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# The Mummers Song in Newfoundland: Intellectuals, Revivalists and Cultural Nativism

GERALD L. POCIUS

THE FIRST WEEK OF DECEMBER, 1983, Newfoundland radio stations were swamped with callers' requests to play a new Christmas song that had recently been aired throughout the province.<sup>1</sup> The composition, "Any Mummers Allowed In?", was the latest work written and performed by a group from Fortune Bay — Simani — a band that had already achieved widespread local popularity with their albums, "Saltwater Cowboys" and "Heaven By Sea". Their first album, "Saltwater Cowboys," has sold a remarkable 70,000 copies to date — astonishing since the record's distribution is handled by the group itself from their homes in tiny fishing communities on the island's south coast.<sup>2</sup> "Any Mummers Allowed In?" — or simply "The Mummers Song" as it quickly became known — would prove to be one of the most popular for Bud Davidge and Sim Savoury, the two members of the group (figure 1). Indeed, the song was the most obvious indication of a growing nativistic movement within Newfoundland that had focused on mummering as a powerful identity symbol of cultural revival. The song itself — although not a revival of an earlier composition — had a direct impact on the public perception of mummering, while at the same time encouraging its continuation. Simani's role in this revitalization is ironic, for while their music enjoys enormous success among Newfoundlanders outside of St. John's, it is little known amongst the intellectual elite in the capital city which prides itself on being in the vanguard of any Newfoundland cultural revival. From

outside an intellectual clique that had been trying for years to revive their own narrow version of Newfoundland's mummering ritual, would come a revitalization beyond any expectations by means of a simple song. The popularity of this newly composed Mummers Song and its general impact on traditions provide insight into the dynamics of nativistic revivals and how new creations drawing on indigenous cultural forms can foster and encourage certain activities. To understand the Mummers Song's impact on Newfoundland, it is first necessary to examine why mummering *per se* achieved the symbolic importance it has in contemporary Newfoundland.

## MUMMERING AND NEWFOUNDLAND CULTURE

Since the 1970's, Newfoundland has witnessed what anthropologist Ralph Linton called a nativistic movement. From many different quarters, Newfoundlanders have increasingly become concerned with reviving or perpetuating aspects of culture that are considered specifically distinct. A number of expressive forms drawing on what is believed to be genuinely Newfoundland have been celebrated in what Sandra Gwyn has labelled "Newfcult". Her article in *Saturday Night* magazine essentially chronicles the leading figures of the cultural revival of the 1970s. The work of local painters like Gerry Squires and Christopher Pratt focused national artistic attention on the province for the first time. A cadre of local writers such as Ray Guy, Al Pittman and Michael Cook created satire, poems and plays all mirroring regional cultural concerns. Many of these works were published by new companies like Breakwater Books, companies that were formed to promote Newfoundland talent. Contemporary musical groups blended what was considered unique in Newfoundland folk traditions with either rock music (Wonderful Grand Band) or Celtic fare (Figgy Duff).<sup>3</sup> Local theatrical groups like Codco performed a wide range of new productions on everything from the possible impact of the oil boom to the battle over Confederation. By the late 1970s, the L.S.P.U. Hall had become the centre for these performing groups. The Art Gallery at Memorial University, led by Edythe Goodridge, was during the 1970s, as Gwyn described it, the "crossroads and command post for Newfoundland's cultural revolution." Goodridge ran what she described as "sort of an open forum and information exchange for painters, sculptors, actors, playwrights, community planners, architects, folksingers, film-makers, photographers, visiting feds, ecology freaks, conservation nuts and anyone else who happens to be on the go" (Gwyn 41). All in all, a wide assortment of intellectuals who moved in the same circles and gathered informally at the same public places (in later years the Ship Inn) produced a remarkable amount of creative work, all drawing on indigenous sources and forms.

As Linton points out with respect to such nativistic movements, however, an entire culture is not focused upon; instead, “certain current or remembered elements of a culture are selected for emphasis and given symbolic value. The more distinctive such elements are with respect to other cultures with which the society is in contact, the greater their potential value as symbols of the society’s unique character” (Linton 231). What were in previous generations ordinary everyday practices that were not considered as exceptional embodiments of cultural identity become, during periods of nativism, objectified symbols of the very culture. This objectification of parts of the past then leads to these activities becoming collective identity systems for a culture, their practice believed to be the very enactment of what it means to be part of that group. Such objectifying of local ordinary activities “allows any aspect of human life to be imagined as an object, that is, bounded in time and space, or (amounting to the same thing) associated as property with a particular group, which is imagined as territorially and historically bounded” (Handler 195). Everyday activities become reinterpreted as “tradition”; current values and events determine which aspects of the past are considered as signifying an entire culture, and which aspects are ignored (Handler and Linnekin 280). This has been the case with mummering in Newfoundland.

When interviewed shortly after the smash success of the Mummers Song during Christmas 1983, school superintendent Bud Davidge — the songwriter of the group — expressed surprise that no one had ever written a song about mummering. Yet, the lack of such songs points to the fact that until recently mummering was not indeed considered exceptional, simply another well-known Newfoundland calendar custom like community concerts on St. Patrick’s Day or bonfires on Guy Fawkes Night. The song’s popularity indicated that mummering had become an identity symbol for Newfoundland nativism. Both the fact that a song had been written as well as its immense popularity indicated this change in mummering’s status from ordinary act to nativistic symbol. The transition had much to do with the role of various elites in defining what should be considered as authentic Newfoundland culture, a role that they have played in many other cultural revivals (Dégh 1984: 197; Ovesen 331). Such elites act as official codifiers of what should and should not be an identity symbol for a group. In Newfoundland, two groups (that commonly have had roles in other nativistic movements) were at the forefront of making mummering a symbol of indigenous culture; these were academics and artists.

The objectification of mummering as one of the unique aspects of Newfoundland tradition had to do, in part, with the attention focused on this topic by non-native academics in the late 1960s. The Institute of Social and Economic Research at Memorial University had sponsored a number of pre-doctoral Fellows — mainly from the United States — to study the small fish-

ing communities beyond St. John's. One anthropologist — Melvin Firestone — became especially interested in mummering during his fieldwork on the Northern Peninsula. Upon his return, he discussed this custom with a newly-arrived American folklorist at Memorial University — Herbert Halpert — and soon an entire seminar devoted to this topic was planned. This was held in 1963, and a series of discussions and promised papers gradually led to an influential collection of essays that was published in 1968, *Christmas Mumming in Newfoundland* (Halpert and Story v-vi). As Bud's song would do later, non-native academics were transforming what, for Newfoundlanders, had been an everyday custom into something of interest that would be scrutinized by intellectuals.<sup>4</sup> While the essays in the volume made no claim that mummering was anything unique to Newfoundland, popular opinion thought differently, especially since university academics found it important enough to devote a book to it. The published volume was reviewed by Ray Guy, a popular and prize-winning Newfoundland satirist who was at the forefront of the Newfoundland cultural revival, although often as the court jester who poked fun at the sacred cows of indigenous culture. Guy was favorably impressed, however, with *Christmas Mumming*. While the book drew heavily on symbolic anthropology and other theories obviously foreign to the general reader, Guy remarked in his review that the work "will stir up memories of kerosene lamps, raspberry syrup and heavy dark Christmas cake and all the things that recall early winter in the 'old' Newfoundland." In spite of the fact that "some of the papers ... are pretty deep going, especially when they get into interpretations of what drives the natives to carry on that way," nonetheless for the average reader the book would "serve to start a chain-reaction of recollections and reminiscences about his own mummering exploits" (Guy).

With all the possible areas of Newfoundland culture that could have been researched during this early wave of ethnographic surveying, mummering still holds a surprising fascination for social science researchers — especially anthropologists and folklorists. Over the years a steady stream of essays and monographs by both academics at Memorial University and visiting scholars has continued to appear that deal with the topic, thus keeping it in the academic limelight (e.g. Clark; Firestone; Handelman; Lovelace 1985; Moss; Powers; Robertson 1982; 1984; Sider 1976; 1977; 1986). While most of these were academic publications, the reprinting of one essay in pamphlet form by a Toronto publisher gave the topic an even wider audience (Sider 1977). One reviewer puzzled over what has become almost a fixation in Newfoundland culture research, commenting: "Christmas mumming has become for Newfoundland anthropologists what the potlatch was for students of the Kwakiutl: a ritual which seems to open up a whole society to analysis" (McKay 206). What is surprising, as well, is the fact that these subsequent

studies have been based almost exclusively on the initial fieldwork conducted more than two decades earlier in the Newfoundland of the mid-1960s, and that essentially no fresh fieldwork has since been done by anthropologists or folklorists. Academic writings on mummering seem to be fixated on this earlier period, without realizing the vastly altered role that the event now has. In other words, some academics seem to have traditionalized a certain body of ethnographic material (Hymes 354-55). Several recent essays provide theoretical explanations that link a decline of mummering with class changes of the 1950s and 60s (Clark; Sider 1976; 1977; 1986). They do not appear to reflect an awareness of the revival of the custom in the 1970s and 80s, a revival which might tend to negate many of the hypotheses based on earlier data.

Academic interest was not limited simply to several monographs and a series of essays. During the early 1960s, faculty at Memorial University had distributed three lengthy questionnaires to undergraduate students in English and Folklore classes that dealt extensively with mummering.<sup>5</sup> Eventually generating over 1200 responses, these assignments obviously focused the attention of soon-to-be teachers and other middle-class professionals all across the province on this custom. Breakwater Books increasingly became involved with publishing projects directed at the primary and secondary schools in the Province, providing printed materials on indigenous topics, including mummering. A literary anthology, *Doryloads*, published in 1974 and intended for use in schools, contained a section entitled "From the Days of Our Forefathers". In that section was included a composite version of the mummers play as performed by a local theatrical group (Major 7-18). In 1983, Breakwater published a ten volume module set on Newfoundland folk literature edited and written by faculty members of the Department of Folklore at Memorial University. This collection, intended exclusively for use in the schools, was not even sold in local bookstores. Each volume had questions for class discussion, class activities and suggested readings. One module dealt with "Folk Drama" and reprinted a number of folk plays from the British Isles, as well as the Newfoundland composite mummers play from the *Doryloads* book (Small). Research on a university level thus would soon have reverberations in local primary and secondary schools.

While an academic elite made Newfoundland mummering a focus of interest producing a steady stream of scholarly research, it was the artistic elite who made it more widely known to the public. In 1972, a local theatrical group interested in staging indigenous Newfoundland theatre believed that mummering would provide the perfect vehicle. Led by Chris Brookes, a St. John's urbanite, this group saw themselves as social activists whose goal it was to raise the ordinary Newfoundlander's cultural consciousness. Brookes commented that "someone who didn't like us once called us 'an anarchist,

agitprop, political-warfare-type theatre'. Personally, I thought it was a perfect description" (Gwyn 44). Turning first to *Christmas Mumming in Newfoundland* and later doing their own fieldwork on the Southern Shore to gather material (Brookes),<sup>6</sup> this group decided to annually present a composite version of a mummers play. They began to perform the play during the twelve days of Christmas 1972, in private homes throughout St. John's. Calling themselves first "The Mummers", and later "The Mummers Troupe", this group was interested in publicly performing "something that could be enjoyed by even a contemporary audience, and not something to be shoved away and forgotten in the museums and archives" (Qtd. in Drodge 26) — a not so subtle reference, obviously, to academic work done at Memorial University. Indeed, as in many nativistic movements, such material was considered to be inherently more meaningful than that classically taught in schools. As the leader of this group expressed it, "students would benefit more from studying [the mummer's play] than from studying such plays as *Twelfth Night* and *Othello*" (McCurdy 31A).

The Mummers Troupe had criticized academics for neglecting the play, later commenting: "Newfoundland folklorists and sociologists have paid scant attention to the Mummers Play itself, preferring to focus on some of the more accessible aspects of mummering which survived longer into the current century" (Brookes). The popular assumption common among intellectuals has always been that the present-day informal house visit is a degenerate form of the older mummers play (e.g. Ryan). Recent research indicates, however, that the mummers play chosen for revival may be a more recent introduction to this Christmas activity, and that the Newfoundland house visit involving simple disguising and guessing of identity may be the earlier form (Lovelace 1980: 277-80). Upper class households in Britain that received raucous visits by working class mummers during the twelve days of Christmas clearly wanted to structure and thereby control potentially unruly behaviour. The mummers play, it seems, became the vehicle for the wealthier classes to regulate such indecorous behaviour; local gentry encouraged the learning of a standard play with definite textual and therefore social roles, ensuring that few disruptions could occur during any visit. Thus, while the mummers play itself seems to be an imposition of a genteel behavioral form on the lower classes in Britain, discouraging the rowdiness of the unstructured house visit, revivalists — including the Mummers Troupe in Newfoundland — took it, instead, as a form of indigenous working class theatre. The house visit was the common form that survived either in practice or in memory in Newfoundland not as some survival of the earlier play, but because, unlike in Britain, there were likely few attempts and little success by reformers at altering this raucous activity. Ironically, then, the Mummers Troupe chose to revive a cultural form that was ultimately a product

of the very genteel class that they felt had ignored Newfoundland culture. Since it was the house visit that was the older and more widespread version of the mummering custom, it is not surprising that the frequent performance of a mummers play in St. John's and environs by this theatrical group did not lead to any widespread revival. In most communities the play itself was not in living memory, and, in fact, it may have never been common. The Troupe hoped to resurrect what they considered a pure form of indigenous culture that was, in fact, never very widespread in Newfoundland, ignoring the mummering visit of today as somehow degenerate. Ironically, in some ways, the Mummers Troupe was interested in a cultural form mistakenly believed blessed by the aura of a distant origin in time, much like the antiquarian folklorists in Great Britain who first documented mummering (Chambers 12).

The mummers play was one of the most popular genres performed by folk revivalists in Great Britain. The assumption by many was that the play was quite ancient, although one researcher points out that there are no references to the play dating before the early 1700s (Helm 7). The assumed antiquity of the play, together with an emphasis on its supposedly pre-Christian elements (Tiddy 70-89), contributed to its appeal among populist revivalists and academics in Britain who considered this genre as truly indigenous theatre (e.g. Green). This same attitude was summed up by Chris Brookes: "...it was popularly performed for hundreds perhaps thousands of years not by stuffed-shirt culture-vultures but by ordinary folk who liked to have a good time at Christmas" (Brookes). The Mummers Troupe in Newfoundland obviously believed this assumed mixture of antiquity and primitivism gave the play intrinsic value. During a performance of the play on January 2, 1973, at the home of George Story (one of the authors of *Christmas Mumming*) in St. John's the group distributed printed cards with the following explanation:

The Mummers Play was the Christmas custom of our ancestors. Passed down through the centuries by word-of-mouth and changed in the process, no-one knows what its age, original form, or purpose really was.

By the time it was written down, its form was roughly what you see tonight, and was always played in homes. Once a Christmas common place in Nfld, the play probably hasn't been performed here within fifty years.

Festive entertainment, fertility ritual, primitive magic, rites of the New Year, Bacchanale, Christmas camaraderie [sic]....?? Who knows? If this ceremonial retains any power, we hope the spirits will tonight, as of old, bestow their benevolence upon the home where the mummers play.<sup>7</sup>

While the Troupe believed they were reviving an ancient Newfoundland custom once popular, realistically the play was never widely performed here, and the actual age of the play as it is now known is questionable. The aes-



thetic of the British and Irish folk revival obviously influenced the notion of what local traditions should be like. And these notions are still influential today. Yet the publicity that the Troupe received in the media, and the fact that this group remained at the forefront of the theatre revival of the 1970s meant that the name “Mummers” was fixed to the ongoing cultural revival. This factor, coupled with the play’s performance in St. John’s for at least several Christmases, led to an increased awareness of mummering as a cultural symbol, something that purely academic research alone could not do.

Mummering began to capture popular interest not simply through the artistic performances of the Mummers Troupe. Nationally-recognized visual artists like David Blackwood painted images of mummering (Mowat and Blackwood 27). The National Film Board of Canada produced a film about Newfoundland Christmas which included the local folk-rock group, Figgy Duff, dressed as mummers while singing “God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen.”<sup>8</sup> A small exhibit dealing with mummering was held on the province’s west coast in 1979, depicting mummers’ masks and other objects connected with the custom.<sup>9</sup> And the Canadian edition of *Time* magazine featured a story on Newfoundland mummering at Christmas, 1970, giving the practice national exposure.<sup>10</sup>

Through academic interest, through the sporadic efforts of various artists and revival groups — in short, through the efforts of several intellectual elites, Newfoundlanders had been sensitized to an indigenous activity that could well become a central image of cultural identity if fashioned in an appropriate form. This form appeared in 1983 with the Mummers Song. Simani’s performance of Davidge’s composition met with the response it did partly because it appeared at this opportune time, but as much because of the power of its imagery.

## THE MUMMERS SONG

The lyrics of the Mummers Song deal with the visit of mummers to a typical Newfoundland outpost house. Christmas mummering still occurs in many communities during the evenings of the twelve days of Christmas (December 26 - January 6), when small groups of disguised adults visit from house to house (figure 2). Mummers sometimes ask permission to enter, careful to disguise their voices through ingressive speech. Upon entry, the visitors walk and then sit in postures different from normal, attempting to hide their everyday stature and build. The owners of the house immediately begin to try and guess the mummers’ identity. After several moments of guessing — whether successful or not — hosts offer the visitors drink and Christmas cake or cookies. In some communities, if guessing has not been successful after

five or so minutes, mummers will remove their face coverings in order to reveal who they are. Either upon the initial entry, or later after treats are served, mummers might play music, recite verse or sing a song. As often, however, mere chat ensues.

The Mummers Song describes what Bud Davidge considered the typical setting, costumes and behaviour of both the mummers and the house's occupants. Bud, who has an M.A. in Education from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), has always been interested in literature as well as music, and in most of his song writing he attempts to present visual images that convey various levels of feeling. While not directly quoting T.S. Eliot, he explains that he creates using a series of visual images — or objective correlatives — that provide concrete examples of feelings, rather than what he feels are the maudlin clichés that clutter much of Newfoundland music today. As Bud Davidge explained: "I think it's important to empathize with your audience, and be sensitive enough to their past and their thoughts that you can turn the proper phrase that will spark *images* in their minds" (Marshman 22). With the Mummers Song, Bud wanted to capture what he felt were the important images of mummering, images that would include the major aspects of a typical house visit. He used his childhood home in Bay du Nord in Fortune Bay as his model for this, and, as he explained, the song essentially wrote itself in about an hour, probably the easiest song he ever wrote (Meeker 29). The eventual success of the song had largely to do with his text.

The song itself begins with a guitar strumming background chords and the words of a verse simply recited. At the conclusion of this initial section, a loud knock is heard and the music quickly changes to three-quarter waltz-time with accordion accompaniment. The remainder of the song features the syncretic blend of Irish and country and western sounds that is most frequently considered as distinctly indigenous by ordinary Newfoundlanders (Narváez).

The transition from the recited words of the spoken verse to the main part of the song is one of the most brilliant aspects of the composition. Words spoken over guitar backup — imitative of country and western style — are juxtaposed with the rest of the song — waltz-time accordion melody. The spoken verse sets the listener up for a song lamenting declining traditions, but quickly it bursts into a celebration of a flourishing one. The text then develops a series of images that provide a simple description of what Bud Davidge considers the major facets of mummering. These motifs include themes of language, sound, heat, disguising, the house context, and the social obligations of mummering. In a quite short and compact text, we are provided with those themes deemed important not by an academic but by participants themselves — in short, an informant's ethnography.

## Any Mummings Allowed In?

Notation for verses 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8

A

1. Hark, what's the noise out \_\_\_ by the porch door?  
 2. "Come in, love-ly mum-mers, don't both-er the snow, We can  
 "Gran-my, 'tis mum-mers, there's twen-ty or more." Her  
 wipe up the wa-ter, sure, af-ter you go,  
 old with-ered face bright-ens up with a grin, "An-y  
 Sit, if you can, or on some mum-mer's knee, Let's  
 mum-mers, nice mum-mers 'lowed in?"  
 see if we know who you be."

Notation for verses 3, 6, 9

B

3. There's big ones and small ones and tall ones and thin,  
 Boys dressed as wo-men and girls dressed as men,  
 Humps on their backs, and mitts on their feet, "My  
 bless-ed, we'll die with the heat."

ANY MUMMERS ALLOWED IN?

by Bud Davidge

[Spoken]

“Don’t seem like Christmas if the mummers are not here,”  
Granny would say as she’d knit in her chair,  
“Things have gone modern and I suppose that’s the cause,  
Christmas is not like it was.”

[Knock]

“Any mummers allowed in?; allowed in?” (with ingressive voice)

[Sung]

- 1 Hark, what’s the noise out by the porch door?  
“Granny, ’tis mummers, there’s twenty or more.”  
Her old withered face brightens up with a grin,  
“Any mummers, nice mummers ’lowed in?”
- 2 “Come in, lovely mummers, don’t bother the snow,  
We can wipe up the water, sure, after you go,  
Sit, if you can, or on some mummer’s knee,  
Let’s see if we know who you be.”
- 3 There’s big ones and small ones and tall ones and thin,  
Boys dressed as women and girls dressed as men,  
Humps on their backs, and mitts on their feet,  
“My blessed, we’ll die with the heat.”
- 4 There’s only one there that I think that I know,  
That tall fellow standing over long side the stove,  
He’s shaking his fist for to make me not tell,  
Must be Willie from out on the hill.
- 5 Now, that one’s a stranger if there ever was one,  
With his underwear stuffed and his trap door undone,  
Is he wearing his mother’s big forty-two bra?  
I knows but I’m not gonna say.
- 6 “Don’t s’pose you fine mummers would turn down a drop?”  
“No! Homebrew or alky, whatever you’ve got.”

Not the one with his rubber boots on the wrong feet,  
He's enough for to do him all week.

- 7 "S'pose you can dance." "Yes." They all nod their heads,  
They've been tapping their feet ever since they came in,  
Now that the drinks have been all passed around,  
The mummers are plankin' 'er down.
- 8 "Be careful the lamp, and hold onto the stove,  
Don't swing Granny hard cause you know that she's old,  
No need for to care how you buckles the floor,  
Cause mummers have danced here before."
- 9 "My God, how hot is it, we'd better go,  
I 'low we'll all get the devil's own cold,"  
"Good night and good Christmas, mummers, me dears,  
Please God we will see you next year,  
Good night and good Christmas, mummers, me dears,  
Please God we will see you next year."

Copyright Bud Davidge 1982, CAPAC.

The main portion of the song opens with a unique sound: a knock at a door. The knock is quite startling when the song is first heard, just as startling as in a home context where knocking was unheard of when gaining entry to someone else's kitchen. No one knocked before entering a house, unless he or she was a stranger — or, in this case, the mummers. But in this contemporary time when "things have gone modern" and knocking by friends and strangers alike may now be commonplace, Granny is startled to hear this loud knocking with a stick or board followed by mummers' voices, quite a different sound from what is now the ordinary knock of a stranger.

The key to mummering is the disguising of one's voice by ingressive talk. The experienced listener needs to hear it only once in the song — after the knock — to immediately realize that this distinctive speech would characterize much of the mummers' visit. Obviously, it would almost be impossible to include mummers singing in this ingressive voice at the appropriate parts in the song — that would result in a kind of Newfoundland answer to Alvin and the Chipmunks — yet one line suffices for all verses. Indeed, the entire mummers' visit is often marked by periods of noise (mentioned initially in the recited verse), with a cacophonous chatter of ingressive "yesees and noes", "I want a drink", and laughs and giggles. Noise at the porch soon becomes

noise in the kitchen, transforming a quiet present where one only knits and wonders, to dancing, drinking and socializing.

Once entry is gained, the physical setting of what is considered a “typical” outport kitchen emerges. The kitchen space, though normally sufficient for family needs, now becomes crowded. But instead of moving into the front room — as with strangers — mummers stay in the kitchen, and now sit where they can, often on one another’s knees. To disguise identity, mixing of couples occurs here, so as not to link husband and wife, or boy and girlfriend, adding to the air of mock sexuality that permeates much of the mummering game.



Pl.1: Simani: Sim Savoury (L) and Bud Davidge (R) playing for a dance at the Conception Bay South Stadium, September 1987. (Gerald L. Pocius)

The stove next enters into major physical focus in the text, as it indeed did in daily life — for those who recall the work involved in the almost constant tending of the fire before the advent of oil and airtight models. For the disguised visitors, the kitchen would be especially hot, and even before the mummers have danced, the heat is mentioned (verse three). By the end of the visit, the temperature has become almost unbearable, and the impression is given that it is for this reason that the mummers must leave (verse nine).

The stove was a particular concern when mummers began to dance (mentioned in verse eight), both because of the stovepipe and the warming oven

on the back of many models. With a large number of people dancing, the stovepipe often fell out from the chimney. As well, with only three or four screws holding what was normally a wobbly warming oven, anything that rested on top of it would soon be in danger of falling. Indeed, one friend, on hearing the first line of verse eight, recalled an incident where several ceramic ducks gradually jiggled their way across the top of the warming oven during a mummers dance. She looked helplessly on as they finally crashed to their deaths on the top of the stove. Kerosene lamps would suffer a similar fate if they were not held in their wall brackets, or removed to a safer place before dancing commenced.

The description of disguising mentions what are considered all the important elements — those themes that folklorists and anthropologists have labored so arduously to fit into categories of liminality, reversal, strangerhood, and the like. People made fun of the opposite sex — exaggerating with size forty-two bras or stuffed underwear; they made fun of the abnormal — humps on their backs. Such disguising was often necessitated by the fact that if you wore your own clothes — whatever they were — you would be identified; you either wore someone else's clothing, covering parts of the body that might give you away (mitts covering shoes or boots), or wore clothing that most people would not recognize (frequently undergarments).

The disguising activity itself carried rules of interaction that involved determining identity. In the song, the people in the house, after letting the mummers in, immediately say: "Let's see if we know who you be." Mumming is a spectator sport, as Bud Davidge commented, and as in a sport you must play by the rules. The identification of one mummer jeopardizes the identity of all, since the same friendship or kin group travels together. The resident suspects the identity of one person in verse four, Willie, but he shakes his fist so that guessing does not occur too quickly. After a long period of time, if not identified, mummers will finally "haul up" their disguise (often a piece of cloth over the face). One can be identified too quickly, however, which diminishes the sport of guessing during the visit.

Social responsibility also requires that mummers be given a drink. In some communities, mummers still knock and ask "Any mummers allowed in?", giving the occupant an option of refusal (because, for example, someone is sick in the house). Often, however, it means that there is little or no drink available, or not enough for a large crowd of mummers who might ask for more than one. But if you are let in, you know you will get at least one alcoholic drink.

Reciprocity on the mummers' part usually involves providing some type of entertainment. This may occur initially, with mummers entering with music or dancing, or later, after drinks. Mummers provide entertainment through their costumes, and this is evident through the actual language that is used

to describe them: “nice mummers”, “lovely mummers” — phrases still in widespread use, indicating appreciation in the care of assembling a disguise.

After writing a song, Simani perform any new composition at several dances, and so it was with the Mummers Song. After several live performances, Bud and Sim realized that their new work was potentially popular. Bud felt that he had captured the essence of an experience that was shared by Newfoundlanders all across the province — a “universal experience”, as he put it. People would come up to the stage, according to Davidge, after hearing the song, and say, “Well, old man, ‘tis no harm to say that you had that right ‘cause I can remember ...” and then explain how a particular expression or practice in the song coincided exactly with their own.

Simani had decided that they would release a Christmas song on a forty-five rpm record sometime by late November for the 1983 holiday season. They had several possible Christmas compositions to choose from, but decided on the Mummers Song. Although they themselves liked the song, they were still cautious about its chances for success — as they are with all their original material. As Bud remarked, what they liked and what people actually wanted to buy could often be two different things, so they usually dealt in minimums when it came to record releases. In the past, they usually had a thousand copies of a forty-five pressed when it preceded the release of an album on which it would eventually appear. However, after much agonizing, they decided to have two thousand copies of the Mummers Song pressed, mainly because there were no plans to have it come out on an album in the near future. They were gambling that they would sell all these copies by Christmas.

The initial pressing was released by late November, and copies were sold out in local stores even before the song began to receive any air play. Bud realized quickly “that something [is] happening here that we’re not ready for.” The events of the next few weeks involved a frantic rush to press and distribute as many copies as possible. On December 3, the local radio stations in the Fortune Bay area began to play the song. While driving to Marystown from Bay l’Argent for a performance that afternoon, Bud and Sim turned on the radio; they remembered that the disc jockey remarked: “I got requests here a foot high for a new Christmas song we played here this morning.” They knew immediately which song he was referring to. Bud and Sim quickly realized that although they had suspected the song had potential success because of the initial sales in the stores, radio play would now create a hit beyond their wildest hopes. When they tuned in the other local station, the disc jockey was “tormented off his head” by the number of requests he was getting for the song; there were only so many times an hour he could play the song, and he had to announce when the next playing would be. One of the stations played the song through its parent station in St. John’s that afternoon, and the sound was spreading.



Caught up in a wave of enthusiasm they hardly expected, Bud ordered another two thousand records from the plant in Toronto. Bud and Sim met the next shipment December 8th at the Gander airport, ready to package it themselves for mailing. Coming prepared with address labels, envelopes and tape, they stuffed lots of fifteen, twenty-five and one hundred records into packages in the back of their pickup truck at the shopping centre in Gander, and brought the huge stack of parcels to the local post office to the startled looks of several clerks.

With seventeen days still left before Christmas, Bud and Sim decided to have more records pressed. Bud recalled: "Back on the phone again to the lad up in Toronto, Bob Cousins.... He said, perhaps we should go for another thousand, and I said, 'By Jesus, Sim, old man, I don't know. I got a feeling we should probably go for two thousand. Well, now, maybe not. Maybe fifteen hundred. OK, fifteen hundred.' Gets 'em on the phone. Buddy says, 'Fifteen hundred', he says, 'You sure?' I said, 'No, not right sure, boy.' He said, 'Well, you might as well go for two thousand again.' I said, 'OK, let her go for two thousand'." On December 23, nineteen hundred were shipped from Toronto directly to various shops across the province; time ran out before the last one hundred were pressed; in all, fifty-nine hundred copies were made. Unlike their other forty-fives which normally had several hundred left over after their release, only fifty copies of the Mummers Song were sent back, and that by mistake. Indeed, as late as February and March, Bud and Sim were still getting phone calls inquiring about where the forty-five could be bought. Bud summed it all up: "I never thought that anything could happen like that." There is no doubt that the Mummers Song met with instant success during the Christmas of 1983. The record had sold out in the various shops all across the province as soon as it appeared. As Sim commented, with a better distributor and a more reliable production operation, they could have sold at least ten thousand copies over that first Christmas season. Thus, approximately two per cent of Newfoundland's population would have owned the single, the equivalent of a double platinum record in Canada (Kallman and Moogk 799).

The hundreds who could not find a copy to purchase usually made a tape of the song, copying it off the radio, or from a record of a friend. The song was being played incessantly on the jukeboxes of lounges and clubs all over the province; in Badgers Quay, Trinity and Bonavista I saw people put their quarter in a jukebox and choose the Mummers Song for all two or three selections. For every person who managed to get a copy of the record, two or three more obviously had taped it. The success of sales of the forty-five was so great that first Christmas that exaggerated accounts were common about the numbers sold. One man from Notre Dame Bay, for example, reported

that the record sold six thousand copies in Woolworths in Grand Falls the first day. And the success of the actual recording did not decline after that first Christmas. For Christmas 1985, Simani released an album, *Christmas Fancy*, which contained the Mummers Song.<sup>11</sup> It continues to sell three to four thousand copies every year before each Christmas, and stores carry it throughout the year because of the demand.

Radio stations first considered this composition as a Christmas song that would only be played during that particular season. Simani felt the same, and decided not to perform the song publicly at dances after Christmas. However, it was quickly evident that this was not possible as audiences badgered the band at each performance with requests for the song. At a dance at the Waterfall Lounge in Terrenceville in April 1984, Bud told me before their performance that they had no intention of playing the Mummers Song, as they were saving that for Christmas dances. Soon request after request forced them to change their mind. When they finally began to recite the initial words of the song, the Lounge erupted into a loud thunder of beer bottles pounding on the tables. And after the initial recited verse, beer bottles knocking on the tables replaced the knock on the door in the recorded version, the chorus of clanking bottles lasting several minutes. After a number of similar experiences, Bud and Sim finally accepted its year-round popularity, and now perform it as part of their repertoire every Saturday night, even in the middle of July. Radio stations now sometimes play it during the summer, often receiving requests from ex-Newfoundlanders who are visiting their home communities. Instead of gradually falling off in popularity, Bud has



Pl.2: Mumming in Calvert, Christmas 1986. (Gerald L. Pocius)

seen interest in the song intensify over the years. And enthusiastic response often goes beyond wanting to merely hear or dance to the song; in a performance at the Cabot Highway Lounge, near Charleston, Bonavista Bay, in August 1987, for example, one of the audience quickly donned a make-shift mummers' costume when the song began, and danced as a mummer with a friend.

Simani's composition encouraged mummering to become formalized in new contexts. Bud Davidge suggested that a lounge near his home hold a mummers dance a year before he even wrote the song. At these dances, people could come dressed up as mummers and receive a free drink. At one point during the night, mummers would be required to disclose their identity. After the Mummers Song had become popular, these dances became even more widespread, and are now found all across the province.

Christmas 1985, saw the production of a CBC television program about Simani which featured interviews interspersed with their songs performed to actual scenes described in the compositions.<sup>12</sup> The playing of the Mummers Song was obviously the high point of the show, with a group of mummers visiting Bud's house in English Harbour West as the visual scene for the song's performance. Public response to the program was enormous, and the following Christmas CBC repeated the production, deliberately advertising it as "The Mummers Show", although only the last five minutes actually dealt with mummering and the Mummers Song. Over the past four years this show has been taped many times on VCRs all across the province; Bud Davidge has been told of thousands of copies that people have made and kept. One undergraduate student in a folklore course at Memorial University explained how the tape is shown to visitors from the Mainland as a succinct introduction to Newfoundland culture. A mainlander visiting during the summer of 1987 remarked to Bud Davidge: "If I haven't seen that video fifty times since I came to Burgeo I haven't seen it once." Copies are sent away, as well, to Newfoundlanders and non-Newfoundlanders alike who want to see what Newfoundland culture is all about. When it was shown on television on 28 December 1987, the host began with the comment that the annual airing of "The Mummers Show" was "fast becoming a tradition on CBC." The television listings in the *Evening Telegram* for that day had what was an unusually long entry for the program: "Land and Sea — 'A Fortune Bay Christmas' (most call it The Mummer's Show). You've asked for it once! then you asked for it again — and CBC will present it tonight."

Local and even national media realized the extreme popularity and interest now focusing on mummering — Bud Davidge was interviewed on Peter Gzowski's national radio program soon after the song was released. A group of mummers from Torbay appeared on both a national CBC television program, "The Journal", on Christmas Eve, 1986, and on the local St. John's

evening news broadcast on the following January 6. I gave several radio interviews about mummering after the song's release in 1983, and spoke specifically about the Mummers Song on the St. John's television news show the evening the Simani "Mummers Show" was first repeated. Even Newfoundland's Minister of Justice described, during an interview on Christmas Day 1986, her plans to go mummering and her enthusiasm for the custom — amusing comments given the fact that this activity is still technically illegal in the province. But it was not only the electronic media who noticed this enormous increase in interest in mummering. Local newspapers during the past Christmas seasons have featured articles or photographs about the custom with titles such as: "Mummers Keep Tradition Alive", "Mummering Tradition Making a Comeback", "Mummers are Making a Comeback", "Jannyng Revived".<sup>13</sup> The regional magazine, *Atlantic Insight*, carried an article on mummering in its December 1987 issue; while the author spoke to a colleague of mine about the impact of the Mummers Song on local tradition, she still combined a revivalist fascination with the ancient mummers play with the more pervasive house visiting custom (Sullivan 1987).<sup>14</sup> Local artists and writers continue to use mummering as a theme in their novels and short stories (e.g. Batstone). A recent fictional account of academic conversations at a St. John's party has one of the Department of Folklore professors arriving disguised as a mummer (Rapport 25).<sup>15</sup> An article has even appeared in the United States published in a Morris Dance newsletter discussing the song (Noel).

## MUMMERING AND NEWFOUNDLAND NATIVISM

In his book, *The Long Revolution*, Raymond Williams points out that what a culture decides is traditional is tied directly to present-day values: "The traditional culture of a society will always tend to correspond to its *contemporary* system of interests and values, for it is not an absolute body of work but a continual selection and interpretation" (Williams 52). Finland and Ireland, for example, saw language as the crucial factor in distinguishing themselves as unique cultures. For the Finns, the Kalevala, published in 1835-36, became the cultural text of nationhood, and many nativists were not concerned with the fact that it was a composite text created by a literary reworking and not strictly folk in origin (Wilson). The Irish founded the Gaelic League in the 1890s, and the long fantasy narratives (märchen) told in the Gaeltacht by only a handful of residents became national treasures; "the old folks who could still talk in the ancient tongue were now brought forth and praised, where formerly they had been shunted aside" (Dorson 293).

When what is considered as a cultural mother-tongue has disappeared,

however, the nativistic movements of many countries have, instead, selectively singled out past oral genres that are believed to convey the essence of collective cultural identity. Nativists turned to any kind of survivalist folklore to provide a link for the current generation to some ancestral group deemed the creator of authentic culture. Modern-day Greeks recorded the pre-Christian beliefs of rural peasants to connect them to their ancient and illustrious ancestors, since no documentary history could provide such a connection (Herzfeld 6). English-speaking Scots, believing that they lacked any culture of their own apart from the dominant English form, looked to the beliefs and narratives of the Gaelic Highlands for inspiration, so that Scots have often assumed that Gaelic culture is synonymous with their entire country (Chapman 9). And closer to home, in Cape Breton, as the Gaelic language has faded, Scottish culture has come to be translated into the performance of the bagpipes and the wearing of tartans — however dubious the actual Highland origins of some (such as tartan wearing) may really be (Trevor-Roper). No ancient mother-tongue or ancestral group existed from the misty past that modern Newfoundlanders might raise to nativistic symbol through revived language or oral genre. So it had to be a more recent form that would be symbolically appropriated — to use Malcolm Chapman's term — to provide a nativistic focus of indigenous culture (Chapman 28). With Confederation, with a cash economy, with media contact, various aspects of older life were disappearing, and, as Linton points out, it is often those cultural elements that are on the wane at the time of contact with a superior group to which symbolic values of nativism will be attached (Linton 236). While mummering is still carried on in a number of European countries (e.g. Bregenhøj 1974; 1975; Dégh 1982), it no longer exists in the areas of North America with which Newfoundland has media and travel contacts, and it therefore provided one out of many possible everyday behaviours that could readily be instilled with nativistic symbolic value.

This leads to the question, why did a song about mummering enjoy such enormous popularity in Newfoundland, a popularity that has continued over successive Christmases? Why would people today be interested in — in fact, crazy about — listening to a song that in a sense is a folk ethnography, a description of a folk custom? Whatever Newfoundland mummering was in the past — either for participants or analysts — it certainly has an altered meaning today. In communities marked by easy transportation, roving strangers, altered sexual mores, the decline of the merchant truck system, and so much else, mummering persists for reasons far different from those given by academics, reasons based on fieldwork from the 1960s. Mummering has become *the* collective identity symbol for Newfoundland's nativistic movement.

The Mummers Song appealed to the two different groups that often find

themselves a part of any nativistic movement. In some communities — like those around Bud Davidge's home — mummering has continued uninterrupted, and this has increasingly become a source of pride. The Mummers Song, in a sense, is a rallying anthem that assuages any doubts about why traditions should continue; it validates by saying that, as in the song, the past *can* be a part of the present. During a conversation on mummering before Christmas 1983 in one Bonavista Bay community, I mentioned to a friend that many people had blamed the introduction of wall-to-wall carpeting for the decline in mummering; people did not want their houses dirtied. But one man commented this was only an excuse, "It's like in the song: 'We can wipe up the water, sure, after you go,' if people really wanted the mummers in." The song expresses sentiments about the continuity of a tradition. In those areas where what have become collective identity symbols are still a part of everyday life, the Mummers Song affirms that local practices are at the forefront of the emerging nativistic movement.

While the song affirmed values for those who regarded their continuing of mummering as a sign of cultural identity, its success was equally profound amongst those Newfoundlanders who had moved beyond their past, who now looked at Newfoundland culture with nostalgia, as a series of fragments that had to be preserved before they disappeared forever. Images in the song brought back memories of glowing — and selective — aspects of past lives: the warm kitchen stove (with its sounds and smell of burning wood); the small kitchen with the flickering kerosene lamp, crowded with friends dancing and drinking homebrew. Bud Davidge's descriptions leave out all that was negative about the custom: the occasional fighting and violence (e.g., Byrne; Porter; Whittle),<sup>16</sup> the fear of mummers by some members of the household such as children (Widdowson 233-38). Mummering for this middle class had become one of those nostalgic icons to be fondly remembered, to be sung about, and something that might even still go on in those mythical communities that many Newfoundlanders suspect exist somewhere — communities where all things old-fashioned are believed to still run rampant. This same middle class was often involved with the consumption of a Newfoundland culture that could be safely viewed as nostalgic fragments that mainly added colour to modern life (Overton). While mummering had, indeed, never disappeared in some communities, one writer inadvertently summed up the role of the Simani composition for this nostalgic middle class group: " 'Let th' mummers in t'night?' About the only time you hear that question these days is when Simani sing their marvelous 'Mummers Song.' Perhaps in some parts of the province, there's a pounding on the door, accompanied by the strains of a button accordion and strange-sounding voices, but in most places mummering, like so many other of our nobler traditions, has disappeared without so much as a whimper" (Smith). For the middle

classes, traditions exist in safe and controllable contexts: on records, on festival stages, in books. Mumming itself, then, can continue to exist for this group not in the rowdy behaviour of the house visit with its attendant social obligations, but in the objectified creation of the Mummers Song. You need not mummer if you can listen to a song.

The popularity of this text, however, actually led some people from the realm of nostalgia to action, from the song to the practice — often after a lapse of years. For many listeners during Christmas 1983, the rallying cry raised in this song was clear: lament or mummer! And mummer many did mightily, responding directly to Simani's message. Indeed, the song *per se* became part of the mumming process from that very first Christmas. While mumming with friends in various communities on the Southern Shore during the Christmas season after the song's release in 1983, we were actually asked whether we could sing the Mummers Song after our disguises were removed, and our accordion player often played the tune as we entered a house. As we ate our Christmas cake, the owner of one house sang several songs for us accompanied by guitar: "All I Have to Offer You (Is Me)"; "Storms Never Last"; and part of the Mummers Song.<sup>17</sup> By the last day of Christmas, January 6th, we mummured in the house of a noted singer in one community, and while sipping on our dark rum after removing our disguises, she performed the song for us, having learned it by heart.

Every Christmas since its release the Mummers Song now figures prominently in actual mumming activity. I have seen many groups of mummies carry portable tape recorders with them, playing the song as they enter each house, this having become a standard practice all over the province. A student from Corner Brook in one of my undergraduate classes mentioned that during Christmas 1985, visitors from Quebec who could barely speak English had to be taught the Mummers Song before they could go out during the twelve nights of Christmas. And during the annual Christmas concerts in local schools and church halls in many communities (including King's Cove, Bishops Cove, Gaultois, Grand Falls and Bishops Falls), the various parts of the Mummers Song are acted out — a phenomenon that has occurred in the past with other important Newfoundland songs like the "Squid Jigging Ground" and "Aunt Martha's Sheep" (Taft 95-96).<sup>18</sup> The text from the Mummers Song — as well as several other of Simani's compositions — are now widely used by teachers in the Newfoundland Culture course taught as part of the high school curriculum all over the province. In short, Bud Davidge's comments sum up the unintentional impact that his song has had on mumming: "Lot of people will say: 'It [mumming] was dead. Mumming was dead around here, such and such a place. And then all of a sudden, y'know, she came alive again.' And, ah, and they say, 'I believe it had to do with the fact of the song'."

Whatever the effects — intentional or unintentional — that Simani had planned for their song, whatever moods they were trying to evoke when composing it, Newfoundlanders greeted it with an enormous enthusiasm. This was due to the fact that mummering — largely because of the song — had moved beyond the erudite concerns of scholars to become a symbol for the public at large of something uniquely Newfoundland. Some proudly listened to the song as an affirmation of cultural continuity (they hadn't "gone modern" — with everything negative that this implied), for others it was pure nostalgia (mummering surely could not go on today in places like St. John's, but at least it could be fondly remembered). And yet for others it was a creation that provided a rallying point for a return to a certain practice.

In much cultural nativistic activity, there is an implicit agenda to document tradition, preserve a record of the past, and present this genuine material to the public. Such activities, then, will hopefully encourage the continuity and even revival of certain cultural practices. However, in spite of denials to the contrary, nativists often tend to shy away from music like Simani's because it does not clearly fit into preconceived analytical categories: it deals with issues from the indigenous culture, but is newly written by educated creators; it uses locally preferred musical instruments and styles like the accordion, but incorporates commercial country and western sounds; it is performed for commercial dances in taverns and lounges and is spread on radio and commercial recording. Yet, Simani has mastered the various musical styles that ordinary Newfoundlanders enjoy. Bud and Sim move easily from the accordion waltz of the Mummers Song to one of their country and western compositions (like "I Wanna Live Like a Millionaire") to a traditional jig like "Pious' Favourite" learned from a neighbour in Belleoram.<sup>19</sup> And during one dance set they may start with Dire Straits' "Walk of Life", move on to Bruce Springsteen's "Cadillac Ranch", and slow things down with Bud's perfect George Jones rendition of "Right Left Hand" — all standard songs done by current Newfoundland dance bands.<sup>20</sup> Cultural nativism of the intellectual variety is usually unable to deal with such eclectic reality, and finds it easier to promote its own notions of what is pure and therefore meaningful. While "stuffed-shirt culture-vultures" may have been only interested in promoting mainland art forms in Newfoundland, Mao-shirted culture-vultures have had an equally narrow notion of what the ordinary folk should prefer as their own tradition. Last year I represented Simani at the annual Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council award presentation; they had been nominated for the music award. It came as no surprise to me during the course of the evening's events that many people at the ceremony had never even heard of Simani, since a small circle of St. John's-based nativists still have a major voice in the ongoing cultural revival. Not long afterwards, when one of my colleagues in the Department of Folklore was interviewed



about the revival of mummering, he mentioned the widespread impact of Simani's Mummers Song. The journalist knew little about the group, and had thought it was an Inuit band. While cultural revivalist groups in St. John's might fill standard city venues like the Ship Inn, Bridgett's or the L.S.P.U. Hall with a hundred or so patrons, Simani now plays for dances in stadiums and hockey rinks across the island where the audience numbers in the thousands.<sup>21</sup> When Bud and Sim play in lounges that hold several hundred, tickets usually quickly sell out; when they performed at Rocky's Place in Trinity in August, 1987, for example, tickets were sold out in twenty minutes. What remains as Newfoundland's most popular and successful of recording groups remains largely unrecognized within an intellectual nativistic elite based primarily in St. John's who prefer their own definitions of what is intrinsically valuable for Newfoundland.

While academic elites like folklorists and anthropologists may have kindled an initial interest in mummering, and revivalists like the Mummers Troupe brought this cultural form to the attention of a wider public, it was a simple composition recorded by a local band that has revived a custom beyond all expectations. Ironically, as a country and western-influenced group has indeed brought about a revival of this form of indigenous Newfoundland theatre, Chris Brookes, founder of the Mummers Troupe, has written an intellectual history of his group, to be published by the Institute of Social and Economic Research at Memorial University, the initial sponsor of academic research on Christmas mumming. And ISER is using several lines from the Mummers' Song to promote the book!

"Any Mummers Allowed In?" was successful certainly because of Simani's ability to pick the right musical phrase and text. But Newfoundlanders, themselves, were ready for such a composition, as mummering — probably second only to singing — has become objectified as a symbol of Newfoundland's culture. In spite of what is often the academic neglect of newly-created compositions, the impact of Simani's song on a local cultural practice was profound. More importantly, Simani's music — as so many other aspects of Newfoundland culture — indicates that modernity can co-exist alongside indigenous practices. Indeed, cultural nativists, themselves, are often as guilty as Granny about protesting too much that "things have gone modern" before realizing the positive impact of such new creations on earlier activities that are of concern. In Newfoundland, "Christmas is not like it was", as mummering has become more and more a symbol of cultural identity. Mummering initially became more than a simple custom because of the work of intellectual elites like academics and revivalists, but finally, because of Simani's Mummers Song, it has become one of the most forceful of cultural identity symbols for ordinary Newfoundlanders.

Notes

<sup>1</sup>Earlier versions of this essay were read at the Folklore Studies Association of Canada meeting, Guelph, Ont., June 1984 and the Popular Culture Association meeting, Louisville, KY, April 1985. I would like to thank Philip Hiscock, Herbert Halpert and Michael Taft who provided information used in this essay. David Taylor assisted in the preliminary fieldwork at English Harbour West and Belleoram in February 1984. Ian McKinnon did the musical transcription. Burt Feintuch, Martin Lovelace, Shane O'Dea, and Neil Rosenberg provided invaluable comments on an earlier version of this study. George Story commented on several drafts, and shared additional details and bibliographic references. Finally, I would like to thank Bud Davidge, Sim Savoury and their families for much help and hospitality over the years; the importance of their music for Newfoundland speaks for itself.

<sup>2</sup>Simani, "Any Mummers Allowed In?" BelAir, BA 202, Side A, 1983; *Saltwater Cowboys*, Quay, cs-8059, 1981; *Heaven By Sea*, Quay 8089, 1983; all of Simani's recordings are available from Simani, Box 77, English Harbour West, Nfld. The title song from their first album, "Saltwater Cowboys" has since appeared as the Canadian representative on an album of labour songs compiled and edited by Archie Green, *Works Many Voices, Vol. 1*, JEFM-110, 1986, available from Down Home Music/Arhoolie Records, 10341 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito, CA, 94530. The *Saltwater Cowboys* album has already achieved "gold" status in Canada by selling over 50,000 copies; it will, no doubt, eventually go "platinum" by reaching the 100,000 mark (Kallman & Moogk 799).

<sup>3</sup>Wonderful Grand Band, *Wonderful Grand Band*, Quay cs-78-014, 1978; Wonderful Grand Band, *Living in a Fog*, Grand East GE 1001, 1981; Figgy Duff, *Figgy Duff*, Posterity PTR 13014, 1980; Figgy Duff, *After the Tempest*, Boot BOS 7243, 1983.

<sup>4</sup>On the typical image of Christmas familiar to the ordinary Newfoundlander up until this time, George Story remarked: "For twenty or more years after the 1949 Confederation, each Christmas, CBC St. John's (radio) beamed its Newfoundland contribution to the national network. Dick O'Brien was usually the producer, and a few British left-overs from the London Players would be featured. They usually chose to give some readings from *Pickwick Papers*, dramatizations of "Christmas at Dingley Dell", and an accordion-piece from a house in Torbay or Portugal Cove. This was the presentation of Newfoundland to the Mainland and to ourselves. So when Mel Firestone broached his Northern Peninsula janneying to us at that ISEB occasion, it gave us all [at MUN] a good deal to talk about — discovering the obvious" (personal communication).

<sup>5</sup>MUNFLA Q65/66; Q67; Q69/70.

<sup>6</sup>My references to Brookes' comments are taken from his unedited manuscript history of the Mummers Troupe in Newfoundland to be published by the Institute for Social and Economic Research as *A Public Nuisance: A History of the Mummers Troupe*; I would like to thank Robert Paine and Susan Nichol for lending me a copy before the final version appeared.

<sup>7</sup>Deposited in MUNFLA 73-85.

<sup>8</sup>"A Figgy Duff Christmas," National Film Board of Canada, 106c0178233, 1978.

<sup>9</sup>"Christmas Jannies Crash Exhibit Opening," *Western Star* 10 Dec. 1979: 9.

<sup>10</sup>"The Mummers' Christmas," *Time* 28 Dec. 1970: 4-5.

<sup>11</sup>Simani, *Christmas Fancy*, swc Productions, sd-x095, 1985.

<sup>12</sup>"Land and Sea," CBC, St. John's, 6 Jan. 1986.

<sup>13</sup>"Mummers Keep Tradition Alive," *Evening Telegram* 4 Jan. 1986: 2; "Mumming Tradition Making a Comeback," *Evening Telegram* 24 Dec. 1985: 3; "Mummers are Making a Comeback," *Evening Telegram* 3 Jan. 1987: 4; "Jannying Revived," *Metro* 5 Jan. 1986: 1.

<sup>14</sup>The author was more familiar with folk revival notions of mummering, and had never heard of Simani or their composition, and incorrectly identified the Mummers Song as "Mum-

mers Allowed In". My essay was then in manuscript form, and I was referred to as Dr. George Pochius. Not surprisingly, when the same author had written an article for a local magazine in 1986, she made no mention of Simani or the Mummers Song (Sullivan 1986).

<sup>14</sup>George Story, while providing this reference, commented: "I've not read many recent Newfoundland novels which don't, somewhere, bring in, even if very briefly, something about the jannies [mummers] — just as, for some decades, young Newfoundland poets felt it necessary to write an elegy on the Beothucks, especially, Shawandithit, presumably influenced by a piece on her in one of the school texts included in a school anthology" (personal communication).

<sup>16</sup>Contemporary newspaper accounts include: "Our Reputation Abroad," *St. John's Daily News*, 16 Jan. 1861: 2; "Rowdism in Harbour Grace," *Evening Telegram* 3 Jan. 1889: 4; "That Mumming Affair," *Evening Telegram* 1 Feb. 1890: 4; an early twentieth century illustration of a mummers fray in St. John's ca. 1850 can be found in O'Dea 13.

<sup>17</sup>Waylon Jennings and Jessi Colter, "Storms Never Last," *Leather and Lace*, RCA AALI-3931, 1981; Charlie Pride, "All I Have to Offer You (Is Me)," *The Best of Charlie Pride*, RCA LSP-4223, 1969; both songs are commonly played by Newfoundland bands.

<sup>18</sup>In southeast Ireland where the mummers play was widespread, local Womens' Institutes featured the performing of the play in local community concerts (Gailley 16).

<sup>19</sup>Simani, "I Wanna Live Like a Millionaire," *Outport People*, swc Productions, sd-0785, 1986; "Pious' Favourite," *Saltwater Cowboys*.

<sup>20</sup>Dire Straits, "Walk of Life," *Brothers in Arms*, Warner Brothers, 25264-1, 1985; Bruce Springsteen, "Cadillac Ranch," *The River*, Columbia pc2-36854, 1980; George Jones, "Right Left Hand," *Wine Colored Roses*, Epic FE 40413, 1986.

<sup>21</sup>During the summer of 1988 Simani will be playing for dances at ten hockey stadiums from one end of the province to the other.

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