potential of their land.

Implicit, even explicit, in this rhetoric was the idea that the wild was unused, or at least underused space, and that, accordingly, space was only useful as it was brought into cultivation. It was this aesthetic, this rhetoric, at once moral and economic, a rhetoric which defined the hinterland as a wilderness, and the wilderness as backward, that shaped Newfoundland as an administrative domain, a domain in which, by the very nature of its construction, development would be the defining feature of its political culture.

Power and the Bringing forth of the Text

Crucial to this agenda for development, for the transformation of the wilderness into the cultivated landscape, for the civilizing of the savage, for the domestication of the monstrous woman, was an idea of power, which, in practical terms, took the form of an argument for the territorialization of the hinterland by institutions of moral and civil discipline: the colonial government, the merchant and the church. To understand this

idea of power it is useful to re-examine the precise terms in which the west coast was composed within the discourse of civilization, and the notions of social evolution that were assumed in that discourse.

In a sense the position of the west coast within the colonial discourses of time and space was somewhat ambiguous, and it is at these points of ambiguity, points which I have so far glossed over, that this discourse reveals itself to be less about natural history, though it did effectively naturalize a hierarchy of social order as history, than it was about the presence or absence of modes of domination.

The first point of ambiguity was that, though the people of the West Coast were *as* savages, they were also Europeans. They were not, therefore, children of the wilderness who knew no other way; rather, they were children of civilization who had gone wild. This was history written backwards, not a story of natural progression, but a story of regression, of the decay of the cultivated self into the natural other (and indeed beyond the natural other, as the savage European was often represented as being more debased than the resident savages, the Micmac Indians, who were accorded some degree of natural nobility).

The depiction of the European settlers of the West Coast as savages was in keeping with a more general concern amongst European scholars and social campaigners of the nineteenth century with “degeneracy”. Practically, this concern was directed at the urban poor of the major European cities, who, although a product of the advancement of European civilization, were showing all the signs of mutating into a creature more crude, ugly and savage than the natives of faraway primitive lands. (Pick 1989, 11-27)

More philosophically, according to Daniel Pick, the idea of degeneracy was imbedded in “the language and culture of later nineteenth-century evolutionary naturalism”. (1989, 11) The science of emergent forms, which we discussed in the previous chapter with reference to landscape, assumed a certain visual prose of history.

In theory people, like landscapes, should become more complex and perfect as they evolved over time. Yet this prose of history was haunted by the possibility that form may decay, become fluid, lose its structure and so transform into an amorphous and threatening entity.

Both Thomas Richards (1993, 57-63) and Daniel Pick (1989, 68-75) cite Bram Stoker's *Dracula* as an example of nineteenth-century anxieties concerning the stability of form. Dracula is a monster. Not an old-fashioned monster, but monstrous in the way of the women of the Bay of Islands. He is the embodiment of "a colonial alterity" whose being refuses "to follow the ordinal scheme of historical morphological development." (Richards 1989, 51) He is at once the product of the new science of emergent form, which undid the stability of the two dimensional Linnaean universe, and a mutant creature who lies outwith that science of form, and whose threat can only be countered by an attempt to bring him within the structured spatiality of proper and orderly formations.

The idea of degeneration, embodied in the figure of Dracula as a monster of colonial alterity disrupting Darwinian narratives of natural progress, indicates the complex "resonance and reverberation between European class politics and colonial racial politics." (Cooper and Stoler 1997, 9) In the colonial milieu these concerns centred around the maintenance of Europeanness as a form of civilized order and disposition against the contagion of the debased and degraded "other" (a contagion that was both literally and metaphorically sexual). (Cooper and Stoler 1997, 26; Stoler 1995, 1-18) This fear of contagion had its heart, however, an anxiety concerning the stability of our own form and selfhood. Europeanness was not a fixed or inviolable historical category of being; rather, it was a fragile construct of environment and social circumstance. Accordingly, if the European was allowed to live beyond the ordering influences of church and state, idealised and imagined as the pastoral English landscape, then he or

(particularly) she could transform into the monster: a creature whose very being defied the racial logic of social advancement.

The second point of ambiguity was that this decay, this devolution from civilization into savagery, from womanhood into monstrosity, was far from being universal. A marked feature of the west coast, indeed of rural Newfoundland as a whole, as it was authored in travelogues and reports of nineteenth century, was its very uneven development. As Wix writes: "a single league may often carry the traveller upon the same shore, from a people whose habits are extremely coarse and revolting to a population which has suffered nothing . . . from its being far removed from the seat of advanced civilization and refinement." (1836, 168) The contrast between the wilderness and the civilized, between the savage and the Christian, was, then, not simply written in the distinction between the hinterland of Newfoundland and England, though this distinction did provide the meta-language for accounting for the degree of civilization, but it was also written within the hinterland between populations living adjacent to one another.

One explanation given for this uneven development was the nature of the people who originally settled a given area. Again to quote Wix:

Much of the character of a settlement must, of course, depend, for several generations, on the character of its original settlers. The descendants of some profane, run-away man-of-war's man, or of some other character as regardless or ignorant of decorum and delicacy, are likely to shew to a third or fourth generation licentiousness of conversation and conduct which betray the foul origin of their stock. (1836, 169)

In essence the variance of the quality of local culture was accounted for etiologically, in terms of the myth of founding fathers and mothers. Moral character seems to be treated as something near genetic, a quality intrinsic to the body of

individual, an assumption which allows the observer to read backward from the social character of given community, to the body of the people who were, quite literally, the parents of that community.

The paternalistic reading of the social genesis of civilization in the Newfoundland wild extended beyond the relationship of descent, to the relationship with forms of institutionalised authority that were embodied in paternal or maternal figures. The degree of development was not so much of a matter of biological parentage, as it was of social parentage, and the degree to which the character of the rural Newfoundlander had been influenced by the past actions of the civilized and civilizing authorities.

As with physical descent, the civilizing influence of paternalistic authority was discovered in an archaeology of the personal history of the other. Particularly in the travelogue of Reverend Wix, the presence of the civilized man in the midst of the wilderness was invariably accounted for by the past presence of moral parent. Such was the case with Wix's "worthy friend" M.J., whose "superior demeanour, compared with that of the people around him" was partially explained by his "respectable parents" who had given him as "fair an education as possible in the little out-harbour" where he was born, but was more the result of "the kind attentions which he received when a cabin-boy from a worthy clergyman in England" who, seeing the boy praying in church, "took pains to give him instructions in his Sunday-school and on other occasions". (1836, 178-9)

Similarly, Wix met a small cluster of families along the "third Barrisway, or Crabs" (possibly the same settlement that Jukes had visited some years earlier), who he described as being a "most industrious, moral, cleanly people". In accounting for their civilized qualities he remarked that the first settlers, from Jersey, Dorset and Devon, were "of a superior class", and that "their descendants did not degenerate". Amongst the people of the third Barrisway Wix met with a "man in humble life", who "pleased" him.

As with M.G. this man was discovered to “have profited much from his training in his earlier years” under the guidance of surrogate parent, in this instance one Lady Caroline Damer, who ran a free school for orphans at Abbey Milton, near Blandford, Dorset. (1836, 190)

Interestingly, the paternalistic relationship was not only embodied in the civilized child now grown to adult, but also in the book, and in particular in the Bible or prayer book. Both M.G. and the man of the third Barrisway owned a religious text. These texts were at once artefacts of civilized society, and in themselves agents of civilization, whose very presence served to transform the savage into the Christian, to discipline the undisciplined natural appetites and to shed light upon the darkness. But more than this the book was, quite specifically, the materialization of the past and of the institutionalised modes of domination that were the precondition of the transformation of the child into the civilized adult, and of the wilderness into cultivated landscape. In both cases the texts were autographed by the moral parents, the unnamed English Pastor, and Lady Damer, and it was this autograph in particular that made the book a treasure, to be “shewed with grateful pride”, for in its bringing forth the separation between the past and present, between England and rural Newfoundland, between the child and the adult, the separation which was the condition for the perverse devolution of the European into the savage, disappeared. So it was with M.G.’s books when he showed them to the Reverend Wix:

... tales have been told of the village school and of the catichizing in the aisle of the church, and of the pastor’s affectionate stroke upon the head of my host, - rugged and weather-beaten now, – but then a sleek and curly headed youth, and the reward-book with the pastor’s valued autograph, has been brought forth, and the clasped bible and the torn prayer-book, which he would not by any means part with, but would wish for another, – till-O! the missionary and the man of rugged features, have both become children! and

on the thought of home, and of the church-yard stile, and the village spire, and the intervening sea! and the present sad, sad wilderness in which they are wandering, or wearing away life far from the privileges of which such fondly recollected scenes remind them, ... (1836, 180-1)

The bringing forth of the text simultaneously pointed to a separation in time and space, the separation between the curly-headed youth and the weather-beaten man, the separation between the cultivated landscape of England and the wilderness of Newfoundland, and effected a transcendence of that separation in the materialisation of paternalistic authority. It is this simultaneity of the distinction between the Christian self and savage other, and the transcendence of that distinction, a simultaneity existent in the text and in the processes of textualization, that is the key to unlocking the relations of power that were both written as the discourse of civilization, and immanent in the very politics of that writing.

The forms of power assumed in the bringing forth of the book in the midst of wilderness, and the notions of time and space that were evoked in this act, were, I would argue, not simply a feature of the discourse of the travelogue or report, but were also inherent in the very process of authorship by which these texts were created. In essence Wix, Jukes, Feild et al. were both creating a field of power, and positioning themselves within that field as civilized men, and, more importantly as civilized men who were authoring accounts of their travels beyond the margins of the civilized world. Indeed, what is striking about these accounts is the degree to which the author and the act of writing are present in the text. The savagery of the Newfoundland wilderness was written of as something looked at, felt, experienced, by the author, and, through the author, by the reader. In saying this, what should be underscored is that this presencing of the other in the sentiments of the author, was, again quite explicitly, not so much an account of personal experience, a discourse of the self as subject, as it was a way, a

technology, by which Newfoundland was made present as an object of concern amongst the ruling classes of Saint John's and England. Wix is quite clear on his reasons for writing of his experience of visiting the West Coast:

I may be asked why I give even a partial publicity to such disgusting details of crime. I have been silent as regards much which came to my knowledge: the interests of morality may not, indeed I know, be directly served by the exposure of any of these details of immorality; but may not the attention of humane legislature – of the true patriot, of the Christian philanthropist be roused by the knowledge of the existence of these horrible enormities, to devise some plan for the emancipation of our rapidly increasing population from their present godless ignorance, – from a slavery worse than that of the body? – and may not the next generation, if not the present settlers, be benefited by the glare of light which is thrown upon the deeds of darkness, which else could never be suspected or conceived? (1836, 172)

The language of this passage, the play between images of darkness and light, is revealing: like the Bible brought forth in the humble house, the text of wilderness written by the enlightened author, was a means by which the distance between the civilized and the savage was at once created and resolved. In fact the very resolution of the problem of underdevelopment, of backwardness, of darkness, assumed the authorial act by which it was “brought to light,” by which it was exposed, and so, by moral necessity, became an object of colonial administration.

In these accounts of the past the authors writing about their travels on the west coast were, therefore, setting the agenda for the future. The clean and industrious settlers of the shores of the third Barrisway and the worthy friend M.G., were described as being the result of what could be said to be a history of internal colonisation by the dominant will of institutions of moral and civil discipline. In essence then, the transformation of the savage into the Christian, of the wilderness into a flourishing community, demanded an act of domination, of territorialization, through which the savage as child, was made

subject to the control of the Christian as adult, a control which assumed an initial act of textualisation by which the savage subject became a moral object before the gaze of the civilized traveller.

It was this theory of transformation, a theory that had at its centre the distinction between the savage and the Christian, and the patriarchal metaphor of family, that informed the politics of development in rural Newfoundland. For the hinterland to become a civilized space, and for the population of the outports to become a civilized people, it was imperative that both the physical and social space of this region be brought under the domain of the formal institutions of colonial authority: the government in St. John's and London, and the churches of England and Rome.

Within the discourse of civilization it was, then, the severing and re-emergence of this paternalistic relationship that structured the history of social, moral and economic development. It was the breaking of this relationship that explained the decay of the European self into a state of savagery, it was the continuity of this relationship that explained the existence of civil society in the midst of the wilderness, and it was the upon the successful (re)establishment of this relationship that the future of the Newfoundland depended. If institutions of civil and moral authority did territorialize the remoter shores of then, as the authors assure their reader, the region would ascend from its wilderness state, its condition of savagery, and become near as England, a space fully developed both socially and economically. If, however, this was not done, if those in who had control over the administration of civil and moral discipline neglected to extend this control to this region then the descent from civilization to savagery would continue, and, as Wix writes, "the people in this and like places . . . may fast merge into a state similar to that which the first missionaries found the inhabitants of the Islands in the South Seas." (Wix 1836, 173)

Visions for the Future

What has been described is a moment in the history of the rhetoric of development in rural Newfoundland. This is a moment of some antiquity, and yet, I would argue that in the examination of this moment, and of the specific nature of the discourse within which western Newfoundland was composed as an underdeveloped space during the nineteenth century, one may, in effect, have a vision of the future, of a history unfolding to the present, a history in which, in a various ways and according to various theories, rural Newfoundland has always been underdeveloped, backwards, a past in the present, and so a place whose future must, by that very logic of time, become an object of administration.

In particular there is, in this reading of the travelogues and reports of the nineteenth century, three basic theoretical points that I think continue to hold true to the present day. The first is that development policy is not designed in response to a state of underdevelopment that exists external to that policy; rather, agendas for development and the composition of underdeveloped spaces are imminent within a single discursive process. The second is that the key to this discursive process is the composition of space as a hierarchy of social and economic order that is naturalised as historical time. The third is that specific discourses of development assume specific modes of discursive practice: that, in other words, the text is not simply a reflection of a prevailing ideology of development, rather it is integral to the developmental process as the means by which experiential space is territorialized by dominant discourses of time.

The ideologies of backwardness have, of course, changed over the past century. Where the nineteenth century the society, economy and culture of rural Newfoundland were defined within a dominant discourse of civilization, a discourse which had, as its primary mode of production the colonial gaze, the seeing eye of civilized man, written as

travelogue or report from the field, the rural Newfoundland of the early twenty-first century seems to be created as an administrative object within a discourse of economic rationalism, a discourse that has its chief mode of production the scientific report, in which rural Newfoundland is composed as an entity that exists *sui generis* to any human agency or will, a place where laws of economy unfold according to their own logic. As the nature of Newfoundland as an underdeveloped space changes, so does the vision of the future of rural Newfoundland: where, in the nineteenth century the future was written as a promise of expansion, of the emergence of community from the wilderness, the future of the early twenty-first century is written as the inevitability of contraction and of the disappearance of community: a future of non-existence, the wilderness returned.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion: “To dwell again on that little ice-bound coast”

The return of the native

In this thesis we have told stories of travel. In these stories European men left their homes and went to Newfoundland. They went to Newfoundland for a variety of reasons. In the fifteenth-, sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries they went in search of their fortune, be that fortune imagined as spices and gold, or fish and penguins as big as geese. In the eighteenth-century they went to make observations, be these observations of the clockwork movements of the heavens or of yellow flowers growing on top of dry hills. In the nineteenth century they went to gaze upon the wilderness and to assess the moral and social condition the people who lived within that wilderness.

In telling these stories of travel we have told another story. This is the story of the writing of Newfoundland. Each journey is an episode within this story.

In the fifteenth century John Cabot went to Newfoundland and wrote nothing.

In the sixteenth century Humphrey Gilbert went to Newfoundland and he, and those who travelled with him, wrote of the island and its productions. They wrote of a good and generous country, where fruiting bushes and tall trees grow from the earth, and fish beyond number swim in the seas. They wrote of things they had seen, but they did not write of seeing. It was the presence of things that was important, not their appearance.

In the eighteenth century this changed. John Winthrop travelled to Newfoundland with the sole purpose of seeing and writing of what he saw. He made an observatory on top of Signal Hill and from that observatory he looked towards the horizon as Venus moved across the disc of the rising sun. What he saw he described in numbers, inscribing the movements of planets and stars in the geometric prose of empiricism.

Joseph Banks and James Cook followed Winthrop. They came for the sole purpose of collecting and creating facts. They were both in their way mapmakers, men who employed the mechanics of empirical observation to draw charts of Newfoundland. Cook charted the outline of the coast of Newfoundland upon the mathematized surface of the globe. Banks charted the place of plants of Newfoundland within the topographic schema of Linnaean classification.

Finally, in the nineteenth century men came to Newfoundland to observe the work of time. William Epps Cormack looked upon the face of the land and saw a primitive country in the coarse texture of the rocks and the sweeping vistas of forests, lakes and granite hillocks. The Reverend Edward Wix travelled to Newfoundland and saw the effects that such a country had on the moral and social condition of those Europeans who had left the old world to settle in the wilderness.

In telling the story of the writing of Newfoundland through the medium of travel we have addressed two issues or problems.

The first problem is the historical possibility of travel as a mode of inscription. How did it come to pass, we asked, that educated Europeans travelled to Newfoundland with the purpose of writing of what they saw? And how was it that these writings became taken as knowledge, and so deemed an important and useful thing to do?

As Anthropologists this pastime, this habit of writing descriptions of things we have seen while on our travels, seems quite natural (although the status of ethnographic description as knowledge has proved, of late, somewhat controversial). As we have

shown, however, there is nothing natural about it. European travel writing, as an account of the experience of the traveller, began during the Enlightenment. Its emergence was made possible by a series of intertwined cultural and philosophical developments. In particular, travel writing was closely linked to the emergence of what Michel Foucault calls the classical *episteme* in which the prose of knowledge became written as the visible surface of things, and the related emergence of what Martin Jay calls “a modern scopic regime” in which the site of inscription became the observatory and the work of inscription was done by the eye of the observer.

The second problem is Newfoundland’s perceived backwardness or underdevelopment. Perceived is the key word here. Throughout this thesis we have argued that the fact of whether Newfoundland is “really” backward or underdeveloped in an economic, social or cultural sense is, for the purposes of this study, neither here nor there. What is important is that over the past two centuries Newfoundland has come to be inscribed as backward and underdeveloped.

Again, we have interrogated the historical possibility of this way of describing Newfoundland and its people. We have argued that the idea of backwardness or primitiveness was informed by a narrative of the history of form that was popularised at the beginning of the nineteenth century. According to this narrative all things, be they the rocks of the earth, plants or people, had inscribed upon them the traces of the process of their formation. Moreover, this process always followed roughly the same course: things emerged out of a formless chaos and then as time passed they became increasingly structured and complex. This history of progress also allowed for the possibility of regression. As things emerged from a primeval fluid state so they may return. What is important for the story of the writing of Newfoundland is that this meta-narrative of progress allowed educated travellers to visualise history and so to historicize landscapes. So it was that Cormack could look upon the Newfoundland hinterland and

see it as a primitive place, reading upon the face of the land the primal processes of its own making.

This visual aesthetic of time was also a discourse of moral being. Just as earth developed, becoming more structured and ordered, so our own body emerged from a fluid embryonic state to become perfected as the adult human. This evolution of the body was mirrored in the evolution of society and the social individual. From our primitive state, in which we were purely subject to our natural passions, we increasingly learned to master our passions and, in this mastery, act and think like civilized people. This mastery of the passions within was demonstrated, written if you will, in the creation and maintenance of orderly spaces and relationships. A garden all fenced and tended, a table neatly laid, a Bible verse correctly spoken, all these were descriptive of the moral ascension of civility. So it was that Edward Wix could historicize the people of Newfoundland as moral subjects, for as surely as rocks bore traces of their formation, so the manners and habits of a people were descriptive of their place in history and the circumstances of their making.

A few years ago now I presented something like this overview of the history of the writing of Newfoundland to a postgraduate seminar at the University of Edinburgh. Dr. Neil Thin, a lecturer of Anthropology at Edinburgh, asked me a question upon the conclusion of the seminar. Though reasonably sympathetic with my study of the inscription of Newfoundland as a colonial discourse, he raised a basic concern. "Where", he asked (and I paraphrase for I cannot recall the exact words), "are the Newfoundlanders?" I had talked at some length how visiting strangers had written of Newfoundland and its peoples, but I had made no mention of how the natives of the island wrote or spoke about themselves. In effect, I had transformed the people of Newfoundland into literary characters, while treating those who wrote this literature, be they botanists, geologists or missionaries, as historical actors. By assuming that

strangers were the writers and fisher-folk the people written about I risked grossly oversimplifying the complex politics of inscription in Newfoundland, and, in so doing, denying the island's resident population any agency in the process of inscription.

In my defence I said, and would still maintain, that in some respects this alienation of the Newfoundlander from the writing of their island is not just an effect of the imposition of theories of colonial discourse. As discussed in the introduction, one thing I noticed while living in rural Newfoundland was the widespread feeling of powerlessness. Much of what people did, from pulling fish from the sea, to cutting down trees, to shooting moose, was governed by rules and regulations that were not of their making. This governance was made possible by writing and legitimised by the rhetoric of development and underdevelopment. The visiting stranger who possesses the power to inscribe landscapes and peoples as knowledge is, then, a very "real" actor within the lives of rural Newfoundlanders, and the separation of living from writing is descriptive of a very real politics by which the lives of rural Newfoundlanders are administered by distant strangers.

This being said, however, there was and is considerable substance to Dr. Thin's critique. The fact of the matter is that "come-from-aways" were not the only people who wrote of Newfoundland. Since the mid-nineteenth century there have been people who thought of themselves as Newfoundlanders, and as Newfoundlanders they wrote of their island and their people.¹¹⁸ In the context of our discussion of the history of the writing

¹¹⁸ The question of the identity of the first Newfoundland author of Newfoundland is, as one may expect, somewhat complex. Part of the problem is that when we refer to a "Newfoundland author" we are referring to someone from Europe, or the descendant of someone from Europe, who has chosen to represent themselves as a Newfoundlander. The "Newfoundland author" is, then, first and foremost a matter of self-ascription. William Epps Cormack was, after all, born in Newfoundland yet most would not consider him to be a Newfoundland author because he did not consider himself as such (if anything he thought of himself as Scottish). If there is a "first Newfoundland author" then most seem to agree that it was the Reverend Philip Tocque, who was born and raised in Carbonear. In 1846 Tocque wrote *Wandering Thoughts: or, Solitary Hours*, a somewhat curious meditation on the moral and physical situation of his homeland as told through the interweaving of the story of a walk along the coast near Carbonear and an imaginary journey through the various districts of the island (a journey which was in turn based upon various published

of Newfoundland, the presence of the nativist author raises several questions and opens possibilities for further study. Obviously, much of this study is beyond the scope of this thesis. As a conclusion, however, I want to briefly consider the relationship between the inscription of self as Newfoundlander and the traditions of travel writing that we have described over the previous pages. In doing so, I will be advancing the argument that the writing of the experience of travel was not simply a means by which strangers created Newfoundland as an object of knowledge, it was also a means by which Newfoundlanders created an idea of the island as a homeland.

We will, then, be telling one more story of travel. This is the story of Captain John W. Froude. This story is different from the others we have told. In the other stories people have left their home to discover Newfoundland. In this story Froude leaves Newfoundland to discover the world and, in so doing, writes his experience of home.

The diary of Captain John W. Froude

Captain John W. Froude was a native Newfoundlander. He was born in Twillingate in 1863, the son of fisher-folk, the grandson of an immigrant from New Brunswick. Like most men of his time John Froude made his living by working a variety of jobs. And like many men of his time working meant leaving home. He was fourteen when he first left Twillingate to work in the Baie Verte mines. In the years to follow he spent the summer on the Labrador catching cod, the fall in the woods cutting lumber and the spring on the ice clubbing baby seals. None of these efforts brought much reward, and

travelogues, particularly that of Joseph Beete Jukes). Tocque left Newfoundland as a young adult to live in Nova Scotia, New England and, finally, Toronto. Nonetheless, he quite clearly thought of himself as a Newfoundlander, and throughout his travels he continued to write and publish books and articles about his beloved island. Certainly from 1846 onwards there was a growing amount of literature written by Newfoundlanders about Newfoundland. Significant amongst these authors are the Reverend Moses Harvey (whose works include *Across Newfoundland with the governor* (1879) and *Newfoundland as it is in 1894* (1894)), Joseph Hatton, who with Harvey wrote *Newfoundland: the oldest British colony* (1883), and Judge Daniel W. Prowse, who published the seminal *A history of Newfoundland* in 1896.

so finally in the spring of 1881 he crewed onto a merchant ship bound for the Mediterranean and spent the next five years of his life crisscrossing the globe as a sailor.

He returned to Twillingate in 1892 and turned his hand to business. He built and bought boats, and with these boats engaged in trade up and down the coast of Notre Dame Bay. He twice opened a store in Twillingate, and was on the board of directors of both the Twillingate Coal Company and the Twillingate Electrical Company of Newfoundland. He retired from trading in 1927, and, after forty years, returned to the fishery, jigging for cod in the waters close to home. John Froude died in 1939.

John Froude, fisher, sealer, sailor and merchant, was also an author. Towards the end of his life he completed his memoirs, written in an old accounts ledger. Upon his death this book was passed through the hands of various family members until it was “discovered” in the early 1980’s, and published by Jespersen Press of St. John’s.

Froude introduces his work as a “simple dirie” (1983, 2) of his “journey along the rugged road of life”. (1983, 4) The image of life as a journey is appropriate for his story is a story of travel, of a “roving lifes experience”, of a “rolling stone that gathers no moss”. (1983, 2)

Froude’s “journey threw life” is circular. It begins with his “happy child days on the old quidnock hill of mount pleasant where my grandfather pitched his tent after leaving St. John Newbrunswick” (1983, 5) and ends with him standing on “this very same old pleasant plain on the hill side”. (1983, 2)

From this vista John Froude overlooks a “seafaring life” (1983, 24), a life of leavings and returns. Indeed, very little of his book concerns Twillingate. His time there is simply a time between journeys, and is passed over with vague phrases such as “I dodged around for a while” (1983, 12) or “we passed through our winter months as usual.” (1983, 14) It is his travels, and in particular his travels around the world as a sailor, that are the subject of memoir.

However, just as the “rocky place where I sit near the old cottage door” (1983, 177) is the vantage point from which Froude views his life of travel, so the “broad atlantic” and “the shores of Africa under the bright burning sun” (1983, 179) are the places from which he looks back “to the brightsome scenes of boyhood days in my childhood happy home.” (1983, 179) The circularity of Froude’s narrative is then not only a matter of space but also a matter of time. In his memoirs the present is interrupted by the past. When at home his thoughts turn to the sea. When at sea his thoughts turn to home.

It is in this circular movement of travel and memory that Froude writes of himself as a Newfoundlander. More precisely, through the juxtaposition of exotic and familiar landscapes Froude creates a vision of Newfoundland as homeland. In doing so he is writing at the intersection of personal experience and post-colonial discourses of spatiality and identity.

Columbus and the New World

When he was eighteen Froude joined the seal hunt as a crew member aboard the schooner *Ripple*. It was an ill-fated expedition. The schooner was trapped in the ice, and finally abandoned by its crew. Froude and five others took to two small boats and made their way home. By day they poked along the coast. By night they slept, “wet and frozen” (1983, 8), under canvass. Finally “the ice cleared of from the shore”, and with “rugs up on padles for topsails” (1983, 9) they sailed for home. “I thought” Froude reflects, “we appeared like the little ships that columbus first crossed the broad atlantic in as we glyded down the bay towards twillingate.” (1983, 9)

The evocation of Columbus at the moment of return points to the significance of the idiom of exploration and adventure in Froude’s writing of space and place. As a traveller Froude was, in a sense, an inheritor of Columbus, and the colonialist discourse

of discovery in which “New Worlds” became places within European histories and imaginations.

More to the point, Froude wrote at the time of the enlightened traveller, the botanists, geographers, and anthropologists for whom the voyaging to exotic lands was a means of extending the boundaries of knowledge. Through the application of “the descriptive apparatuses of natural history” these enlightened travellers created Europe’s “planetary consciousness.” (Pratt 1992, 8) Their ambition was to map all people and places upon a single grid of knowledge, and, in so doing, compose the globe as a scientific and administrative landscape.

Closer to home, the late nineteenth century was also a time when there was an explosion of writing about the hinterland of Newfoundland. The people of Newfoundland had been granted a measure of control over their own affairs in 1832, and much of this writing was implicitly or explicitly connected to the composition of Newfoundland as an emerging nation, a region unto itself, possessing its own population, resources, interests and identity.

There were two aspects to this project of nation writing in Newfoundland.

The first, discussed in chapter four, was the mapping of Newfoundland as a rational space. The devices employed to achieve this mapping were familiar ones. The first census of the island’s population was conducted in 1836. A comprehensive survey of Newfoundland’s mineral resources was completed in 1862. Reports on the state of islands fisheries were commissioned. These were supplemented by myriad travelogues, missionary reports, lectures and correspondence, all of which contributed to the accountancy of Newfoundland’s geography, economy and society. As Suzanne Zeller argues when considering “early Victorian science” in Canada, “tasks of identification, inventory and mapmaking” had significance that went well beyond their material usefulness. (1987, 8) The charting of Newfoundland’s geography, resources and

population was a means by which Newfoundlanders could realise their island as homeland. Geologists, botanists and surveyors, to quote again from Zeller, “drew verbal, visual and symbolic representations from the natural and physical world in which they lived. But this transfer of ideas worked both ways, for they also contributed to the intellectual mode in which to “cultivate that same world.” (1987, 9) In their work, therefore, they were, to paraphrase Zeller, helping to invent the idea of Newfoundland as place apart possessed of a distinct landscape and historical trajectory.

The second aspect of writing about Newfoundland was the development of a poetics of Newfoundland identity. This was the language of Newfoundland as home, a language whose principal features were a picturesque appreciation of the rustic landscape of the island and the conceptualisation of Newfoundlanders as a distinct “race” or “breed” who were at once European in ancestry yet possessed a unique culture and character.

The development of Europe’s “global consciousness” and Newfoundland’s “national self-consciousness” (O’Flaherty 1979, 89) were closely interrelated. This interrelationship was complex. On the one hand, the writing of Newfoundland was contiguous with eurocentric discourses of vision and knowledge. Newfoundland was, as we described in the introduction, represented as a dark and mysterious land, a “*terra incognita*” (Murray 1877, 267) veiled in ignorance. The work of knowing Newfoundland fell to a series of enlightened travellers, geologists, surveyors, and missionaries, who “resolved to take a prolonged look behind the veil” (Rogers 1931, 157) and explore the unknown hinterland of the island.

On the other hand, this project of exploration was closely allied to a nativist rhetoric of New World identity which sought to disrupt European spatialities and histories, and in so doing invent new sites of personal expression and political action. The writing of Newfoundland was then also a contestation of colonial knowledge. This contestation took the form of a concern with truth and falsity. Invariably, the nativist writers of the

time would preface their works with a critique of the state of European, particularly British, knowledge of Newfoundland (cf. Willson 1897; Harvey 1894). There was, they argued, a widespread and persistent ignorance concerning the qualities of the island and its people, an ignorance that was sustained by self-styled explorers whose vision of Newfoundland was prejudiced and superficial. The job of the nationalist author was to dispel this ignorance, to make empire remember, to, as it were, put Newfoundland on the map.

In this context, travel was not so much a means of discovering an “other” as it was a technique for the exploration and articulation of a national self. The mapping, describing, drawing and photographing of the landscape of the island, were integral to the creation of Newfoundland as a place of belonging. Writing within and against Eurocentric visions of space, the authors of Newfoundland identity composed the geography of the island as the locale of national destiny and personal memory.

Homeward bound

John Froude’s identity was expressed in this complex interplay of global consciousness and regional self-consciousness. Returning to the image of Columbus, it is telling that Froude evoked this image when he was sailing into Notre Dame Bay towards the village of his birth. His Columbus was not an explorer discovering the New World as an exotic place of the other; rather, he was rediscovering the New World as his home, as the familiar place of the self.

Froude’s narrative of rediscovery, his traveller’s tale of home, is told through the envisioning of two landscapes, two sites of knowledge and experience.

The first is the globe. Froude represents himself as one who has travelled “all over the world” (1983, 192) and who has “roamed to every clime and land and sailed from shore to shore”. (1983, 197) In the introduction to his memoirs he writes:

I have sailed around the globe
over the bounding bellows of the 5 great oceans
the 7 lakes and rivers of the world to 32 different
countries 77 seaport towns and cities one hundred and
fifty nine thousand seven hundred miles in my travells
of 2270592,000 seconds of time” (1983, 1)

The use of numbers in this passage is typical of Froude. His vision of the globe is empirical and rational. The surface of the earth is divided by lines: latitude, longitude, the tropics of Capricorn and Cancer, the Arctic Circle and the International Date Line.

These lines constitute a grid for charting position and movement. Froude’s voyages are marked by the crossing and recrossing of the lines that define the different regions of the earth. Particularly significant are the crossing of the equator and the International Date Line. To pass into the “torrid zone” is to discover a place that is completely other to all that is familiar, where “all the stars in the northern sky disapaired to our view” and “old things are passed away and all things are becoming new” (1983, 26), while it is in the circumnavigation of the earth that Froude composes the globality of his perspective. After sailing from London to Tenerife via New Zealand he writes: “I can now say that I have travelled around the globe no man can Go farther in the world than I have been.” (1983, 51)

The places that Froude travels to are named points upon this globe. The extent of his travels is catalogued in the listing of the names of places visited. Two sections of his memoirs are devoted entirely to such lists, the first naming the “32 different countries I

have travelled to" (1983, 163), the second naming "Port towns and cities I have travelled to". (1983, 164)

Global space is, therefore, conceptualised as a network of distances between named places. Froude's discourse of distance is exact. It is, he tells his reader, 9780 miles from London to Hong Kong (1983, 41), and the distance from Twillingate to the Suez Canal is "about 5340 miles." (1983, 142) This exactitude is the key to Froude's global spatiality. It is in the making of lists and the taking of measurements that Froude represents the extent of his knowledge and experience.

Upon the enumerated surface of the globe Froude moves as a transient placeless subject. He is a sailor whose "lot may be cast for to roam/ to find his pleasure/ good friends everywhere/ and make every country his home". He "is like a sea gull/ never rests in one place/ But loves the broad ocean to roam/ On the bellows so deep/ Where he takes his sound sleep/ On the chrisp of the sparkling foam". (1983, 68)

Froude's perspective is that of the enlightened traveller, a perspective that "privileges an intellectually and physically distanced visual perception of the world". (Olwig 1993, 331) His sailor's life is an adventure of vision. In Livorno he wanders around "viewing the great buildings churches music alls theaters circuses and law courts". (1983, 19) In Malta he "saw the place where St. paul Was Ship Wrecked". (1983, 34) And in New York he travelled around "to view its high buildings and lofty towers Music hall churches and spires of all description." (1983, 70)

It is in the seeing of other landscapes that Froude comes to know the world. This is a world of "wonders" and "strange Scenes". (1983, 43) Froude does not look on the mundane or parochial, rather his gaze is directed towards magnificent sights and places of renown. St. Peter's in Rome is described as "the largest church in the world it is 840 feet long and 720 bredth 500 in height 2465 in circumference". (1983, 19) In Odessa Froude visited "some of the grand buildings also The theatre that cost more money than

any other theatre in the world". (1983, 35) In New York he "walked across the Brooklyn bridge Which is the longest in the world Which is 1595 feet 6 inches long". (1983, 69).

These places situate, and are situated within, a global perspective. They are reflections of the themes that run throughout Froude's narration of his world travels: themes of expanse, of scale, of grandeur, expressed through the rational discourse of numbers.

Froude's vision of global space is haunted by an imagining of a second landscape, that of Newfoundland. Newfoundland is a memory to which Froude returns often in the course of his world travels. These memories intrude upon his thoughts, disrupting his linear narrative of seeing and creating a double vision in which the past and the present, Newfoundland and the world, are conjoined as a single reflective moment.

This double vision is a vision of difference expressed in the poetics of landscape. When visiting Livorno, the "famous seaport", he notes that the "streets here are paved with marble". Then as he "stood occasionally and gazed on the pleasant scenes around" he "thought how different" they were "from some of the rugged roads of Twillingate especially at this time of years when the great snow drifts cover the tops of the fences making it hard to travel from one place to another." (1983, 20)

This contrast, between marble streets and rugged roads, between "remarkable places and ancient things" (1983, 54) and the "wild and rocky shore" (1983, 55), is a recurrent feature of Froude's reflective discourse of home. Indeed, it is precisely at the times when the world is revealed in all its expanse and grandeur that Froude remembers the "outlines of his native land". (1983, 216)

When crossing the International Date Line Froude remarks on the wonder of working two Fridays in one week. He then reflects:

"if I never go

Around the globe again I shall
Never see two days alike in one
Week. Especially if I ever go back
To dwell again on that little
Ice bound coast, where the hills and
Fields are covered with snow and
The rivers are congealed to the shore
Where the bright twinkling stars
Shall point out a cold night
In that land I may visit no more.
But of all the kingdoms on the globe
The land that I love best
Is that little place where I was born
Out in the fair wild west
Where the green woods grow
And rivers run
With many a hill between
By day and night my fancies flight
Is with them mountains green.” (49-50)

The contrast between home and is not only a matter of content, it is also a matter of style. His global vision is expressed in a discourse of numbers, of measures and lists. His memories of Newfoundland are written in the painterly language of the picturesque, a language of “hills rock ribbed and bare” (1983, 212) and of “dark brown hills and ruffled lakes”. (1983, 211)

It is in this lyrical description of the wilderness of Newfoundland that Froude composes his sense of belonging. Newfoundland, a place small and insignificant when viewed from a planetary perspective, is nonetheless home, the sentimental, nostalgic centre of Froude’s globe.

By writing of home, Froude writes of his identity. In the remembering of Newfoundland his fluid, transient self, becomes fixed in place. This connection between

self and landscape is inscribed as the moment of Froude's birth. He writes of Newfoundland as "the place which gave me birth" (1983, 50), and describes the day of his birth as follows:

I was born on the 28th of the pleasant month of May 1863
as the flowers were out in full bloom and the green grass were fast
covering the fields with a soft velvet coat as the robin red brest
were singing their sweet song on the fair branches of the
green bay tree as the bright sun shown down through a brilliant
blue sky causing the lily of the valley to spread its tender leaves
to shadow the old soil of my own native land where the wild
sea gull spreads its feathery wings o'er the rippling waves and
the blue waters beat around the rugged shores of my dear old
island home (1983, 5)

The longing for a return, the desire to see the "rugged shores of my dear old island home", is then a desire for the recovery of lost origins. Froude's experience of returning home is narrated as an experience of retracing his way back to childhood: "And as I walked down the south side I meet my mother For the first time since I leaved the old cottage on The hill she threw her arms around my neck and Fondly pressed me to her bosom as if I had been a child of 6 years it was then I feel'd the long Lasting and kind affection of a mother." (1983, 122)

When leaving London for Newfoundland Froude asks himself why he would choose to leave a place "where I had seen all the pleasures of life" (1983, 97), to return to a place "Which close us in from The outside world. Also the employment Are scarce and wages low." (1983 98) It is in the moment at which his life had come full circle, the moment of the return to childhood, of the rediscovery of origins, that he finds his answer.

Conclusion

As I write it is February 2002. This month the film "The Shipping News" is to be shown in cinemas across Britain. The film is based on a book of the same title written by the American author E. Annie Proulx and published in 1993. It tells the story of Quoyle, "a hapless, hopeless hack journalist," who, on losing his feckless and faithless wife, is persuaded by his Aunt to leave New York and return to the land of his forefathers: Newfoundland.

They cross aboard the ferry from Sydney, Nova Scotia to Port-Aux-Basques on the southwest coast of the Island. The Aunt, who had left Newfoundland when she was seventeen, looks upon the blue land on the horizon and her eyes fill with tears. Like Froude before her, she comes to realise her home, her Newfoundland, only in her displacement and return. Her memories may have been of slightly darker hue than mariner's recollections of a bright sun shining through a blue sky upon the lily of the valley, but, like Froude, it is in the circular movement of her life-voyage that she rediscovers the elemental landscape that begat her. "She had not been in these waters since she was a young girl, but it rushed back, the sea's hypnotic boil, the smell of blood, weather and salt, fish-heads and reeking armpits, the rattle of wash-ball rocks in hissing wave, turrs, the crackery taste of brewis, the bedroom under the eaves." (1993, 33)

So it is that, as we quit the twentieth century, the writing of Newfoundland is an ongoing venture. People, such as Proulx and the fictional Aunt, still travel to the island and in their travels they inscribe Newfoundland as a place and Newfoundlanders as a people. There are many intersecting sites of inscription: songs and plays, magazines and books, theses and reports. And just as there are many different sites of inscription so there are many different ways of authoring the experience of Newfoundland. Some, like Froude, have written of Newfoundland as a homeland: a landscape that has shaped who

they are and so describes their being and memory. Others, like Cormack or Banks, have written of Newfoundland as an environment: a terrain of forms and features to be surveyed and charted; an assemblage of plants, animals and people to be gathered, shot or interviewed, and so made into facts.

This study has been historical. The peoples whose travels we have narrated and whose writings we have studied have been long dead. The *terra incognita* through which they travelled was a place quite different from the Newfoundland of the early twenty-first century, and the manner in which they described the land discovered in their travels may seem to us to be archaic or idiosyncratic. Yet I would argue that the story we told through the study of these tales of travel in centuries gone by is a story still unfolding in the present day. In a very real sense, this history of written journeys constitutes the possibility of the modern inscription of Newfoundland. Moreover, the ways in which we can write the island into being are not simply a (slightly distorted) mirror of material history of the exploitation of its resources; rather, the ways in which the island and its peoples have been written are woven into the very substance of Newfoundland's past, present and future.

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